

## Hungarian Geopolitics during the interwar period

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### Abstract

*The end of the First World War produced a major reconfiguration of the political map of Europe. The three anachronistic empires that continued to exist in the Eastern part of the continent (Ottoman, Tsarist, and Austro-Hungarian) quickly disintegrated and gave way to a system of politically unstable nation-states. The Trianon Treaty signed in 1920 annulled the Hungarian multiethnic state formed by a context of circumstances in 1867 and sowed the seeds of the conflicts that followed. The Hungarians, the main losers of the peace treaty, developed a real cult for the Hungarian "millennial" state and tried to identify solutions for its recreation. Geopolitics, a rising science at that time, became the main instrument of Hungarian revisionism and created the necessary conditions for the renegotiation of borders at the beginning of the Second World War.*

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## Introduction

Geopolitics was the ideal tool for promoting irredentist theses based on which Fascist Hungary asked Hitler's Germany and Fascist Italy for support to change the *status quo* established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1920. Many of the Hungarian geopolitical studies written in the interwar period aimed to highlight the historical right of the Hungarian state to request the annexation of some of the territories under the sovereignty of neighboring states. Starting from the premise that "purpose excuses the means" this *desideratum* was based on speculations, data, and information unverified from a scientific point of view.

## Ideological preparation of the campaign to revise the borders of Interwar Hungary

One of the most contested studies that served the Hungarian authorities as a theoretical basis and argument for the preparation of the injustice dictated in Vienna on August 30, 1940,<sup>1</sup> was written by Count Pal Teleki<sup>2</sup> in German "Siebenbürgens Lage in Ungarn und Europa" and later translated into Romanian

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\* United Nations, *Reports of international arbitral awards, Award relating to the Territory ceded by Romania to Hungary, 30 August 1940*, VOLUME XXVIII, p. 409, [https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol\\_XXVIII/407-412.pdf](https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXVIII/407-412.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Count Pal Teleky, a geographer by profession and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, came from an old noble family that had held large territories in Transylvania in the run-up to World War I. At the time of writing, he was acting Prime Minister of Hungary and was campaigning externally for Hungary to regain lost territory under the Treaty of Versailles. See Turda Marius, Weindling Paul, *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900-1940*, Central European University Press, 2007, p. 380.

under the title "The situation of Transylvania in Hungary and Europa."<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian professor tried to promote the idea that Transylvania can be divided into two distinct regions that can easily be placed in two nation-states.<sup>4</sup> The two halves of a unitary historical province in its entire existence were considered to have their own identity based on major differences classified not only ethnically but also historically, geographically, and economically.

The northern part that was forcibly integrated into the Hungarian state was considered a quintessential Hungarian area while the southern half of the province was a nationally undefined area inhabited by nationally distinct religious and religious communities. The Hungarian author refers to the ethnic diversity of the province's population but acknowledges that in the hilly and sub-mountainous area, geographical space that characterizes the region inside the Carpathian arc, the population of Romanian origin is the majority.<sup>5</sup>

The Hungarian author considered that the ethnic structure of the province existing at that time 52% of the Romanian population was the result of an "accident of history" following the Ottoman conquest when the Hungarian population fell sharply. He mentioned that many of the Hungarian inhabitants of the province died in battles with the Turks, and their place was quickly taken by Romanians who migrated to this area.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the Vienna dictatorship, the Hungarian side presented its estimates of the ethnic composition of Northern Transylvania, denying the results of the official census conducted by the Romanian authorities.

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<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *Teza ungară a celor două jumătăți ale Transilvaniei. Studiu critic*, Cluj-Napoca, Imprimeria Ardealul, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Anton Golopenția, *Preocupări politice maghiare* in Emil I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, Vasile S. Cucu (eds), "Geopolitica", Iași, Glasul Bucovinei Publishing House, 1994, p. 262.

The Hungarian delegation argued for the right to annex this territory, invoking a Hungarian ethnic majority of 53.6%, and mentioning that the Romanian population represented only 39.9% of the total number of inhabitants of this region.<sup>7</sup>

The idea promoted by Pal Teleki is completely false because the Ottoman expeditions in the northern part of Transylvania were of low intensity and took place starting from the south, the most affected areas being the rich Saxon craft centers in the southern part of the province (Sibiu, Braşov, Făgăraş, etc.) as well as the Romanian villages in their immediate vicinity. The official documents of the principality of Transylvania do not record any such military expedition during the entire period between the end of the reign of Iancu de Hunedoara and the conquest of the province by the Habsburg Empire.<sup>8</sup> The official documents of the principality register rather the emigration of an important part of the Romanian population from the area to the free zones from the south of the province and even to the neighboring principality of Moldova. The first step of the Hungarianization of the Romanian population was their conversion to the Catholic religion. As a result of the persecutions to which many Romanian peasants were subjected, they took refuge in Moldova, the flight of serfs (most of them Romanians) from the estates of Hungarian counts had become a common practice at the time.<sup>9</sup> This population moved across the Carpathians explains the large number of Catholic

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<sup>7</sup> Janos Kristof Muradin, *Minority Politics of Hungary and Romania between 1940 and 1944. The System of Reciprocity and Its Consequences* in "European and Regional Studies", Vol. 16, No. 1/2015, p. 59, <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/auseur/16/1/article-p59.xml>.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

believers who lived in the border counties of Moldova and whom Hungarian geopoliticians classified as Csango.<sup>10</sup>

In the mentioned volume, Count Teleki presents another ridiculous theory regarding the assimilation of a part of the Hungarian population by the Romanians "newly arrived in the area". The very large share of the province's population was explained both by the natural increase in population growth much higher among Romanians than Hungarians and because "the light language assimilated many Hungarians."<sup>11</sup>

The author intentionally omits to mention the antiquity of the Romanian settlements in the area, many of them attested by the Hungarian historiography chronicle "Gesta Hungarorum" also known as the chronicle Anonymus written around 1200 at the court of King Bela I.<sup>12</sup> The document written in Latin mentions the presence of the Romanian population in that area before the Hungarian conquest and mentions pre-existing politico-state formations (duchies of Glad, Gelu, Salanus, Morout, names with Latin resonance), as well as the massive presence in their armies of numerous "blachi", a name given at the time to the

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<sup>10</sup> The name Csangos comes from the Hungarian word "csángó" which means alienated or gone. The name originally described all ethnic groups displaced from their place of origin without reference to their ethnic origin. Currently, three important Csango communities are identified on the Romanian territory. The most important from a numerical point of view are the Catholics from Bacău and Neamț counties, most of whom identify themselves as Romanians. Along with them, two small communities can be identified on the territory of Brașov counties (Hungarian-speaking, but with evangelical religion, most probably from Hungarianized Saxons) and one in Ghimeș from the border of Bacău, and Harghita counties. See Csango minority culture in Romania, Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, from the Council of Europe, <https://archive.is/20120605044639/assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc01/EDOC9078.ht>

<sup>11</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Lazăr Tonciulescu, *Cronica notarului Anonymus. Faptele ungarilor*, Bucharest, Miracol Publishing House, 1996, p. 3.

population of Romanian origin.<sup>13</sup> The poverty of written evidence regarding the existence of a permanent population of Romanian origin before the Hungarian conquest favored the formulation of many speculative ideas, which call into question the ethnic origin of many of the leaders of these benefit formations, but Romanian continuity in this region can be easily traced. The basis of numerous archaeological evidence that invalidates from the beginning any trace of speculation.

Another important omission is the chronicles that mention the Romanian origin of the first rulers of Moldova, Dragoș and Bogdan, who laid the foundations of the Romanian State East of the Carpathians along with a large community of Romanians from Maramureș. The emigration of an important part of the population of Maramureș to Moldova confirms the fact that in that area the Romanian presence was very old and its high density allowed the colonization of the neighboring lands.<sup>14</sup> These important details in clarifying this dispute are also recorded by the Hungarian chroniclers of the time in numerous works (*Chronicle of the Hungarians* written by Ioan de Târnave, official to King Louis I of Hungary). The information was later taken over in the writings of Moldovan chroniclers who explicitly mentioned the Romanian origin of Dragoș and Bogdan from Maramureș:

“Bogdan, the voivode of the Romanians (Olahorum) from Maramureș, bringing the Romanians of that district, secretly passed into the Land of

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<sup>13</sup> Alexandru Madgearu, *The Romanians in the Anonymous Gesta Hungarorum, Truth and fiction*, Cluj-Napoca, Institutul Cultural Român, 2005, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Dimitrie Onciul, *Dragoș și Bogdan, fondatorii principatului moldovenesc* in “Convorbiri literare”, XVIII, no. 7-8, 1884-1885, Iași, p. 254.

Moldavia (.. ), increasing the number of Romanians in this country, it widened in the kingdom (*in regnum est dilatata*).<sup>15</sup>

Another important detail to which the Hungarian author does not give enough importance is the coverage area of the space inhabited by Romanians. Their presence in all areas of the province, their very good adaptation to physical and geographical conditions (characterized by their occupational multitude) show that: "of all ethnic groups they are the least indicated to be considered an immigrant population."<sup>16</sup>

The withdrawal of an important part of the Romanian community from Transylvania from the depression area to the mountains, which was intensely speculated by the Hungarian revisionists, was due to the shortcomings caused by the migrant populations that "ruined their state and civilized life."<sup>17</sup> However, due to the transhumance practiced by Romanian shepherds, the Romanian language spoken in all corners of Transylvania developed as a unit. Moreover, the Vatican's financial records from 1332-1337 mention as taxpayers the inhabitants of only 950 localities in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș, the remaining approximately 1100 localities existing in the Hungarian royalty registers being registered with a population of faith Orthodox, meaning Romanian.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pavel Parasca, *În problema izvoarelor tradiției medievale a întemeierii Moldovei* in "Revistă de istorie și politică" p. 64,  
[https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/In%20problema%20izvoarelor%20tradiției%20medievale%20a%20intemeierii%20Moldovei.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/In%20problema%20izvoarelor%20tradiției%20medievale%20a%20intemeierii%20Moldovei.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol, *Unitatea sufletului românesc*, in Emil I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, Vasile .S. Cucu (eds), "Geopolitică", Iași, Glasul Bucovinei Publishing House, 1994, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> \*\*\**Documente privind istoria românilor. Veacul XIV - C Transilvania, Vol III (1331-1340)*, Bucharest, Academy Publishing House, 1954, pp. 41-253, apud. Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The very large share of the Hungarian population in cities was largely due to the phenomenon of ethnic assimilation. In many urban communities, the demographic increase was well below the level of neighboring villages, naturally creating a movement to supplement this deficit with the population from these areas.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Hungarianization of Romanians who emigrated to cities was almost total. The small number of those who settled allowed the rapid dilution of their identity. An interesting movement occurred at the beginning of the Modern Age when the feudal privileges granted to the three recognized nations (Hungarians, Saxons, and Szeklers) were annulled,<sup>19</sup> and the Romanian nation had the chance to change the numerical ratio in the cities of Transylvania.

Taking into account that the number of Romanians in the rural area was very high, a possible move to the cities would have managed in a very short period to cancel the advantage held by the Hungarians. In response to this new situation, the Hungarian authorities initiated a systematic process of assimilation of all non-Hungarians, including Saxons and Szeklers. The movement intensified after the proclamation of the dual Austro-Hungarian state in 1867. The "need for the intensification of Hungarianization" was repeatedly emphasized by Hungarian politicians and culture, who argued that in the absence of this process, the very notion of a dualist state was annulled. The publicist and politician Gustav Beksits, who also held the position of director of the minority department, mentioned that:

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<sup>19</sup> Ioan Aurel Pop, *Reformă și națiuni în Principatul Transilvaniei* in "Studia Historica et Theologica" *Omagiu Prof. Emilian Popescu*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 464, [http://dspace-v.buculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/48226/1/Pop%2BIoan%2BAurel-Reforma%2Bsi%2Bnatiuni-2003.pdf](http://dspace.v.buculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/48226/1/Pop%2BIoan%2BAurel-Reforma%2Bsi%2Bnatiuni-2003.pdf)



„The Hungarians must prevent the national development of the Slavs and the Romans, because otherwise dualism, whose fundamental idea is the Hungarian national state, is no longer necessary.”<sup>20</sup>

To this end, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Khuen-Héderváry Károly, by order no. 4,795 / 902 of 22 August 1903 ordered an extensive linguistic study based on which a coherent policy of consolidating the Hungarian ethnic bloc should have been implemented.

According to Vargha Gyula, director of the Central Statistical Office, the author of the study in mixed areas or areas where Hungarians had no ethnic representation, colonizations with a Hungarian population should have been carried out to intensify the Hungarianization process.<sup>21</sup> Through the legislation designed by the Hungarian state, the population speaking the official language enjoyed many rights, many of them being deeply discriminatory against other nationalities. By ministerial ordinance no. 4000/1917 Romanians were denied the right to purchase agricultural land,<sup>22</sup> which in the medium term would have encouraged many of them to emigrate or become Hungarian. Officially, the policy of Hungarianization and discrimination of the Romanian nation in Transylvania was stopped after the achievement of the Great Union in 1918.

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<sup>20</sup> Aurel C. Popovici, *Stat și națiune. Statele Unite ale Austriei Mari*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 1997, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, *Politică și demografie în mișcarea de emancipare națională a românilor din Transilvania în epoca modernă* în “Călător prin istorie: omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani, Center for Transylvanian Studies, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 384, <http://dspace-v.bcuccluj.ro/bitstream/123456789/47862/3/Bolovan%2BIoan-Politica%2Bsi%2Bdemografie-2010.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 390.

Through the agricultural reform of 1921-1923,<sup>23</sup> Romanian peasants, as well as those of other nationalities, were given ownership of agricultural land, nationalized from the Hungarian counts, who, like the Romanian boyars from the former kingdom, received important monetary compensations. However, Hungarian revisionist circles continued to promote many theories in the West, based on studies conducted during the dualism period, some of which later became legal arguments for the two Vienna dictates. The thesis of the two halves of Transylvania became after the annexation of the northern part to Hungary an important propaganda document that continued to be developed in complementary studies during 1941-1944 published by the Transylvanian Scientific Institute, based in Cluj.<sup>24</sup>

### **Revisionist Hungary and its actions during the Second World War**

Representatives of the Hungarian government negotiated with the German and Italian fascists the possibility of regaining part of the territories they had been "forced" to cede to neighboring states following the Treaty of Trianon. The negotiations took place long before the beginning of the Second World War, each of the requests made by the Hungarians being strongly supported by a multitude of arguments. The framework for these negotiations had been created following the Munich Protocol of September 30, 1938, when Germany had obtained from Britain and France for itself and its allies a series of concessions of a territorial nature. The first state "sacrificed on the altar of European peace" ("peace for our

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<sup>23</sup> \*\*\* Law of July 30, 1921, for the Agrarian Reform in Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş, [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm?act\\_text?id=65850](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act_text?id=65850)

<sup>24</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Charmley John, *Chamberlain and the lost peace*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1989, p. 105.

time”) had been Czechoslovakia, whose security had been guaranteed by the great European powers. The United Kingdom, through the voice of Prime Minister Chamberlain, had expressed its utter disinterest in the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary and even agreed that it could integrate as much of Slovakia as possible.<sup>25</sup>

The Munich agreement created the framework for the conduct of the two dictatorships in Vienna, whose main beneficiary became Hungary. In the first round of these treaties, also called the "First Vienna Dictate" signed on November 2, 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced to accept the dismemberment of its territory.<sup>26</sup> Except for the Sudetenland, which had been forced to cede to Germany, the Central European state had been divided into two separate entities. Subcarpathian Ukraine (Ruthenia). Its allied Poland had also annexed the Teschen region, thus violating the treaty of alliance signed between them. The Warsaw government gave its consent to the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary, considering that in this way it would gain an ally in the undeclared war with its population of Ukrainian origin.<sup>27</sup>

Hungary sought recognition of its new borders not only from Germany but also from neighboring states from which it took over certain territories. The recognition of independent Slovakia meant that the new government accepted the territorial losses. Upper Hungary or the Danube Slovakia, inhabited mainly by people of Hungarian origin, was the price that this new state had to pay in exchange for recognizing its independence from the Czech Republic. To ensure the

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<sup>25</sup> Smetana Vit, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from 1938 to 1942*, Prague, Karolinum Press, 2008, p. 113.

<sup>26</sup> Denny E. Eastman, *German policy and first Vienna Award*, The University of Arizona, University Libraries, 1964, p. 9, in

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.975.1725&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

amicable settlement of this agreement, German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop called on Hungary to drop its claim to annex the five major Slovak cities in the south of the country, including the capital of the Slovak state: Bratislava, Eitra, Kosice, Uzhorod, and Mukacevo.<sup>28</sup> Regarding the loss of Ruthenia (Subcarpathian Ukraine) also ceded in favor of Hungary, there were no major objections because this territory, inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, was already a millstone attached to the foot of this fragile state.

#### **The sacrifice of Greater Romania. The Second Vienna Dictate**

The Hungarians kept on putting pressure on the neighbors through various channels to continue annexing their territories. Romania and Serbia became the next two victims of Hungarian irredentism. Although they had skilled negotiators and demands, the Hungarians managed to annex only a part of the requested territories at the beginning of the Second World War. Romania was forced by the Vienna Dictate of August 30, 1940,<sup>29</sup> to cede one-third of the territories it had reclaimed in 1918 (Hungary had requested two-thirds), and Serbia only half of Vojvodina (Backa and Srem provinces).<sup>30</sup>

These territorial abductions were justified by Hungarian geo-politicians through a series of studies that had to justify their historical right to rule those provinces. Although most documents presented partial data, and ethnic maps were drawn up by Hungarians to highlight the numerical superiority of the

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Béni L. Balogh, *The Second Vienna award and the Hungarian- Romanian relations 1940-1944*, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> Marius Turda, *In pursuit of Greater Hungary: Eugenic Ideas of Social and Biological Improvement, 1940–1941* in “The Journal of Modern History”, Vol. 85, No. 3 (September 2013), p. 563, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/670822>

Hungarian community in the territories they requested were drawn up by superimposing close colors (red and pink)<sup>31</sup> to separate the two communities the reality on the field was completely different.

Except for the Szeklerland, where the share of the Hungarianized population exceeded 90% of the total population, in the other regions of Northern Transylvania the Hungarians constituted ethnic minority groups. An in-depth analysis of this situation can be made very easily by studying the official statistics of the Romanian state (the data contained in these documents were not disputed by the representatives of the Hungarians in Romania) published before the surrender of this region. The largest city with a majority population of Hungarian origin in the requested area, Târgul Mureș, was not nearly as Hungarian as the Budapest authorities presented it. On July 31, 1940, the Hungarians represented just over 50%, more precisely 22,596 (58.12%), the Romanians 9,887 (25.43%), and other cumulative minorities (Germans, Jews, Roma) numbered 6,394 inhabitants (16.44%).<sup>32</sup> At the county level, things were even worse, the Hungarians constituted only 38.2% while the Romanian population represented 50.9%.<sup>33</sup> The same situation was registered at the level of the entire region that was to become part of Hungary. According to the same document from a total population of 2,970,246 inhabitants, Romanians numbered 1,606,481 people, 54.08%, while Hungarians, combined with Szeklers, represented only 34.45%, more precisely 1,023,431 inhabitants.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> \*\*\* *Spațiul istoric și etnic românesc*, Vol. III, Bucharest, Editura Militară, 1992, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> \*\*\* *Anuarul statistic al României 1939-1940*, 1940, p. 113.

<sup>33</sup> Sabin Manuilă, *Aspects démographiques de la Transylvanie*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1938, pp. 70 - 73.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

The injustice of this dictation was recognized even by the moral author of the treaty, the Chancellor of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, who declared: "solving the problem is particularly complicated because a Hungarian territorial claim is opposed by a Romanian ethnographic claim."<sup>35</sup> Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihail Manoilescu, the signatory of the Vienna dictatorship, who fainted when he saw the map of the territories to be ceded, stated in his memoirs that: "the wisdom of the Vienna arbitrators was so great so that in the region ceded to Hungary, the Hungarians were less numerous than the Romanians."<sup>36</sup>

The lack of logic of how the border was drawn through the middle of the historic province, cutting communications, gas supply networks, electricity, or even depriving urban communities of resources provided by villages in the immediate economic space was noticed even by the Hungarian authorities. The Budapest government continued to demand from Germany and Italy a much larger territory that would have regulated the economic functioning of this area. Everyone agreed on the idea that this compromise solution would not satisfy either party,<sup>37</sup> and solving the issue was to become a reality only at the end of the war. Until then, Germany had to win the unconditional support of both states, which would find themselves in constant competition to win Hitler's sympathy.

In order to cancel any future territorial claims of the Romanian state on the territory incorporated by the Vienna Dictate, the Budapest authorities analyzed the variant of a population exchange. The governor of the annexed territory, Count Bethlen Istvan, considered it necessary to "repatriate the Romanians who fled from

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<sup>35</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>36</sup> Mihail Manoilescu, *Dictatul de la Viena. Memorii iulie-august 1940*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1991, pp. 246-247.

<sup>37</sup> Béni L. Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

Moldova to Transylvania” and replace them with the Csangos living in Moldova and Bukovina, whom he considered denationalized Hungarians.<sup>38</sup> The effort of the Hungarian authorities to ethnically purify the region of Transylvania that they had received under the administration during the war was particularly intense.

To diminish the resistance to the assimilation of the masses of peasants, the new Hungarian authorities put pressure on the Romanian intellectuals, forcing them to abandon their houses and take refuge in the part of the province that remained part of the Romanian state. Aware of the short time they have available to change the ethnic composition of the territory received,<sup>39</sup> the Horthysts used a multitude of elements to determine the Romanians to abandon their national identity: a forced hungarianization of names, the rapid change of the localities’ names and the toponymy of the area, the abusive introduction of Hungarian language education for all forms of education, incorporation and sending to the front of many Romanian ethnics. As a result of these actions, over 500,000 Romanian ethnics left the occupied territory and took refuge in Southern Transylvania.<sup>40</sup>

Along with Romanians, victims of the repression of the Hungarian Horthy’s army were also citizens of the Jewish faith who were deported to forced labor camps and later exterminated. Out of a total population of 138,885 Jews (at the time of the transfer of their territory their number was approximately 164,052) recorded by the Romanian census of 1930 for the counties ceded to Hungary at the end of

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<sup>38</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> The Hungarian authorities were preparing the ground for the next peace conference when they wanted to justify their right to annex this part of Transylvania.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.buletindecarei.ro/2014/09/romani-refugiati-expulzati-sau-ramasi-in-ardealul-de-nord-dupa-diktatul-de-la-viena.html>

the war less than 25% of the initial population was still alive. In order to assess the haste with which the new authorities proceeded to implement racial and anti-Semitic policies, one can analyze the Hungarian census of 1941 which identified only 45,593 Jews.<sup>41</sup>

The act of August 23, 1944, repositioned the Romanian state in the camp of the Allied Powers, the Romanian army making a significant contribution to the defeat of fascism in Europe. Aware of the fragility of the two dictates in Vienna, the Hungarian authorities considered that they could keep these territories only by fighting for another time with Nazi Germany and at the right time to negotiate a separate peace with the Soviets. As at the end of the First World War, Hungarian politicians understood very well what the immediate goal was (keeping the territory of the state within the existing limits) and tacitly accepted a new political reconfiguration. The first steps taken to leave the German camp were taken by the leader, Miklos Horthy, who hypocritically declared on October 15, 1944, that Hungary had been forced to go to war against the Allies and that annexations of neighboring states had followed - agreements with them or as a result of their disintegration (the case of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia).

Following his arrest by German troops, Hungary tacitly adopted an anti-fascist stance and allowed Hungarian left-wing radicals to reconstitute the Communist Party. As early as December 23, 1944, in the eastern territories of the country liberated by the Soviet and Romanian armies, a government was formed consisting of representatives of communist, social democratic, smallholders,

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<sup>41</sup> Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1957, p. 423.



peasants, and 3 generals of the new Hungarian army,<sup>42</sup> with the declared role of obtaining the support of the Soviets for the preservation of the territorial boundaries obtained during 1940. Despite all their efforts at the end of the war, Hungary returned to the post-war borders, leaving out of the national territory a significant number of ethnic Hungarians, who later became the necessary argument for irredentism for the new Hungarian governments regardless of their political color.

### **Conclusions**

Many ideologies have collapsed as a result of the passing of time and the changes that have taken place, but the idea of a Hungarian ethnic nation has not only not disappeared but has also been consolidated through modern means of promotion and has gained a global dimension. Regardless of the political regime that has governed the country, the perseverance with which the whole society continues to fight to maintain this idea is admirable. Even if during the communist period the geopolitics was marginalized, the statesmen allowed and even encouraged the realization of some studies that at the opportune moment would allow “the rebirth of the Hungarian nation”. Less praiseworthy is revisionist rhetoric, which should no longer find its place in a united 21st century Europe that operates on completely different principles.

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<sup>42</sup>Andreea Lușor, *Comunismul ungar și revoluția negociată* in “Historia”, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/comunismul-ungar-si-revolutia-negociata>