



# Minority Politics of Hungary and Romania between 1940 and 1944. The System of Reciprocity and Its Consequences<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The main objective of the paper is to highlight the changes in the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the Romanian minority in Hungary living in the divided Transylvania from the Second Vienna Arbitration from 30 August 1940 to the end of WWII. The author analyses the Hungarian and Romanian governments' attitude regarding the new borders and their intentions with the minorities remaining on their territories. The paper offers a synthesis of the system of reciprocity, which determined the relations between the two states on the minority issue until 1944. Finally, the negative influence of the politics of reciprocity is shown on the interethnic relations in Transylvania.

**Keywords:** Transylvania, Second Vienna Arbitration, border, minorities, politics of reciprocity, refugees

## Introduction

According to the Second Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940, the northern part of Transylvania, the Szeklerland, and the Máramaros (in Romanian: Maramureș, in German: Maramuresch) region, which had been awarded to Romania twenty years earlier, were returned to Hungary (L. Balogh 2002: 5). According to the 1941 census, the population of a total of 43,104 km<sup>2</sup> of land under Hungarian jurisdiction (Thirring 1940: 663) was 2,557,260, of whom 53.6% were Hungarian and 39.9% were Romanian speakers. Besides the 1,380,506 people who considered the Hungarian language to be their mother tongue, 1,029,470 Romanians, 47,357

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Jews, 44,686 Germans, 34,338 Gypsies, 19,635 Russians (Ruthenians), and 19,584 Slovaks lived in the re-annexed region (Fogarasi 1944: 4). In terms of the number and ethnic composition of the population of the area, the Romanian statistics of the time differed significantly from the Hungarian ones, and in the end Northern Transylvania, which was under Hungarian rule, was defined as a region where Romanians were in majority. According to this, the total population of the region was only 2,388,774, of which 50.2% were Romanians and 37.1% ethnic Hungarians (Aurică 1996: 363). These statistical reports also confirmed that the total number of Romanians exceeded one million in Northern Transylvania (1,195,582 people), but the Hungarians were estimated to be over half a million less (719,022 people). At the same time, about 473,000 Hungarians remained in Southern Transylvania, which was still part of Romania, accounting for 14% of the total population there (L. Balogh–Bárdi 2008: 162).

The triumphal procession of the Hungarian Royal Army and its enthusiastic reception by the Hungarian population, which took place in Northern Transylvania between 5 and 13 September 1940, followed by the large-scale celebrations of 15 September in Kolozsvár (in Romanian: Cluj-Napoca, in German: Klausenburg) and on the 16<sup>th</sup> in Marosvásárhely (in Romanian: Târgu-Mureş, in German: Neumarkt am Mieresch) with the participation of Governor Miklós Horthy (Illésfalvi–Szabó 2015: 53–195), were a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the vast majority of the Hungarians there. However, the masses of the local Romanian population disliked this exultant joy, and sometimes – due to the uncertain future – all of this could be even intimidating. No wonder that the majority of the Romanian people retreated to their homes, watching the events passively. All this had only stirred up the centuries-old tensions between the two peoples. The Hungarian–Romanian conflict was then aggravated by the overwhelming ignorance and excesses of the Hungarian military administration (Sárándi 2017), which was operating in Northern Transylvania between 14 September and 26 November 1940, making it impossible to reach a compromise between the two peoples. In the years to come, a constant breeding ground for the deepened ethnic conflicts was provided by the fact that none of the parties was satisfied with the decision. The Hungarians found the re-annexed territories to be insufficient, and the Romanians considered losing these territories to be unfair and unacceptable in the long run. For this reason, the two state authorities got even with the minorities trapped on the two sides of the border, the Romanians in Northern Transylvania and the Hungarians in Southern Transylvania. In my study, I will briefly summarize this minority trap situation and its consequences.

## **The Failure of Political Integration of the Minorities**

The new border was seen by both Budapest and Bucharest as a temporary one. The Hungarian political leadership hoped to achieve the full Transylvanian revision later, while the Romanian government considered the recovery of Northern Transylvania as its main foreign policy goal. Therefore, no attempt was made by either party to consolidate the situation in the autumn of 1940 and to settle the relations between the two countries in a profound and lasting manner. And this rendered more difficult especially the life of the people of Transylvania, which was split into two parts.

Led by the fear of further loss of territory, the Romanian Government made every effort to exclude ethnic minorities and, above all, Hungarians from political life, tried to prevent their community development by all possible means, and, ultimately, made an attempt at their violent assimilation – the Romanian authorities attempted to starve the Hungarian community of Southern Transylvania by taking their wheat and maize stock, tried to eliminate the Hungarian education by closing their ecclesiastical schools, planned a massive assimilation process by forced conversion to Orthodox religion, etc. These oppressive efforts, however, triggered exactly the opposite effect in the Hungarian national community: they locked themselves up and they assumed a defensive position like a hedgehog to confront the Romanian majority.

At the same time, the Hungarian government, at least initially, based on the ideas of Prime Minister Pál Teleki, considered ‘Saint Stephen’s conception of the Hungarian State’ as the guiding principle of its minority policy. According to this, the main goal was the inclusion of the minorities in the Hungarian political nation. To this end, the strengthening of the Hungarian nation was considered necessary in all possible ways and means. The naive hope of the idea of belonging to the Hungarian nation – which would be realized first in political and then in cultural and economic terms – would eventually become attractive, leading to identity, identification. It can be concluded that, in spite of its milder minority policy, the goal of the Hungarian government was not to preserve nationalities in the long run but to accelerate the natural assimilation of other ethnic groups that took to Hungarians. However, at least initially, this was seen as achievable not in a violent but, on the contrary, in a peaceful manner and as a long, decades-long process.

The Hungarian political leaders in Northern Transylvania were of the same opinion. In one of his speeches at the parliament, the national political secretary of the Transylvanian Party (the region’s dominant Hungarian mass party), Representative Dr Imre Mikó, stated the following in relation to the minority:

It would be a mistake to believe that the nationality issue can be solved by paralysing the development of nationalities. [...] The only correct, positive,

and creative nationality policy is the one that sets the task of strengthening the Hungarians. [...] Violent assimilation is self-deception and weak-spiritedness. It is self-deception to believe that the change of name and religion is enough to become Hungarian, and it is weak-spiritedness to think that Hungarians can only be strengthened with the renegades of nationalities. [...] The Hungarian nation needs to be strengthened both in quantity and in quality if we want them to absorb those nationalities that believe in Saint Stephen's thought and neutralize those that are toying with the idea of going across the border. Land-use policy, social policy, public health, taxation, public administration, public education, religious education, and national defence propaganda must be at the service of this goal.<sup>2</sup>

However, this plan failed from the beginning due to the non-acceptance of Romanian and German minority communities in Northern Transylvania. In view of its failure, after Prime Minister Pál Teleki's suicide in April 1941, the leading circles of Budapest that were striving to create the 'Hungarian Transylvania' gradually stepped away from the nationality politics drawn from 'Saint Stephen's conception', and their attitude towards minorities was increasingly determined by practices that had been applied across the border: confiscation of lands, unjustified public works, deportations, animal and food requisitions, etc.

The rapid political organization and integration of Northern Transylvania was a key priority for Hungary if only because of the large number of Romanian people living there. Therefore, instead of the parliamentary elections that became impossible in the absence of electoral rolls for the time being, the solution for the representation of Northern Transylvania in the Hungarian Parliament was to simply invite the public figures chosen as deputies. According to Law XXVI of October 1940, 50 deputies from Northern Transylvania could take their seats in the Hungarian Parliament (Murádin 2019: 80).

At the same time, no attempt had been made from the Romanian side to ensure the political representation of the Southern Transylvanian Hungarian minority in Bucharest. This then prompted the Hungarian government to leave the 12 seats reserved for the Romanian deputies from Northern Transylvania unoccupied. The same phenomenon took place in the Upper Chamber, where the invited Romanian church dignitaries were not willing to occupy the 3 seats reserved for them, and so these remained vacant as well (Ablonczy 2011: 112–113).

Seeing the untenability of the situation, the Hungarian Government made some timid attempts to settle the matter later in 1941 and 1942, but the leaders of the Romanian minority in Northern Transylvania repeatedly refused to take part in

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2 *Erdély a magyar Képviselőházban II.* (Transylvania in the Hungarian Chamber of Deputies II) – issue of the Transylvanian Party. Kolozsvár: Minerva Nyomda Rt. 1943: 42. This citation and the following ones were translated into English by the author.

the Hungarian Parliament. They always cited the prohibition of leading circles in Bucharest as the reason for their decision. There was also a realistic basis for this as the Kingdom of Romania rejected any gesture that could have been interpreted as acknowledgement of the situation in Romania that occurred after the Second Vienna Arbitration (ibid.). By doing this, the Romanian Government wanted to prevent the establishment and consolidation of the Hungarian power in Northern Transylvania, hoping that the power decision on territorial integration could be changed later and the region could be re-annexed to Romania.

All this led to the fact that not only did the issue of the Hungarian–Romanian compromise and the supremacy over Transylvania divided along the new border not come to a rest, but the conflict between the two sides had further intensified. Under such circumstances, it was impossible to talk about a satisfactory and viable minority policy.

## **The Beginning of the Politics of Reciprocity**

The Second Vienna Arbitration triggered a real shock in Romania. Because of the lost territories, the public opinion turned against the minorities, and landslide-like changes took place in the government. A few days after the announcement of the Vienna arbitral decision, King Charles II resigned, and a change of government took place in Bucharest on 4 September 1940. The new head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu introduced a military dictatorship (Rothschild 1996: 94–95). Subsequently, atrocities against the Hungarians of Southern Transylvania began immediately.

At the news of all the more serious anti-Hungarian repressions, the Hungarian military administration still operating in Northern Transylvania deported 280 renowned Romanian intellectuals together with their families from Nagyvárad (in Romanian: Oradea, in German: Großwardein) and 300 of them from Kolozsvár on 4 October 1940. The calvary of well-known Romanian personalities deported across the new border under inhumane conditions, squeezed into cattle wagons led to a massive public outcry in Romania. The reckless and hasty decision of the Hungarian military authorities had very bad consequences for the Hungarians in Southern Transylvania. In response to the deportation, Ion Antonescu ordered that only as many newspapers written in Hungarian could appear in Romania as there were Romanian ones in Northern Transylvania (L. Balogh 2013: 86–87). In fact, this meant that in addition to a few cultural publications, the minorities living on both sides of the border could each have only one daily newspaper from which they could learn about the different news in their mother tongue. From that time on, the daily press needs of the Northern Transylvanian Romanians were met by *Tribuna Ardealului* (The Transylvanian Tribune) published in Kolozsvár

and that of the Southern Transylvanian Hungarians by *Déli Hírlap* (Southern News) published in Temesvár (in Romanian: Timișoara, in German: Temeswar) (Csatári 1968: 47). The content of both newspapers was basically determined by censorship on the one hand and the ever-growing pressure on newspapers regarding size limitation on the other. In the course of time, newspapers – as they were allowed to publish only official government declarations in the political sphere without any comments – have become more and more cultural, educational media.

## **The Degeneration of the Politics of Reciprocity**

The reciprocal minority policy that appeared this way was the evidence of inflexibility and incapability of compromise on both sides – although this was not the original goal. The Hungarian Government initially perceived the issue of reciprocity in a way that it may expect similar measures from the Romanian side regarding the Hungarian minority in Southern Transylvania on the basis of the minority rights it provided to the Romanians in Northern Transylvania. At first, Budapest saw the issue of reciprocity in a positive way, hoping to ensure the survival of the Hungarian minority in Romania. And in the end they would be able to maintain further territorial needs against Romania based on the ethnic composition of the Southern Transylvanian population. However, it was exactly this that the Romanians wanted to avoid! Guided by the shock of the Vienna Arbitration, their goal was to get rid of the Hungarians once and for all. The expulsion of the Northern Transylvanian Romanian intellectuals provided a great reason for this. Thus, the politics of reciprocity became negative for Bucharest in the autumn of 1940 and was clearly manifested in a series of actions against minorities. And the Hungarian side did not want to change this after some timid initial attempts. This escalating conflict in the minority issue led to an acute situation, driving matters to the verge of an armed conflict between the two states. Pál Teleki, Prime Minister of Hungary, even tried – through the good offices of Dr Eugen Dunca, a Romanian politician, and Dr Iuliu Hossu, the Greek Catholic Bishop – to persuade the Romanian government to change its attitude towards minorities, but this initiative with low domestic political support was totally ineffective (Bethlen 1989: 27). Recognized as the political leader of the Hungarians in Southern Transylvania, Dr Elemér Gyárfás had no more success either in Bucharest. Although he managed to have a brief meeting with Prime Minister Ion Antonescu on 24 October 1940, he could not convince the Romanian dictator of a change in the government's minority policy (Csatári 1968: 45). Antonescu did not want to hear about the easing of the situation of the Hungarian minority. All this was not changed by the firm diplomatic message

of the Hungarian Government, which provided for similar retaliatory measures against Romanians in Northern Transylvania (Bethlen 1989: 27).

Gradually becoming common in the following few years, the politics of reciprocity took shape in the continuous harassment and the discriminatory measures against the two minorities. It became a common practice that whenever the rights of a minority were allegedly or indeed violated by the public authority this would immediately lead to similar measures against the other minority across the border. Until 1944, the Hungarian and Romanian governments used the Northern Transylvanian Romanian minority and the Southern Transylvanian Hungarian minority practically as 'hostages' in their political and diplomatic battles to gain control over Transylvania. Meanwhile, both minorities appeared in the official state propaganda as the 'rear-guard' of the motherland, fighting for national interest behind enemy lines...

Occasionally, the ethnic conflict manifested itself in extreme anti-minority incidents. Within the politics of reciprocity, at the news of decrees carried into effect in Northern Transylvania on the removal of land and property from Romanian peasants with the help of a judge as well as laws on the expropriation of pastures and building plots, the lands of Hungarian farmers were confiscated in Southern Transylvania, and they were hit by military invasions, unjustified public works, deportations, and animal and food requisitions. However, the most serious case was the complete food and cereal requisition carried out on the basis of Decree no 1460 issued by the Romanian Minister of Public Supply on 7 June 1942. According to the order, all food was taken from the Hungarian farmers living in Hungarian villages in Temes (in Romanian: Timiș, in German: Temesch), Hunyad (in Romanian and German: Hunedoara), Torda (in Romanian: Turda, in German: Thorenburg), Alsófehér (in Romanian: Alba de Jos, in German: Unterweißenburg), Szeben (in Romanian: Sibiu, in German: Hermannstadt), Brassó (in Romanian: Brașov, in German: Kronstadt), Nagyküküllő (in Romanian: Târnava-Mare, in German: Groß-Kokelburg), etc. counties (Csatári 1968: 139). In this way, the authority sentenced the peasantry, which made up the widest stratum of the Southern Transylvanian Hungarians, to death. In view of the Hungarian Government's strong protest and the prospect of similar retaliatory measures, the decree was withdrawn, but through the intimidation of the Hungarians in Southern Transylvania and the increased sense of uncertainty they managed to raise the feeling of hopelessness in the minority community to an unprecedented level (Nagy 2010: 384–389).

Anti-minority actions continued in the following year. In the spirit of the politics of reciprocity, upon hearing that some of the buildings of the Romanian parochial schools in Northern Transylvania were seized by the Hungarian authorities, and centrally regulated textbooks were prescribed for them, the Romanian Government closed the three most important Southern Transylvanian

Hungarian parochial schools: the Bethlen Gábor College in Nagyenyed (in Romanian: Aiud, in German: Straßburg am Mieresch), the Roman Catholic High School in Gyulafehérvár (in Romanian: Alba Iulia, in German: Weissenburg), and the Roman Catholic School of Commerce in Brassó.<sup>3</sup> This brought about the collapse of the most important bastions of the Hungarian secondary education in Southern Transylvania, which shook the whole Hungarian minority school system to its foundations.

## The Effects of the Politics of Reciprocity: Refugee Crisis and Border Incidents

The border outlined after the Second Vienna Arbitration divided several regions of Transylvania in the most inconvenient way. It detached towns from their surrounding rural areas with which they formed an economic system, as was the case of Kolozsvár, just 8 km from the borderline. At the same time, villages along the border with mostly Romanian inhabitants became to be part of Northern Transylvania (e.g. Kolozstótfalu, in Romanian: Tăuți), and villages almost entirely populated by Hungarians remained in Southern Transylvania (e.g. Györgyfalva, in Romanian: Gheorghieni, in German: Gergesdorf – in Kolozs County). In this way, the existence of many families was endangered, and several new minority groups that were artificially cut off from ethnic borders emerged on both sides. This gradually aggravating politics of reciprocity and the already almost impossible living conditions caused by it urged many to leave their homes and flee.

A significant migration from Romania to Hungary, and especially to Northern Transylvania, started already in the months following the Vienna Arbitration, which in just under eight months, by April 1941, resulted in a drop in the number of Hungarians by about 110,000 people, and only 363,000 remained in Southern Transylvania. This formed only 11% of the whole 3.3 million population of Southern Transylvania (L. Balogh–Bárdi 2008: 162, 167). Although the extent of moving, and sometimes fleeing, to Hungary gradually diminished, the phenomenon itself – thanks to the politics of reciprocity – remained continuous until the passage of the front line in 1944. According to official Hungarian reports, a total of about 200,000 people, about every second Southern Transylvanian Hungarian, moved from Romania to Hungary and primarily to Northern Transylvania between August 1940 and February 1944 (Ablonczy 2011: 204).

Initially, the Hungarian Government tried to hinder this migration by all possible means as it was feared that due to the massive abandonment of Southern

3 Enyedi, Sándor: *A romániai magyar oktatás helyzete 1945-ben* (The Situation of Hungarian Education in Romania in 1945) 1–2. [http://www.adatbank.transindex.ro/regio/html/alcim\\_pdf56.pdf](http://www.adatbank.transindex.ro/regio/html/alcim_pdf56.pdf). Last accessed on: 15.04.2019.

Transylvania by Hungarians further Hungarian revision claims could become impossible. Thus, the situation of the Southern Transylvanian refugees was very difficult. Leaving all their possessions behind, they often arrived mostly in the regions of Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Szászrégen (in Romanian: Reghin, in German: Sächsisch-Regen) and Sepsiszentgyörgy (in Romanian: Sfântu Gheorghe, in German: Sankt Georgen) almost completely destitute. Those who did not have relatives in the areas that were re-annexed to Hungary were forced often with their families to move at first in very bad circumstances into the five North Transylvanian hastily set up, overcrowded mobile, distribution, and collection camps. They could not obtain Hungarian citizenship automatically, and it was difficult to get employment in most cases. The crowd of refugees was getting massive mainly in the autumn of 1940, in the months following the border demarcation, when it was possible to 'opt', that is, to decide freely between staying in Romania and moving to Hungary. As a result, the number of South Transylvanian refugees registered in Hungary had risen to 60,000 by mid-October 1940, after just one and a half months following the Second Vienna Arbitration (Prantner 2013: 80–81).

The Hungarian state was unprepared for the significant influx of people, which can be measured, among other things, in the large number of people arriving in Marosvásárhely. In the former 'Szekler capital', which was considered to be a migration destination with a population of 44,933 (Fogarasi 1944: 6), there were 8,000 refugees on 5 October 1940 (Sebestyén 2011: 405). They were unable to find them decent accommodation for a long time. On 22 May 1942, there were 5,734 people still living in barracks in the third largest city in Northern Transylvania (Sebestyén 2011: 439).

At the same time, a reverse exodus also occurred: a large number of Romanian people left Northern Transylvania voluntarily or forced mainly in the direction of Southern Transylvania but also Moldavia. By 1944, the number of Romanians from Northern Transylvania who moved to areas that remained parts of Romania, mainly to the Southern Transylvanian cities along the border (Torda, Brassó, Arad) and to nearby villages, approached 220,000. Of these, some 28,000 people were primarily civil servants and people working in law enforcement, who settled in Transylvania after 1920 (Ablonczy 2011: 207). More than 190,000 refugees from among the local Romanian population living in Transylvania before the Peace Treaty of Trianon represented one fifth of the total Romanian minority in Northern Transylvania. Although the flow of Romanian migrants was proportionally smaller than the crowds of refugees from Southern Transylvania, it still severely affected the local community. However, the escape of the Hungarians had more dramatic consequences in the long run: the Southern Transylvanian Hungarians leaving for the territory of Hungary delimited by the Treaty of Trianon no longer returned after 1945 when Transylvania came under Romanian rule again. As a result, the ethnic

image of Transylvania and the geographical location of its Hungarian population were radically changing. Regions with ancient Hungarian majority became deserted or inhabited unequivocally by Romanians in Southern Transylvania.

The two-way migration and the large number of personal tragedies that had occurred had only further exacerbated the relations between the two countries, which were already stretched to breaking point. This then led to a series of incidents along the border that split Transylvania into two. Except for minor conflicts, 74 major border incidents took place in a timeframe of three years, from September 1940, when Northern Transylvania came under Hungarian rule, until November 1943. In these cases, 25 people were killed (17 Romanians and 8 Hungarians), 24 were injured (17 Romanians and 7 Hungarians), and 40 people were arrested by the border patrol on each side (Ablonczy 2011: 206). All this despite the fact that the inner Transylvanian border was not hermetically closed – it could not be because the villagers, often cut off from their lands, had to be able to do their daily agricultural works, and thus regular crossing of the border was common in the region.

## **The Outcome of the Politics of Reciprocity in the Shadow of the Passage of the Front Line**

With the gradual deterioration of the military situation, the conflict between Hungary and Romania had become increasingly sharp. Although the occupation of the Hungarian state by the Germans on 19 March 1944 may have dampened this for a while, the relationship between the two sides remained very tense. The mass arrests by the Gestapo in Northern Transylvania and the deportation of the Jewish population averted attention from the Hungarian–Romanian confrontation for a few months, a confrontation that became increasingly acute in the restraints of the politics of reciprocity, but all of this was only temporary. The ethnic hatred flared up with an even greater intensity after Romania had changed sides on 23 August 1944, when Bucharest, also in the hope of retrieving Northern Transylvania, stepped out of the German alliance and joined the anti-Hitler coalition. From that point on, there was a state of open war between Romania fighting on the side of the Soviets and Hungary still under German subordination and occupation. The hostile atmosphere, which had evolved as a consequence of the politics of reciprocity over the years, led to an immediate armed conflict between the two sides. All this was enhanced by the Soviet–Romanian armistice agreement signed on 12 September 1944, which entered into force two days later and which – with the Kremlin's brilliant diplomatic move – treated the future authority over Transylvania as an open question, stating that: 'the Allied Governments regard the decision of the Vienna award regarding Transylvania as null and void and

are agreed that Transylvania (or the greater part thereof) should be returned to Romania, subject to confirmation at the peace settlement'.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet and Romanian troops invaded Northern Transylvania through the Uz Valley just three days after the Romanian transition on 26 August 1944 (Illésfalvi–Szabó–Számvéber 2005: 75). In the tense atmosphere generated by the politics of reciprocity, massive crowds of Hungarian civilians, who were afraid of Romanian vengeance but also of Soviet atrocities as a result of the Vienna Arbitration, left their homes and headed for the central and western regions of Hungary as well as for Budapest. In the period of the passage of the front line, in September–October 1944, some 300,000 Hungarians fled from Northern Transylvania (Benda 1993: 995). Those who stayed at home had to suffer the most terrible consequences of ethnic hatred. The extremist Romanian paramilitary units that were formed at this time, mainly the so-called Maniu Guards, moved behind the lines and started conducting mass atrocities and even public executions. In many cases, they were not deterred from committing murders either. In the course of public executions, 13 people were killed in Szárazajta (in Romanian: Aita Seacă) in Szeklerland, 12 people in Sândominic; then, moving forward, 13 locals were killed in Egeres (in Romanian: Aghireșu, in German: Erldorf) in the land of Kalotaszeg (in Romanian: Țara Călatei), while 45 Hungarian civilians were murdered in Gyanta (in Romanian: Ginta), Bihor County (Kocsis 1990: 39). All this was done in the spirit of reciprocity, bringing up the crimes committed by Hungarian soldiers who entered Northern Transylvania in September 1940 as a reason (according to Romanian data, 93 people were executed in Ördöggút (in Romanian: Treznea, in German: Teufelsbrunnen), and 157 Romanians were killed in the village of Ipp (in Romanian: Ip), Sălaj County (Barabás 1990: 45)). Thus, the Hungarian civilian population in Transylvania was punished because of the hurt suffered due to the actions of the Hungarian army years ago.

## **The Long-Term Consequences of the Politics of Reciprocity**

The entire territory of Northern Transylvania was occupied by the Soviet and Romanian troops by 25 October 1944 (Illésfalvi–Szabó–Számvéber 2005: 163–164). The temporary Romanian military administration was introduced in the region on the same day.<sup>5</sup> However, due to a series of abuses, atrocities, violence, robberies,

4 *Orosz–román fegyverszüneti egyezmény. Groza Péter és Sztálin marsall táviratváltása. Orosz–magyar fegyverszüneti egyezmény* (The Soviet–Romanian Armistice Agreement. An Exchange of Telegrams between Petru Groza and Marshal Stalin. The Soviet–Hungarian armistice agreement). Kolozsvár. Józsa Béla Athenaeum kiadása. 1945: 7.

5 The preparation of the temporary Romanian military administration in Northern Transylvania was ordered by Commanding General M. Racoviță, the Romanian Minister of War at the time,

and murders committed against the Hungarian civilian population, the Soviet military leadership soon expelled the Romanian administration from Northern Transylvania, introducing the Soviet military administration on 14 November.<sup>6</sup> While during the temporary Soviet administration that lasted until 13 March 1945 most of the violent acts came to an end, the Hungarian–Romanian tension caused by the politics of reciprocity did not subside. In fact, quite the contrary. Thus, the two sides now began to curry favour with the Soviets instead of the Germans, which, on the one hand, strengthened the influence of the local Hungarian communists in Northern Transylvania and, on the other hand, accelerated the communist takeover in Romania. After the communists gained significant positions in the new Romanian Government led by Petru Groza on 6 March 1945 (Știrban et al. 2001: 292), the Soviet military administration gave place to the Romanian civil administration in Northern Transylvania. This is how Moscow achieved a faster pace in the communist takeover and secured its own influence in the region.

However, the politics of reciprocity had a long-term demographic effect as well. In the autumn of 1944, the Hungarians fleeing from Transylvania, officials from the motherland and many local residents – just like the majority of those who had moved to the territory delimited by the Treaty of Trianon –, no longer returned. The total Transylvanian Hungarian population consisting of 1,711,851 people in 1941 decreased to 1,481,903 by 1948 (Kocsis 1990: 107), while at the last census in 2011 only 1,227,600 people declared themselves Hungarians in Romania.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusions

The division of Transylvania in 1940 could have been a historic opportunity for the Hungarian–Romanian reconciliation and the easing of the century-old opposition caused by the Peace Treaty of Trianon. The division of the region accompanied by prudent compromises, partial population exchange and supported by local referendums could have given the issue of the control over Transylvania a certain amount of rest. To achieve this, indulgence, willingness to reach agreements,

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by Decree no 1996 of 24 October 1944. See: *Monitorul Oficial* (The Official Journal). 25 October 1944: CXII. 247: 6854.

6 See: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár. Országos Levéltár. Külügyminisztériumi Iratok. Titkos Ügykezelő Irat (Hungarian National Archives. State Archives. Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Classified Document). Romania. XIX-J-1-j. 60. d. IV–132: Tarnay István követségi titkár napi jelentése a romániai politikai helyzetről (Daily Report of István Tarnay Embassy Secretary on the Political Situation in Romania). Debrecen. 5 March 1945. Sokszorosított másolat (Copy).

7 Institutul Național de Statistică (The National Institute of Statistics). Rezultate definitive ale Recensământului Populației și al Locuințelor – 2011 (caracteristici demografice ale populației) (Final Results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census [Demographics of the Population]). [http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/REZULTATE-DEFINITIVE-RPL\\_2011.pdf](http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/REZULTATE-DEFINITIVE-RPL_2011.pdf). Last accessed on: 15.04.2019.

mutual respect and tolerance as well as sensitivity to each other's emotions and perspectives would have been needed on both sides. However, all this was almost completely absent on both sides in those tense times. The craving for the full ownership of Transylvania prevented reconciliation between the Hungarian and Romanian parties. And the minorities suffered because of this on both sides. They were regarded by both Bucharest and Budapest as spies and enemies, and from 1940 onwards both governments regarded the final resolution, or, more precisely, the elimination of the minority issue, as a major goal. For this, as I have explained earlier, they used partly different methods, but in the short or the long term their ultimate goal was the same: to get rid of the minorities and to create a one-dimensional nation-state arising from the concepts of 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism. The politics of reciprocity applied between 1940 and 1944, with its consequences to date, was nothing more than the practical application of this guiding principle. Its operation was possible due to the lack of dialogue between the Hungarian and Romanian authorities and the constant tension between the two countries. All this made these two small Central European countries vulnerable to the great powers and made cooperation between them impossible. This is how they ended up – contrary to their essential interests – being controlled first by Nazi Germany from 1940 and then by the Soviet Union from 1945 onwards. The minority issue in Transylvania – although eased over time – has not been resolved to this day.

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