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An Ethnic Group on the Pressure Field of Totalitarian Population Policies. The Moldavian Hungarians/Csángós in the Romanian–Hungarian–German Relations (1944)

In the interwar period the assimilation pressure practiced by over-bureaucratic national states on ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities was a general feature all over Europe. This pressure had a major impact on those rural minority communities which had only a few, or almost no elite, to represent them in the country they were living in. In Hungary this was the case of the Germans, in Czechoslovakia the Ruthens, in Yugoslavia the Macedon, in Bulgaria the Pomac, in Poland the White Russians and others. In these active and sometimes aggressive policies the religious institutions, in our case the church, had a major role, because through the clergy – formed by persons from the actual state nation – it could transmit certain identity models to these groups. The local clergy often presented already assimilated individuals of that very community. An excellent example for all this has to be the case of the Moldavian Csángós.

A Short History of the Csángó Hungarians

The Csángó term is used for identifying some Hungarian ethnic groups living in Transylvania and most of all on the territories of historic Moldavia that today are a part of Romania. The Hungarian Csángó term (in Romanian ceangăi, in German Tschangonen, Csangos) first appeared in the second half of the 18th century as a foreign name given by others to the Moldavian Hungarians. The term has been used and it is used today first of all as a name of an ethnic group both by politics and science. At the national censuses from 1992 and 2002 only 2165 and 1370 persons respectively declared themselves Csángós all over Romania.

Groups named Csángós live outside Moldavia as well:

1. The Csángós of Ghimeș: A Roman Catholic Hungarian group living in the valley of the Ghimeș river from the 17th century, counting 14 000 persons. From a historic point of view this territory represents a part of Szeklerland and Transylvania.
2. The Csángós of Deva: There are a few villages in Hunedoara county and in the heart of Transylvania with Csángó population, who had been deported from Moldavia after 1883 according to the Hungarian repatriation policies.

3. The Csángós of Barcaság (Seven Villages): A Hungarian group of Reformed confession living in a small region south-east of the city of Braşov since the late Middle Ages.
4. The Csángós who immigrated, moved or were relocated to Hungary after 1944. These four groups clearly consider themselves Hungarian.
5. At present there are 70 000 Romanian Roman Catholics living in Transylvania. Most of them are Moldavian Csángós, moved within the industrialisation and relocation practices of the Ceauşescu-regime. From the point of view of their language and identity, these people have been totally Romanianized, thus the Hungarian minority from Transylvania does not include them in their own nation either.

According to the 2002 national census 1 028 401 persons, that is 4,7% of the population declared himself/herself of Roman Catholic religion. The absolute majority of the population belongs to the Orthodox Church. Most of the Roman Catholics can be found in Transylvania and in Banat, territories which had been a part of Hungary before WWI. In their case we can talk first of all about Transylvanian Hungarians, about Swabians who have not been a part of the immigrant movement, and about not too many Slovaks, Gypsies and Bulgarians. Almost half of the Transylvanian Romanians had been Greek Catholics, at least until the violent dissolution and persecution of the believers between 1947 and 1989. Afterwards their number decreased to 195 000 (230 000 in 1992), of whom approximately 170 000 were Romanians.

In Moldavia there are approximately 243 000 Catholics, representing 5% of the population of this region. The territory of historic Moldavia covered a part of the lands between the Danube, the Carpathians and the Black Sea, including places that are not on the actual territory of Romania. For example the actual Republic of Moldova and the northern parts of Bukovina, today a part of the Ukraine.

Similar to the neighbouring culture territories, the history of the people of Moldavia – in opposition with the rigid utopias of the 19th and 20th century national states – has been marked by political, religious, ethnic, social and cultural discontinuities.

Already in the 14th century the Hungarian kings tried to use Moldavia as a border domain. Mainly there were the Romanian officials of the Hungarian Crown who founded a voivodate that quickly broke away from the Kingdom. Thanks to this aspect – among others, of course – gradually a Romanian Orthodox majority and leadership was formed, which was related to the Byzantine culture. This tendency was strengthened by the upcoming relations with the Ottoman Empire and its Orthodox Church during the 17th and 18th centuries. Romanians, Hungarians and Saxons settled down in the newly founded Moldavian Principality, influenced by the late medieval colonizing movements that characterized Europe in general. The people they found here, Cumanians and Slavs, had gradually assimilated to the Romanian ethnicity.

The demographic structure of historic Moldavia expressed a multiethnic character. Besides the Romanians, who were mostly land owners, dealing with agriculture and animal keeping, there had been German, Greek, Armenian and Hungarian merchants and

craftsmen living in different settlements with continuous fairs. Plus in the rural areas one would find Hungarian, Eastern Slavonic and German peasants. Many Hungarian and German immigrants founded villages and city-like settlements (having an outstanding military importance), and they held important positions at the court of the aristocrats up to the 17th century. Hungarians were usually free peasants, at least until the 18th century; therefore they could enjoy several privileges, especially because they were indispensable for their modern economic knowledge. The Romanian term for free peasants, the *răzeș*, probably derives from the Hungarian *részes*. Between the 14th and 19th centuries there had been several more or less significant immigrant movements, which resulted in the arrival of very different Hungarian ethnic groups especially to the western part of historic Moldavia. Also, mainly in the early modern age, inner Hungarian mobility was also a characteristic of these lands.

During Reformation almost the complete population of Hungary joined one of the new denominations, but these had no real success in Moldavia, thus the Moldavian Hungarians became culturally and religiously more and more isolated. The former close relations with Hungary had been constantly withdrawing. The frequent epidemics and military actions decimated the population (including the coexisting Hungarians). As a result of this the not too numerous German population slowly melted into the Hungarian ethnic group during the 17th century.

Most of the Hungarian rural settlements, spread all over the region, remained without any Hungarian-speaking clergy. Very few Bosnian, Polish and Italian missionaries used to take care of the needs of the Catholic Diasporas – generally on a quite low level. Also in this period emerged the acculturation processes in the case of the Romanians. The priests, who could not speak Hungarian, preferred to learn Romanian, because it proved to be easier and handier within their relation with the local officials.

In the 19th and 20th centuries the number of the Csángós – in concordance with that of the population in general – increased quickly. Due to the lack of their own relations with Hungary and of local intelligentsia, they had no part in the 19th-century formation of the modern Hungarian nation. They were not involved within the formation of the literary Hungarian either. There was no interests for them from Hungary, and any information or report about them either. As one of the last ethnic groups of Europe, some of them still possess a pre-national identity pattern based only on Catholic religion.

In 1884 the Roman Catholic Diocese of Iași had been transformed into a missionary bishopric, which is still standing today and has always been a decisive tool in the assimilation of the Csángós. The bishop and the clergy in general had been of a foreign origin up to the interwar period. They tried from the beginning to celebrate the masses exclusively in Romanian, deliberately supporting – besides the Romanianization of the liturgical practice – the identity and language change of the believers.

Similarly to many other European countries, Romania faced the strengthening of radical, nationalist movements starting with the 1920s. These ideologies found many followers within the Roman Catholic clergy from Bucharest and Moldavia. Since then the local clergy has been recruited from the local Romanianized communities, with its members

showing an outstanding loyalty to the Romanian nation. Just like many Romanian elites, several Roman Catholic priests joined the fascist Orthodox Iron Guard. The Guard was more than attractive for the newly founded national clergy of Hungarian origin because of its – at that time – modern national-religious disposition. And it also enabled non-Orthodox peripheral Romanian groups to be included. It seems like in the case of first generation intelligentsia that had undergone acculturation the ideological radicalisation was a general aspect. We have to include into this context the construction of theories regarding the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Csángós, made by the demographic sciences that developed in Romania as well, by the school of sociology formed around Dimitrie Gusti in the 1920s and by some members of the Moldavian Catholic clergy in 1940s, first of all by Iosif Petru Pal.

The Moldavian Roman Catholic clergy, educated in the local Seminars, being the first leading intelligentsia of the Csángós starting with the 16th century, spread the Romanian national and popular consciousness among the still Hungarian-speaking Moldavian Csángó peasants. Very often the educational process of the Seminars was led by Italian Minorites, the spoken language being exclusively Romanian. Many attendees joined the “Michael Archangel” legion of the Iron Guard. They hoped for assuring themselves a place within the Romanian nation through this popular-Romanian and Romanian-Christian movement. But their attempt turned out to be a complete failure.¹ The Roman Catholic Romanians, just like the Greek Catholic Hungarians and the Orthodox Polish, would hardly succeed in finding their place in the prevailing national canon until the recent past.

The foreign policy of the Hungarian state, which had been isolated from the international situation up to the 1930s and had been suffering from internal political, economic and social crises, had not dealt with the question of the Moldavian Csángós until the 1940s. Budapest was not in an appropriate position for this, thus the question was only of a secondary importance against the openly debated topics of foreign affairs. The political leaders of Hungary and of the Transylvanian Hungarians were not really familiar with the topic of the Csángós, and they had no real importance in the public life and opinion either.² Hungarian historiography, ethnography and linguistics rarely dealt with this issue. At the same time, except for a few short publications, not even the international or the Romanian scientific life would be interested in the question of the Csángós. This turns out to be interesting if we take into consideration the large number of Moldavian Csángós; according to the 1930 national census there were 109 000 persons, representing almost 5–6% of the Moldavian population.

¹ The work of Armin Heine (1986) is indispensable in the understanding of the Legion of Michael Archangel's/The Iron Guard's role in the Romanian intellectual history and in the knowledge regarding the forms of fascism in Europe (Arens–Bein 2003: 248–251).

² There is an exemplary case study on the different forms of revisionary politics and propaganda (Kovács–Bertrand 1999).

The first local scholar to contribute to the history and origin of the Moldavian Csángós was Iosif Petru Pal³, a Catholic priest with Csángó origins and Romanian identity. His first study – being the basis for many Romanian-oriented articles even nowadays – published for the first time the idea of the Romanian and Latin origins of the Csángós, exposed in a scientific manner for that time. Starting with the 1920s, around minister of education Angheliescu there was outlined the dilettante and unscientific concept of the Romanian origin of the Szeklers, which was passed to the neighbouring Csángós as well.

This concept became the basis for many works related to the Csángós in the 1930s and 1940s, and for the ones from the 1980s labelled with the name of Dumitru Mărtinaș, probably having emerged in the court of the Securitate.

With the second resolution of Vienna on 30th August 1940 enforced by Germany and Italy, according to which Romania had to accept the cession of 40% of the territories gained from Hungary in 1920, no one was satisfied, regardless of the ideological or political orientation. Anyway, the resolution was regarded as a transitory one, which could be re-discussed with an eventual European change of powers. The military confrontation between Romania and Hungary in the period between August 1940 and August 1944 was prevented by the hegemony of the German Empire on both of the states. In these years the leading circles in Bucharest and Budapest were aware of the fact that if they had committed a violent act against the inimical neighbour, it would have resulted in an invasion by the Wehrmacht and in the cession of most of Transylvania to the enemy. Besides, the elite of both states – with the support of most of the population – since their entering the WWII in 1941 and with a looting and annihilating national-socialist policy were trying to gain as much economic and territorial profit from the alliance with the Third Reich as possible.

The German Empire succeeded in maintaining its economic and political interests related to the territories between the Danube and the Carpathians by juggling with the Transylvania-question among the two states.

In the meantime – in 1943 and the beginning of 1944 the national conservative government of Hungary lead by Nagykállói Kállay Miklós⁴ tried to step out from the alliance with the Third Reich and to make separate peace with the western powers. Because of these actions and the denial of German economic demands, the German troops occupied Hungary without any military confrontation in March 1944, they enforced the change of the government, which was considered by most of the political elite and the Hungarian society a positive thing.⁵ The ambassador of the new popular-oriented government to Berlin, Döme Sztójay still had a large field of action. From the German side the expectations related to the occupation of Hungary were oriented to the effective and quick looting of the resources, urgently needed for continuing the total war (Ungváry 2006: 11, Matić 2002: 221–229, 238–244).

³ About his activity see: Diaconescu 2003, Pozsony 2002:104.

⁴ About the policies of Kállay see: Matić 2002: 194–214, Kállay 1954: 66–406, Romsics 1995.

⁵ For this topic see: Gerlach–Aly 2002, Matić 2002: 219–222.

Under the *Legionary State* (September 1940 – February 1941) that has not been really studied so far for its ideological history, structure and socio-political aims (Heinen 1986, Hausleitner 2001: 374–376, Boia 2003: 245–246), and in the first phase of the fascist military dictatorship of Antonescu (February 1941–spring of 1943) the violent actions taken against Jews, Ukrainians, Hungarians, plus against the Russians on the occupied territories of the Soviet Union reached their peak: mass murder, deprivation of civil rights, theft (Heinen 1998: 169–198, Hausleitner 2001: 374–425). Besides, similarly to the Third Reich and to Hungary, Romania was working on the “repatriation” of the Romanian ethnic groups from Southern Ukraine and Serbia.

In the summer of 1943 the Antonescu-regime realised that the German Empire would lose the war, so they tried to establish secret negotiations with the western states and with the Soviet Union, to ferret out the demands and consequences of the changing sides.

Through these years Romania and Hungary, similarly to the German Empire, were trying to overtake and further develop certain political concepts and projects regarding territory and population in order to create *pure facts* (Heinen 1986, Heinen 1998: 168–198, Gerlach–Aly 2002, Ungváry 2006, Hausleitner 2001: 374–425).

Prime Minister László Bárdossy (April 1941–March 1942) (Matić 2002: 191–195, Romsics 1995), national-socialist Prime Minister Döme Sztójay (March – August 1944) (Matić 2002: 221–249, Gerlach–Aly 2002) and the popular-national Hungarian regime (starting with October 1944) proved to be very active in this field. The biggest related crimes of the 20th century took place within these periods:

1. The mass execution of the civilians by the Hungarian army on the eastern front, within the so-called “actions against partisans”. Between 1941 and 1942 and in 1944 almost 300 000 persons were murdered (Ungváry 2002/2003, 127–165).
2. From the regained territory of Bácska in April 1941 the Serbs of almost 28 vilages were persecuted.⁶
3. Starting with March 1944, the total deprivation of rights, the plundering and murdering of the whole Jewish population of Hungary. The cooperation between the SS troops of Adolf Eichmann and the Sztójay-government lead to the execution of 437,000 persons of the total 600,000 Jews of Hungary, most of them in Auschwitz. Most of the population of Hungary took part in the plundering of the Jews, regardless of their national belonging.⁷

Besides all these, there were instructions regarding the resettlement of different Hungarian ethnic groups. For this present study the resettlement of the 13,000 Szeklers from Bukovina in the year 1941 presents considerable importance.⁸ The inhabitants of

⁶ Völkl 1991 – The history of the re-annexed parts of Bácska and Szerémség (from April 1941 to October 1944) awaits for further exact research.

⁷ About Jew labour-service in the Hungarian army see: Gerlach–Aly 2002, Ungváry 2002/2003: 145–148. About Northern Transylvania in 1944 see: Matić 2002: 249–263, Stark 1997: 71–79, Horváth 2008.

⁸ Many plans regarding demographic policies and the regain of the lost territories in 1919–1920 could not be executed until the fall of 1944. See: Romsics 1995, Ungváry 2006. About the leading politicians of that age, the following provide excellent sources: Kállay 1954, Bethlen 1985 and Hennyey 1975.

six villages from Bukovina, who had been settled there in the last quarter of the 18th century, were repatriated – on the basis of a Romanian–Hungarian agreement – into former Serbian villages from Bácska. The Germans from Bukovina were relocated in the same manner. The aim of the resettlement was to transform the demographic structure on behalf of the Hungarians.⁹

The Hungarian actions regarding the resettlement of the Moldavian Csángós to Hungary have to be interpreted in the context outlined above.

In connection with the relocated Szeklers from Bukovina the repatriation of the still Hungarian-speaking Moldavian Csángós was raised already in 1941–1942 by the Bárdossy-cabinet, which was in very close relations with the Third Reich. But the project could not be executed during the ministry of Bárdossy. Another obstacle was the fact that many Moldavian Csángó men had been enrolled and loyal to the Romanian state already participating in the battles against the Soviet Union within the Romanian army. Many families ready to move were not willing to do this last step without their men (Vincze 2002: 59–63).

It would be very important to find out under what conditions Antonescu would have agreed to the resettlement of the Csángós, and where they would have been settled. The work of Pal debating the Romanian origin of the Csángós was published exactly in 1942, so we can consider it as a book written for the Romanian public opinion and government and against the relocation of the Csángós.

In the next two years, under the ministry of Kállay nothing really happened in the case of the Csángós on the Hungarian part. Kállay, his national conservatory cabinet and his small non-German oriented advisory elite could hardly survive without the help of Horthy against the violent criticism of the radicalised Hungarian public opinion, press and parliament dominated by popular-national and anti-Semite political parties. Kállay's attempts to break away from the alliance with the Third Reich and to negotiate separately with the western forces lead to his dismissal and to the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht, raising positive or indifferent reactions from the population. In spite of the occupation of the country, the regime's power of decision remained free, especially on the local levels.

The greatest efforts for the repatriation of the Moldavian Csángós were made between June and August of 1944, at the time when the deportation of the Jews from Hungary to the concentration camp of Auschwitz reached its peak. From the Hungarian side the deportation was initiated and ordered from the responsible positions of the Sztójay-cabinet. Several official documents were sent by the Hungarian prime Minister and the ambassador of Hungary to Berlin to the headquarters of the Führer and to the Office of Foreign Affairs. In the next few months the German side's exposure of will – just like in other similar cases – proved to be an expressive example for national-socialist population policies. The officials of the Office of Foreign Affairs, the SS offices, the Wehrmacht and the South-German Research Department were working in a cooperative, and sometimes

⁹ For a comparison to the Germans of Bukovina see: Mikecs 1943: 280, Hausleitner 2001:366–374. About the Szeklers see: Vincze 2001–2004.

even competing way (Matić 2002: 232–249, 258–261). No Hungarian decision had been taken about the place of the Csángós resettlement until September 1944. The possible targets were some cities from Northern Transylvania and the Bácska, which had become depopulated along with the Jewish genocide.

Science will have to examine how and to what extent the Hungarian side was able to extend its propaganda in the Moldavian Csángó villages (Vincze 2002: 59–63; Pozsony 2002: 104–106). We also know very little about the standing point of Antonescu in this matter, who was existentially threatened by the enclosure of the Red Army. In 1943 the bishop of Iași, Mihai Robu probably tried to personally convince Antonescu about the belonging of the Moldavian Catholics to the Romanian nation.¹⁰

Besides the confrontations based on the well known historical and cultural argumentation patterns there was the idea of biological determination to appear in this matter. Bucur (2002), who had been conducting analyses of racial anthropology in the interwar period, avoided the direct collaboration with the racist movement, or at least we can say that within the case of the Moldavian Csángós. But according to the racial anthropology theses of Râmneanțu (1944) and Bucur (2002: 36–37, 136–137, 143–146)¹¹, the majority of the Csángós – based on blood-tests and “territorial relations, communities of tradition and fate” – “have their origin in Romanian blood” (Râmneanțu 1944: 55–58).¹²

It is not clear enough for us, who argued for and who argued against the resettlement of the Csángós among the Hungarian political elite, or who had been dealing with the question anyway.¹³ It would be important to analyse the standpoint of the Transylvanian Hungarians in this case and to reveal the different variants for resettlement. And there is also a question if the Csángós who had been already Romanianized (from the point of view of language and identity) were also a target for repatriation to Hungary.

Because of the collapse of the front in the Carpathians and the Black Sea on 20th August 1944, Romania changed its government and also changed sides. This and the occupation of many Moldavian Csángó settlements by the Red Army made every plan impossible.

With the fall of the Sztójay-regime on 29th August 1944 and the quick march forward of the Red Army in Transylvania and Hungary the Csángós question lost its actuality until the end of the war.

The study of the 19th and 20th century history of the Moldavian Csángós should be done in comparison with similarly structured ethnographic groups. These comparative studies have been ignored over the years. Furthermore, it would be necessary to analyse the history of the Csángós in the context of the whole Romanian and Hungarian history and their questioning.

¹⁰ The information can be found on the website of the Diocese of Iași. (<http://www.ercis.ro/index.asp> 19. 11. 2007). The author of the short biographies on the Diocese's bishops is Alois Moraru.

¹¹ For further studies and connections see: Diaconescu 2003.

¹² The “results” of the quoted work have been used even in our days in pamphlets of Romanian nationalist organizations.

¹³ Recently see: Vincze 2002–2004.

In the following we will try to reveal the German actions related to relocation. In 1939 the paper *People in the South-East* published an article by Hans Friedrich called *The Csángó-Hungarians*. The author heavily criticised the newest publications on the Moldavian Csángós. He was on the same opinion with the Hungarian authors regarding the origin and history of the Csángós, showing some understanding towards the Hungarian ambitions in this case, but he criticised Hungary's policy on nationalities at the same time. He compared the Csángós to the Swabians from Satu Mare county, whose assimilation to the Hungarian nation reached an advanced stage in spite of the efforts of the Germans (Friedrich 1939: 324, 327). In his opinion both ethnic groups could be included in the category of "hesitating groups"¹⁴. Friedrich reproaches that "the relations towards the groups broken away from the Hungarian nation should determine the relations towards the other ethnic groups being in the same situation, too" (Friedrich 1939: 324). It seems that this could not be the same case, because the Hungarians thought that their own minorities – in opposition with the Germans from Hungary – had not got on the territories of other states because their own will. Therefore it cannot be the case of a similar treatment. Friedrich outlined that the Csángós in Moldavia are in the same situation as the Germans in Hungary, thus the legitimacy of Hungary's requests might be questionable. To that point no German author had really dealt with the topic of the Moldavian Hungarians. The presented Hungarian works had been arbitrarily chosen from the writings of popular journalism (Domokos 1939, Szvoboda 1939). It is even more interesting that some of these not really basic writings had been translated by an office from Vienna and entered our possession in the form of photocopies.¹⁵

Thus we can assume that behind Friedrich's publication there were circles of influence able to command the office from Vienna to look over the Hungarian texts and to translate them. The implication of the so-called "P. Office" in national-socialist population policies is presented in details by Falbrusch (1999: 626). The Publication Office from Vienna was one of the agencies belonging to the German National Research Department, dealing with questions on the population and borders of a region that had been given into its jurisdiction. In Vienna, at the headquarters of the South-East European Research Centre, within the research programmes lead by well known scholars, vast material was collected on the countries of that region. "Collecting" included the clearing of the invaded countries' libraries (Fahlbusch 1999: 632). The director of the department was an SS lieutenant specialized in statistics and demographic sciences, Wilfried Krallert. The *Publication Office or Department* was serving the needs of the department of foreign affairs and of the economic department, but it was also a helping tool in the formation of the NS territorial politics, including ethnic purge.¹⁶ One of its main tasks was to translate from the

¹⁴ The study of R. Beck from 1938 is trendsetting in this matter.

¹⁵ About the duties of the Service see: Fahlbusch 1999: 273–276.

¹⁶ The diversified activities of the scholars of that time make their present judgement more than difficult. The same is the case of Fahlbusch. Within the use of his works some book reviews (for ex. Böhm 2000) are indispensable, because he tended to make some misleading mistakes exactly at the parts on valuation.

press of the monitored countries. Photocopies of other longer studies were also added. The series of 330 booklets, including the quoted articles of Domokos and Szvoboda, were in the possession of the East and South-East European Institute in Vienna.¹⁷ According to Fahlbusch, choosing the appropriate books was the right of the translators, who were not working in the *Publication Office*, but in some of the monitored countries. It seems more probable to us that they were assigned to direct collecting procedures in order to elaborate certain questions or topics. The present case probably exemplifies this situation. The article of Friedrich was published in the paper *People in the South-East* edited by Otto Brunner, a paper that had always been close to the Publication Office, usually publishing materials that had more or less connection with the Office itself (see Fahlbusch 1999: S. 633 Anm. 387). Franz Basch and Anton Taffern were in charge of the Hungarian translation, while the director of the Brukenthal Museum, Rudolf Speck was in charge of the Romanian one. Along the label of the Publication Office very often it said the “Dr. Ronnenberger service place”, a unit lead by Franz Ronnenberger himself, trusted with research and press activities by the NR-regime.¹⁸ Ronnenberger had many functions, being in important positions in the SS and SD, and from 1936 he had been dealing with the systematic observation of the foreign press and the German press from abroad. His experiences lead to the unification of his unit with the P. Office from Vienna, and thus he became its assistant director. The media news was only the visible part of his activity. In a quite short period of time his staff managed to set up a network of informers of German origin all over South-East Europe. The informers were part time agents, too. Because of the war the detailed information from the countries of South-East Europe had become quite valuable. New frontiers had been drawn, ethnic groups had been relocated, and in this matter the results of the publication offices were the relevant ones.

In June 1944 the Hungarian Prime Minister Sztójay paid a visit to Hitler at his headquarters. At that moment he handed him over some reports about the Moldavian Hungarians.¹⁹

He exclaimed his desire to resettle all these or some of these persons in Hungary. An opportunity would arise if Moldavia needed to be evacuated because of military purposes. A similar request was handed to the leader of the East-Hungarian German command by commissioner Ricsó-Uhlarik.²⁰

According to those reports approximately 100 000 Csángós were situated right next to the front, 32 000 of them in the Roman area, and 47 000 in the Bacău area. The Csángós had been in a permanent relation with their Szekler neighbours, thus the Hungarian public opinion, worried about them, were continuously informed on their situation. Because the Hungarian government contributed to the transit of several refugee groups, including

¹⁷ Besides Vienna we can also find some collections at the Federation Archives, consisting of translations made by publication offices, and especially confidential studies and articles.

¹⁸ About Ronnenberg's role in national socialism see: Heinelt 2002.

¹⁹ Sources nr. 15, 16, 17.

²⁰ Source nr. 17.

Romanian ones, the public opinion expected something to be done with the endangered Moldavian Hungarians as well. There was very little hope for an accord with the Romanian government, a fact established by general major Zellner, too²¹: “The difficulty of the question stays in the fact that in the conception of the Romanian government most of the Moldavian Hungarians/Csángós have to be considered Romanian. This is a circumstance that makes the settling of an agreement between the Hungarian and Romanian governments very difficult, if not impossible.”²² Ignoring this aspect the Hungarian government remained attached to the diplomatic support of the German service offices. Anyway, Romania was not able to host any more refugees, but in Hungary “there was a need to settle peasantry on the lands confiscated from the Jews, resulting in not only the economic, but the military enforcement of the country, because the Moldavian Hungarians could be enrolled next to the Hungarian troops in the battle against the Bolsheviks.”²³

On behalf of the German officials the Hungarian part was assured that the appliance of their propositions would be examined by the German ambassadors in Romania, and they would get an answer soon enough.

At the same time different departments of the Office of Foreign Affairs along with other service offices tried to find out as much as possible about the Moldavian Csángós.²⁴ Obviously the aim was to get objective information on their “ethnic and religious marks, their number and their subjective national attitude, plus the Romanian attitude towards them.”²⁵

On the 12th of July a letter from Dr. Gredler arrived to the German Military Command, which in essence agreed with the Hungarian data, considering technically easy to resettle the Moldavian Hungarians.²⁶ But the Inland II Department formulated a report which placed the previous resettling actions in a critical light.

“In the year 1941 the Hungarian government moved the Csángós in the Bácska within a repatriation action. 4000 families, counting approximately 16 000 souls had been resettled in three and a half months on 35 000 Hungarian acres, providing them lands, houses and the necessary livestock. The locations were in fact 28 former Serbian villages, from which it seems that the former inhabitants had been driven away by quite brutal means. Most of the Csángós got 8 Hungarian acres of land and a house. Because most of them were poor farmers, with different procedures than the locals, these villages presented major regression in the aspect of agricultural accomplishment.”²⁷ “The percentage of the Hungarians from Bácska had grown with 6% as a result of these actions – state the reports.”²⁸

²¹ Source nr. 17.

²² Source nr. 16.

²³ Source nr. 16.

²⁴ Sources nr. 11, 12, 13.

²⁵ Source nr.13.

²⁶ Source nr. 3.

²⁷ Source nr 2.

²⁸ Source nr 2.

The informational situation had obviously improved, but at the same time the possible technical and diplomatic difficulties had been revealed. The German Embassy from Bucharest formulated the following: “The request for the repatriation of the fragments of Hungarian population from Moldavia to Hungary was mentioned to me by the external commissioner from here, too. If this proposition becomes public, the Romanian side will consider it as a Hungarian counteraction for marshal Antonescu’s suggestion to the Führer regarding the repatriation of the Romanian population from Moldavia through Szeklerland to the Romanian territories. The Romanian government will hardly reconsider this Hungarian suggestion: first of all we can count with the Romanian objection that the Hungarian population we are talking about in the mean time has been completely Romanianized. We have to mention here that the German officials in charge have not recorded the number of Hungarians suggested by the Hungarian side; the results are not even close. According to the census from 1941 published by the Publication Office of Vienna, in the Bacău area there were 2180 Hungarians against 289 000 Romanians, while in the Roman area 969 Hungarians against 170 000 Romanians. We have the same image if we take a look at the ethnic map of Krallert, too.”²⁹

The information provided by the Wilfried Krallert Publication Office proved to be reliable. The data of the national census from 1941 – considered secret at that time –, published by Krallert in 1943³⁰, and the ethnic map compiled also by him³¹ made the Hungarian figures questionable.

The discrepancy could also be explained by the fact that both Hungarians and Romanians considered these groups as a part of their own nation, while the German ethnographers described them as a “hesitating ethnic group”.³² For the German side the difficulties resulted in the impossibility of offering satisfactory solutions for both parties. All this was mirrored in the proposition of the Office of Foreign Affairs: “Under these circumstances it is very difficult to find a solution that would satisfy both parties; a question of this kind would probably further burden the Hungarian–Romanian relations, and in the case of a German intervention, the responsibility would fall on us. Therefore the Inland II Department suggests the adoption of a standpoint towards the Hungarian side according to which at this moment any demographic movement in Moldavia must be avoided, because it might seem that we do not consider the Moldavian front stable enough. It is also of an immediate importance to not induce any restlessness in the Moldavian rural communities, thus they could do all their agricultural works that are so important in the matter of war.”³³

²⁹ Sources nr 1, 8.

³⁰ Krallert 1943. About the national socialist career of Krallert see: Fahlbusch 1999: 257–258.

³¹ Krallert 1941: 12, an overlook on Moldavia. About the nature of this material see: Fahlbusch 1999, S. 637f.

³² Source nr. 1. (Beck 1938)

³³ Source nr. 1.

The letter sent on the 3rd of August from Berlin to the German Embassy in Budapest was written in this spirit.³⁴

In the preparation of this decision Wilfried Krallert had his part not only through his publications, but he personally travelled to Berlin, carrying a material on the Csángó topic with him. He underlined the fact that opposite to the Hungarian materials, this present one had no cultural or political relation with the Hungarian state. "In the present condition of their identity-loss, the Csángós can hardly be named a Hungarian population."³⁵

The Krallert-material was not the only help for the decision-makers in foreign affairs. On the 10th of August 1944 the Office of Foreign Affairs prepared a report in a critical tone: "It is unnecessary for the Reich's Command to undertake the inconvenience of rejecting the Hungarian requests regarding the repatriation of the Moldavian Csángós. If this request cannot be honoured because of different reasons, we should try to shift this responsibility onto the Romanians. The objections proposed by Inland II – according to which repatriation is not timely, it is not motivated by the present war situation – would not be understood by the Hungarian side, especially after the Romanians have just repatriated their Moldavian population through Szeklerland. Finally, if we expect maximum efforts in war by the East-European countries, at least we should sustain the image of being interested in the case of their smaller problems and requests, as if we would think about them as well, not only about us."³⁶ Thus the data provided by Krallert could be questioned directly based on the Romanian national census from 1930: "according to which there were 110 000 Roman Catholics living in Moldavia, including 21 000 declaring themselves of Hungarian nationality and 24 000 of Hungarian mother tongue."³⁷ The Department annexed some notes to the Csángós' belonging to the Hungarian or Romanian nation: "In its report, the Romanian delegation mentioned marshal Antonescu's request to repatriate the Moldavian Romanian population through the Szeklerland onto Romanian territories. According to the Hungarians' statement, this has already been accomplished (see the report of the delegation from Budapest on the 27th of June, no. 2380). If this has already happened, we might formulate the question: why was the mentioned Hungarian ethnic group, which according to the Romanian government has become completely Romanianized, not annexed to the groups subject of repatriation? The attitude of the Romanian government leads us to the conclusion that they do not consider the Csángós Romanian. In these conditions the rightfulness of the Hungarian requests cannot be questioned, especially when they are about a group which has been clearly disadvantaged by the Romanian side and would be handed over to the Bolsheviks after a certain change of the front."³⁸ Therefore the Inland II Department suggested that

³⁴ Source nr. 20.

³⁵ Source nr. 14. Krallert, who considered that an alliance with Romania would be prioritary to the one with Hungary, underscored the differences between the Hungarians from Moldavia and Bukovina at this point.

³⁶ Source nr. 4.

³⁷ Source nr. 4.

³⁸ In this matter see also source nr. 18.

the Embassy in Bucharest should be ordered to sustain the repatriation of the Csángós in front of the Romanian government.

The competition between the two offices is mirrored by the tone of their reports. The critical standings of the IVb Political Department gave birth to other answers. The Inland II proved its statements one by one.³⁹

In the meantime the quantity of Csángó-related material was constantly growing. And also the translation office's work was systematically evaluated. Hans Friedrich's study appeared again, along with the used translations.⁴⁰ This material had been transformed into a four page report for the Office of Foreign Affairs (Szvoboda 1939, Domokos 1939). In the introduction the author states that only Hungarian works had appeared dealing with the Csángó topic and no Romanian ones. It is a fact that the Romanian publications were always seriously outnumbered by the Hungarian ones, but there existed a few already in the 1940s. This is the time when the new Moldavian elite of Csángó origins appeared in different publications, even if mostly in Moldavian clerical papers.⁴¹ We might presume that the Office did not get these publications. Anyway, on most of the German professional opinions we sense the influence of the Hungarian and external German propaganda and literature. Since the beginning of WWII the Hungarian authors had tried to formulate their opinion in German, too. They have to be considered important regarding both Hungary and Germany. In the field of journalism the name of Alexander or Sándor Baumgartner appeared more and more often. The former teacher of the Seminar of Iași was the informer of the Hungarian government and the agent of the German Abwehr⁴² but he probably observed the German press as well (Romsics 1995: 276). One specific study of the translation office wearing the monogram B. S. is probably his work.⁴³ Probably he was the spiritual author of the memorandum handed over to the German Command.⁴⁴ The latter ends with an optimistic opinion: "The repatriation of the Hungarians of Bukovina raised the interest of the Moldavian »Csángó-Hungarians« as well. In the last two years there have been 75 families from Bacău County arriving to Hungary and settling down here. From the letters written by their relatives from Moldavia it seems that they would like to settle here, too. The Romanian government found out the preparations made by the Hungarians from Moldavia and – aiming to prevent this – restricted their mobility in such a way that they can hardly communicate with each other. In the last few weeks according to the information provided by the »Csángó« refugees, we could deal with the repatriation of 50 000 people if the necessary conditions were provided."⁴⁵ But in the

³⁹ Source nr. 18.

⁴⁰ See above and Friedrich 1939.

⁴¹ Diaconescu identifies many passages. Also the periodical of the Episcopate of Iași, the *Lumina Creștinului* published a whole series of articles on their conception on the Moldavian Catholics.

⁴² About the precise interpretation of the data from the 1930 census see: Baumgartner 1940, Romsics 1995: 276–290, Vincze 2001–2004, sources nr. 8, 9.

⁴³ The cover of source nr. 10. Plus Baumgartner 1940 was also important.

⁴⁴ Source nr. 9. Its influences become hard to understand here.

⁴⁵ Source nr. 9.

report sent to the Office of Foreign Affairs it was stated that the Romanianization of the Csángós had been completed a long time before.⁴⁶

Thus it is not really clear why the Moldavian Csángós had to be evaluated, and the German service offices would have to sustain or restrict the Hungarian initiatives. It is also controversial if it was really important for the political leadership of that time to get a clear picture of this group. We have to let this question open to any answers, because a note written on the 9th of July closed the whole action with the following: “Passed by the events themselves.”⁴⁷

The notes started on 18. 06. 1944., thus the attempts regarding repatriation had lasted for approximately three months. From the German side the Office of Foreign Affairs, the Wehrmacht, the SS, the Hungarian invasion offices had been involved, just like several departments of the German spying organization along with the Publication Office of the South-Eastern German Research Centre from Vienna, with a collecting work of many years which could be quoted within this work.

Conclusions

How did the Csángós react to the idea of repatriation? Only a fade image can be reconstructed from the sources. The yet known confessions are almost exclusively of people relocated from Bukovina.⁴⁸ Open debate did not take place, collective opinion could not be exposed; however, the idea of the Csángó community is mostly a product of journalism and research. From this point of view we must also approach the work of the Hungarian rural sociologist Mikecs – who was a national agitator in Hungary and Moldavia in the 1940s – with a critical eye.

Joining a group with an identity previous to the modern European national consciousness to a nation is contradictory within itself. Only those people could have a standpoint in this issue who were not Csángós any more, but a part of the Hungarian or the Romanian nation. This “hesitating group” would have been probably behaving like the “homeless peasant” of the tale. This attitude can be observed especially in the “populations living in border areas”. Its main strategy might be showing the biggest possible foolishness in front of the authorities, avoiding all the possible affirmations that would be reconsidered later on. The words of Vince: “More than 40 000 people are living there at the gates of hell, willing to come here, if they could” probably cannot be considered a typical statement, being related mostly to the condition of living next to the front. The Csángós used to fight in the Romanian army without any controversies, regardless of the side taken by the state. Based on their accentuated assimilation sustained by an extremely nationalist Catholic Church, it seems unlikely that a call for a volunteer repatriation would have had

⁴⁶ Source nr. 5.

⁴⁷ Source nr. 5.

⁴⁸ Source and literature: Vincze 2001–2004. About the Moldavian ones see: Forrai 1994, Gazda 1993: 97–130.

any followers. Anyway, in the 1940s there were a few members of the local clergy and some political personalities who tried to integrate in the Hungarian identity patterns of that time. These persons appear with their own names as the supporters of the repatriation initiatives in the Hungarian and Romanian sources.⁴⁹

The Csángós' own questions about their identity have not been answered, not even today. For them the most reliable thing remains their confessional belonging, having an accentuated assimilation process in its background.

From the 1930s the number of those who would like to find their place within the Romanian nation and remain Catholic at the same time has been constantly growing. Related to this a phenomenon of aggressive nationalism appears more and more often⁵⁰, implying the denial of someone's own roots as well.⁵¹

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⁴⁹ See: Vincze 2001–2004: 20, 75.

⁵⁰ An illuminating example is the book of Mărtinaş, which has been translated to several languages and has lived several publications.

⁵¹ It is a good thing that a lot of publications deal with the present situation, focusing on the question of identity: Tánzos 1999: 119. But how could these articles be applied to the period in question will remain unsolved.

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