

# The Intellectuals of Politics and the Policies of Intellectuals The Role of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council in the Political Integration of the Ethnic Hungarian Cultural Elite during the Ceaușescu Regime

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*The existence and evolution of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council reflects in fact the evolution of the policy of the Ceaușescu regime, especially in connection with the national minorities.*

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## 1965—the Beginning of a New Policy Towards the Ethnic Minorities

**A**FTER THE death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on 22 March 1965, Nicolae Ceaușescu became first secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP).<sup>1</sup> During the first 4–5 years after gaining power, Ceaușescu methodically removed his political opponents, creating the premises for implementing new directives in social and economic policy. The 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was held in 1965 (that year the RWP also returned to its old name). During the Congress, the party's leadership defined the new political and economic principles, the most important being: with the disappearance

of the exploiting class, socialism had obtained total victory in the entire country, starting a new phase of the construction and development of socialism. During the Congress it was stated that in a future phase of the construction of socialism an administrative and territorial reform was to be implemented, rural communities were to be systematized and the economic policy-making improved.<sup>2</sup>

As a basic principle with repercussions on the nationality issue the idea according to which “the basis for the development of socialist society is going to be assured, for a long time, by the state and the socialist nation” was launched. During this period the notion of socialist nation was reformulated and reassessed. The independence policy towards the USSR and the changes in the policy towards ethnic minorities after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution forced the party leadership to find new models of ideological interpretation for this notion. As far as the relationship between the socialist Romanian nation and the cohabitating nationalities is concerned, the fundamental principle—although the existence of other nationalities was recognized—denied the necessity of collective rights for minorities and emphasized the ethnic Romanian element.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the relationship between the majority population and the ethnic minorities, the interpretation of the concept of socialist nation was a new element that, beyond the negation of collective rights, served as a means of bringing together the cohabiting populations, offering an ideological basis for the social, economic and cultural homogenization of the country. In the long run, for the ethnic minorities, it could also mean ethnic homogenization. On the long term, within the process of the socialist nation’s formation, the existing strong relationships of the ethnic minorities with their mother countries were not taken into account. Simultaneously, the assimilation of the country’s nationalities was taken into consideration, in several stages.<sup>4</sup>

From the point of view of the policy towards minorities, as compared to the last years of the Gheorghiu-Dej regime, the new party leadership showed a more visible interest towards the nationality issue. More precisely, there were possibilities that did not exist towards the end of the Gheorghiu-Dej regime. In 1965, a new committee was set up within the Central Committee (CC) of the RCP, which dealt with the issues pertaining to the ethnic minorities, and among its members one can find András Sütő, Lajos Takács, and Richard Winter. The main purpose of this committee was to facilitate the party’s ideological work directed at the minorities (anticlerical propaganda, dissemination of the party’s ideology). However, in this context its members had the possibility to raise special issues regarding these communities: the issue of education, vocational training, or the exaggerated reaction of the authorities towards the so-called “nationalist manifestation” of individuals belonging to ethnic minorities.<sup>5</sup>

The highlight of this political process came in 1968, having been influenced of course by the international context. The number of meetings and discussions between the party leadership and various groups of intellectuals, as well as the number of work visits in most of the counties visibly increased. This series of tactical moves on behalf of the party did not avoid the most important ethnic groups of Romania, the ethnic Hungarians and Germans. In order to regain the trust of these groups, a number of actions were taken, among which the meeting held on 28 June 1968 between the highest party leadership and the elite of the ethnic Hungarians in Romania. Although this meeting with the leaders of the ethnic Hungarians and Germans cannot be viewed as a singular event, it was still a very important moment of the RCP's policy towards the cohabiting nationalities. After 1948, the party basically stated that the issue of the minorities had been solved, and the situation of the minorities did not represent a distinct problem, while the rights conferred by the socialist constitution did not justify the demands concerning collective rights. Within the party, which controlled every aspect of social life, there was no debate until 1968 regarding the issues of the minorities or of other religious or social groups.<sup>6</sup>

The events of the second half of the 1960s clearly show that in order to strengthen his position after taking the power, Ceaușescu was seeking some sort of reconciliation with the Romanian society. In these endeavors an important role was played by finding a balanced paradigm of control and collaboration with the intellectuals.<sup>7</sup> In this political process, breaking with Gheorghiu-Dej's policy, the party leadership offered a new possibility of institutional integration for the intellectuals of the ethnic minorities. Different approaches, the activation of some intellectuals in 1965–1966, and then the meetings with the representatives of the elites of the minorities were followed after the 1968 administrative reform by the creation of several new institutions and organizations.<sup>8</sup> In the newly created counties and in the capital, the existing cultural institutional system was reorganized or new components were created: theatres, newspapers, periodicals, cultural ensembles, the *Kriterion* publishing house, Hungarian and German studios of the Romanian Television, *A Hét* (The Week) cultural magazine etc.<sup>9</sup>

After the meeting with the representatives of the ethnic Hungarian cultural elite, the party understood the importance of the direct institutionalization of the relationship between the minorities' cultural elite and the party structures. However in the current context, the creation of representative organizations on the existing 1945–1953 model was not possible.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Ceaușescu found a compromise by setting up a new organization for the minorities in which the main co-opted partners were the intellectuals. On 15 November 1968, on the model of the Front of Socialist Unity (FSU), the Ethnic Hungarian Work-

ers' Council (EHWC, Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsa) and the Ethnic German Workers' Council (EGWC, Rat der Werktätigen deutscher Nationalität) were created. The workers' councils of the ethnic minorities were not set up in order to implement the collective rights of the minorities of Romania, but to channel the party's policy towards the respective ethnic minorities. Moreover, in the name of the linguistic "separation" entailed by the definition of the socialist nation, besides their role of integrators these councils could, in theory, help "boost the scientific, artistic and literary works created in the language of the cohabiting nationalities, forming a close unity with the development of the Romanian people's creations and with the socialist spiritual progress of the whole country."<sup>11</sup> It was hoped that this would solve—at any level—the specific issues of the minorities, hence the statement according to which the EHWC and EGWC could play a role in the "assessment of these communities and the specific problems of their population, in order to find the best solution in line with the general interests of the socialist society and the minorities."<sup>12</sup>

Generally these councils were headed by renowned intellectuals of the given community, who at the same time, due to their activities, were closely connected to party structures. In the minds of these intellectuals the councils had the political and cultural mission to create a connection, to function as a "transmission belt" between the party leadership and the ethnic Hungarian community in Romania.

From this perspective, in the activity of the EHWC one can distinguish three stages. During the years 1968–1974 the council managed to successfully and totally fulfill the function of being a transmission belt in both directions.<sup>13</sup> Starting with 1975—in the light of the July 1971 Theses—one can observe a gradual erosion of the council, an over-ideologization of its activity and a limitation of the intellectuals' activity within the organization. From 1984, the council's activity was restricted to the dissemination of propaganda and the mobilization of the masses, and after several reorganizations and purges the key members left the organization.

## **A New "Transmission Belt" for the Intellectuals? The First Years After the Creation of the EHWC (1968–1974)**

**B**ASED ON the party's dispositions, the social composition of the EHWC's leading bodies had to be socially heterogeneous: party activists, workers, peasants, and intellectuals. During the first years of the organization's activity, intellectuals played a major role. The elected president of the

EHWC's Political Bureau was István Péterfi from Cluj, a member of the Romanian Academy. The vice-presidency was ensured by Lajos Takács (university professor), Károly Király (first secretary of Covasna County), József Méliusz (writer) and Tibor Maros (physician, university professor). The members of the Bureau were: László Bányai (university professor), János Demeter (lawyer, pro-rector of Babeş-Bolyai University), Anna Dukász (actress, director of the Hungarian Theatre in Sfântu Gheorghe), Zoltán Kovács (painter), Sándor Egri (worker), Magdolna Fábíán (member of the Women's National Council), Mihály B. Kovács (vice-president of Harghita People's Council), Julianna Márton (worker), Sándor Nagy (president of the Vaida cooperative of Bihor County), András Sütő (writer, editor-in-chief of the *Új Élet* magazine of Târgu-Mureş), József Valter (activist, secretary of the Union of Communist Youth), and Dezső Szilágyi (editor). In 1974 this central body was completed with an additional 24 members.<sup>14</sup> In total the EHWC had 162 members, many of them activists and worker cadres. However during this period the core was made up of known intellectuals, personalities acknowledged both within the ethnic Hungarian community and outside it (reporters, writers, theatre directors, actors, professors), namely: András Sütő, Edgár Balogh, László Bányai, Gábor Cseke, Sándor Dali, Anna Dukász, Zsolt Gálfalvi, György Kovács, János Szász, József Méliusz, Domokos Szilágyi, Ferenc Szemlér, Géza Domokos etc.). In the county organizations, out of the 162 members approximately 75% were party activists or representatives of the economic units, factories, agricultural production cooperatives, etc. A more significant presence of the intellectuals can be found in the counties and regions where there were cultural and educational centers, such as Cluj, Mureş and Harghita counties.<sup>15</sup>

During the first year after its creation, the activity of the EHWC was based on two pillars. During the bureau's meetings and during lucrative meetings, issues regarding the Hungarian community were discussed, then all these, together with the proposals of the plenary sessions, were presented to the party leadership. At the same time, during the first period the county organizations worked with the local party organizations in order to improve the party's cultural activity within the minority communities.

The EHWC was set up to work as a mass organization on the model of the FSU, in order to create connections between the party leadership and a specific segment of society, in this case the ethnic Hungarian community in Romania. However, the first years were marked by an active presence of some of the intellectuals who tried to tie together some major issues regarding the party's nationality policy. The intervention and the presence of the intellectuals were well integrated and "camouflaged" into the official activity of the EHWC. As it was stated above, the makeup of the council was done according to party direc-

tives, and the plenary sessions were conducted in the same manner. Some of the speakers, activists, factory delegates, presented general policy issues (international policy, economic life, propaganda issues), while some intellectuals raised problems strictly connected to the party's national policy, the educational and cultural system of the Hungarian community.

During the EHWC's first plenary session, on 8 July 1969, out of the 21 persons that spoke, half were intellectuals. The EHWC prepared a series of proposals for the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCP. Out of the 15 points of the proposal, five were connected to economic problems such as: equipment for the agricultural production cooperatives, creating dorms for girls, the remuneration of agricultural engineers, matters regarding the chemical industry.<sup>16</sup> Ten points were directly concerned with the RCP's policy towards the ethnic Hungarians: a law of nationalities, a research institute for the minorities, the re-establishment of vocational education on the language of the national minorities, teaching history and geography in their mother tongue, the problem of school textbooks, the organization of the educational system, television programs in their mother tongues. A proposal regarding the "creation of a state body that would help local bodies in applying in everyday life the nationality policy and the relevant laws" was very interesting because theoretically this role could have been played by the EHWC itself if its statute had been better defined and outlined.<sup>17</sup> During 1969, the EHWC also held a few bureau meetings where they analyzed the activity of the county organizations and attempted a synthesis regarding the discussed issues.<sup>18</sup>

The researched documents have revealed that during this period the majority of the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals that were active in this organization hoped that the EHWC was going to be the main forum to discuss the issues regarding Romania's Hungarian community, as well as a means to transmit these issues to the party. After the Hungarian Popular Union was abolished in 1953, there was no organization outside the party where these questions could be discussed and introduced into the public discourse. The appetite of the intellectuals is illustrated by the fact that during a meeting in March 1969 Lajos Takács wanted the EHWC to set up a set of regulations even before the party regulations appeared.<sup>19</sup> During the first years of activity many important leaders of the EHWC took quite seriously their "mission" to map the problems of the Hungarian community and to propose solutions to party leaders.

Besides the compulsory propaganda, during this time the EHWC had quite a rich activity. Special councils devoted to the counties of Transylvania were set up, within which meetings with local intellectuals were held to discuss the issues they were confronted with: education in their mother tongue, cultural institutions, cultural events etc. A festivity to commemorate the execution of the 13 Hungarian generals on 6 October 1849 was held in Arad.<sup>20</sup> Councils for

the control of state education in regions where there was a minority population were also set up. The work plan in six points established for the second half of 1970 was concerned only with the concrete issues of the ethnic Hungarians' cultural life: the anniversary of George Dózsa's revolt, support for establishing a cultural magazine edited in Hungarian, a better presence of Hungarian literature on the market, the analysis of the program regarding education in Hungarian, the assessment of the results from 3–4 counties and current problems, dispatching activists to Bihor, Arad, Harghita, Mureș, Cluj counties in order to help the collaboration between county councils and the EHWC.<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning the activity of the EHWC was limited to a well-defined and restricted area: cultural life, party propaganda and issues pertaining to education. In these conditions it did not have the chance to carry out socio-political activities that would mobilize the larger masses. However, starting with 1970 letters of different groups appear in which these ask for the EHWC to help and intervene on matters such as new classes with teaching in Hungarian or even personal problems. A group of ethnic Hungarian workers from Sic asked for the intervention of the council in order to clarify their situation after they were (allegedly) assaulted on ethnic grounds near Zalău.<sup>22</sup>

The first period of the EHWC's existence was analyzed during a plenary held in the presence of Nicolae Ceaușescu on 12 March 1971.<sup>23</sup> Prominent Hungarian intellectuals were also present and delivered speeches: János Demeter, András Sütő, Géza Domokos, Edgár Balogh, Sándor Kányádi etc. Based on these assessments and speeches it can be said that the first three years of the organization's activity had been relatively productive, despite the abovementioned political context. In the case of the ethnic Hungarian minority, individual decisions could not be made and there were no specific answers to their problems, but the development of the nationality policy and the party's promises could be tracked by the council, and with the help of persons close to the party leadership, on the level of proposals and observations, lobbying could be made or some issues could be presented during the plenary, but only after having been properly "strategically embellished."<sup>24</sup>

At a plenary session from 1971 it was still possible for ethnic Hungarian intellectuals to raise issues and present their observations. E.g., János Demeter requested in 1971 the control and compliance with the dispositions of the popular councils.

*Thus, article 26 provides that in counties where there is a minority population, the decisions have to be presented also in the language of the minority in question. Two years have passed since the law was adopted, so it is high time to ask in what measure are the requests submitted in a minority's language solved by the clerks and if the*

*decisions of the Councils and Executive Committees have or have not been printed in Hungarian as well. I would dare to propose—as it has already been mentioned by comrade Péterfi—the establishment of a committee that, in connection with this issue, would collect data from the counties and municipalities, convincing those authorities that there are no further reasons to wait for other special decisions, because these laws are compulsory and also include the law on the equal rights of all citizens of this country.*<sup>25</sup>

## On the Path of Transformation: 1975–1984

**D**URING THE plenary session of the Central Committee of the RCP from July 1971, Nicolae Ceaușescu delivered a speech regarding the need to improve the political-ideological activity and the Marxist education of party members, a moment that later became known as the “July Theses.”<sup>26</sup> These and their long-term effects caused visible ruptures in the country’s political life. The partial relaxation felt towards the end of Gheorghiu-Dej’s regime and continued by Ceaușescu was succeeded by a new wave of ideological severity, and its implementation ultimately gravely marked the whole of Romanian society (it became quite intense by the end of the ’70s). The mechanisms born out of the Theses, such as economic ones (forced industrialization, harsh living conditions), territorial systematization (the beginning of the destruction of villages), as well as the ideological and cultural ones (restrictions in the educational system and in the cultural life of the minorities) gradually created a situation increasingly lacking any perspective, including for the ethnic minorities of the country. The physical existence of the national minorities’ cultural institutions established towards the end of the ’60s was not yet in danger. However, social life, culture and all their areas and products were under the pall of a general ideological rigor, just as in the case of the cultural institutions of the majority population. The activities in the minority cultural institutions and organizations, which had previously had a certain specificity, presently had to reflect the party’s new directives. Starting with the ’70s, these institutions experienced a gradual regress as far as their existential base was concerned and were degraded to mere mouthpieces of the party’s directives, having lost the role of promoting and developing the specific culture of the nationalities.

The revaluation of the councils of the nationalities started practically in 1971, but an important change in their activity occurred towards the mid-seventies. In 1971 the main criticism was referring to the fact that these councils did not emphasize enough the transmission of the official propaganda and socialist education.



*The attempts to offer solutions to the issue of nationalities must be eliminated in a unilateral manner. The councils of the cohabiting nationalities will be able to fulfill the tasks they were given only if they deal with the most current problems of building socialism. In future, the Council of Ethnic Hungarian Workers in Mureş County has to be more attentive regarding the implementation and achievement of the Party's policy in every area—economy, politics, cultural and social life—thus contributing to the birth of a healthy public opinion that shall not tolerate any hostile manifestation towards the new man, defined by the socialist humanism based on the Marxist-Leninist principles*

stated in 1971 Endre Antalffy, president of the EHWC.<sup>27</sup>

In the mid-seventies, due to the ever increasing ideological pressure, these councils lost even the minimal role that they had at the beginning, i.e. to convey the specific problems of their communities. In 1971, in letter addressed to János Fazekas, András Sütő and Győző Hajdu brought to the attention of the former that certain county organizations of the EHWC (e.g., Satu Mare or Timiș) existed only on paper and their leaders were unfit. The efficiency of the councils was also undermined by the fact that county secretary generals were not given clear instructions as to how these councils should work.<sup>28</sup> They could not, however, be given such instructions, as no plenaries of the councils were held between 1971 and 1974.

Within the activities organized by the EHWC, “mass cultural work,” i.e. conveying party propaganda, was increasingly emphasized.<sup>29</sup> A 1973 report shows that

*During the period we are referring to, the activities carried out in order to raise the socialist awareness of the masses and deepen their ideological knowledge were amplified, the propagation of the Party and state policy was intensified within the Party's educational structures and the CYU [Communist Youth Union], within conferences, people's universities, and lectures. In localities with a compact population of ethnic Hungarians, this activity is carried out in their mother tongue.<sup>30</sup>*

**D**URING THE joint plenary of the EHWC and EGWC on 5 April 1974, neither the tone nor the contents of the report presented by István Péterfi were in the least similar to those presented at the 1971 plenary. This speech no longer mentioned the grievances of the nationalities, but increasingly underlined the role and purpose of the councils as a means of conveying to the minorities the latest ideological discourse of the party.<sup>31</sup> In both content and tone, Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech suggested a new perspective. It stated again that the party had taken care of the nationality issue and underlined the unity of the Romanian people with the coexisting nations. The educational problems

highlighted since the '70s were deemed general and valid for the whole educational system of Romania.<sup>32</sup> Ceaușescu, who had been recently promoted to the position of president of the country, took up a moralizing tone, and told the representatives of the national minorities that they should make the communities understand that if they wanted to succeed in life they would have to learn the Romanian language. Those present were quite surprised when the secretary general stated that granting excessive powers to the minority councils could lead to the creation of councils of the Romanian nationality in Harghita County.<sup>33</sup> The idea that closed the speech of the supreme leader and according to which unity must be strengthened—excluding the separation of the minorities—made any cultural manifestation of the minorities impossible.<sup>34</sup>

During the 1970s, the EHWC slowly lost its status and the possibility to be the body that conveyed the ethnic Hungarian minority's special issues to the party. The changes in the council's activities can be seen on two levels: many leaders and important members of the council were purged and the council's political role decreased significantly. During the second half of the '70s, many cadres were changed both at central and county level. A significant number of intellectuals who had played a defining role in presenting some of the specific issues as well as in interfacing with the party, were purged or forced to retire. In the leading bodies of the council, activists like János Vincze or Sándor Koppándi, dispatched by the Central Committee of the RCP, played an increasingly significant role.

By the time of the 1976 plenary of the EHWC (where Ceaușescu was not present), of the old leadership only the Cluj-Napoca professor, István Péterfi, was still active. Besides him the presidency was ensured by three party activists, Lajos Fazekas, János Vincze, and Sándor Koppándi. Out of those who were permitted to give speeches only two were intellectuals from the old generation, Endre Antalffy (he had not had a decisive role in the previous years, either) from Târgu-Mureș, and Zsolt Gálfalvi, the editor of the *A Hét* magazine. The rest were party activists and worker cadres, as well as agricultural cadres.<sup>35</sup>

During the first period, important issues were discussed during work meetings and then presented to the party leadership and discussed during plenary sessions. In most of the cases high-ranking officials from the Central Committee would be present, at times even Nicolae Ceaușescu himself. In this context, those who presented certain problems could do so in front of the plenary, fulfilling their roles of mediators. Starting with the second half of the '70s, Ceaușescu stopped participating in these plenaries, being represented by an activist of the Central Committee, in this period by Miron Constantinescu. The diminished role of the EHWC was illustrated by the fact that the Central Committee's representative did not allow certain problems discussed during the work meetings

to be presented here. Issues considered important by the members of the EHWC were only discussed during the bureau meetings.

In this period there were already cases when intellectuals, even if they were members of the EHWC, were not allowed to deliver speeches. One of them was a professor from Cluj, an old activist, Edgár Balogh, who after the meeting sent a letter to the leadership of the EHWC where he presented his ideas regarding education in the mother tongue, especially in vocational schools.<sup>36</sup> Similarly to Balogh, many intellectuals were left out of the leading and influential circle of the EHWC, however they did not give up and tried to present the issues within the secondary forums of the council.

On 2 October 1975, the secretary of the Central Committee, Ilie Verdeț, had a meeting with some of the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals, among them Géza Domokos, Zsolt Gálfalvi, Pál Bodor, and János Szász. The meeting was also attended by party activists János Vincze and Sándor Koppándi. They mainly discussed some issues that were not presented at the plenary: in some institutions there were no Hungarian musicians (the Târgu-Mureș Philharmonic); in the propagation of socialist culture the specific Hungarian culture and the history of the Hungarian community from Romania were neglected (those present stated that the poems of Adrian Păunescu were not enough for the ethnic Hungarian community), some of the ethnic Hungarian citizens were accused, in most of the cases unjustly, of nationalism; in Valea Nirajului some of the local police and members of the people's council requested the population to send their children to classes with teaching in the Romanian language. Those present at this meeting requested that the local organizations of the EHWC be given more of a say in solving such problems.<sup>37</sup>

On 18 October 1975 another heated bureau meeting took place, also in the presence of Ilie Verdeț. Lajos Takács, a professor from Cluj and a longtime party activist, presented in a very critical tone the fact that in his opinion there was no clearly defined idea in the area of education in the mother tongue. He also stated that based on documents, half of the ethnic Hungarian pupils in vocational schools did not have the possibility to learn in their mother tongue, and those who attempted to get into universities could not take the exam in their mother tongue.<sup>38</sup> Two other members of the bureau, Zsolt Gálfalvi and Géza Domokos, joined Takács but with a more moderate tone, while Dezső Szilágyi and István Péterfi refrained from making declarations. In his response, Verdeț, criticized in a determined tone the EHWC, stating that it approached some issues only from the point of view of the nationality issue, neglecting the party's general directives and the creation of the new man. He also stated that from the point of view of the party leadership the educational network in the languages of the ethnic minorities was not acceptable and that the problems that appeared along the way

could be solved. Moreover Lajos Takács was reprimanded by Verdeț on grounds that as a long-time comrade he had become ungrateful to the party: “It must be known that the Party’s national policy is a correct one; the basis of this policy must not be changed, but perhaps the way in which it is applied.”<sup>39</sup>

Starting with the mid-seventies, the structures of the EHWC were used by the party as a disciplinary forum in the case of the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals that did not follow party directives. For instance, in April 1975, Ilie Verdeț met and held private discussions with Edgár Balogh. Also present at the discussions were activists János Vincze and Sándor Koppándi, as well as the director of the *Kriterion* publishing house, Géza Domokos. The purpose of these discussions were the political mistakes made by Balogh in an article with the title “From the Perspective of Minority Humanism” sent for publication to the Hungarian magazine *Tiszatáj*.<sup>40</sup> Verdeț harshly criticized the contents of the article, as well as the fact that it had been sent to Hungary. He stressed the fact that in the national policy of the party there was no minority perspective, everything being part of a universal process. Balogh said in his defense that he had only tried to counteract the nationalist discourse in Hungary. At the end of the discussions Balogh resorted to self-criticism.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, we see that during this period many ethnic Hungarian intellectuals were left out of the EHWC’s leading structures. However, for the majority of them the council still was the only forum where, theoretically, it would have been possible to convey the problems concerning the policy towards the nationalities. During the ’70s these intellectuals, uninvited or absent from the EHWC meetings, communicated with the leadership through letters or petitions, thus raising issues that were no longer discussed during the meetings of the council (cases of discrimination, unpublished manuscripts and books, the activity of the Securitate, the interpretation of nationalism, etc.). In a letter from 23 January 1978, András Sütő expressed his indignation regarding the fact that, according to his information, in Târgu-Mureș a Ph.D. thesis was rejected due to that fact that the candidate was labeled as a nationalist.<sup>42</sup>

During the drafting of the 1977 law of education, the EHWC had some proposals—granting by law the education in one’s mother tongue, introducing into the curriculum the history of the coexisting nationalities—but they were not taken into consideration. On the contrary, the new law of education underlined the fact that for a better learning of the Romanian language, some subjects were going to be taught in Romanian.<sup>43</sup>

Due to changes among cadres and to political pressure from the party’s bodies, the EHWC almost ceased to operate as a mediator in matters of the national policy of the RCP. In the plan for the period 1976–1977, only one of the six points referred to issues specific to the ethnic Hungarian community, namely the

consultative role of the council in matters of education. The rest of the points referred to administrative and propaganda issues: the makeup of the bureau, organizing bureau and plenary sessions, the methodology of party propaganda dissemination.<sup>44</sup> This trend was continued in the program for the year 1977 as well. The dissemination of party ideology and political work were the main priorities. Here is an overview of the program proposed for the year 1978: assessment of the results of education, questions regarding the organization of Cântarea României (The Song of Romania Festival), the activity of the ethnic Hungarian theatres and ensembles, and the increased mobilizing role of newspapers and periodicals that were published in Hungarian.<sup>45</sup>

After the plenary session of 19 June 1979, the EHWC was totally subjected to politics. Instead of the university professor from Cluj-Napoca, István Péterfi, who had in fact avoided throughout his entire mandate any confrontation with the party, the new leader of the EHWC became a high ranking activist, Mihály Gere, a member of the Central Committee of RCP and an alternate member of the Executive Bureau. In the makeup of the chair, party activists and worker cadres gained the absolute majority: vice-presidents Lajos Fazekas (a member of the Central Committee of RCP and alternate member of the Executive Bureau), László Lőrincz (secretary of state), József Méliusz (writer), Ilona Péter (worker, Cluj-Napoca), Albert Szabó (turner, Oradea), János Vincze (party activist), and the secretary of the organization, Sándor Koppándi (alternate member of the Central Committee).<sup>46</sup>

Through Gere the council was now headed by a fervent activist from Ceaușescu's innermost circle. The EHWC was now under complete political control. In 1979, Ceaușescu declared the following regarding the purpose of these councils and the party's national policy:

*At the same time, I think that these councils, both central and county, must take part in the general activity of political education, of shaping the new socialist consciousness. It is imperative that the press, radio and television, in Romanian and in the Hungarian and German languages, play a more active role in the whole political-educational activity combating the various backward and mystical concepts, in the formation of the new man that builds socialism. I must emphasize again the important role of literature and art, of the cultural-artistic activity, and of ensuring the conditions for these to be able to manifest themselves and to be created also in the languages of the nationalities, while at the same time integrating this activity into a unique stream during Cântarea României. Regardless of the language in which this political, cultural, literary, artistic activity is carried out, it must be done in a language that is consistent with scientific materialism, with the program of our Party—the expression of Marxist-Leninism in Romania.<sup>47</sup>*

After the 1979 plenary major changes were made also at the level of the county organizations. By comparing the list of members of the EHWG from 1979 with the list of members after the council was set up (1968), one can observe two important things: the fluctuation of the cadres and the disappearance from the lists of a significant part of members who were intellectuals. For instance, if in 1968, in Cluj County, out of the 18 EHWG members seven were intellectuals, many of them known and appreciated by the Hungarian community, in 1979 their numbers fell to three, the best-known Professor Lajos Takács. In the case of Mureş County, the number of intellectuals was also reduced to three, the better known ones being the writer András Sütő and the editor Győző Hajdu.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1983 report of the EHWG, among others, the following were stressed:

*A central and permanent preoccupation of the Council was the support and popularization of the way in which the Romanian Communist Party has solved the nationality issue, of Nicolae Ceauşescu's determined and original contribution to the substantiation of a unique, scientific principle on the matter, of the way in which the results of this policy are reflected in economic, social, cultural life and in the liberties which the coexisting nationalities enjoy.<sup>49</sup>*

## The Fall of the Intellectuals: 1984–1989

**A**T THE beginning of the '80s, the political process started by the July Theses reached a new phase. The party leadership was struggling to find solutions to the economic and political problems caused by the global economic crisis and by the neo-Stalinist structure of the Romanian economy. Despite the difficult situation, Nicolae Ceauşescu refused any kind of socio-political reform and intensified the ideological campaign, increasing the centralization of the leadership structures and the mass mobilization based on nationalism. The cult of personality of the RCP's leader reached unprecedented heights in the postwar history of the country. The rotation of cadres continued, both at central (party and government) as well as at local level. Following the success in foreign affairs from the '60s and '70s (especially after the Helsinki Act of 1975), Ceauşescu's regime was now being criticized by Western powers in connection with the cult of personality, violations of human rights and its policy towards the ethnic minorities. In response, Ceauşescu tried to reduce international isolation by forging new political and economic relations with Third World countries.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCP practically preserved this status quo, eliminating the slightest chances for potential reforms. Romania's external debt in this period (1981) reached a staggering 10.2 billion dollars. Under these circum-

stances, Ceaușescu decided to pay all debts by the end of the '80s, thus creating an independent and sovereign country in all respects. The consequences of this policy were to be experienced by a population condemned to find a way to survive in very harsh conditions. Meanwhile, the party leadership, in order to maintain control over society, was using administrative methods with the help of the police (Militia) and the Securitate.<sup>50</sup>

The mobilization of the Romanian society was done through the manipulation of nationalism. In order to achieve this goal, a reevaluation of national history was underway: the Dacian-Roman origins, the history of the Romanian feudal states, the anti-Ottoman wars etc. In the national pantheon, Ceaușescu was portrayed as the successor of the medieval rulers. Following the disputes of the '60s, by now the new forms of the Romanian socialist nation were crystallized. The implementation of the new theory regarding the formation of the Romanian socialist nation created a real danger for the national minorities in the country, as in this new political context there were no ideological and legal guaranties that the national and linguistic characteristics were to be taken into consideration by the party leadership. Social and national homogenization was again in full force thanks to the intensification of the industrialization and urbanization process.<sup>51</sup>

The radicalization of political and ideological life, the rapid social transformations and some foreign policy events (Hungary's active role in the life of Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary) brought new changes to the party's policy towards nationalities.<sup>52</sup> As early as the '60s Ceaușescu's regime was thinking of a total homogenization of society (from an ethnic point of view as well), but for certain reasons it made compromises with the larger ethnic groups such as the Hungarians and Germans.<sup>53</sup> Starting with the second half of the '70, and mostly during the '80s, the party leadership tried to intensify the ethnic homogenization by encouraging emigration (in case of the Germans) and by intensifying the assimilation process (in case of the Hungarians). One by one the party leadership abandoned all political techniques used in the nationality policy: integration of ethnic communities through their own elites, cultural institutions with a national content, recognizing the national, linguistic characteristics of cultural activities, integration of the political and intellectual elite into party and state structures. Gradually, the activity of minority cultural institutions became devoid of substance. The term coexisting nationality was replaced by the term ethnic Hungarian or German workers, and the use of place names in the language of the minorities in printed texts was banned.

Due to the worsening situation, many ethnic Hungarian activists and intellectuals that had been previously loyal reconsidered their ties with Ceaușescu's regime, with Hungary, and the issues regarding their national and political

identity.<sup>54</sup> Ethnic Hungarian intellectuals who were institutionally integrated into the Romanian political system withdrew or were replaced in key positions. According to a report of the Securitate, in 1987 András Sütő was revolted by the fact that the leadership had only consulted with Sándor Koppándi, Győző Hajdu and Lajos Létay, activists and intellectuals who in Sütő's opinion did not represent in any way the opinion of the Hungarian community. The writer from Târgu-Mureş also underlined that the abovementioned had taken over all important positions in the EHWC.<sup>55</sup> During the same period, in 1984 to be exact, one of the long-lasting ethnic Hungarian activists, János Fazekas, was removed from the leading circles of the RCP.<sup>56</sup>

The year 1984 saw the last major change in the activity and structure of the EHWC. During this year, partly because of the quarrels among a few Hungarian intellectuals, a new wave of purges targeted the council. The tone of the events was set by Győző Hajdu, the editor of *Igaz Szó* (True Word) a periodical published in Târgu-Mureş. In November 1984, in a lengthy letter to the secretary general, he detailed the situation within the EHWC. Hajdu's attack was oriented against that group of intellectuals that had survived the purges from the '70s. Even if this concerned the conflict between Hajdu and other intellectuals, the former's denunciation report reveals that from the point of view of the intellectuals' contribution, the EHWC operated only in theory, many members refusing to take part in the meetings, adopting a sort of passivity. The writer and former editor-in-chief at the Romanian Television, Pál Bodor, had fled the country.

*On a related topic, it has been noticed that Pál Bodor frequently publishes in the People's Republic of Hungary, but the contents of his writings does not reflect the fact that he is a member of our Party and a citizen of our country, giving instead the impression that he approaches socio-political issues as a native Hungarian,*

states Hajdu.<sup>57</sup> As far as András Sütő was concerned, he underlined the fact that his children had left the country and he

*For many years now has been declaring that he would not put his name to any actions initiated by the RCP. I have personally witnessed many occasions when he has stated this. For 8–10 years he has not voiced a single positive appreciation regarding Party documents or Party policy in general.<sup>58</sup>*

A literary critic from Bucharest, Zsolt Gálfalvi, declared that Hajdu had been close friends with Sütő for a long time, and had since identified with the same attitude of opposition. Just as Sütő, he prided himself with the fact that in his writings he never mentioned the name of the first secretary. "Sándor Huszár



published in 1982 his autobiography, a volume in which, due to the excessive subjectivity of the author, the Party's cultural and national policy for the period after 23 August 1944 is distorted,<sup>59</sup> declared Hajdu about Huszár. The author of the letter also denounced two other prominent members of the EHWC, editor Géza Domokos and József Méliusz, the vice-president of the organization.

*The grave political and ideological mistakes made at the Kriterion publishing house are closely connected to Géza Domokos' attitude. As I also had the opportunity to witness, he is a two-faced man, with different attitudes towards the Party's bodies and towards the circles of the Hungarian minority with which he is in contact. Not once have I observed the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals with nationalist views praise the only and vigorous leader of the Hungarian minority in Romania. I also had the chance to convince myself that for years now he has been under the poisonous influence of József Méliusz and János Fazekas, identifying with the principles and attitude of András Sütő . . . József Méliusz was elected vice-president of the Council of Ethnic Hungarian Workers only because he was also the vice-president of the Writers' Union of the Socialist Republic of Romania, a position that he has not occupied for over ten years. In general he has a passive attitude towards the Council's activity, in the last 5–6 years he has attended only one meeting and none of the bureau meetings. József Méliusz's attitude is in plain contradiction with the fact that he is the vice-president of the Council, as for 10 years he has been refusing to express publicly, in the press, a favorable position towards our Party's policy, especially the policy towards the nationalities.<sup>60</sup>*

In 1984 came new removals, respectively new appointments in the EHWC's leading body. In the Bureau, out of the eight appointees only one was an intellectual, but this time he was not a known writer or poet, but a university professor from Cluj-Napoca, Árpád Páll. The other seven members were party activists.<sup>61</sup> In the same year major changes occurred in the county organizations of the EHWC. The majority of the old cadres from the '60s and '70s disappeared from the lists of the council, which was now clearly dominated by party activists. It must be mentioned that during the '80s, the intellectuals were represented within the EHWC by only a restricted, loyal circle around Győző Hajdu. Most of the members of this group had been living in the capital city for a long time, having worked for the party, with no direct connections with their communities, while the intellectuals (writers, poets, editors) that stayed in the EHWC had not enjoyed the same popularity with the public as the members that had stayed outside the organization.

During this period the EHWC did not have a single activity that was organized at its own initiative, not even bureau meetings. The program and the activity of

the council were restricted to mass mobilization, respectively propaganda, used in the propaganda and media war with Hungary, and if necessary in the war with the Western powers. The EHWC program for 1985 was only about propaganda issues and mobilization:

*As the center of their preoccupations is the task defined by the National Plan for Socio-economic Development for 1985 and by the current five-year plan, the members of the Council shall each at their workplace act under the coordination of Party bodies and organizations for the mobilization and stimulation of the workers' initiatives in order to ensure in a complete and continuous manner the production, the efficient use of energy and raw materials, of production means with maximum yield, as well as their creative capacities, in order to realize in a timely manner and with irreproachable quality the production destined for export, to increase work productivity, economic efficiency, to strengthen the workers' economic and financial self-management in each unit.<sup>62</sup>*

During 1984, the council received at their request reporters and delegations from Great Britain, Austria, Sweden, France etc. who wanted to be informed about some aspects of the ethnic Hungarian Romanian citizens' rights in Romania. The EHWC reported to the party leadership that the organization had fulfilled its mission:

*In all of these cases, in its response the Council has presented in great detail the Party's and the country's just nationality policy, with concrete arguments about the way in which this policy is reflected in the socio-economic, political and spiritual life of the workers belonging to this nationality, and has refuted the claims that sought to distort the Party's policy regarding the assurance of equality of all our country's workers.<sup>63</sup>*

The last (documented) large scale action of the EHWC was in 1987, when the publication in three volumes of the *History of Transylvania* in Budapest had to be condemned.<sup>64</sup> The publication of the book in Hungarian and then in English translation was done with the (tacit) approval of Hungary's Party leadership and it was a clear signal that, before the public opinion, Hungary had entered into a direct polemic with the RCP on all levels. Therefore, for the party leadership it was vital to ensure for itself the support of the acknowledged ethnic Hungarian intellectuals from Romania. There were precedents from 1956, when the great majority of ethnic Hungarian intellectuals had condemned the Hungarian Revolution, or in 1968, when many of the same intellectuals, at the request of the leadership, had opposed the decision of the Writers' Union from Hungary

regarding the double connection (one with the mother country and one with Romania) of Hungarian literature in Romania.<sup>65</sup> During this period Nicolae Ceaușescu attended again the plenaries of the EHWC. The situation was critical, and the EHWC Bureau looked in vain for any personalities (even outside the organization) that would take on the role of condemning in plenary the actions of Hungary.<sup>66</sup> In the end, the EHWC issued a declaration in which it stressed the following:

*A series of history books published in the People's Republic of Hungary contain gross falsifications of the historical truth, reviving the most reactionary theses from the time of Horthy's fascist regime. They incite in fact to a reopening of the discussions regarding the decisions of the peace treaties of World War I and World War II and the existing European borders. Becoming aware of such shameful manifestations, in flagrant contradiction with the truth, with the principles and norms of international relations, with the interests of the Romanian-Hungarian friendship, the ethnic Hungarian workers in Romania express their perplexity and sorrow and firmly condemn them. Such theses are extremely dangerous and harmful, they encourage nationalism, chauvinism and anti-communism, glorify revengeful feelings, create illusions and false problems that result in and incite misunderstandings among peoples, nations and different ethnic communities.*<sup>67</sup>

During the '80s the EHWC did not exist as an organization on the national stage. Local branches were not functioning, a significant number of the members had left the organization or were not invited to meetings, with the exception of important propaganda missions. In this period the field of activity of the organization was gradually restricted, and the leadership consisted of an extremely limited group of activists and intellectuals loyal to Nicolae Ceaușescu. With the 1989 Revolution the organization ceased to exist de jure as well. The last president of the EHWC, Mihály Gere, was convicted during the trials of the 1989 Revolution; the rest of its active leaders withdrew from public life, but were confronted with a great rejection on behalf of the Hungarian community of Romania.<sup>68</sup>

**T**HE EXISTENCE and evolution of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council reflects in fact the evolution of the policy of the Ceaușescu regime, especially in connection to the national minorities. This policy tried to integrate nationalities by ensuring access to public property and to the redistribution of the state's resources in exchange for the nationalities' support for the communist ideology. The leadership based on the elites and derived from the principles of democratic centralization favored the ethnic elites with a discourse supporting the ethnic groups. Most of all, these elites wanted to consolidate

group loyalty, and later tried to exploit the failures of the redistribution process to gain more resources for these communities, more rights, and even territorial autonomy, and lastly political sovereignty.<sup>69</sup>

At the end of the '60s, the Council was born in the context of a moderate liberalization of cultural and political life and was an integral part of the party's policy towards the ethnic minorities. The EHWC's original purpose was a double one: integration and mobilization of the Hungarian community by conveying and interpreting the party's policy, respectively the integration of the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals through their consultative role regarding the issues specific to the Hungarian minority. Its functioning—employees were not remunerated, the organization had no headquarters, total subordination to the party organizations, the Council had no right to make decisions or call for plenaries, it did not even have a budget—rapidly revealed the organization's limitations. However, until the mid-seventies, even if during 1972–1973 the plenary was not held, by virtue of its consultative rights many EHWC representatives brought to the party's attention (e.g., at the plenary held at the 12 March 1971) issues specific to the ethnic Hungarian community, such as: the right to use the mother tongue in local administration, the issue of editing books in Hungarian, the issue of education on their mother tongue, representation of the Hungarian community in state bodies.

Once the political atmosphere changed in Romania in the '70s, the EHWC gradually lost its consultative role, becoming a mere tool of the RCP's propaganda. The use of the EHWC as a means of propaganda led at first to the discontent of the most prominent members who later on left the EHWC: András Sütő, János Demeter, Géza Domokos, Károly Király etc. Their places were taken by activists that were loyal to the party: Mihály Gere (president of the Council during 1979–1989), János Vincze, Lajos Fazekas etc. During 1974–1983 the EHWC's plenary was convened many times, but only for reasons of propaganda, out of which the most important was combating the so-called “Hungarian revisionist tendencies.”

In the year 1989 a new wave of changes swept over the organization's leadership, the majority of the intellectuals were thrown out and their places were taken by activists loyal to the Ceaușescu regime. The EHWC was operating as a mere instrument of the propaganda, legitimizing Ceaușescu's policy, with no chance of formulating issues specific to the ethnic Hungarian community. The plenaries were held only for reasons considered to be important by the party leadership. The 1987 plenary was held only to condemn the fact that a vast monograph in three volumes regarding the history of Transylvania was published in Budapest. There were a few volumes published in the '80s under the aegis of the Council (*The Hungarian Nationality in Romania*, edited by Sándor Koppándi) the pur-

pose of which was to underline the correct policy of the party towards the coexisting nationality. The ethnic Hungarian leaders that remained loyal to the party and who were practically isolated in Bucharest lost contact with the Hungarian community, becoming simple tools of the Ceaușescu regime.<sup>70</sup>



## Notes

1. For more details see: Mariana Conovici, “Martie 1965—Nicolae Ceaușescu, noul lider al comuniștilor români,” *Analele Sighet* (Bucharest) 9 (2001): 493–499; Lavinia Betea, *Partea lor de adevăr: Alexandru Bărlădeanu despre Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu: Convorbiri* (Bucharest: Compania, 2008), 149–177; ead., *Maurer și lumea de ieri: Mărturiile despre stalinizarea României* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2001), 343–353.
2. Alexandru-Murad Mironov, “Tot mai departe de Moscova: Politica externă a regimului Ceaușescu,” *Arhivele totalitarismului* (Bucharest) 10, 3–4 (2002): 228–255; *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 19–24 iulie 1965* (Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1965), 743–797.
3. Călin Morar-Vulcu, “Between Old and New: The Discursive Construction of the Socialist Nation,” in *Re-Searching the Nation: The Romanian File: Studies and Selected Bibliography on Romanian Nationalism*, ed. Sorin Mitu (Cluj-Napoca: International Book Access, 2008), 249–267.
4. Csaba Zoltán Novák, “Politica națională a P.C.R. la sfârșitul anilor 1960 și începutul deceniului următor,” in *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă*, eds. Ágoston Olti and Attila Gidó (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009), 194–199.
5. Ibid.
6. More than 50 people were invited to the meeting with the Hungarian intellectuals (writers, poets, editors, artists, teachers), among which: Géza Domokos, János Szász, Pál Bodor, Ernő Gáll, János Demeter, Lajos Jordáky, Lajos Kántor, István Nagy, Gyula Csehi, Sándor Fodor, Sándor Kányádi, Elemér Jancsó, Győző Hajdu, Zsolt Gálfalvi, András Sütő, Ernő Sisak, etc. During the meeting they discussed issues connected to cultural life, legal issues, the situation of cultural institutions etc. Csaba Zoltán Novák, “Anul posibilităților? 1968 în România și problema națională,” in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, vol. 4, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2009).
7. Alina Pavelescu and Laura Dumitrescu, eds., *P.C.R. și intelectualii în primii ani ai regimului Ceaușescu (1965–1972)* (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2007).
8. Following the administrative reform of 1968, after intense debates, the Hungarian Autonomous Region was divided into three counties (Mureș, Harghita, Covasna), of which two had a majority ethnic Hungarian population, where new Hungarian institutional systems were put in place.

9. Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, and Cristian Vasile, eds., *Raport final: Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 525–541.
10. The transition period of 1945–1953 included the Hungarian minority's attempts to set up their own organizations (in a first phase the authorities blocked the similar actions of the German minority). In close cooperation with Moscow, the party entrusted the leadership of these organizations to leftist activists, loyal to the regime. During this period, mass organizations for the majority of the country's ethno-cultural communities were established: the Hungarian People's Union, the Jewish Democratic Committee, the German Anti-Fascist Committee, etc.
11. Novák, "Politica națională a P.C.R. la sfârșitul anilor 1960," 211–212.
12. *Ibid.* The headquarters of the Council were in Bucharest, and its members were appointed by the Hungarian, Serbian or German workers' county councils. Both the Hungarian and the German councils had an elected executive bureau, whose primary task was to organize everyday activities. In the counties where there were significant communities of Hungarians, Germans or other nationalities there were also county councils. Their members were appointed by the representatives of the respective minority's workers. The county councils of the co-inhabiting nationalities were headed by a president and 2–3 vice-presidents. Each of the councils also had a secretary. These councils did not have an independent legal status, their employees were acting on the principle of work done for the community and could not be remunerated.
13. Contrary to Gábor Vincze's declarations, we consider that the EHWC, at the beginning, was not a "ghost organization" without a role in shaping policies (especially cultural policies) towards the minorities, but had the role of a transmission belt; the transformation into a propaganda tool took place only in the second half of the '70s. Gábor Vincze, "Nașterea unei 'organizații fantomă' în România," in *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă*, 161–187.
14. *Vörös Zászló* (Târgu-Mureș), no. 273, 1968.
15. National Archives of Romania (NAR), coll. Consiliul Oamenilor Muncii de Naționalitate Maghiară din România (COMNMR), file 1/1968. fols. 25–32.
16. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 1/1969, fols. 1–5.
17. *Ibid.*
18. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1969, fols. 2–5.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, fols. 6–8.
21. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 3/1970, fol. 38.
22. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1970, fols. 33–35.
23. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 1971, fol. 30.
24. The style of the political discourse of the period included the apparent orientation according to the party's political directives, considered fundamental axioms. With the increase in the cult of personality, the phenomenon intensified. Any minimal criticism aimed at the party could only be made public if there was a proper linguistics-

tic context. Thus, concealing real problems under the mask of boilerplate expressions became a habit.

25. The intervention and assessment of János Demeter in 1971 regarding the role and activity of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council, as well as the main problems of the Hungarian minority.
26. Regarding the birth of the July Theses some researchers (Dennis Deletant, Vladimir Tismăneanu) consider that these are first and foremost the direct results of Ceaușescu's visit to China and North Korea, and of the atmosphere he experienced there. Ceaușescu was impressed by the results of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, by the strengthening of the supreme leader's role and by the control exercised by the party, and last but not least, he was influenced by the grandiose manifestations of the personality cult. Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communism: Paradox and Degeneration* (London: Routledge, 2018); Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). It is certain that the abovementioned actions had a role in this political phenomenon; however we think the one must not neglect the opinion of historians who connect the genesis of the Theses to the Romanian economy and the transformations that took place in national and foreign policy. According to Florin Constantiniu, the pressure coming from the Soviet Union was quite manifest, and by strengthening the ideological control the party leadership wanted to send the message to the Soviets that it had complete control over matters of domestic policy. However, one must consider the following: by the early '70s Ceaușescu had fully consolidated his power, had carried out a change of the elites, and with a new momentum, through a massive cult of personality, he continued the grand process of economic and social transformations that—based on the system's logic—resulted directly from ideological ruthlessness. Also, the changes in international economy cannot be overlooked, as they had a significant influence over the Romanian economy.
27. NAR, Mureș County Branch, coll. Comitetul Județean de Partid Mureș, file 2/1971, fols. 54–55.
28. Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (Union Archive and of Political History), Budapest, coll. János Fazekas, 917, 8. doboz.
29. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1970, fols. 33–35.
30. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1973, fol. 8.
31. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 38/1974, fols. 4–13.
32. *Ibid.*, foll. 46–47.
33. The observation of the listeners (animation) was mentioned in parentheses also by the person that took the minutes.
34. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 38/1974, fols. 46–67.
35. Out of the 22 who signed up only 14 were allowed to deliver a speech: Antal Becze (Miercurea-Ciuc, activist) Albert Szabó (turner, Oradea), Ernő Gáll (Cluj-Napoca, *Korunk* magazine), Endre Antalffy (Târgu-Mureș, vice-president of the EHWC, professor), Antal Kőműves (Pecica, bricklayer), Sándor Albert (*Brassói Lapok* newspaper), Mária Bisztrai Horváth (Cluj-Napoca, Hungarian Theatre), Dénes Bálint (CYU, Bu-

charest), Dezső Kiss (engineer, Căpeni, Covasna), Ilona Pethó (women's organization, Harghita), Zsolt Gálfalvi (*A Hét* periodical), János Gergely (Satu Mare, county vice-president EHWK), Győző Hajdu (Târgu-Mureș, *Igaz Szó* magazine), Sándor Dali (activist, Covasna). NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 1/1976, fols. 1–10.

36. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1975, fols. 9–10.
37. *Ibid.*, fols. 26–28.
38. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 3/1975, fol. 23.
39. *Ibid.*, fol. 28.
40. *Tiszatáj* is a cultural magazine that was published in Szeged, which during the '70s became the most important press organ where reports regarding the Hungarians outside Hungary's borders were published.
41. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1975, fols. 6–8. It must be observed that in this article Balogh practically obscured the bridging role of the Hungarian minority between the two countries, Romania and Hungary.
42. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1978, fol. 4.
43. *Ibid.*, fol. 8.
44. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 2/1976, fols. 2–3.
45. *Ibid.*
46. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 1/1979, fols. 1–3.
47. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 13/1978, fols. 46–47.
48. NAR, coll. COMNMR, file 1/1978, fols. 91–100.
49. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 19/1983, fols. 144–147.
50. Tom Gallagher, *Furtul unei națiuni: România de la comunism încoace*, trans. Mihai Elin, Delia Răzdolescu, and Horia Barna (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 80.
51. Dragoș Petrescu, "Building the Nation, Instrumentalizing Nationalism: Revisiting Romanian National-Communism, 1956–1989," in *The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe, 1918–1989*, ed. Martin Mevius (London–New York: Routledge, 2011), 146–165.
52. On the change in Hungary's policy, see: György Földes, *Magyarország, România és a nemzeti kérdés (1956–1989)* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2008).
53. Novák, "Politica națională a P.C.R. la sfârșitul anilor 1960," 189–227.
54. Offering possibilities of institutional integration (including a cultural one), for a long time the party leadership allowed the ethnic Hungarian political and cultural elite to nurture a double identity: national and political. In return for their political and ideological loyalty, the Hungarian elite enjoyed a specific cultural institutional system, fostering a culture in the Hungarian language with a socialist basis but with many traditional elements. The most relevant gesture of loyalty comes from the year 1968, when the majority of the ethnic Hungarian intellectuals in Romania rejected the point of view of the Writers' Union of Hungary regarding the double connection of the Hungarian minority's culture in the Carpathian Basin. For more details see the case of János Fazekas: Csaba Zoltán Novák, "În slujba națiunii și a partidului: Dubla identitate a unui activist maghiar: Exemplul lui János Fazekas," in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, vol. 5, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2010), 316–328.



55. Archive of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, coll. Documentar, file 13409, vol. 35, fols. 70–71.
56. Novák, “În slujba națiunii,” 316–329.
57. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 85/1984, fols. 21–23.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Mihai Gere (president, head of department at the Central Committee of the RCP, substitute member of the Central Committee’s Political Executive Committee), Ludovic Fazekas (vice-president, deputy prime-minister, member of the Political Executive Committee of the Central Committee of RCP), Ștefan Rab (vice-president, first secretary of the Covasna County Committee of the RCP, member of the Central Committee), Ion Vințe (vice-president, activist of the RCP’s Central Committee), Árpád Páll (vice-president, vice-rector of Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, substitute member of the RCP’s Central Committee), Irina Birta (vice-president, Town Council of Trade Unions secretary, Arad), Alexandru Czágó (vice-president, president of the Salonta agricultural cooperative, Bihor County, member of the RCP’s Central Committee), Iuliu Fejes (secretary, head of sector of the RCP’s Central Committee, member of the RCP’s Central Committee).
62. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, file 6/1985.
63. Ibid.
64. *The History of Transylvania* was compiled by a team of the Academy of Sciences of the People’s Republic of Hungary and was published in 1986.
65. Csaba Zoltán Novák, “Relațiile româno-maghiare și schimbarea de regim din 1989,” *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane “Gheorghe Șincai”* (Târgu-Mureș) 16 (2013): 43–63.
66. Historian Lajos Demény, researcher at the Institute for History of the Romanian Academy, was invited to deliver a critical speech on *The History of Transylvania* during the EHWC plenary. After lengthy hesitations, Demény decided to decline this request and left the capital city, citing health issues.
67. NAR, coll. CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, file 13/1987, fols. 20–37.
68. The case of Győző Hajdu is the best known case. Practically he was banished from the city of Târgu-Mureș.
69. Levente Salat and Csaba Zoltán Novák, “Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Minority Regime,” in *Post-Communist Romania at Twenty-Five: Linking Past, Present, and Future*, eds. Lavinia Stan and Diane Vancea (Boulder–New York–London–Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 63–87.
70. Csaba Zoltán Novák, “Consiliul Oamenilor Muncii de Naționalitate Maghiară,” in *România 1945–1989: Enciclopedia regimului comunist: Instituții de partid, de stat, obștești și cooperatiste*, ed. Dan Cătănuș (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2012), 195–197.

**Abstract****The Intellectuals of Politics and the Policies of Intellectuals: The Role of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council in the Political Integration of the Ethnic Hungarian Cultural Elite during the Ceaușescu Regime**

After Ceaușescu's rise to power, in 1965 a new committee was set up within the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, which dealt with the issues pertaining to the ethnic minorities. The Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council (EHWC) and the Ethnic German Workers' Council (EGWC) were created in a later stage, on 15 November 1968. The paper analyzes the activity of the EHWC, in its three main stages. During the years 1968–1974 the council managed to successfully and totally fulfill the function of interfacing with the party authorities. Starting with 1975—in the light of the July 1971 Theses—one can observe a gradual erosion of the council, an over-ideologization of its activity and a limitation of the intellectuals' activity within the organization. From 1984, the council's activity was restricted to the dissemination of propaganda and the mobilization of the masses, and after several reorganizations and purges, the key members left the organization.

**Keywords**

national policy, communism, elites, minority, culture, propaganda, theatre, literature, intellectuals, education