

The Evolution of the Ethnic and Political Romanian-Hungarian Border

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Paris, 15 Jan. 1920, Count APPONYI, the head of the Hungarian delegation, arriving at the Quai d'Orsay to receive the Paris Peace Treaty.

SOURCE: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rol 57645, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53036032b>.

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Introduction

THE ROMANIAN-Hungarian border was set after the First World War along the line that separates the ethnic Romanian bloc in Transylvania from the Hungarian one in the Tisza Plain. The borderline became a legal provision of the peace treaty between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary, signed at Trianon (Versailles) on 4 June 1920, and was reconfirmed in the Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Neighborliness between Romania and the Hungarian Republic, signed in Timișoara on 16 September 1996. The total length of the border is 448 km (out of which 415.9 km territorial border and 32.1 km water border), which means 14.2% of Romania's state border length.

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Immediately after signing the Treaty of Trianon, an intense revisionist media campaign was launched, claiming the Hungarian rights over the territories lost in 1920. Thus, in 1896–1899, Hungarian historian Benedek Jancsó propounded a theory whereby the large number of Romanians in Transylvania was allegedly due to the massive immigration of Wallachians from the two extra-Carpathian principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) in the 17th and especially 18th centuries, who tried to escape the excessively high taxes imposed during the Phanariot period. This theory was taken up, after the treaty had been signed, in an English-language work on Transylvania (Ajtay et al. 1921), in *A román irredentista mozgalmak története* (The history of Romanian irredentist movements) (1920), and in *Erdély története* (The history of Transylvania) (1923), all these writings being refuted with scientific arguments and following field research undertaken by the Romanian geographer Ion Conea (1941; 1942 a, b).

Another representative work on this subject (*Ethnographical Map of Hungary Based on the Density of Population*) is authored by Count Pál Teleki, geographer and former prime-minister of Hungary, who presented it at the Paris Peace Conference (1920). Later on, at the Second Vienna Arbitration (1940), where they decided on the annexation of Northern Transylvania to Hungary, István Tarnóczy presented a map of Hungarian territories annexed by Romania on the basis of the Trianon decision (Deică 1999, 36). Within the same context, András Korponay (1941) showed that border tracing is not a question of surface area, but of population, launching an appeal to a rapid birthrate growth (Golopenția 1942, 25–33). Along the same lines we can also mention Péter Vida's title, "The Carpathian Basin Should Be Populated by Hungarians" (1941), the author suggesting both an increase in birthrate and the return of the Hungarians living abroad. These ideological theses lay at the basis of the reprisals taken against the Romanian population during September 1940–October 1944. That same period witnessed the studies produced by András Ronai, the author endeavoring to justify Hungary's rights over the territories lost at the end of World War I (Deică 1999).

The end of the Second World War and the instauration of Kremlin-loyal communist regimes in Bucharest and Budapest brought Hungary's revisionist demands to a standstill, concealing them behind a policy of understanding and neighborly relations between the two friendly countries (Berend and Bugarcic 2015). However, as of 1970, Hungary's geopolitics became ever more vocal against the Central European "border opening" concept. It is the period in which writings re-substantiating the ideas of the "Carpathian Basin" relying on "Greater Hungary" and of Hungarian-inhabited regions started being published. This concept would later (1993) be used in outlining the Carpathian Euroregion (Deică and Alexandrescu 1995; Deică 1999–2000), the Hungarian ethnic bloc and the Hungarian community in Transylvania (Kocsis 1994 and 1997).

In 1990, with the collapse of the communist regimes, interethnic tensions would surge in both countries, reactivating political and social nationalistic movements (Nedelcu and DeBardeleben 2015). As early as the 1990s, the first civic political organization, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, came into being with the aim of representing the interests of the Hungarian community in Romania. In order to counteract the Hungarian activists, a cultural organization, *Vatra Românească* (The Romanian Hearth), was founded, and after a month they set up its political wing, namely, the Romanian National Unity Party. In the first months of 1990, these organizations kept agitating the spirits by organizing a rally in Târgu-Mureș City, which ended up tragically in violent street clashes (19–20 March 1990). The result was six dead and scores of wounded, seriously affecting Romania's image in the world, especially through the international press reports (Gallagher 2005).

Romania's nationalists witnessed the foundation of the Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*) in June 1991 and of the center-right Hungarian Civic Party (*Magyar Polgári Párt*), which advocated for more minority rights and the autonomy of the Szekler Land (January 2008). After long negotiations and public debates (Andreescu 1998, 79–86), the basic bilateral treaty with Hungary was eventually signed, as both countries were seeking membership in the EU. The Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good Neighborliness between Romania and the Republic of Hungary (signed at Timișoara on 16 September 1996) came into force on 27 December 1996 after the exchange of the instruments of ratification. It was a turning point in the relations between these countries, the nationalistic movements having to comply with European provisions on this issue (Niculescu 2004). Nevertheless, divergent views persisted, as indicated by the proposal of regionalization on federal principles, according to ethnic-minority criteria outside the Romanian constitutional framework,¹ or by some statements and actions meant to destabilize the situation (illegal use of symbols, chauvinistic, racist positions or declarations at public meetings, sporting events, etc.) and raise the tension between the two ethnic communities, especially in regions with a majority Hungarian population (Harghita and Covasna counties, also partially Mureș County) (Głowacka-Grajper 2018).

Aims, Data and Methods

UNLIKE THE works published in Hungary, many of them translated into international languages, based on data and interpretations that fundamentally distort the scientific reality (Deică 1999), the Romanian geographical literature is very poor in approaching this subject and illustrating

the real situation with historical, ethnic and geographical data. In this way, false scientific arguments, views hostile to the Romanian geopolitical and geostrategic interests, come to the forefront.

We intend to shed some light on the historical documents, cartographic and statistical, produced over time, but more or less willfully ignored by historians and authorities, because they illustrate the evolution of the ethnic structure of Hungary and of Transylvania (18th, 19th centuries and the beginning of the 20th century) which clearly demonstrates the correctness of the consequences of that treaty for the northwestern border of Romania.

The study relies on Hungarian and German documentary sources dated 1750–1918, on Romanian, Hungarian and international sources from the inter-war and contemporary periods, as well as on the processing of official statistics. The methods used were both deductive and inductive.

Results and Discussion

The Romanian-Hungarian Ethnic Border between 1750 and the End of the First World War

IN A geographical study on Hungary, Matthias Bel (1753, 214, 259, 265, 281, 284, 311, 313) devotes a very important part of his presentation to the area inhabited by Romanians on the territory of Hungary. In 1763, Adam Kollár described Hungary as an ethnic mosaic. He admitted that, of all its inhabitants, the Hungarians had the lowest population percentage (Hunfalvy 1876, 415).

Karl Gottlieb von Windisch (1780, 137, 143, 148, 188, 199, 213, 221) described the ethnic composition of the counties on the border between what were then Hungary and Romania, counties in which Hungarians and Romanians lived, saying that the latter were the majority in the Timiș Banat (Temesi Bánság, Temescher Banat), also accounting for a high proportion in Ugocsa, Szabolcs, Békés, and Csanád.

Hungary's geographical lexicon, authored by János Mátyás Korabinszky (1786, 41, 57, 70, 90, 108, 274, 535, 643, 652, 715, 823), indicated a compact Romanian ethnic group in the villages of Nagykovács, Nyíradony, Bedő, and Sáránd, on the present-day territory of Hungary.

Representative for the ethnic structure of Hungary in the late eighteenth century are the works of András Vályi (1796–1799, vol. 1: 15, 142, 153, 462; vol. 2: 36; vol. 3: 80, 117, 213, 300, 616, 628) and Márton Schwartner (1798,

86, 89). The first is important because it enumerates the villages in which Romanians were in the absolute majority: Bedő, Darvas, Körösszakál, Méhkerék, Sáránd, Sarkadkeresztúr, Zsáka (all remaining part of Hungary), Battonya (Csanád County), Porcsalma (Szatmár County), and Nyíradony (Szabolcs County). Statistician M. Schwartner analyses the different development phases of the Hungarian state, saying that “Hungary is a country with the highest mix of peoples (nationalities) on Earth” and that the “Hungarians do not constitute a population group, but are mixed up with the Jasses (Jazygs) and the Cumans and occupy only the central part of the Tisza Plain, while at the periphery of the depression, towards the hills and the mountains, one meets other-language populations, forming compact ethnical lands.”

According to Johann von Csaplovics (1821, 396–399; 1829, vol. 1: 204–205, 207), the Romanians were in the absolute majority in the counties of Arad, Torontál, Krassó, and Temes, and accounted for the relative majority in Szatmár, Maramaros, Ugocsa, Szabolcs, Csanád, and Békés, while the Hungarians were a compact ethnic bloc in a few counties in the center of the Tisza Plain, being scattered among other nationalities in the rest of the country. Maramaros (Maramureş) was a frontier area between the Ruthenian population of the Wooded Carpathians and the Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary. In a geographical and statistical study, Pál Magda (1832, 46–47, 50, 409, 421, 430) shows that Hungary’s population was made up of several nationalities. Most of the Hungarians were settled in the plains, in 40 counties, but only few had an absolute Hungarian majority. The Hungarians were the dominant population in 23 counties, while in the other 17 they were in the minority. The Romanians accounted for the absolute or relative majority in the counties of western Romania, being dispersed in Hungary, near the border. At that time, on the present territory of Hungary, mention was made of 5 Romanian villages in Szabolcs County, 3 in Békés County and 4 in Csanád County.

Among the outstanding works describing the ethnic situation in mid-nineteenth century we find those of Fényes (1842, 1: 60, 63–64, 76), Stricker (1847, 45–46), Kautz (1855, 21, 75, 78–79, 80), Prasch (1852, 8, 78–79), Ritter von Heufler (1856, 3: 17–19, 92), and von Czoernig (1857, 1: 65, 67–68) (Manciulea 1938).

In his studies and publications on the ethnic structure of Hungary, E. Fényes (1842, 1: 60) affirms that Hungary is “a little Europe, because we can count 18 distinct nations, which differ among each other in speech, customs and attire, who have been living together for centuries and, with very few exceptions, have not borrowed any other language or customs, everyone stubbornly preserving their own.”

TABLE 1. THE EVOLUTION OF THE ETHNIC HUNGARIAN POPULATION (1869–1910)

	1869	1880	1890	1900	1910
Hungarians	6,156,421	6,445,487	7,426,730	8,679,014	10,050,575
Germans	1,820,922	1,953,911	2,107,577	2,114,423	2,037,435
Slovakians	1,817,228	1,864,529	1,910,279	2,008,744	1,967,970
Romanians	3,470,069	2,405,085	2,592,905	2,785,265	2,949,032
Ruthenians	469,420	356,062	383,392	427,825	472,587
Croatians	206,651		1,554,000	1,670,905	1,833,162
Serbs	267,344	2,352,339	1,057,264	1,042,022	1,106,471
Jews	–	624,826	707,961	826,222	932,458
Others	11,295	264,689	318,251	394,142	469,255
TOTAL	13,229,350	15,642,102	17,349,398	19,122,340	20,886,487

SOURCE: Seişanu 2000, 120.

The author admitted that the Hungarians lived in the central regions, while the peripheral mountains and hills were populated by other nationalities. In his opinion, based on statistical data, the Hungarians held the greatest share in Csongrád County, followed by Heves, Győr, Borsod, and Szabolcs counties, by the Land of the Cumans and the Jasses and in the towns of Hajdú, while in the counties of Vas and Sopron the Hungarians represented almost half of the population. Referring to the Romanian minority in Hungary, the author stated the following:

in Hungary, after Hungarians and Slovaks, the Romanians are the most numerous ethnicity, because in 1,423 villages with 1,211,544 inhabitants, 907,693 were Eastern Greeks (Orthodox Christians), 301,813 Greek Catholics and 2,035 Roman Catholics. Together with the Transylvanian Romanians, they number 2,203,542 persons. No county has a population formed only of Romanian ethnics, but they are in the majority in the counties of Krassó, Temes, Zaránd, Middle Szolnok, and Kraszna, in the Kővárvidék district and in regions of the Banat border guards province; they make up almost 1/3 of the population in the counties of Bihar, Szatmár and Maramaros, 1/4 in Csanád, 1/6 in Ugocsa and Torontál, some of them living also in Békés and Szabolcs. (Fényes 1842, 1: 63)

The same results from the statistical data presented by W. Stricker in 1847, according to which the percentage of Hungarians, compared with that of other nationalities, was very low. They were also in the minority in Transylvania and in the border guard regions in the south of Hungary.

Commenting upon the Austro-Hungarian census of 1850–1851, Gyula Kautz recognized the heterogeneity of the Hungarian population, comparing it ethnically with a miniature Europe. The same author considered that the Roma-

nian population, who lived mostly in Maramaros, Bereg and Ugocsa counties, in the central part of Szatmár and Bihar counties, held the greatest share in the Timiș Banat and Arad County. At the time, the Hungarians were a relatively homogeneous population only in the lowlands on the left-hand side of the Tisza River and between the Danube and the Tisza, but even in these places they lived in mixed pockets alongside German and Slavic populations.

In 1852, V. Prasch described the Hungarian ethnic bloc as confined to the lowlands in the central part of the country, populated by numerous ethnic minorities. This bloc was surrounded by foreign nationalities: “Ruthenians and Slovaks in the northeast and northwest, Serbo-Croats and Slovenians along the Drava River, Serbs and Romanians in the southeast.” According to his data, the majority Romanian population in Transylvania lived in the border guard region of Banat, and in the eastern counties of the Tisza Plain (Arad, Bihar and Szatmár).

In Ludwig Ritter von Heufler’s statistical, geographical and historical study about Hungary, the Hungarian ethnic bloc occupies the central plains area of Hungary, in contact with the Slovaks and the Ruthenians to the northeast, with the Germans to the west and southwest and with the Romanians to the east “along the border with Transylvania.” On the territory of Vojvodina and of the Timiș Banat there were only 241,000 Hungarian inhabitants (17% of the population).

Particularly important is the great ethnographical study on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy authored by Karl Freiherrn von Czoernig in 1857. According to him, the limit of the Romanian ethnic bloc

started from the Bereg and Ugocsa counties, went through Bătarci [Batarcs, Batartsch] and Turț [Turc] villages, up to the border with Szatmár County, and farther on, through the villages of Botiza [Batiza], Păulești [Szatmárpálfalva] and Domănești [Domahida]. This limit was winding through a German and German-Romanian-Hungarian ethnic island, met on its way. The borderline went from the villages near the border westward of Szatmár and Szabolcs, reached the Penészlek area, continuing parallel to the Szatmár and Bihar border counties, up to Valea lui Mihai [Ermihályfalva]. Near Cheț [Magyarkéc] village, it entered the territory of Bihar County, reached Marghita [Margitta] and passed over the Barcău [Berettyó] River up to Crestur [Apátkeresztúr], then followed the river as far as Sfârnaș [Berettyófarnos] village. The border route crossed Tăuții-Măgherauș [Miszmgogyorós] and Șușturogi [Sitervölgy], reached Oradea [Nagyvárad, Großwardein], then continued westward parallel to the Crișul Repede [Sebes-Körös] River up to Cheresig [Körösszeg]. Here it left the Criș River and moved farther on westwards up to Zsáka and Darvas villages, presently in Hungary, then went south again, reaching the border with Arad County in the Crișul

Negru [Fekete-Körös] River. From here, the border between the Hungarian and the Romanian ethnic blocs ran southward to Chişineu-Criş [Kisjenő], then made a turn westwards to Gyula-Várşand [Varsánd]. Here it reached the German-Hungarian ethnic island, up to Curtici [Kürtös] town, advanced south through Pilu [Nagypél] and Cherechiu [Kerek] villages up to Micălaca [Mikelaka] [Arad City], separating the Romanian ethnic bloc in the Arad Plain from the German ethnic island. (Manciulea 1938, 31–34)

The largest ethnic Romanian “island” was Bihar County, near the present-day border, up to Santăul Mic (Kisszántó) village. The second Romanian ethnic island was in the Méhkerék village area. In Békés and Csanád counties, the villages of Torony (Turnu) and Battonya (Bătania) had a Romanian majority population. The Romanian population continued westwards in a patchwork distribution, to Deliblat, being scattered near the Tisza and the Danube (Turda 2013).

Another ethnographic study, published in 1860 by Adolf Ficker, situated the Hungarian ethnic bloc in the central region of the Tisza Plain, in five counties with over 90% of the total population, with over 80% in six other counties, the Hungarians being in the minority in the rest. At that time, the Romanians occupied “the same regions as Decebalus and Trajan had, i.e. the Timiș Banat, the western side of the Western Carpathians, up to the Tisza Plain” (Ficker 1860, 43–44).

The ratio between the Romanian and the Hungarian populations in the border counties is appended to this paper: Krassó: Romanians over 90%, Hungarians 1–2%; Temes: Romanians over 50%, Hungarians 1–2%; Torontál: Romanians 10–20%, Hungarians 10–20%; Csanád and Békés: Romanians 10–20%, Hungarians over 50%; Arad: Romanians over 50%, Hungarians over 10%; Szabolcs: Romanians 1–2%, Hungarians over 50%; Szilágy: Romanians 50–60%, Hungarians 20–30%, and Maramaros: Romanians 20–30%, Hungarians 5–6%.

That the Hungarians formed a compact ethnic bloc only in the center of the Tisza Plain is also confirmed by the geographical study of Károly Szász (1862, 27). According to this author, the Romanian population represented the majority in Transylvania and Banat, in Arad, Temes and Krassó counties, and also in the so-called Partium² (Kővárvidék, Kraszna, Middle Szolnok, and Zaránd counties).

On Heinrich Kiepert’s map, published in 1869, the limit of the Romanian ethnic bloc started from the Vyshkovo (Visk) village, near the Tisza Valley, went on to the southwest and west, passed through Szatmár, Carei (Nagykároly, Großkarol) and Oradea, then led westwards to Komádi in Hungary, southwestwards—to Salonta (Nagyszalonta) and Gyula—and westwards of Arad. The census of 1870 confirmed both the heterogeneity of Hungary’s population and the fact that the Hungarians formed a compact ethnic bloc only in the center of Hungary, with other nationalities around it (Keleti 1873, 77–78).

TABLE 2. THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE IN THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN BORDER AREA (1865)

County	TOTAL	Romanians	Hungarians	Germans	Ruthenians	Slovakians	Jews	Others
Maramaros	177,000	57,000	1, 000	7,000	80,000	*	1,000	-
Szatmár	248,000	72,000	145,000	16,000	4,000	1,000	9,000	-
Ugocsa	50,000	8,000	21,000	1,000	19,000	*	2,000	-
Szabolcs	221,000	*	186,000	*	*	16,000	11,000	-
Bihar	500,000	200,000	290,000	-	-	-	7,000	-
Békés	155,000	9,000	96,000	4,000	-	46,000	*	-
Csanád	75,000	45,000	20,000	*	-	*	*	-
Arad	240,000	180,000	36,000	18,000	-	*	*	-
Temes	320,000	195,000	6,000	94,000	-	-	-	14,000
Torontál	350,000	62,000	55,000	88,000	-	-	-	124,000
Krassó	219,000	195,000	*	*	-	*	*	*
Border guard land	26,000	10,000	-	27,000	-	*	-	85,000

* Present in small numbers: in Torontál County: Bulgarians—10,000; French—6,000, the remaining Greeks and Jews, in Arad County: the Greek minority, in the border land, the Croatian minority. SOURCE: Szász 1862, 107, 109, 111, 113, 117, 119, 122, 124, 126, 128, 163.

The policy of colonization and of denationalization of Romanians and the systematic attempts to falsify the data in the Hungarian censuses organized after that date, based on mother-longue interpretations, led to an artificial increase in the proportion of Hungarian population, in an attempt to create the impression that the Hungarians were ethnically homogeneous (Grünwald 1876, 7). Even so, the Romanian ethnic bloc exerted a strong westward pressure on the Hungarians. This was acknowledged in a paper published in Hungary in 1884 (Láng and Jekelfalussy 1884, 126). Thus, based on the 1900 Hungarian census, the boundary between the Romanian and the Hungarian ethnic blocs was set almost on the same line as the one set by the Treaty of Trianon: from the Tisza River, through Turulung (Túrterebes, Túrterebesch), Livada (Sárköz), Remetea Oaşului (Kőszegremete), Culciu Mic (Kiskolcs), Culciu Mare (Nagykolcs), Amaţi (Amac), Ambud (Ombod), Păuleşti, Satu Mare, Vetiş (Vetés), Dara (Szamosdara), Boghiş (Csengerbagos), Domăneşti, Ghilvacii (Gilvács), Moftinu Mare (Nagymajtény, Großmaitingen), Ghenci (Gencs), Pişcolţ (Piskolt), Irina (Irin, Hirrin), Chereuşa (Érkőrös), Petea (Pete), Pâţal (Patal, Viişoara), Cheţ, Marghita, Abram (Érábrány), Terebeşti (Krasznaterebes, Terebesch), Petreu (Monospetri), Crestur, Olosig (Érolaszi, Schwäbisch Wallendorf), Pocluşa (Poklostelek), Sâniob (Szentjobb), Sălard (Szalárd), Cetariu (Hegyközcsatár), Săldăbagiu de Munte (Hegyközszáldobágy), Fughiu (Fugyi), Oşorhei (Fugyivásárhely), Sânmartin (Váradszentmárton), Oradea, Episcopia Bihorului (Biharpüspöki), Tărian (Köröstarján), Varsány, Geszt, Salonta, Ghioroc (Gyorok),

Vânători (Vadász), Adea (Ágya), Chişineu-Criş, Pădureni (Erdőhegyi), Zerind (Nagyzerénd), Iermata Neagră (Feketegyarmat), Ant, Gyula, Iratoşu (Nagyiratos), Zimandu Nou (Zimándújfalú), Livada (Fakert, Baumgarten), Arad, Pecica (Pécska), Peregu Mic (Kispereg), Mezőhegyes, Csanádpalota, Kövegy, Apátfalva, Makó, Kiszombor, Pordeanu (Porgány, Porgau), Cherestur (Pusztakeresztúr), Beba Veche (Óbéba, Altbeba), Kübëkháza, Rabe (Novi Kneževac), Majdan, Szöreg, Martonoş, Kanjiža, Zenta, Čoka, Bački Monoštor, Sajan, Padej, Ada, Bačko Petrovo Selo, Bečej, then farther on into the region between the Danube and the Tisza (Balogh 1902, 933–935).

The ethnographical map of Hungary, drawn up by Count Pál Teleki on the basis of the 1910 census data, used a new geographical method of representation, shifting the lower density of population in mountainous regions (under 20 inh./km²) and the greater densities in the large cities, average density areas. In this way, large mountain and tableland regions remained blank, creating the false impression of a kind of “ethnic voids.” This false representation of regions, with a compact Romanian population spread out over larger urban areas, Magyarized through colonization, distorted the reality of the Romanian-inhabited areas to lower values, simultaneously exaggerating the Hungarian-inhabited surface-area and creating a “corridor” to connect the Szeklers from the Harghita-Covasna area with the Hungarian ethnic bloc (Cociu 1993, 3: 32).

In a comprehensive commentary on this cartographic work, Romanian geographer Vintilă Mihăilescu concluded: “Count Teleki’s map must be decisively refuted and denounced—at least by specialists—as an deliberate attempt at mystifying reality” (Mihăilescu 1940, 152).

It was not long before the political value of the so-called “ethnic corridor” could be seen in the Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940. The “ethnic voids” created by Count Teleki in the Carpathian regions would be later seen in a Hungarian cartographical representation done by Kocsis (1997), in an erroneous interpretation of the 7 January 1992 census data (Deică 1998).

The Romanian-Hungarian Border in the Interwar Period (1918–1945)

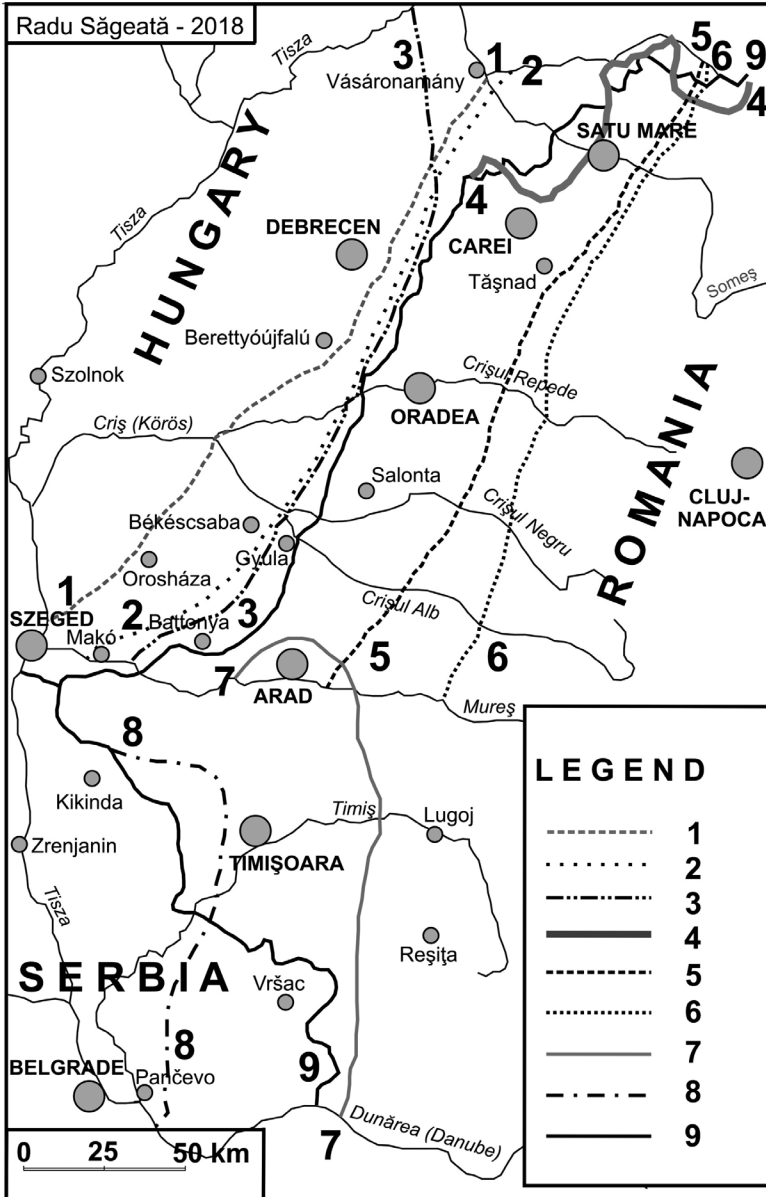
THE END of the First World War and the dissolution of the multinational empires in Europe (German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian) created the premises for the union of all Romanians, providing the opportunity for Bessarabia (on 27 March 1918), Bukovina (on 28 November

1918), and Transylvania (jointly with Banat, Crişana and Maramureş) (on 1 December 1918) to unite with the Kingdom of Romania. In this way, Romania's western border was set at the boundary between the Romanian and the Hungarian ethnic blocs, and internationally recognized at Trianon on 4 June 1920.

At the time of the First World War, the ethnic Romanian-Hungarian border appeared to have moved eastwards, following the pressure put on the Romanian ethnic bloc by the denationalization policy³ pursued by the Hungarian authorities. In addition, false interpretations of the 1910 census were used. Based on these interpretations, homogeneous regions inhabited by Romanians appeared to have radically changed their ethnic profile in just 10 years. The limits of the Romanian ethnic bloc (M. Kiss 1915, 1918) included the following settlements: Korolevo (Királyháza), Tarna Mare (Nagyarna, Gross-Tarnau), Chornotysiv (Feketeadó), Dyula (Szőlősgyula), Băbeşti (Kisbábony), Turulung, Adrian (Adorján), Oraşu Nou (Avasújváros), Viile Apei (Apahegy), Seini (Szinérváralja, Leuchtenburg), Berindan (Berend), Sătmărel (Szatmárzsadány), Satu Mare, Aradud (Erdőd, Erdeed), Beltiug (Krasznabéltek, Bildegg), Bogdand (Bogdánd, Bogendorf), Hodod (Hadad, Kriegsdorf), Lelei (Lele), Ulciug (Völcsök), Mânău (Monó), Arduzel (Szamosardó), Biuşa (Bősháza), Cehu Silvaniei (Szilágycseh, Bömischdorf), Deja (Désháza), Verveghiu (Vérvölgy), Sâncraiu Silvaniei (Szilágyszentkirály), Crestur, Zalău (Zilah, Zillenmarkt), Căţălu (Meseşenii de Sus, Oláhkecel), Petenia (Horoatu Crasnei, Krasznahorvát), Crasna (Kraszna, Krassmarkt), Ratin (Ráton), Şimleu Silvaniei (Szilágyosomlyó, Schomlenmarkt), Nuşfalău (Szilágynagyfalva), Zăuan (Szilágyzovány), Ip (Ipp), Leşmir (Leesmér), Suplacu de Barcău (Berettyószéplak), Aleşd (Élesd), Felcheriu (Felkér), Poşoloaca (Pósalaka), Tileagd (Mezőtelegd), Fughiu, Oşorhei, Sânmartin, Seleuş (Szöllős), Oradea, Sântion (Bihárszentjános), Tărian, Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti, Magyarhomorog, Biharugra, Geszt, Salonta, Ghioroc, Satu Nou (Kügypuszta), Vânători, Zerind, Adea (Agya), Vârşand, Zimandu Nou, Livada (Fakert), Arad, Pecica, Peregu Mic, Csanádpalota, Kövegy, Apátfalva, Kiszombor, Pordeanu, Cherestur, Novi Kneževac (Majdan), Čoka (Egyházaskér), Crna Bara (Feketetó), Kanjiža (Kanizsa), Toba (Tóba), Hetin (Tamásfalva), Răuţi (Aurelhaza), Sânmartinu Maghiar (Magyarszentmárton), Otelec (Ótelek), Mihajlovo (Magyarszentmihály), Beciche-recu Mare (Nagybecskerek, Großbetschkerek, Zrenjanin), Lukino Selo (Lukácsfalva), and Novi Bečej (Törökbecse) (Bolovan 2001).

However, the border set eight years before at Trianon followed without major deviations the ethnic limits set by Count István Bethlen and by Gyula Varga, a member of the Hungarian Academy, while seeking a compromise between the variants proposed by the experts present at the negotiations (Fig. 1).

FIG. 1. VARIANTS FOR THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN BORDER PROPOSED AT TRIANON (1920)



LEGEND: 1. Requested by Romania in 1916; 2. Proposed by British experts; 3. Proposed by French experts; 4. Proposed by Acad. Gyula Varga in 1912; 5. Proposed by American experts; 6. Proposed by Italian experts; 7. Proposed by Serbian experts; 8. Proposed by Count Stephen Bethlen in 1912; 9. Present border, after Trianon (1920).

SOURCE: Seișanu 2000, 168–169.

Although the border set at Trianon did not give any square meter of Hungarian territory to Romania, but only confirmed a historical reality, the signing of this treaty triggered a massive campaign in the Hungarian political mass media, challenging it as based on false scientific arguments.

A representative propaganda volume titled *A történeti Erdély* (Historical Transylvania), published in Budapest in 1936, stated the following: “moving the Carpathian frontier is not only an act of violence against the Hungarian nation, but also an actual offence against God” (Asztalos 1936, 23) and the mountains which had been a borderline until 1918 were now “une chaîne tout à fait fermée et puissante” (Rónai 1936, 39). Commenting upon these assertions, Ion Conea (1942b) quoted the German geographer Walther Vogel (1922, 33–34) who set the natural frontier between the Romanian and the Hungarian ethnic blocs along the Tisza floodplain, which until several scores of years ago had been a natural borderline unsurpassed even by the Pripet marshes. It was a geophysical barrier unique in Europe, nearly 500 km long and 50 km wide, and when the snow melted and it rained heavily in spring and writer a real freshwater sea would overflow and separate Hungary from the Carpathian regions. Based on ethnic, historical and toponymic arguments, the Romanian author demonstrated that the Carpathian Mountains “are far from having the attributes of a so-called natural frontier,” forming the backbone of the Romanian land and people (Conea 1942b, 64).

In order to counteract the Hungarian revisionist stance, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (named Yugoslavia since 1929) concluded an alliance—the Little Entente. Take Ionescu, the then prime minister of Romania, accounted for the signing of that alliance as follows: “A war does not end with the signing of peace treaties. It goes on in the very hearts of peoples, and statesmen should create and maintain a state of things liable to convince those who hope to destroy a stable order as senseless and even dangerous” (Cârstea and Buzatu 2011, 37). This alliance was successively reinforced (on 27 June 1930 and 16 February 1933), eventually becoming an “international organization open to other countries, as well” (Article 1). It was dismantled on the eve of the Second World War, when German troops invaded Czechoslovakia, Nazi Germany annexed Bohemia and Moravia, and Slovakia became independent (1939–1945) (Mantu 1924; Campus 1997).

Drawing on a solid documentation, a man contemporaneous with these events, Milton G. Lehrer (1944/2013, 185), wrote: “If an injustice was committed in 1920, it is not for the Hungarians to complain about it, but for the Romanians, because beyond the political borders, several islands inhabited by Romanians were left in the Hungarian territory.” Lord Balfour told the House of Commons meeting of 12 February 1920 that the border between Romania and Hungary was set by the committee of experts of the main Allied and As-

sociated Powers “as a result of thorough and well-thought research and with the sincere wish to create a fair border for all parties” (apud Seișanu 2000, 169).

Analyzing the population structure of Transylvania by nationality and residence, Emmanuel de Martonne, who knew Romania very well (Bowd and Clayton 2015) said on 6 June 1921, at a conference held at the Romanian Society of Geography:

It is a very strange phenomenon the urban character of the Hungarian population in Transylvania, one of the factors that caused most difficulties for Romanian rights defenders . . . The ethnic composition of urban centers in mixed population regions is an artificial phenomenon: it depends on the nationality of governance, basically the army, the government, the banking, and trade sectors. If you add deliberately-caused pressure to someone’s benefit it is easily understandable that the Transylvanian cities became almost entirely Hungarian. It is equally understandable that this pressure can no longer continue now. Naturally, cities need to get a Romanian physiognomy. I knew old Cluj at a time when one had to be a careful listener to catch a word in Romanian; now, in Union Square, in the streets, everywhere Romanian is heard. During my stay of only two months, I had the impression that the Romanian language made notable progress. It is a natural and necessary phenomenon. In a country where the villages and the government are mostly Romanian it is not possible for cities not to become Romanian.

TABLE 3. THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF COUNTIES
IN THE ROMANIAN BORDER AREA AFTER THE TREATY OF TRIANON (%)

Counties		Romanians	Hungarians	Others
Satu Mare		60.7	25.4	13.9
Sălaj		56.3	31.4	12.3
Bihor		61.6	30.0	8.4
Arad		61.0	19.5	19.5
TOTAL	N	934,263	317,895	161,338
	%	59.9	26.6	13.5

SOURCE: Seișanu 2000, 170.

Hungary’s revisionist claims resulted in the Second World War, given the absence of firmness and unity of the states allied against Hitler’s fascism, which led to a change in the balance of power in favor of the aggressor countries, supporters of the revisionist and territorial invasion policy. Thus, the Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940 changed the border to the benefit of Hungary.

Border change was supported by an ethnic map of Transylvania and Eastern Hungary, which left the impression that the ethnic structure of Transylvania had

been changed by the cartographical process used, whereby the Hungarians were shown in deep red, the Germans in orange (the similarity between these colors leading to confusion between the two ethnic groups, creating a visual perception of more Hungarians), the Jews were deemed to be Hungarians, while the Romanians were colored in a pale violet shade, appearing to be dominated by the Hungarians. However, despite guileful representation “the mass of Transylvanian Romanians, with the exception of the Szeklers—an island in the midst of Romanians—is so obvious that only ill-will can deny the Romanian character of this province” (Cociu 1993, 3: 18).

Romania lost 42,243 km² and over 2.6 million inhabitants, more than half of them Romanians. In the territory occupied by Horthy’s Hungary there remained 702 large-and-medium-sized industrial enterprises with a vested capital of nearly 4 billion lei, workshops, and small enterprises (*Tribuna* newspaper of 2 April 1941 and *Transilvania* newspaper of 29 October 1944). The transport systems were disrupted, as entire sectors of national roads and railways, the postal service, telegraph and telephone companies passed under Hungarian administration (Popa-Veres 1941). Agriculture lost 1,303,002 hectares of arable land, 1,074,466 hectares of pastures and hayfields, 57,693 ha of vineyards, plus 685,508 ha of fallow land (roads, water, human settlements) (*Gazeta de Turda* newspaper of 16 March 1941).

Romania’s territorial losses were accompanied by a harsh repression against the Romanian population in these territories, in an effort to artificially change the ethnic composition in favor of the Hungarian population and to justify the perpetuation of that regime as much as possible.

Commenting on the repressive actions of the Hungarian Horthyst authorities, Sándor Kelemen and László Szenczei, contemporaneous with the events, wrote: “Most military commanders had a fascist and chauvinistic orientation. . . . The most important task of the military commanders were the ‘cleansing’ operations” (Kelemen 1946, 12–13). “Soldiers, imbued with fascist theories, arrived in northern Transylvania, committed heinous atrocities against the helpless people of the Romanian villages” (Szenczei 1946, 161).

On 25 October 1944, the liberation of Northern Transylvania from Horthy’s domination, with the sacrifice of Romanian soldiers, restored the Romanian administration over these territories. The Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940 was declared null and void by the Armistice Convention of 12 September 1944, and by the Paris Peace Treaty of 10 February 1947. Consequently, the legal basis for the state border between Romania and Hungary remains the Treaty of Trianon. This was confirmed by the Treaty between Romania and Hungary, signed in Timișoara and ratified by both sides in 1996.

Conclusions

THE ANALYSIS of the historical documents on the ethnic structure of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area highlights three major aspects.

1) The inconsistency of the Hungarian authorities' discourse. Until 1918, based on statistical data, historical documents and scientific works drawn up mainly by Hungarian authors, they recognized *Hungary's heterogeneous ethnic structure and the absolute majority of Romanians in Transylvania*, with the exception of the Szekler zone in the area of the present-day counties of Harghita, Covasna, and Mureș. After the First World War, as the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was dismantled and Transylvania passed under Romanian administration, the Hungarian discourse suffered a radical change, challenging the Trianon decisions and claiming, on the basis of false scientific reasoning and cartographic procedures that distorted the reality, that the Hungarian ethnic element was more numerous in Transylvania. Consequently, several Romanian geographers of the interwar period produced lots of writings highlighting the reality of an opposite situation. Since during the Second World War (September 1941–October 1944) Northern Transylvania came under Hungarian administration, the stage was set for the outburst of the chauvinistic frustrations of the then Hungarian authorities, leading to bloody conflicts and ethnic cleansing. In the communist period, interethnic tensions simmered down, masked by the friendship among the peoples of the Soviet bloc. However, after 1989, the first interethnic tensions in the Romanian counties with a majority Hungarian population (Harghita and Covasna) were rekindled in extremist-nationalist speeches by some representatives of the political class. The signing of the basic political treaty between the two neighboring states, followed by their integration into the European Union (2004 and 2007, respectively), and the adoption of the EU legislation on matters pertaining to the ethnic minorities, dampened the extremist manifestations, which nevertheless continued on the occasion of public meetings or sporting events. At the same time, they developed concepts intended to reintegrate the territories that had belonged to the Hungarian state before 1920, either in the form of a “Carpathian Basin,” or of a “Carpathian Euroregion” (Deică 1999–2000, Deică and Alexandrescu 1995), territorial structures later proved devoid of substance.

2) *The eastwards shift of the boundary between the Hungarian and the Romanian blocs*, in the wake of the colonization policies promoted by the Austro-Hungarian authorities until 1918.

3) *The righteousness of the borderline set at Trianon* along the ethnic frontier was demonstrated by the analyzed historical sources and confirmed by the international experts who drew up the treaty.

In view of the above, one century after the union of Transylvania with Romania and on the eve of a century since the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, we consider that a scientific approach, based on documentary sources, likely to help elucidate the circumstances in which the political boundary between Romania and Hungary was set, is an imperative necessity. □

Notes

1. Article 1(1) in the Constitution of Romania reads: “Romania is a national, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible state.”
2. Partium (*Partes reapplicatae*) grouped the four counties that Hungary planned to transfer from Transylvania, but which eventually remained in Transylvania, having been returned by Emperor Charles VI in 1732.
3. The denationalization policy of the Romanians undertaken by the Hungarian state began in the second half of the 19th century and lasted until the Great Union. This resulted mainly in colonization (especially in the big cities), and denationalization through the church, school and administration (Manciulea 1938, 47, 77).

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Abstract

The Evolution of the Ethnic and Political Romanian-Hungarian Border As Reflected in Sources

The 100th anniversary of the union of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia with Romania (1918) and of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which meant international recognition for Romania's western border, is an opportunity to analyze impartially the historical documents justifying that process. This is all the more necessary because the Hungarian side strongly criticized it. The paper deals with the establishment of the Romanian and Hungarian nation-state borders. It analyzes Hungarian, German, Romanian, West European and American historical documents which outline the evolution of the boundary between the Romanian and the Hungarian ethnic blocs previous to the year 1918, the basis for the current political frontier, as well as inter- and postwar documents challenging the recourse to false scientific arguments on the union of Transylvania with Romania. To conclude, from 1750 to 1918, the ethnic boundary between Romanians and Hungarians constantly shifted eastwards as a consequence of the Hungarian authorities' political decisions, the present political borderline running along the ethnic one of 1918.

Keywords

ethnic structure, political border, Treaty of Trianon, Transylvania, Hungary, Romania