

Land of peaceful separatists – the Szeklerland in Romanian media

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In Romanian media, Szeklerland — a region in Central Romania with an ethnic Hungarian majority – is often evoked as a troublesome part of the country, where Romanians are discriminated against and Hungarian separatism undermines the authority of the state. This representation has endured since the fall of Communism in 1989, even though — unlike in other regions of Europe — the local Hungarian autonomist movement has always relied on peaceful means. The mainstream Romanian discourse, with its focus on the political efforts of Hungarian parties, the symbolic rivalry between Hungarian and Romanian elites, and the fight for economic resources has largely been unchanged. This conflict-oriented perspective makes for a skewed and ethnicized representation of Szeklerland, portrayed as an ‘intolerant region’. While the region witnessed only a minor Hungarian–Romanian conflict in March 1990, the topics of instability and constant tension pervaded the media discourse regarding Szeklerland during the 1990s. Even though the dominant nationalist discourse has become less virulent, this pattern has persisted with the advent of digital and new media formats. Many contemporary representations of Szeklerland on commercial television and social media platforms keep reproducing the stereotypes inherited from the 1990s. This article is based on a historical approach, and, through the analysis of several recent Romanian short documentary films about the Szekler area, highlights the reproduction of the region’s imagery and the most common strategies that feed this polarizing representation.

Keywords: autonomy, Hungarians in Romania, interethnic relations, new media, representation, Szeklerland

Introduction

The title of this study contains an apparent paradox – ‘peaceful separatists’ – because *separatism* is usually associated with the image of *violence*. But can we talk about interethnic violence in post-communist Romania? As it is well known, although the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s accompanied many conflicts, it was only in the former Yugoslavia and in some regions of the former Soviet Union that they reached a more ‘serious’ level. However, this was not the case in Romania – despite the fact that the conditions and the interests of some actors were right for an ethnic conflict as well. This demonstrates the 1990 spring conflict in Central Romanian Târgu Mureş (*Marosvásárhely* in Hungarian).¹ On 19 March 1990, growing tensions between the Hungarian and Romanian



Târgu Mureş (*Marosvásárhely*) on 20-21 March 1990. Source: Bálint Zsigmond, azopan.ro

communities in this city in Transylvania reached a tipping point and escalated into bloody clashes. They left five dead and ended only on 21 March, after the intervention of the army, which pacified the city. The



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COTIDIAN MUREȘEAN DEMOCRATIC ȘI INDEPENDENT

DIALOG CONSTRUCTIV ȘI PAȘNIC = ÎNTELEGERE

Luni, 13 martie, la Institutul de medicina și farmacie din Târgu Mureș s-a desfășurat pe fondul gravet studiului și celorlalte activități de cercetare științifică și medicală, o sesiune de lucru pentru a se stabili o linie de acțiune în ceea ce privește studiul și cercetarea științifică și medicală în România.

Pentru a se crea o bază de date, s-a convocat, în ziua de luni, o sesiune de lucru în sala de conferințe a Institutului de medicina și farmacie din Târgu Mureș, în scopul stabilirii unei linii de acțiune în ceea ce privește studiul și cercetarea științifică și medicală în România.

În cadrul sesiunii au participat reprezentanți ai instituțiilor de învățământ superior, ai autorităților locale și ai specialiștilor din domeniul științific și medical.

Sesiunea a fost deschisă de domnul profesor dr. Constantin Popescu, care a prezentat o sinteză a activității științifice și medicale din România în ultimii ani.

În cadrul sesiunii au fost discutate și problemele legate de finanțarea cercetării științifice și medicale în România.

În urma sesiunii s-a convenit să se organizeze o sesiune de lucru în luna aprilie, în scopul stabilirii unei linii de acțiune în ceea ce privește studiul și cercetarea științifică și medicală în România.

ION CUREBĂU

O GRAVĂ JIGNIRE LA ADRESA POPORULUI ROMÂN

HELP TO STOP GENOCIDE

STOP!

DEPORTATION
HUMILIATION
DISCRIMINATION
for 3 million
Transylvanian Hungarians

In Transylvania, the following
 Hungarians are being committed
 by Romanians against Hungarians

Genocidul este o crimă care constă în uciderea sistematică și în masă a unei părți din populația unei țări, din cauza raselor, din cauza religiei, din cauza credințelor, din cauza orientării sexuale sau din cauza altor caracteristici fundamentale ale persoanei.

În Transilvania, următoarele hungarești sunt comise împotriva hungareștilor de către românii: deportarea, umilierea, discriminarea.

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PRIMUM LA REDACȚIE

Cu această ocazie s-a desfășurat în cadrul redacției o sesiune de lucru în scopul stabilirii unei linii de acțiune în ceea ce privește studiul și cercetarea științifică și medicală în România.

ION CUREBĂU

Ce facem cu libertatea?

În cadrul sesiunii s-a discutat despre libertatea de expresie și despre rolul mass-media în societate.

OPINII

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ION CUREBĂU

De la formațiunile de pasaporturi Mureș

Comitetul care pregătește pasaporturile Mureș este în prezent în proces de finalizare a lucrărilor de verificare a cererilor.

ION CUREBĂU

Front page of the 14 March 1990 issue of the biggest Romanian daily newspaper in Târgu Mureș

confrontation became known as one of the first interethnic conflicts within the new, rapidly shifting reality of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.

Many analysts have pointed to the deliberate instrumentalization of ethnic issues as one of the causes that led to the confrontation in Târgu Mures. As more authors have shown, the media – mainly the printed press, but also radio and television – played an important role in mobilising the population on both sides.² Different texts in the Hungarian and especially the Romanian newspapers both reported on the growing tensions and stirred them up: ‘By March, the situation in Târgu Mureş had become tense to the point of explosion, with the elite involved in the dispute gradually hystericalising a section of public opinion, one of the indicators of which was the lynch mob atmosphere in the local media.’³ This conflict became a key reference point in the history of Târgu Mures but also in the wider context of Transylvanian history and Hungarian–Romanian interethnic and interstate relations.⁴

However, the conflict in Târgu Mureş was preceded by a number of violent acts that were also later ethnicized by Romanian nationalist discourse, although this was by no means so clear-cut. The overthrow of the Ceauşescu dictatorship at the end of 1989 accompanied incidents in several places in the country that resulted in deaths, but the Romanian media gave special attention to the lynchings in the Hungarian-majority Szeklerland. In this area, the political turnaround was indeed ethnicized to a certain extent – the local Romanian elites of the national-communist regime were partly replaced by Hungarians in many places, and many Romanian cadres left the region. Thus, in this discourse, the interior ministry employees killed here were victims of ‘anti-Romanian violence’, even though some of them were of Hungarian nationality.⁵ This, together with the conflict in Târgu Mureş, laid the foundations for the representation of the region that many actors in Romanian political life

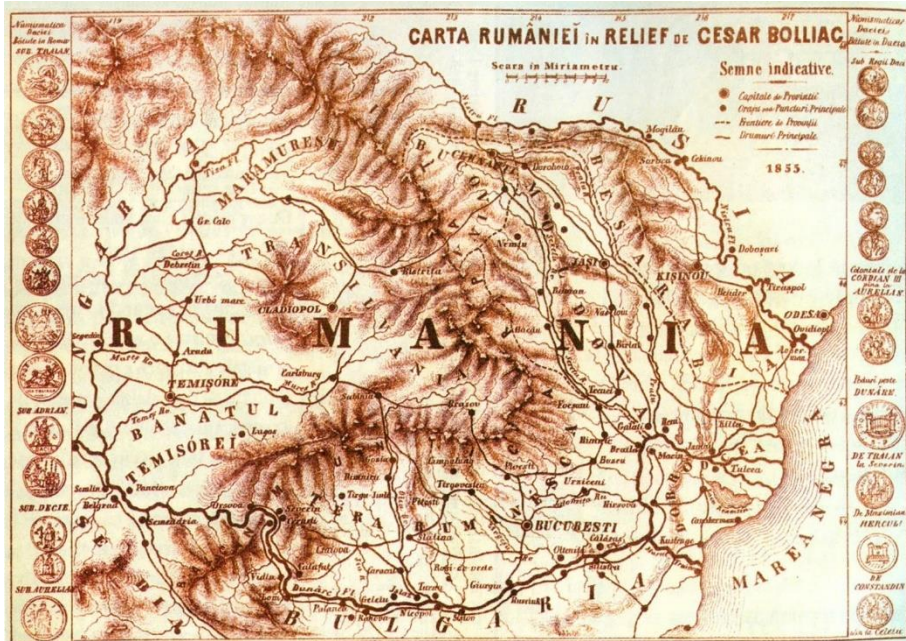
– with the effective assistance of the media – have tried to maintain in subsequent years.

Nationalist discourses and their historical roots

The main *topoi* of this Romanian nationalist discourse on Hungarians in Transylvania are the following: Hungarian demands for territorial autonomy and minority rights framed as a threat to the Romanian unitary nation-state; Hungarian revisionism whose aim is to recover Transylvania from Romania and the subversive actions of the Hungarian state itself; the discrepancy between the political representation of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the ‘real interests’ of the community; the discrimination of Romanians living in the Hungarian-majority Szeklerland.⁶

While the immediate antecedent of this article’s subject is the violence in Szeklerland at the turn of 1989-1990, it’s necessary to at least briefly recall the wider historical context. The above-mentioned discourse is almost entirely rooted in historical antecedents, and its patterns and *topoi* bear remarkable similarities to the Romanian (and inversely Hungarian) nation-building discourses that have been in circulation for more than 150 years. Indeed, the Hungarian–Romanian rivalry for Transylvania has been ongoing since the birth of modern national movements in the nineteenth century. At one level of this competition, the battle is for political, economic, social and cultural dominance, but at another level, the stakes are the representation of the region and the control of the discourse about it. While in the first case political, economic and cultural elites and interest groups compete for assets and positions, the other is essentially a discursive struggle. The two levels are, of course, inseparable and constantly interact. The present paper is primarily about the latter, a discursive struggle (in modern terms, an

‘information war’) which has been going on for a long time, in order to influence public opinion and mobilise the population.⁷ From the outset, its aim has been to justify or to challenge the dominance of Hungarian and later (after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary) Romanian elites in the region, as well as to contribute to the Hungarian and Romanian nation- and nation-state building projects.

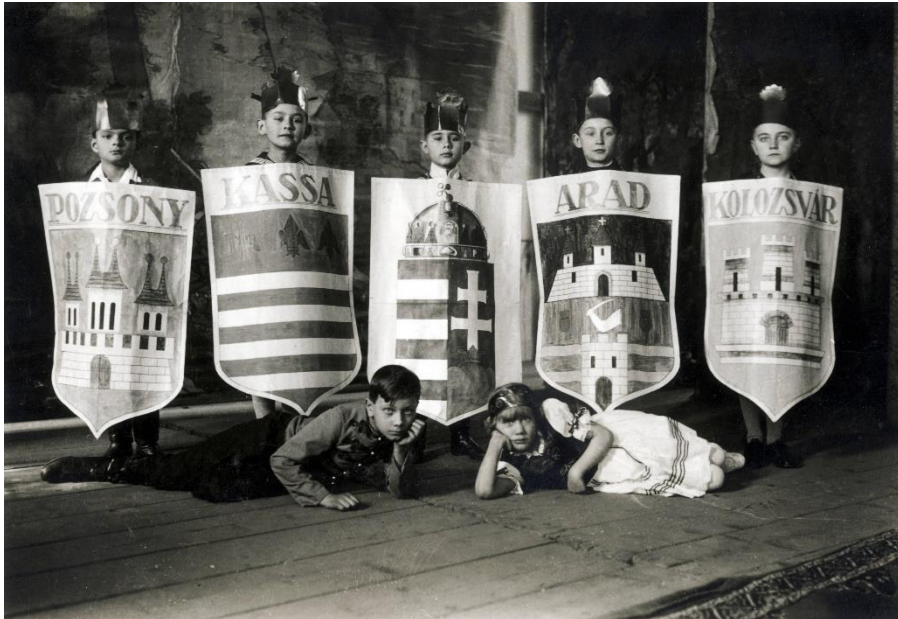


Romanian irredentist map from the second half of the nineteenth century.

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Romania#/media/File:Rum%C3%A2nia_v%C4%83zut%C4%83_de_Cezar_Bolliac.jpg

The ‘threat of Hungarian revisionism’ became effectively obsolete by the end of the Second World War and the Paris Peace Treaty (1947), and Hungary gave up its former irredentist aspirations. Yet, the Romanian nationalist discourse has regularly invoked it ever since, claiming that the re-conquest of Transylvania remains one of Hungary’s goals.⁸ This has continued after the fall of communism as well, despite repeated claims by Hungarian governments and local Hungarian authorities that they have no ambition to revise the current borders. In addition to the fact that the alleged ‘Hungarian threat’ has often proved useful in political games, the continued distrust of Romanian nationalists has undoubtedly been fuelled by the varying intensity of nation-building policies of the post-1990 governments in Budapest (in the rhetoric of the Hungarian right: ‘cross-border reunification of the Hungarian nation’).



Hungarian irredentist performance in 1930. Source: Fortepan/Hanser Mária

Since the end of 1989, the leaders of the Hungarian national movement in Romania have made it clear on numerous occasions – and Budapest has assured them of its support – that their goal is the recognition and enforcement of collective minority rights to ensure the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian population in Transylvania. According to the Hungarian minority elites, a broader territorial and cultural autonomy would provide the necessary mechanisms for such a reproduction, because Romania, despite all the democratisation and decentralisation that has taken place in the past decades, continues to function as a centralised and nationalising state.⁹ The autonomy – which is widespread in many parts of Western Europe – has usually been eyed with suspicion by Romanian elites. Romanian politicians and analysts generally reject it on the grounds that it does not contribute to the integration of Hungarians and tend to frame the whole issue as a ‘national security risk’. Moreover, they often understand Budapest’s support as a form of ‘hidden revisionism’ or at least interference in Romanian internal affairs.¹⁰

Szeklerland in Romanian public discourse since 1989

Although there have been no major (or at least lethal) acts of violence involving Hungarians and Romanians since 1990, Szeklerland has been regularly branded as a ‘problematic’ region. This is probably also due to the fact that in the Hungarian-majority area, local Hungarian elites are dominant in the political and economic spheres, but especially from the cultural point of view, which in itself questions the idea of Romania as a unitary nation-state. Moreover, both the most important political party of Hungarians in Romania (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, DAHR – *RMDSZ* in Hungarian, *UDMR* in Romanian) and the Hungarian autonomist movement are most strongly rooted in Szeklerland.

Thus, in the past three decades, Romanian nationalist discourse has continuously propagated the image of a region in turmoil – whether in the Bucharest parliament, or through the media, various pamphlets and specialised works. Romanian politicians and activists, clerics, historians, social scientists, journalists and other intellectuals have discussed the Szeklerland, but mainly from the perspective of the Romanian nation-state and the local Romanian minority.¹¹ In the political arena, the issue has been mainly pursued by the smaller nationalist parties, but has also been occasionally instrumentalized by the major political formations.¹² On several occasions in the 1990s and early 2000s, the situation in the region became a national issue, mainly because of the alleged discrimination against local Romanians, ‘Hungarian separatism’ and the ‘undermining of the authority of the Romanian state’.¹³



Hungarian autonomist rally in Ditrău (Gyergyóditró), June 2006. Source: Levente Albert

Of course, conflict-oriented discourse is not the only one – there are also examples to the contrary. For instance, in 2022 a young Romanian policeman from Braşov, whose humorous Facebook posts have made him extremely popular, enthusiastically reported on his trip to Odorheiu Secuiesc (*Székelyudvarhely*) – highlighting the tidy cityscape and the kindness of the locals.¹⁴ However, this type of information receives much less attention, so that in the end it is the image of the troubled region that dominates the Romanian public discourse regarding the Szekler counties.

In the 2010s, Romanian–Hungarian interethnic relations in Romania had been rather volatile. Although the tensions of the 1990s were a thing of the past, and Bucharest's integration into NATO and the EU had significantly reduced the chances of their recurrence, the prolonged political crises and anniversaries of particular commemorative importance (the centenary of the 1918 'Great Union') presented a number of risks. For the supporters of the idea of a Romanian unitary nation-state, the main challenge was the autonomist movement in Szeklerland – after the EU accession in 2007, the stakes in this asymmetric struggle have been lowered. Nevertheless, the Hungarian autonomists in Romania (who since the mid-2000s have institutionalised their movement), and the politicians and activists associated with them, have been active on various fields.¹⁵ They repeatedly tabled autonomy bills to the Romanian parliament, which were always voted down, tried to assert minority interests in European forums (e.g. Minority SafePack Initiative) and stood up for regional symbols of Szeklerland (the 'Szekler flag' and 'Szekler Freedom Day').¹⁶

In parallel, radical nationalist groups (for example the 'Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement', *HVIM*) were active as well. However, their impact has remained marginal, and the actions of the Romanian state power also contributed to halting their further spread (see for example the case of 'Szekler terrorists' in 2015).¹⁷ The centenary year 2018 was

also a year without major conflicts, despite the fact that the anniversary of Transylvania's secession from Hungary and annexation to Romania draws a sharp dividing line between Hungarian and Romanian historical memory. The debates between the Hungarian and Romanian interpretations of the past century from a national perspective ended up being limited to the media. More attention was given to an incident in 2019, which was about the symbolic control of a World War I military cemetery – as it was located on the historical border between Szeklerland and the eastern Romanian province of Moldova. All these interethnic and political tensions only occasionally tempered DAHR's involvement in the government, as after 2010, the Hungarian party only participated in the governing coalition until 2012 and then in 2014.¹⁸



The Szekler flag at the Hungarian Parliament in 2020. Source: Csaba Zahorán

At the same time, Hungarian–Romanian relations were also affected by the national policy of neighbouring Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his populist right-wing governments – in office since 2010 – have not only been characterised by emphatically nationalist and sovereigntist rhetoric but have also been engaged in strong nation-building outside Hungary. The Hungarian trans-sovereign nation-building was both manifested in the ‘virtual re-unification’ of the Hungarian nation divided by the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty (e.g. through the simplified granting of Hungarian citizenship) and in the closer and institutionalised ties that bound these communities to Budapest (through educational, cultural and other support).¹⁹ Since 2013, there has been an increasingly close relationship between the DAHR and the Hungarian government, which has also been in constant competition with the far-right, radical nationalist Jobbik on the national question.²⁰ Budapest’s symbolic solidarity with Hungarians abroad was perhaps most spectacularly embodied when the Szekler flag was displayed on the Hungarian Parliament in 2013. While the use of this regional symbol in public spaces in Romania has been limited by court rulings, and later by a special law, in Hungary it can be flown freely.²¹

Budapest’s nation-building politics has provoked the irritation of the nationalist elites of the neighbouring states – including in Romania – not only because the direct Hungarian–Hungarian contacts were actually strengthened over their heads, but also because one of its consequences is the further ‘alienation’ of Hungarian minority communities in their home countries. The construction of a parallel Hungarian society in Romania (‘enclavisation’) seems to vindicate the Romanian nationalists who earlier – until the 2000s – vehemently protested against separate Hungarian schools and institutions, Hungarian inscriptions and the official use of the Hungarian language. These basic minority rights have only slowly become accepted thanks to the governmental involvement and bargaining of the DAHR and Euro-Atlantic integration

requirements.²² Nevertheless, after 2010, Romanian extremists continued to stand up for the Romanian nation-state – for example, a nationalist group has repeatedly organised provocative marches in Hungarian-majority towns on the Romanian national holiday of 1 December.²³



March of Romanian extremists on 1 December 2013 in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy). Source: Csaba Zahorán

Hungarian–Romanian interethnic and inter-state relations traditionally have a geopolitical dimension as well. Since the Trianon Peace Treaty, Romanian elites have feared the confluence of Hungarian and Soviet (and Bulgarian) revisionism. This has been present in the Romanian public

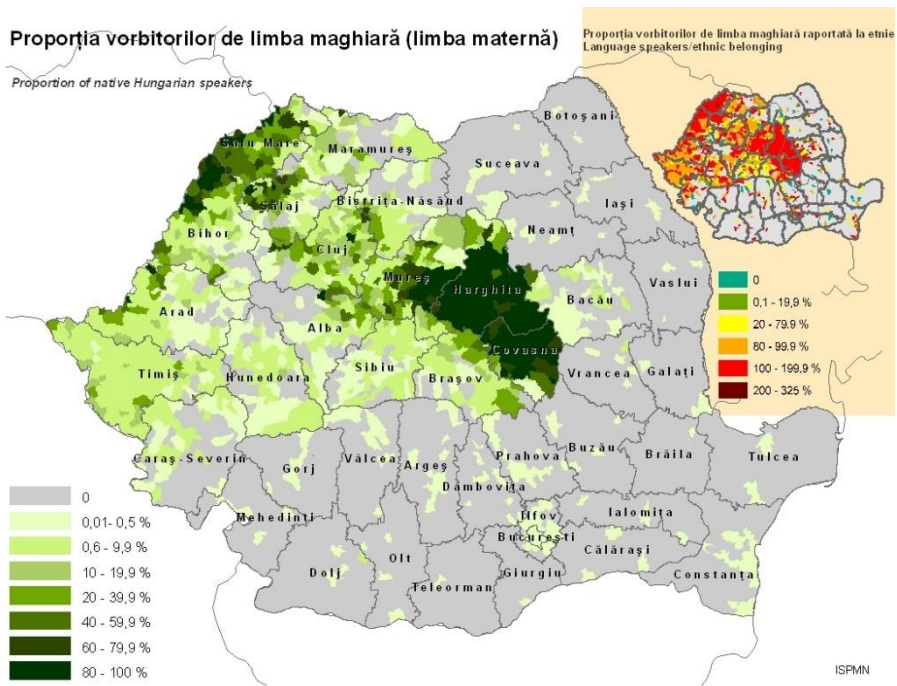
discourse in the post-1989 period too and has intensified with the renewed activity and aggressiveness of Russia and the closer Hungarian–Russian relations in the past decade. Despite the common membership of NATO and the EU, many Romanian newspaper articles and analyses present Hungary as an ally of Russian imperialism, continuing the ‘tradition’ of Hungarian revisionism.²⁴

In parallel with the above-mentioned Romanian nationalist discourse, there is also a Hungarian, similarly nationalist discourse on Transylvania and Szeklerland, but the two have little practical contact or reflection on each other. Only a few Hungarian and Romanian researchers have undertaken a critical analysis and tried to ‘correct’ the distorted representation of Transylvania and Szeklerland.²⁵ Nonetheless, their research and analyses cannot compete with nationalist political discourses, or the stereotypical representations repeated in the media.

In the last decades, the role of the digital media in propagating such representations has been enhanced. The emergence of numerous commercial television channels (including news televisions), news portals, online magazines, followed by blogs and vlogs, and social media, has created a dynamic and rapidly changing virtual medium, far more dynamic than the print press. In this medium, news about Szeklerland often takes on a sensationalist or tabloid character, and the focus is usually explicitly scandal-oriented or just simplistic. While interactivity, commentary and reaction have intensified communication on specific topics and issues and have diversified content production, the news often takes on a life of its own. For example, a report or opinion may turn out to be inaccurate, unsubstantiated – or downright false – and later be nuanced or refuted, but it is very difficult to counteract its impact later, if it initially got sufficient publicity. On the one hand, because of the immediate reactions and emotions that it arouses, and on the other hand, because it can remain on the internet for a long time, and its impact can be felt later as well. This medium therefore seems even more suitable for

conscious manipulation – both one-off, occasional and repeated, based on well-constructed narratives.

In what follows I will try to show the role of the Romanian online media in the creation and reproduction of the above-mentioned discourse of a problematic region in the last several years. Using examples of films made in the past decade, I will explore how this discourse has manifested itself in the recent past: what parts of it have changed, and which aspects have remained the same?



Proportion of native Hungarian speakers in Romania (2011). Source: <https://ispmn.gov.ro/maps>

Current reports on the ‘Hungarian question’

For the purpose of this study, I have analysed a total of seven Romanian films. Shot and released between 2012 and 2019, they are of varying length and come from various sources, ranging from national TV channels to websites, news portals and YouTube. Their makers include professional journalists – often with a strong infrastructure behind them – as well as activists. Most of the films were produced in reaction to a particular event, with the aim of exploring and presenting its wider background in situ.

The team of *Romania of Fairytale – The Forgotten Romanians in Szeklerland* (*România de poveste – Românii uitați din Ținutul Secuiesc*) went to Szeklerland following the publication of a study by a research institute of the Romanian Academy about the region.²⁶ The reporters of the Romanian private news channel used this study as a starting point to present the interethnic relations in the area and the challenge posed by the Hungarian national movement. They mainly interviewed local Romanian public figures and private individuals on the issue of Hungarian–Romanian relations and autonomy. The narrative is illustrated with short film clips of Hungarian (Szekler) autonomist rallies, scenes from the region and the ‘*Tusványos Summer University*’ (an annual Hungarian summer festival with concerts and lectures in the heart of Szeklerland). The filmmakers eventually identify revisionism and the autonomist movement as the main causes behind interethnic tensions in the area, which mean a threat to the Romanian nation-state, in particular to Romania’s territorial integrity. One of the main messages of the film is in line with the above-mentioned study: hundreds of thousands of local Romanians suffer discrimination and feel abandoned in their own country, as a result of Hungarian nationalism. The authors also address the issue of the Szekler–Hungarian dichotomy, presenting the Hungarian (or Szekler?) claims in a somewhat frivolous light.²⁷

The investigative report by independent journalists *Autonomy and Firecrackers (Autonomie și petarde)* explores an even more wide-ranging and far-reaching geopolitical context.²⁸ It aims to shed light on the wider background of an incident in 2015, which the Romanian authorities and media labelled as a ‘terrorist attempt’. The film itself is centred around the activities of a Hungarian paramilitary organisation operating in Szeklerland (the already mentioned HVIM), whose activities purportedly threaten the territorial integrity of Romania. The report focuses on the local, Hungarian and international (mainly Russian) network of the organisation, as well as its goals (‘the restoration of Greater Hungary’). The filmmakers cut in several news excerpts of Hungarian symbolic politics and ethnopolitical activism in Transylvania and visit a Hungarian ‘paramilitary camp’ as well. Focusing on radical nationalist, extreme right-wing or explicitly irredentist groups, they present Hungarian–Hungarian political, ideological and financial relations and the main actors involved.²⁹ The interviewees are practically all Hungarian: one of the accused in the ‘terrorist trial’, another member of the organisation, a Szekler activist, a former radical nationalist member of the Hungarian Parliament and an investigative journalist.

The same case provided the starting point for the makers of *Szekler Dream (Visul Secuiesc)*, but rather than focusing on the broader political and international contexts, their work investigates local conditions and Hungarian–Romanian coexistence in the small Szekler town where the alleged terrorist attempt took place.³⁰ The whole case is explored through conversations with the father and brother of one of the accused, several acquaintances (Romanians and Hungarians) and local residents (such as the Orthodox priest). Although the Hungarian paramilitary groups and their irredentist slogans also appear in this film, a rather dubious process emerges from the relatives’ accounts and a picture of a quiet small town from the locals’ opinions.



The centre of Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely) in the summer of 2015.
Source: Csaba Zahorán

A story of rather minor importance presented a short (roughly 4-minute long) video by a vlogger from Cluj-Napoca, which nevertheless gained a lot of visibility in the virtual space. In this video clip (*Refused in Kaufland in Odorheiu Secuiesc because didn't know Hungarian /Refuzat la Kaufland în Odorheiu Secuiesc pentru că nu știa maghiară*) its maker claims he was refused service because he ordered in Romanian at a fast food restaurant in a small town with a predominantly Hungarian population.³¹ Although it later turned out that the video maker had deliberately edited the footage in a provocative way, it had its (intended?) effect, and the maker's 'adventure' in Odorheiu Secuiesc quickly became a small national scandal.³² The case, which happened to take place on Romanian

Language Day, was also covered by several press products and drew attention to the region – again in a not very positive light.³³

This case also prompted reporters from *Adevărul* – one of Romania's biggest daily newspapers – to investigate and produce a short reportage on the ground: *Why Hungarians in Szeklerland don't know Romanian (De ce nu știu maghiarii din Secuime limba română)*.³⁴ The authors of the film visited Odorheiu Secuiesc – the town where according to the 2011 census the percentage of Hungarians was ca. 96% – to find out 'how true and how much of a myth is it that the Szeklers don't know a word of the language of the country they live in, and that the Romanians who got lost in Szeklerland are starving to death if they can't even ask for bread in Hungarian?'³⁵ The journalists focused on the reasons and possible solutions regarding the Szekler Hungarians' poor knowledge of Romanian. After talking to a number of people – Hungarian and Romanian students, teachers, passers-by and Hungarian politicians – the shortcomings of Romanian language teaching became clear. But the lessons of the 'Kaufland [fast food] case' can also be drawn from the interviewees' comments: actions like the vlogger's provocation are not good for Hungarian–Romanian coexistence and more openness is needed on both sides.

In the symbolic year of 2018, at the centenary of Transylvania's incorporation into Romania, a lengthy feature was produced by reporters from Antena 3, one of Romania's leading news channels: *The Battle for Romania (Bătălia pentru România)*.³⁶ The authors were interested in the Hungarian autonomist movement in Szeklerland, asking a number of Hungarian and Romanian local residents, politicians and activists about its motivations, connections and potential consequences for Hungarian–Romanian coexistence. Addressing a variety of topics, the film gives an overview of the Hungarian–Romanian rivalry in Szeklerland and Transylvania, or, rather, it offers a Romanian reading of it with many references to the Hungarian revisionism. The

latter is demonstrated primarily by presenting the ideological and financial support from Budapest.



Hungarian High School and Romanian Orthodox Church in Gheorgheni (Gyergyószentmiklós), 2015. Source: Csaba Zahorán

A symbolic conflict took place in the following year, when a group of Romanian nationalists forcibly ‘occupied’ a World War I military cemetery on the border of Szeklerland. The events were recorded, amongst others, by Hotnews, one of the largest Romanian news portals: *The Romanian-Hungarian one-day war. How the heroes of Valea Uzului were “honoured” (Războiul de-o zi româno-maghiar. Cum au fost cinstiți eroii de la Valea Uzului)*.³⁷ The short video report follows the events of the ‘Heroes’ Day’ (Soldiers’ Remembrance Day), when, after an Orthodox service, the Romanian crowd breaks through the police line and the

Hungarian activists to enter the cemetery, waving Romanian flags, blaring *Manele* (Romanian pop folk music) and singing patriotic songs, and symbolically ‘occupy’ the site. In the report, Hungarian and Romanian politicians and activists give their views on the whole affair as well.³⁸



The ‘summer university’ in Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő), in the summer of 2017. Source: Csaba Zahorán

How to present a troubled region?

Most of these films feature several of the themes and topics mentioned above. Amongst the seven selected films, four – consciously or not – conflate autonomy with separatism and secessionism, which inevitably

involves violence. They also present the autonomist movement as driven by extremist and revisionist goals.³⁹

Hungarian revisionism and separatism are undeniably real phenomena, but actual support for them is hardly widespread. In fact, it is rather confined to a limited number of small, extremist groups and individuals. Moreover, in Hungarian–Romanian relations, there is no real violence in the region.⁴⁰ In such a context, the report of Hotnews that shows *Romanian* nationalists invading a military cemetery appears as a refreshing exception: unlike the usual scenes of Hungarian demonstrations, marches, and protests, for once, it is not the Hungarians who are portrayed as the aggressors.⁴¹

Two out of the seven films specifically name Hungarian revisionism as the greatest threat to Romanian nation-state-building since 1920. They highlight the subversive aims attributed to Budapest and Hungarian politicians from Transylvania: the secession of the region.⁴² Two other reports refer to the goal of restoring pre-1920 Greater Hungary in relation to the radical, nationalist far-right movement.⁴³

The role of the Hungarian state and the threat of Hungarian encroachment into Transylvania remains a dominant issue. Financial support from Budapest and the Jobbik's national radical rhetoric are recurring motifs in several films.⁴⁴ The newer reports address the pro-Russian foreign policy pursued by the Hungarian government since 2010 and the Russian contacts of Jobbik as well. This 'Russian element' includes the activities of Russian President Vladimir Putin to disrupt the EU – which, in this case, entails Russian support for Hungarian separatism.⁴⁵ The riots in Catalonia in 2017 appear in one of the films as a kind of alarming example for Romanian viewers of how far such 'separatist' movements can go. Moreover, linked to Russia's subversive actions against the EU, they also delegitimise the idea of national autonomy and self-determination.⁴⁶

The ‘unveiling’ of the Hungarian elites in Transylvania and Szeklerland is another ‘classic’ *topos* which is emphasised in two films.⁴⁷ They also repeatedly express strong criticism of the passive Bucharest leadership, which is mainly directed at the weakness of the central authorities and their entanglement with the Hungarian political representation.⁴⁸ Although there are exceptions, there are only a few examples of Hungarian leaders taking an explicitly constructive approach to a problem in Romania.⁴⁹

A recurring theme in these films is the situation of Romanians living in the Hungarian-majority Szeklerland. In one instance, a local Romanian politician describes the coexistence of Romanians and Hungarians in the region as an ‘interethnic cold war’, alleging that – abandoned by the Bucharest government – the Romanian population is subjected to ‘Hungarianisation’ and permanent discrimination.⁵⁰ This opinion is actually reinforced by the provocative video shot in the fast food restaurant and – though indirectly – by the otherwise non-judgmental report too (*Szekler Dream*).⁵¹ The film that stands out positively is the one that seeks and presents solutions to the language issue (intercultural education, Romanian as a foreign language).⁵²

Most of the films I have studied depict Szeklerland as a turbulent region. In this narrative, it is an area whose economic decline is not addressed by the local Hungarian politicians – who convert the discontent of the population into ethnopolitical capital and constantly instrumentalise the minority issue. Despite the overall peaceful interethnic relations, the Hungarian politicians and activists are seeking to isolate and separate the region from the rest of Romania under the pretence of autonomy. This goal is supported by Budapest and motivated by the century-old Hungarian revisionism. In the meantime, the fate of the Romanians living there is growing increasingly hopeless.

Such a narrative is mainly based on a misleading conflation between aspirations towards local Hungarian autonomy and separatism, an overstating of the role played by Hungarian revisionism, and a lopsided presentation of several phenomena. Paradoxically, even the more neutral films contribute to the image of a problematic region, as each of them focuses on a specific problem. The ominous and threatening audiovisual effects and the recurring motif of potential violence employed in the various works also reinforce the tense, troubled image they convey of the area.

Of the seven films I analysed, three – *The Forgotten Romanians in Szeklerland*, *The Battle for Romania* and the vlogger's video – are characterised by an overtly biased narrative (but to a certain extent *Autonomy and Firecrackers* is also tendentious). For instance, although the makers of *The Forgotten Romanians in Szeklerland* based their film on a research report of the Romanian Academy – which is referred to as a kind of 'scientific legitimacy' in the text on the channel's website – they managed to reproduce the dominant Romanian nationalist discourse regarding Szeklerland that has been circulating since the early 1990s.⁵³ Here, as in the other three films, the reporters recycle familiar *topoi* and framings, they mainly present statements that fit into and support the preconceptions of the makers, and the only referred historical context is the Romanian national narrative. In these four films, the Russian connection is the only new element.

In contrast, the approaches of the reporters behind the three other films – the *Szekler Dream*, *Why Hungarians in Szeklerland don't know Romanian* and *The Romanian-Hungarian one-day war* – were way less determined by such stereotypes and biases. In their case, it is more apparent that their authors really wanted to understand an issue and were not guided by the preconceptions of the traditional nationalist discourse.

Finally, we can ask the question: Why is such a representation of Szeklerland as a troubled region still so prevalent up to this day in the Romanian public sphere? My research offers two answers – or rather, two hypotheses. On the one hand, I argue that the maintenance of an ethnicised and conflict-oriented discourse – as well as the tension it entails – may serve the interests of many Romanian (but also some Hungarian) political actors, as well as the various media associated with them. The Hungarian question can still come in handy from time to time – whether it is to attract or divert public attention. The other reason I offer can be ascribed to a lack of knowledge. This may be rooted in a lack of awareness regarding the actual state of the region or a proper understanding of the ‘minority issue’. Besides the superficiality, the lack of a common language to properly describe the complex reality, as well as the normalisation of an ethnic framing also contribute to such results. One must also note that the prevalence of an ‘ethnic framework’ unfortunately obscures a host of other important questions in Szeklerland, such as the situation of the Roma, social inequalities, gender issues or developmental deficits.

The representations of Szeklerland are partly due to the specificity of the Romanian media, but their creation and reproduction are essentially due to the discourse of the nationalist political actors and the government.⁵⁴ Since the Romanian post-communist elites continued to nationalise the country after 1989 and were reluctant to expand minority rights, alleged threats to the integrity of the Romanian nation-state often reappeared in the official discourse.⁵⁵ The nationalist political discourse has legitimised anti-minority attitudes, with little sanction except occasional measures. The Romanian state power contributes to the maintenance of the Hungarian–Romanian ethnic borders and the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian minority, but often ignores, – thus leaving it unaddressed – the social and economic problems of the region (such as impoverishment and slow modernisation).

The distorted and self-contradictory image of Szeklerland is thus fuelled by the mingling of what are – or should be – basically banal issues (the use of local symbols, the teaching of the official language, the maintenance of a military cemetery) with more serious ones (discrimination, the threat of terrorism).⁵⁶ Indeed, in a region that for decades has been allegedly under the threat of Hungarian revisionism and separatism – represented by politicians – and paramilitary organisations, actual violence is, fortunately, very rare. Although the ‘fight’ in Transylvania and Szeklerland is at best fought with flags instead of bombs, the conflict-oriented nationalist discourse successfully maintains the representation of Szeklerland as a dangerous and intolerant region.⁵⁷ This is particularly striking in comparison with not so lucky regions, where acts of terrorism have taken place and/or which have been plagued by ethnic conflicts in the near past. In Western Europe only, one can think of the Basque Country, Northern Ireland, Corsica, not to mention interethnic (or ethnicized) conflicts in the Balkans or Eastern Europe – in Yugoslavia, Moldavia and Ukraine.⁵⁸ It is important to underline that the Hungarian national movement in Transylvania never went beyond parliamentary politics and demonstrations, and violent confrontations have at most only appeared in political fiction.⁵⁹

Finally, one must add that those acting on behalf of the Hungarian community in Transylvania have most often chosen to focus on symbolic politics, and their relationship with radical organisations is at times ambiguous: this may have indeed contributed to the strengthening of the image of Szeklerland as a troublesome region. Thus, those who are not interested in maintaining and reproducing this representation will have a lot to do to change it. As this mainly concerns Romania, the Romanian state and the Romanian majority have more to do, but both sides will be needed.

Endnotes

¹ In 1990, Târgu Mureș had a slight majority of Hungarians, but during the 1990s the city's population became dominated by Romanians.

² T. Gallagher, *Furtul unei națiuni. România de la comunism încoace* (Bucharest: 2004), 103-109.; Cs. Novák, and M. László, *A Szabadság Terhe. Marosvásárhely, 1990. Március 16–21* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2012), 121-130.

³ Novák, László, *A szabadság terhe*, 130.

⁴ Gallagher, *Furtul unei națiuni*, 108-109.

⁵ Cs. Zahorán, 'Románüldözés a Székelyföldön? Egy Állítólagos Etnikai Tisztogatás Története', in *Az Új Nemzetállamok És Az Etnikai Tisztogatások Kelet-Európában 1989 Után*, ed. by T. Krausz and J. Juhász (Budapest: Tanszék, 2009), pp. 268-298.

⁶ Szeklerland (*Székelyföld* in Hungarian, *Secuimea/Ținutul Secuiesc* in Romanian) is a region of about 12 000 km² in Transylvania, in the centre of Romania. The majority of its population are Hungarians with a strong regional (local Szekler) identity. The so-called 'Szekler counties' (Harghita, Covasna, Mureș) include the greater part of the historical Szeklerland, with Hungarians making up 53% of the total population of about 1 million (according to the 2021 census).

⁷ As the renowned Romanian historian Ioan-Aurel Pop (currently President of the Romanian Academy) called it in a 2017 lecture. I. Popescu, 'Academia Română și-a făcut laborator de analiză a „războiului informațional”'. Cum se vede propaganda Rusiei și Ungariei de la București' <<http://ispri.ro/academia-romana-si-a-facut-laborator-de-analiza-a-razboiului-informatiional-cum-se-vede-propaganda-rusiei-si-ungariei-de-la-bucuresti/>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

⁸ L. Watts, *Ferește-Mă, Doamne, De Prieteni* (Bucharest: RAO, 2011), more recently see V. Pușcaș, and N. Sava, *Trianon, Trianon! A Century of Political Revisionist Mythology* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2020).

⁹ R. Brubaker, *Nacionalizmus Új Keretek Között* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2006), on autonomy see M. Bakk, and A.Z. Szász, 'Conflict and Convergence:

Regionalisation Plans and Autonomy Movements in Romania', *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies*, 1/1 (2010), 19-32; L. Salat, 'The Chances of Ethnic Autonomy in Romania – between Theory and Practice', in *Autonomies in Europe: Solutions and Challenges*, ed. by Z. Kántor (Budapest: NPKE, 2014), pp. 123-39.

¹⁰ Cs. Zahorán, "'A Székelyföld Nem Létezik!' A Székelyföldi Autonómia Az 1989 Utáni Román Politikai Diskurzusban', in *Közép-Európa a 21. Század Küszöbén: Regionális Identitás És Civil Társadalom*, ed. by G. Lagzi (Veszprém: Pannon Egyetem, 2014), pp. 65-96; also see: C-G. Done, 'Confronting Nationalisms: Romania and the Autonomy of the Romanian-Hungarians', <<https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/08/02/confronting-nationalisms-romania-and-the-autonomy-of-the-romanian-hungarians/>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

¹¹ *Raportul Comisiei parlamentare de audiere a persoanelor care, după 22 decembrie 1989, au fost nevoite să-și părăsească locul de muncă și domiciliul din județele Harghita și Covasna* (Bucharest: 1991), M. Cobianu-Băcanu, *S.O.S. Români Din Covasna Și Harghita* (Târgu-Mureș: Petru Maior, 1998), I. Lăcătușu, *Tendințe De Enclavizare a Unui Spațiu Românesc* (Bucharest: România Pur și Simplu, 2004), I. Popescu, *O Insula a Șerpilor În Centrul României* (Bucharest: România Pur și Simplu, 2006), P. Țurlea, *Români Și Unguri: 1940-2011* (Bucharest: Editura Karta-Graphic, 2011), R. Baltasiu, G. Săpunaru, and O. Bulumac, *Slăbirea Comunității Românești Din Harghita-Covasna* (Bucharest: Editura Etnologică, 2013), I. Sabău-Pop, and I. Lăcătușu, *Forumul Civic Al Românilor Din Covasna, Harghita Și Mureș În Slujba Dăinuirii Neamului Românesc În Transilvania: Fcrchm 2005-2015* (Sfântu Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2015), D. Tanasă, *Uitați În Inima României* (Sfântu Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2016), A. Andreescu, and D. Bardaş, *Ațiunile Separatiste Care Vizează România* (Bucharest: Editura RAO, 2016).

¹² The smaller, explicitly nationalist parties included the Romanian National Unity Party (*PUNR*), the Greater Romania Party (*PRM*), and more recently the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (*AUR*).

¹³ Cs. Zahorán, "'Transition in the Szeklerland: Ethnic Aspect of the Post-Communist Transition in Romania', in *After Twenty Years : Reasons and Consequences of the Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by T.

Krausz, K. Csaplár-Degovics, M. Mitrovits and Cs. Zahorán (Berlin, Budapest: Osteuropa-Zentrum, 2010), pp. 261-97. Also see N. Kulish, 'Kosovo's Actions Hearten a Hungarian Enclave', <<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/world/europe/07hungarians.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

¹⁴ "Mintha egy másik országban lennék" - Székelyudvarhelyen járt az ország legnépszerűbb rendőre' <<https://maszol.ro/életmod/Mintha-egy-masik-orszagban-lennek-Szekelyudvarhelyen-jart-az-orszag-legnepyszerubb-rendore?fbclid=IwAR27qbhRqKktM-8-78RMkY5Dr89IirQiErAYNfrPZs1bqcKADAjtAL6Capp%20See%20his%20post:%20https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5410082785706312>> [accessed 8/2/2023]. See also: M. Sever, 'În spatele steagului secuiesc (1): Am cumpărat în Secuime, în românește. Și pâine?' <<https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/in-spatele-steagului-secuiesc-1-am-cumparat-in-1411093.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

¹⁵ The Hungarian autonomists founded in 2003 the Transylvanian Hungarian National Council and the Szekler National Council.

¹⁶ On Minority SafePack Initiative see <http://minority-safepack.eu/>, on autonomy initiatives see L. Salat, I.G. Székely, and D. Lakatos, 'The Autonomy Movement of Hungarians in Romania', *European Yearbook of Minority Issues Online*, 19/1 (2022), 268-96. On the Szekler flag see Á. Patakfalvi-Czirják, *A Székely Zászló a Politikától a Hétköznapiig* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2021).

¹⁷ L. Szőcs, "Titkolja a bíróság, miért ítélte el Bekét és Szőcsöt a "székely terrorperben", <https://atlatso.ro/radikalisok/alkotmanyos-rend-elleni-cselekmények/titkolja-a-birosag-miert-itelte-el-beket-es-szocsot-a-szekely-terrorperben/?fbclid=IwAR02NTOcxkm6jXmC_NvE72R65YhjVfOLKH0AeF8PcVE2m5EOs1Ia8H0uOdc> [accessed 8/2/2023] and Á. Patakfalvi-Czirják, 'Nacionalista Szubkultúra És Közösségépítés – a Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom Erdélyben', *Replika*, 5 (2017), 165-89.

¹⁸ In the second government of Emil Boc (2009–2012), in the short-lived Ungureanu cabinet (2012) and in the third Ponta cabinet (2014).

¹⁹ Zs. Csergo, and J. Goldgeier, 'Nationalist Strategies and European Integration', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2/1 (2004), 21-37.

²⁰ Z. Sipos, 'Milliárdokkal olajozott érdekházasság: így hódította meg az RMDSZ-t a Fidesz' <<https://atlatzso.ro/tamogatasok/milliardokkal-olajozott-erdekhezassag-igy-hodította-meg-az-rmdsz-t-a-fidesz/>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

²¹ Patakfalvi-Czirják, 'A székely zászló', 103-122.

²² T. Kiss, T. Toró, and I.G. Székely, 'Unequal Accommodation: An Institutional Analysis of Ethnic Claim-Making and Bargaining', in *Unequal Accommodation of Minority Rights: Hungarians in Transylvania*, ed. by T. Kiss, I.G. Székely, T. Toró and N. Bárdi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 71-165.

²³ 'Szétválasztott szélsőségek Szentgyörgyön' <https://kronikaonline.ro/erdelyi-hirek/szetvalasztott-szelsosegek-szentgyorgyon#> [accessed 8/2/2023].

²⁴ C. Badea, 'Dan Dungaciu: Relatia Romaniei cu Rusia risca sa treaca prin Budapesta! - Interviu' <<https://ziare.com/politica/politica-externa/dan-dungaciu-relatia-romaniei-cu-rusia-risca-sa-treaca-prin-budapesta-interviu-1263139>> [accessed 8/2/2023]. A. Rogoian, *Factorul Intern – România În Spirala Conspirațiilor* (Bucharest: Compania, 2016), 273-277; A. Cumpănașu, 'MARELE PLAN: Transilvania, independentă! Restul, România Federală' <<https://www.dcnews.ro/marele-plan-transilvania-independenta-restul-romania-federala-519981.html>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

²⁵ A. Biró, and J. Gagy, 'Román-Magyar Interetnikus Kapcsolatok Csíkszeredában: Az Előzmények És a Mai Helyzet', in *Egy Más Mellett Élés. A Magyar-Román, Magyar-Cigány Kapcsolatokról*, ed. by J. Gagy (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 1996), pp. 45-111; V. Tánzos, 'Kettős Hatalmi Szerkezet a Székelyföldön', *Magyar Kisebbség*, 4/2 (1998), 339-62; A. Biró, '»Csodálatos« és »intoleráns« vidék. Jegyzetek a Har-Kov problémáról', in *Stratégiaiák vagy kényszerpályák? Tanulmányok a romániai magyar társadalomról*, ed. by A. Biró (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 1998), pp. 167-179; A. Mungiu-Pippidi, *Transilvania Subiectivă* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999); Lazăr, 'Percepții Identitare Si Relații Interetnice În Secuime. Element Pentru O "Deconstrucție" Și O "Reconstrucție"', in *Relații Interetnice În România Postcomunistă*, ed. by L. Nastasă and L. Salat (Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2000), pp. 347-61; G. Andreescu,

Extremismul De Dreapta în România (Cluj: 2003); Ș. Bruno, *Secuii Și Românii. Evoluția Unei Neînțelegeri* (Indianapolis: InterAcademic Press, 2009); Kiss, Székely, Toró e.a. (eds.), *Unequal Accommodation*.

²⁶ R(omânia) TV, 2012, Mihai Ștefan Teodorescu, 18:48 min., <<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 8/2/2023]. On the report see Baltasiu e.a., *Slăbirea comunității românești*

²⁷ Although the Szeklers are considered to be Hungarians, their origins are still not entirely clear. Nevertheless, they were already Hungarian-speaking at the time of their settlement in their present-day homeland (c. 12th c.), and during the formation of modern nations in the 19th century they were integrated into the modern Hungarian nation.

²⁸ RISE PROJECT, 2016, Victor Ilie, Ștefan Mako, 21:56 min., <<https://www.riseproject.ro/documentar-autonomie-si-petarde/>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

²⁹ Also in 2016, the Rise Project produced another reportage on the Romanian far-right: <https://www.riseproject.ro/film-documentar-oamenii-noii-drepte/>

³⁰ Alex Iacob, Robert Casmirovici, 2016, 30:05 min., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJdnw-tESow&t=152s>> [accessed 8/2/2023]. On the case see 'Cei doi extremiști maghiari care plănuiau un atentat la Târgu Secuiesc, condamnați la închisoare', <<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/justitie/cei-doi-extremisti-maghiari-care-planuiau-un-atentat-la-targu-secuiesc-condamnati-la-inchisoare-957901>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³¹ 'Milițianul', 2017, 4:03 min., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JMNctXhhLc>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

³² The video has been viewed more than 230,000 times in a day and a half. Balázs-Pál, 'Már miccsel se szolgálják ki a románokat Székelyföldön?', <<https://bpeiod.transindex.ro/?cikk=1253>> [accessed 9/2/2023], Bot, 'Cum a fost fabricată înregistrarea de la Kaufland Odorheiul Secuiesc - VIDEO' <<https://malinbot.wordpress.com/2017/09/07/cum-a-fost-fabricata-inregistrarea-de-la-kaufland-odorheiul-secuiesc-video/>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³³ Florescu, 'VIDEO Refuzat la Kaufland în Odorheiu Secuiesc pentru că nu știa maghiară: »De ce nu știți ungurește, că sunteți în Ținutul Secuiesc?«' <<https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/cluj-napoca/video-refuzat-la-kaufland-in-odorheiu-secuiesc-1807468.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], 'Reacția vloggerului implicat în incidentul de la Kaufland. »Nu ai cum să trucezi ura«' <<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/reacc-ia-vloggerului-implicat-in-incidentul-de-la-kaufland-nu-ai-cum-sa-trucezi-ura.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], 'VIDEO. Client refuzat în Odorheiu Secuiesc pentru că nu ar fi vorbit maghiară. Reacția Kaufland' <<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/video-client-kaufland-refuzat-in-odorheiu-secuiesc-pentru-ca-nu-ar-fi-vorbit-maghiara-786489>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³⁴ Adevărul - Marta Pavel, David Muntean, 2017, 14:17 min., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uVierI8NR8&t=276s> or <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/societate/de-ce-nu-stiu-maghiarii-din-secuime-limba-romana-1813822.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³⁵ *Why Hungarians in Szeklerland don't know Romanian* 0:00-0:10 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uVierI8NR8&t=276s> or <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/societate/de-ce-nu-stiu-maghiarii-din-secuime-limba-romana-1813822.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³⁶ Antena 3 - Alex Nedea, 2018, 47:32 min., <<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³⁷ HotNews.ro - Clarice Dinu, Victor Cozmei, 2019, 15:41 min., <<https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-23190792-video-razboiul-romano-maghiar-cum-fost-cinstiti-eroii-valea-uzului-filmul-complet.htm>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

³⁸ Palfi, 'Diplomatic tensions flare between Romania and Hungary after cemetery incident', <<https://www.euronews.com/2019/06/07/romanian-crowd-break-into-austro-hungarian-world-war-i-graveyard>> [accessed 9/2/2023]. On the media representation of the conflict see O. Sarány, 'Párhuzamos valóságok termelése. Az úzvölgyi katonatemetőben történt interetnikus konfliktus román és magyar médiareprezentációjának összehasonlítása', *Erdélyi Társadalom*, 19/2 (2021), 99-132.

- ³⁹ *The Forgotten Romanians* 01:33-2:18
<<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 8/2/2023], *The Battle for Romania* 01:20-9:18
<<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *Autonomy and Firecrackers* 2:27-2:34, 20:20-20:30 <<https://www.riseproject.ro/documentar-autonomie-si-petarde/>> [accessed 8/2/2023], *Szekler Dream* 28:08-29:23
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJdnw-tESow&t=152s>> [accessed 8/2/2023].
- ⁴⁰ True, the problems in Hungarian–Roma coexistence sometimes lead to conflicts in this region too, see Toma, 'A túlcsondult teli pohár és az etnikai konfliktusok esete Romániában', *Pro Minoritate*, 4 (2011), 123-143.
- ⁴¹ *The Romanian-Hungarian one-day war. How the heroes of Valea Uzului were „honoured”* <<https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-23190792-video-razboiul-romano-maghiar-cum-fost-cinstiti-eroii-valea-uzului-filmul-complet.htm>> [accessed 9/2/2023].
- ⁴² *The Battle for Romania* 09:17-12:40, 40:00-44:01
<<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *The Forgotten Romanians* 04:40-05:30, 16:20-16:43 <<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 9/2/2023].
- ⁴³ *Autonomy and Firecrackers* 04:34-09:36
<<https://www.riseproject.ro/documentar-autonomie-si-petarde/>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *Szekler Dream* 20:30-22:22
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJdnw-tESow&t=152s>> [accessed 9/2/2023].
- ⁴⁴ *The Battle for Romania* 38:00-40:00
<<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *Autonomy and Firecrackers* 10:23-14:16 <<https://www.riseproject.ro/documentar-autonomie-si-petarde/>> [accessed 9/2/2023].
- ⁴⁵ *The Battle for Romania* 45:03-46:47
<[https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-](https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html)

romania-467913.html> [accessed 9/2/2023], *Autonomy and Firecrackers* 15:27-19:30 <<https://www.riseproject.ro/documentar-autonomie-si-petarde/>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁴⁶ *The Battle for Romania* 44:02-44:53 <<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁴⁷ *The Battle for Romania* 18:24-26:42 <<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *The Forgotten Romanians* 16:44-17:09 <<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁴⁸ *The Battle for Romania* 27:26-29:10, 33:55-35:00 <<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/in-premiera-batalia-pentru-romania-467913.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023], *The Forgotten Romanians* 05:00-10:02 <<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁴⁹ *Why Hungarians in Szeklerland don't know Romanian* 02:29-02:36, 04:07-04:43, 07:05-07:016, 08:49-09:04, 09:45-11:30, 12:12-12:27, 13:14-13:59 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uVierI8NR8&t=276s> or <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/societate/de-ce-nu-stiu-maghiarii-din-secuime-limba-romana-1813822.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁵⁰ *The Forgotten Romanians* 10:30-11:05, 17:10-17:46 <<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xokxau>> [accessed 8/2/2023].

⁵¹ *Refused in Kaufland in Odorheiu Secuiesc because didn't know Hungarian* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JMNctXhhLc>> [accessed 8/2/2023], *Szekler Dream* 27:54-28:07 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJdnw-tESow&t=152s>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁵² *Why Hungarians in Szeklerland don't know Romanian* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uVierI8NR8&t=276s> or <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/societate/de-ce-nu-stiu-maghiarii-din-secuime-limba-romana-1813822.html>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁵³ The case is complicated by the fact that the academic study referred to has been the subject of several professional and ethical criticisms and has even been sanctioned by the National Council for Anti-Discrimination, although the

judgment was later annulled by a court. Mitran, 'Centru al Academiei Române, amendat cu 8.000 de lei de CNCD după concedierea unui cercetător', <<https://www.mediafax.ro/social/centru-al-academiei-romane-amendat-cu-8-000-de-lei-de-cncd-dupa-concedierea-unui-cercetator-11746894>> [accessed 9/2/2023].

⁵⁴ Gross, 'Modificări Spectaculoase, Dar Puține Schimbări În Presă', in *România Postcomunistă: Trecut, Prezent, Viitor* ed. by L. Stan and D. Vancea (Iasi: POLIROM, 2017), 153-172

⁵⁵ M. Keating, 'Többszemzetiségű Demokráciák a Szuverenitás Utáni Világrendben', in *Szöveggyűjtemény a Nemzeti Kisebbségekről* ed. by Z. Kántor and B. Majtényi (Budapest: Rejtjel, 2005), pp. 43-58; L. Salat, and Cs. Novák, 'Etnicitate, Naționalism Și Regimul Minorităților', in *România Postcomunistă: Trecut, Prezent, Viitor* ed. by L. Stan and D. Vancea (Iasi: POLIROM, 2017), pp. 85-108.

⁵⁶ On symbolic conflicts see D. Dragoman, 'Ethnic Groups in Symbolic Conflict: The "Ethnicisation" of Public Space in Romania', *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 11/1 (2011), 105-21.

⁵⁷ A. Biró, '»Csodálatos« és »intoleráns« vidék', 177-178

⁵⁸ McGarry, and O'Leary, 'Etnikai Konfliktusok Makropolitikai Rendezése', in *Szöveggyűjtemény a Nemzeti Kisebbségekről*, ed. by Z. Kántor and B. Majtényi (Budapest: Rejtjel, 2005), pp. 253-263

⁵⁹ D. Autere, *The Fury of the Tsar I. – Bonfire* (Budapest: 2020)