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- 1 This study gives an overview of the history of two Romanian commemorative fests that are held regularly in County Covasna. There are two locations under consideration: the county seat of Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy)¹ and the county's second biggest city, Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely)². Both cities are inhabited in majority by Hungarians, whereas Romanians – the majority component of the state – are in the minority here. The study further examines the Hungarian media representation of these two national holidays, their construction and perception in the Hungarian-language written press of Szeklerland,³ and amongst the local (Hungarian) community.
- 2 January 24, 1859 marked the unification of the two Romanian Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, in what is known in Romanian historiography as the “Little Union.” This date is considered a key event in the formation of the modern Romanian nation-state. Although January 24 became a public holiday in Romania only in 2014,⁴ Romanians have been regularly commemorating this day throughout the last century.
- 3 The second fest commemorates December 1, 1918 when Romanians from Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș gathered to declare their wish to unite themselves in one country to become the then “Greater Romania.” This second union, the “Grand Union Day,” has been the main national holiday of Romania since 1991,⁵ and is the most remarkable commemorative event taking place in all cities of Romania, especially in the capital Bucharest and in Alba Iulia (from whence the 1918 “Declarations of Alba Iulia” stem). This research also aims to give an overview of how the most important Romanian commemorative event, the 1st of December, is celebrated nowadays in Szeklerland.

Ethnic boundaries and cultural memory

- 4 Initially the concepts of *borderland* and *boundary* were used by social science in a geographical sense, but after Fredrik Barth introduced the concepts within anthropology, they gained new meanings. According to Barth, territorial changes in public and ecclesiastical administration can also be interpreted as a macro attempt to homogenise the ethnic-cultural image of a specific area. The scale to which a group may be affected by a border also depends, according to Barth, on its extent and on the homogeneity of its lifestyle. However, it is important that members of a given group are able to identify themselves with their own distinctive marks, in this way they can fight for their separate existence. The local institutions play an important role in this “struggle” in bringing together their actors, forging their actions and styles together, and creating a sense of community among them, while supporting discontinuity between the community and outsiders, thereby reinforcing the boundaries between them.⁶ Thomas Hylland Eriksen also highlighted the relationship between ethnicity and institutionalised politics in his study from 1991. According to him, institutionalised politics are organised along ethnic lines, meaning that ethnic discrimination plays an important role in public policy.⁷ As stated by Eriksen, “Ethnic conflicts are created by politics.”⁸
- 5 According to Zoltán Ilyés, these zones are not static dividing lines, but dynamic, shiftable and permeable ones, which can be seen as “areas of cultural play and experimentation, but also a prime location for dominance and power.”⁹ In Sfântu Gheorghe, a county capital, Romanian and Hungarian commemorative fests transform the city into an important place for struggles over dominance and power, as well as for important cultural games and experiments. The evolution of demographic conditions also explains the increased demand for ethnic representation by the growing but still minority population of Romanians during the past century. In this way, the county seat has become an important site for commemorative events, reflecting the desire for identity articulation on the part of both the Romanian and Hungarian communities.
- 6 Furthermore, as stated by Jan Assmann, these commemorations function as part of the cultural memory, aiming at remembrance. They are not only related to a well-defined space, time, and event, but also to a specific group, whose members develop the basic identity of the group and pass on the necessary knowledge for its operation by participating in these cyclically joint commemorative events.¹⁰ However, as Marianne Hirsch determines in her concept of “postmemory” related to the Holocaust, “These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present.”¹¹
- 7 In this paper, my main research objective is the systematic analysis of the comprehensive changes that occurred in the significance, meaning, and structure of these fests, between 1919 and 2015, in the interethnic environment of this ethnic and confessional border zone.¹² My analysis proceeds with a detailed content analysis of the representation of these two Romanian fests by the Hungarian press based on quantitative and qualitative research methods.¹³ The quantitative method focuses on the number of the press articles found on the two commemorative fests in the regional Hungarian newspapers. The qualitative approach focuses on 313 press articles¹⁴ and 16 structured interviews.¹⁵ I conducted a series of structured interviews with members of the event organising team and with participants of the commemorations.

- 8 The research follows Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis, thus it does not focus on the traditional text-level analysis, but examines conflicting group identities related to ethnicity or language, while perceiving them not as inherent, but in relation to each other.¹⁶
- 9 The analysis is divided in four historical periods between 1919 and 2015 to obtain the optimal number of inputs for presenting, analysing, and interpreting the attitude of the local Hungarians towards the official national celebrations. The four historical periods are as follows: (1) 1919–1944, to mark the period between the two World Wars. Due to multiple border changes, this period has been subject to significant interethnic tensions; (2) 1945–1964, to mark the period between the end of the Second World War and the communist period under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the first communist leader of Romania; (3) 1965–1989, to mark the dictatorship of the Ceaușescu regime and the influence of its propaganda on the commemorations; and (4) 1990–2015, to mark the democratic period after the regime change in 1989–1990 and its corresponding commemorations.
- 10 My overall goal is to give a comprehensive overview on different methods of ethnic representation and the articulation of identity throughout the last century, as well as on the current state of play in the two commemorative fests, by also taking into account the events of the one-hundredth-year anniversary of December 1 in this specific environment.

Ethnic and confessional border area

- 11 The Hungarian community of Romania (6.5% of the total population in 2011)¹⁷ lives mostly in the territories near the Hungarian border and in the geographical centre of Romania (Szeklerland). This community became part of Greater Romania directly after the First World War, a century ago. The ways in which the most important Romanian commemorative events are organised and how they occur in reality have some specific characteristics in the borderlands where Romanian and Hungarian communities meet.
- 12 Due to its geographic situation and historic evolution, Sfântu Gheorghe provides a very special geopolitical site for the analysis of ethnicity, culture, confession, and minority-majority relations. At the geographic centre of Romania, 76.7% of its inhabitants are Hungarian, whereas the Romanian population represents only 21.9% of the population.¹⁸
- 13 Varga E. Árpád's official census data and summaries of Sfântu Gheorghe and Târgu Secuiesc show that these cities have undergone significant changes in their ethnic composition over the past hundred years.¹⁹

City of Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy)

Year	Romanians	Hungarians	Romanians %	Hungarians %
1850	422	1818	18	78.3
1910	108	8361	1.2	96.5
1920	1337	9345	11.9	83.5

1966	2560	17739	12.3	85.4
2002	14134	45012	23.4	74.5
2011	11725	40056	21.9	76.7

City of Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely)

Year	Romanians	Hungarians	Romanians %	Hungarians %
1850	24	3346	0.67	94
1910	50	5970	0.82	98.2
1920	74	4634	1.5	96.5
1966	460	8328	5.2	93.9
2002	1582	17290	8.4	91.4
2011	1262	14840	7.4	87.6

- ¹⁴ Although in comparison with the census of 1920, the number of Romanian residents in Sfântu Gheorghe and in Târgu Secuiesc, as in the Szeklerland generally, has multiplied during the eighty years following the First World War, in fact the Romanian population remains a minority and the Hungarians a majority. Because almost 90% of the Romanian population of these two cities are of Orthodox religion, and because the Hungarians are divided nearly equally between the Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations, the geographical scene of this research is also a confessional borderland and contact zone.²⁰

Romanian commemorative fests in Szeklerland's press: 1919–1989

- ¹⁵ After the foundation of a Romanian state in 1866, there was no clear definition of official national holidays until the 1991 Constitution. Nevertheless, certain individual “national” holidays became part of the celebratory practices of minority Romanian communities immediately after the events they commemorated. Celebrations were organised year-after-year and were organically integrated into the festive order and national imagination of the Romanians, but they were also widely and consciously mediatised. However, in line with the concept of ethnic representation and concepts related to collective memory and postmemory, it should be expected that their significance, meanings, and functions have changed over time.
- ¹⁶ For the first targeted period (1919–1944), I examined eight newspaper articles. From an interethnic point of view, the historical events between the two World Wars – in light of multiple border changes and the Romanian-Hungarian coexistence in Szeklerland –

are a very problematic period. This might be the reason why it was difficult to find any logic based on the celebration of the two commemorative events in Szeklerland. The press reports are irregular – their number changes every year and there is no annual cyclicity – which suggests inconsistent celebration. At the same time, we can also assume that Hungarian journalists may have remained "deeply silent" on events related to the celebration of Romanian nation-state building.

- 17 The fact that the commemoration of December 1 appears only in the form of short articles allows two conclusions to be drawn. First of all, due to the proximity of the events of 1918, this festive event had not yet entered the celebratory traditions of Romanians in Szeklerland to such an extent that it could serve as an authoritative source of news for Hungarian-language newspapers. Indeed, the exchange of local administration and leaders, from the Hungarian to Romanian administrations, only took place around 1924. It was only then that local Hungarians started to realise that the lands would not revert to the Hungarian state after the First World War. Hence even though the Romanians in Szeklerland celebrated this anniversary regularly – even if not to the extent that they celebrated January 24 – the local Hungarian media deliberately ignored, suppressed, or underestimated the Romanian national holiday, and did not want to inform the majority population about the existence of the event. The few reports published during this period testify that the commemorative events were in fact one of the most important arenas for establishing the distinctions between Romanians and Hungarians. The holidays were, as Barth might have put it, between “us” and “them,” the most important “message exchanging” option between the two communities.²¹
- 18 In these years, the question of territorial revision was still raised openly. The events of ethnic Romanian cultural and political associations were covered by the Hungarian press, in entries like this one from 1932:

ASTRA MEETING
The local Astra Association²² held its season-opening gathering on December 1, where speakers delivered about the significance of the union. Dr. Valer Bidu spoke about Transylvania, Cornel Nastasi²³ about Bukovina. In this context, the issue of revision was raised, but the speeches were calm. In the evening, there was a social dinner in the lower hall of the Vigadó without incident.²⁴
- 19 While on January 24, there was relatively regular news coverage of the central events in Bucharest, on December 1, only short items of local news were published. The difference in coverage probably reflects the receptivity of each of these events to the local Hungarian community.
- 20 That is to say that although January 24 was rarely mentioned in local newspapers of this period, it was the second-most frequently celebrated event of the period reviewed.
²⁵ As the union of the Romanian principalities in 1859 did not directly affect the Hungarians in Szeklerland and Transylvania, it seems the Hungarian-speaking journalists of the Szeklerland’s daily newspapers reported on this commemorative event in detail and objectivity.
- 21 Nevertheless, as far as possible, the journalists seized the opportunity to express their opinions on the Romanian-Hungarian coexistence, and strived to clarify the problematic nature of this relationship. “Every once in a while, we can see that, according to newspaper reports, the man coming to us from the Regat [i.e. Moldavia

and Wallachia] is an enemy, and after he sees the real situation and gets us know he really becomes our friend.”²⁶

- 22 The unification of 1859 can be defined as a major historical event of great importance to the modern Romanian nation and the formation of the modern Romanian nation-state. The commemorative event had already become an integral part of the Romanian community celebration order and its national imagination, and as far as the given political situation and leadership allowed, it was also celebrated.
- 23 In Romania of the 1930s, the rise of the far-right Iron Guard, the elaboration of Romanian national mythology, and the revival of the “Daco-Roman continuity theory,”²⁷ did not favour a good Romanian-Hungarian relationship.²⁸ The Iron Guard was yet to discover and use the commemorative fests as an effective, symbolic tool for achieving their admittedly nationalist and chauvinistic aspirations in the areas inhabited by Hungarians.
- 24 In the second targeted period (1945–1964), five articles were published in the local Hungarian press about the two commemorative events. January 24 continued to be celebrated regularly, both locally and nationally. After careful examination of the articles, it can be concluded that this ceremony remained consistent with the original meaning of the celebration, emphasising the importance of the unification of Romanian principalities in the history of the formation of a modern Romanian nation, and bringing it into the international sphere.
- 25 Meanwhile, December 1 also slowly infiltrated and became an integral part of the celebratory practices and commemorations of Romanians in Szeklerland. After careful analysis of the newspaper articles, one can conclude that the commemoration scenario was very similar to contemporary celebrations. In fact, today’s commemorative scenarios and practices originated in the 1930s and 1940s, but they have kept the rhetoric of communism that was added later. The commemoration reports, the emphasis on reconciliation, and the emphasis on the equality of rights between Hungarians and Romanians are strikingly pathetic.

On December 1, Bucharest celebrated the solemn opening of Romania’s first democratically elected House of Representatives with a traditional exterior decoration and pomp. At 11 am a solemn worship was held at the Patriarchal Church to commemorate the anniversary of 1st of December and to celebrate the *annexation* of Transylvania to Romania. Worship was attended by His Majesty King Michael I and members of the royal house.²⁹
- 26 In most of the articles the names of the authors are not known, they report from Braşov, Bucharest, or Cluj. Based on the emphasis on minority issues, the need for Hungarian-Romanian peaceful coexistence and the Hungarian-Romanian parallels, and based on the choice of “annexation” (of Transylvania), as in the above quote, instead of the official “union,” indicates that the articles were written by Hungarian journalists and not by Romanians.
- 27 However, in contrast to hard formulations and statements of the minority aspect of the previous period, the tone of the announcements is too pathetic in this period. The reader senses that the writers have already perceived the pervasive “order” from the communist power, which we will often meet later. Although the Romanian Communist Party was characterised by anti-nationalism in the period between the two World Wars,
³⁰ the above-mentioned declaration of equality and fraternity already shows the myth of the Soviet Union, the Russian pattern, the new trend, the beginning of which was

marked by Mihail Sadoveanu's *Light comes from the east* (Lumina vine de la răsărit) published in 1945.³¹

- 28 A short transitional period occurred until 1947, and in a few years the radical material, social, and mental transformation forced by communism took place. The most significant events were the crushing of the former civilian leadership, collectivisation, massive industrialisation, the mass-movement of people from the villages to the towns, and the creation of the hegemony of a new leadership, the so-called new working class. In this way, one of the most important Central-Eastern European bases of Stalinist, internationalist communism was established in Romania.³²
- 29 An interviewee explains the situation as follows:

Participation was not mandatory during the Kingdom, but after 1947, when the republic was proclaimed, celebrations became mandatory. In 1965, when Gheorghiu-Dej died and Nicolae Ceaușescu was elected, it was only then that they became truly compulsory. (...) The national flag was used as a symbol, but after the Kingdom the red flag, the Soviet influence was very strong. By then everything was about the Soviet Union.³³
- 30 After the dissolution of the *Népi Egység*³⁴ newspaper, and the creation of the Hungarian Autonomous Province in 1952 (from 1960, the Autonomous Province of Maros), it could be assumed that the revival of Hungarian culture and media was also a key factor in Szeklerland. The research by Stefano Bottoni and Péter O. Váry³⁵ confirms that before 1956 a kind of local nation-building continued. Culture and media were an important part of this process, but neither of them could develop freely nor independently of mass media and centralised power. It soon became clear that Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely), as the capital city of the Autonomous Province, was managed in reality from Bucharest and Moscow. All this could be clearly mapped out in the evolution of the written press. Although from 1945 onwards, the church papers, then the sports magazines, and then (in the 1960s) the student papers all attempted to take over the role of non-existent local papers, apart from minor successes, they were usually ephemeral. The Hungarian population of County Covasna was forced to get its information from daily newspapers and magazines impregnated by Moscow's all-pervasive communist propaganda. The state attempted to address the Hungarian population through these organs and keep it under strict control. The youngest age group was no exception from this process either.³⁶
- 31 The glorification and uncritical following of the Soviet Union in Romania of the 1950s and 1960s began to weaken, as nationalism gradually came to the fore. This slow but steadily detectable direction reached its peak in 1964 in the "Independence" statement of the Romanian Workers' Party, whose discourse had praised nationalism rather than internationalism, and practically – as Boia stated – sought roots and legitimacy in a glorious national past against the failed "brilliant future."³⁷
- 32 The interviews made with the participants of the commemorative events, which played an important role in this period, show that neither December 1 nor January 24 were highlighted in their memories. They spoke primarily about the less formal ceremonies related to May 1³⁸ and compared it to the significant commemorative days of the previous (May 10³⁹) and subsequent periods (August 23⁴⁰). Similarities between the May 1 and August 23 are common. These were newly-created, grandiose, and obligatory celebrations of communist and socialist life, and they have largely determined community memory. While May 1 was more memorable due to its informal

celebrations, August 23 was characterised by obligatory, endless preparations, parades, and slogans, during which everyone was thinking on how to leave the event unnoticed.

The event started days earlier, when people were organised: how to leave the factory to join the parade, what slogans and banner to carry, what to shout on the street. It was often tiring, especially for the young ones, because in the eighties outdoor sports and cultural festivities were part of these commemorations, and students were mainly prepared for days and weeks of rehearsal for these parades.⁴¹

- 33 After the Second World War, the new national holiday, August 23, was gradually established and became the most important national holiday in the third targeted period (1965–1989). The reorganisation of the post-1965 celebrations is a typical example of how the propaganda machine that created Ceaușescu's personal cult could manipulate and integrate via its historical ideology the entire series of national holidays into a historical arch, and then make use of dictatorial methods to maintain and increase its legitimacy. At the same time, the national holiday was one of the means of self-expression for the regime's elite, and it provided the regime with an opportunity to strengthen its position.
- 34 During the press review of this period, basically two types of "rearrangement" were outlined. The first involved the creation of historical and personal myth by editing and simplifying the messages of the commemorative events. Regardless of whether it was a celebration of a unification (January 24 or December 1), a celebration of the proclamation of state independence (May 10), or any other official commemoration, the structure and message of all fests was built on the same arch of the Communist Party's propagandists. In the first, milder period of the Ceaușescu era, Romanian history began with the unification efforts of Mihai Viteazul from the year 1600 and its endpoint usually culminated in the contemporary actions of the party and the masses. Meanwhile, for major historical dates, the propagandists assigned a historical person – a writer, a poet, or a statesman – whose actions and words could be considered to embody, and therefore prove, the legitimacy and success of communist ideology. Later, in the second half of the Ceaușescu era, when communist propaganda had infiltrated all areas of life, this historical arch expanded considerably. The origins of the Romanians and the circle of mythical persons were usually brought back to the Daco-Roman period, and ultimately dominated and crowned by the hyperbolised figure of the party and its leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu. The press carried items like this one:

Deeply respected and beloved Comrade NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU!

On the brilliant 41st anniversary of the glorious social and national liberation, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist revolution of August 23, 1944, allow us in the name of all Romanian and Hungarian workers in County Covasna, who are working with enthusiasm for our ideals to create a new life in full unity under the victorious flag of the party, to reaffirm our boundless admiration and infinite respect for you, for your tremendous work in the service of our people's most beautiful ideals of progress and ascension.⁴²

- 35 The second type of "rearrangement" involved editing the "non-national" narratives attached to the commemorative events. The centre of every celebration was no longer an event from the past, but a contemporary one, rebuilt with well-defined ideological aspects by Ceaușescu's propagandists, and regularly highlighted in the written press. In the early 1970s, the myth of the worker standing-out from the crowd was shaped, together with the myth of heroic work based on party congresses and five-year work plans. However, the myth of the outstanding worker gradually diminished, giving yet

more space to the party leader's growing one-man cult. This dominance is also confirmed by an interviewee concerning celebrations of August 23:

[the holiday's] goal was to demonstrate the party's power, the power of Ceaușescu and the Ceaușescu couple. August 23 was always about this. The national element was always secondary, of course, it was the sauce, but the meat was always Ceaușescu. The national was just a sauce around him, and all the ceremonies were made for this. From this point of view, there were two things that could be considered as national: the statue of Mihai Viteazul [in the centre of Sfântu Gheorghe since 1982] and the Monument of the Unknown Romanian Soldier [in Sfântu Gheorghe since 1974⁴³]. The solemn setting up of these – as Ceaușescu was here at the time of setting up the Mihai Viteazul statue, he unveiled the statue – they were messages clearly designed for the Hungarian community, saying this is Romania, you have to understand.⁴⁴

Media representations of the fests since 1989

- 36 With the sudden fall of Ceaușescu's regime in December 1989, the person and the system of trumped-up admiration and worship suddenly disappeared from the public space. Moreover, the whole context of the commemorative events was pushed to change at this time.
- 37 During the fourth targeted period (1990–2015), the new constitution of 1991 declared December 1 to be the most important (and for a long time the only) official national holiday of Romania. January 24 regained its original meaning, and – as it marked the union of two principalities – it became one of the most important commemoration days in the nation-building process of Romanians. The continuity in its celebration and presence in Romanian public space is also confirmed by the fact that this commemorative day was declared by Act 104/1991, adopted on January 18, 1991, as the second national holiday of Romania.
- 38 The analysis of 17 articles from this period shows that directly after the regime change that Romanians in Szeklerland did not celebrate January 24 very heavily. However, after the appearance and subsequent settlement of internal domestic political problems in the 1990s, the commemoration started to gain increased importance. By the turn of the millennium, it had grown into a highly mediated public holiday of the Romanian community in Szeklerland. It was organised by the government office (prefecture) of the county, in the 1990s, at the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in Sfântu Gheorghe, and after the turn of the millennium, at Mihai Viteazul Square in the city centre. The official public commemoration includes military honours, ecclesiastical ceremonies, official speeches, cultural shows, and a Romanian folkdance called "Hora Unirii" (Hora of Unification). The commemoration ceremony strengthens the idea of unity among Romanians. The local Romanian elite uses this opportunity to announce its presence in this part of Transylvania, and to show the differences between "us, Romanians" and "them, Hungarians" by using numerous national symbols, and provocative and often aggressive slogans.
- 39 Structured interviews with participants in this public event reveal that they are drawn primarily from the ranks of the local Romanian political, military, and ecclesiastical elite. "Ordinary" Romanians attend only in a small number. Local Romanian NGOs organise many complementary cultural events (symposiums, conferences, exhibitions,

etc.), which provide an opportunity to celebrate together and to strengthen the identity of local Romanians.

- 40 The analysis of newspaper articles dealing with December 1 after the regime change highlights how a commemorative event that played a marginal role in the past could become, with the help of the new political power, a grandiose, highly mediated – and from the interethnic point of view – a problematic commemoration of a nation. December 1 stood as the only national holiday of Romania in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, its scenario goes back to traditions before the Second World War, even as its discourse evokes the traditions of the Ceaușescu era.
- 41 The historian Maria Bucur explains that in the first ten years after 1918, in the capital of Bucharest, and in other parts of Moldavia and Wallachia, there was hardly any commemoration of December 1. The date was relatively unimportant in these regions because the Kingdom had been established more than half a century before. In Transylvania –with the support of the Orthodox Church and the encouragement of Astra – significant celebrations with political influence took place in the years immediately following the Declarations of Alba Iulia. In the 1930s, the celebration of December 1 entered public consciousness throughout the country, although even then, Bucharest tried to minimise the importance of Transylvanian events for many years. Thus, in the period between the two World Wars, December 1 was celebrated only as a regional Transylvanian commemorative event. However, with the rise of anti-revisionist movements, it became a semi-official fest. After 1947, it disappeared for some time from the public space, until 1968, the fiftieth anniversary of the great unification, when it started to gain space again, but it was still not celebrated as an official national holiday. Finally the disagreements on this commemorative fest between Transylvania and the rest of Romania disappeared in the 1980s, in the melting pot of the Ceaușescu's homogenising cult and policy. According to Maria Bucur, the official and semi-official commemorations had such a rigid institutionalised framework that, according to a 1997 survey, many considered it boring, and that it lacked the capacity to further emotional and patriotic bonding to the nation.⁴⁵
- 42 The democratisation process was slow in the early 1990s, and it shows in the extent to which the historical attitudes and rhetoric formed during communism continued to be seen, with little self-reflection, in Romanian public space. At the very least, commemorations continued to follow the Daco-Roman continuity theory. Nevertheless, the period was characterised by political dilemmas, and these also affected the celebrations. Deep national political uncertainty was visible, for example, during the commemorations on December 1, 1990. It had been considered that the exiled King of Romania might return for the celebrations. Machinations followed by the government on one side and by supporters of a parliamentary monarchy on the other side, each using the holiday to spread their ideas and to retain or gain power. Preventing the king's visit to Romania on the occasion of the commemorations was the main goal of the government leaders.
- 43 As the years progressed, ethnic colour was given to the meaning of December 1 in domestic politics and in verbal struggles with Hungarians. Both in Bucharest and in Alba Iulia, the day was commemorated in an increasingly mediated manner.
- 44 In the local Hungarian newspapers in the area of Trei Scaune (Háromszék),⁴⁶ one can trace the specific evolution of the celebration of December 1 in Szeklerland. From the beginning of the 1990s, the Hungarians demanded the equality of rights laid down in

the Declarations of Alba Iulia, and gave a recurring analysis of why the Hungarians in Transylvania did not celebrate December 1. They argued that this commemoration does not mean any unification for the Hungarians, since this "union" is only about the majoritarian nation. Furthermore, they insisted that the rights promised to minorities in 1918 had been neither implemented nor respected for nearly one hundred years.

- 45 It seems that Romanians in Szeklerland regularly attended the commemorations organised in the county seat in the 1990s. However, these celebrations were not mediated. There were no reports found in the Romanian news regarding interethnic conflicts over the date. In these years, a silent nation-building and strengthening of ethnic identity took place in parallel among both Hungarian and Romanian communities.
- 46 After 1996, during the presidency of Emil Constantinescu, the Hungarians gained a restrained confidence in the Romanian national holiday. The new president did not use communist-era rhetoric, but welcomed the celebrating community with forward-looking thoughts for the country. Respecting the laws and Euro-Atlantic integration became a priority in politics. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (in Hungarian RMDSZ, in Romanian UDMR) even began to take part in the commemorations of December 1.
- 47 In 1997, the Hungarian-Romanian inter-state relationship improved, and the possibility of choosing a different national holiday was discussed. December 22, the day of the victory of the revolution and the fall of Ceaușescu, appeared in public thinking. However, as a result of domestic politics in the following years, Hungarians became more pessimistic about December 1. Their fears were confirmed in 1999, when a major, highly mediated commemoration with torchlight parade and strongly nationalist discourse took place in Sfântu Gheorghe. As a result of this event, the Hungarians repeatedly asked for the equality of rights laid down in the Declarations of Alba Iulia in the columns of the *Háromszék* newspapers and elsewhere.
- 48 At the beginning of the 2000s, ethnic tensions continued to increase in Szeklerland. Factors that caused further interethnic tensions included the Hungarian Status Law,⁴⁷ the Har-Cov Report,⁴⁸ and the disproportionate expansion of the Orthodox Church in Szeklerland. Alongside these factors, the Romanian-Hungarian inter-state relationship has also changed considerably. Celebrations of December 1 have been a focal point for expressing popular tensions and discontent. In 2001, the senator of the Hungarian party RMDSZ, Csaba Sógor called on Hungarians to stay away from the large-scale commemoration of December 1 that had been moved to the centre of Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda), the county seat of Harghita with a Hungarian majority of 85%. In the following year, the countries' prime ministers, Năstase and Medgyessy, clinked glasses in Budapest over December 1, triggering great indignation among Hungarians in Transylvania. They distanced themselves from the celebration. In 2003, graffiti condemning December 1 appeared in Alba Iulia on the day of the commemorations. In 2006, the RMDSZ took part in the celebrations in Sfântu Gheorghe, but it was clear that the Hungarian-Romanian interethnic relationship was bleeding from several wounds. In Bucharest, the speech by Member of Parliament Dezső Becsek-Garda, of Hungarian origin, was drowned out by the whistling of other MPs. In Cluj-Napoca and elsewhere there was uproar over the handling of an academic protest for Hungarian language use at Babeș-Bolyai University.⁴⁹

- 49 An interviewee reports as follows about the mutual participation of the Hungarian and Romanian political elite in each other's national commemorations in the county seat:

In the middle of the 2000s, we tried to get closer to each other and discussed with the representatives of Romanian parties to participate bilaterally in the national commemorations of each other. It was not the practice before, so we asked [the Romanians] to attend the commemoration of March 15 [which commemorates Hungary's independence in 1848]. Accordingly, we participated in the commemorations of December 1 with the entire Hungarian leadership of the county. Ervin György, as Prefect, mentioned in his speech the events of 1918, the promises of the declaration, and our expectations. So we tried such an approach, but on March 15 no representative of any Romanian party showed up, so it ended and no one from the Hungarian leadership has been involved in these events ever since.⁵⁰

- 50 The commemoration of December 1 in 2007 was characterised by overloaded symbolism and by overheated nationalist speeches. In 2009, the extreme nationalist organisation Noua Dreaptă (New Right Wing) stood for the first time on the streets of Sfântu Gheorghe. The demonstrators wore paramilitary clothing, carried symbols, and chanted harsh, insulting, and provocative slogans to the Hungarians. In the meantime, a parallel commemoration was also emerging. On December 1, 2009, Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom (HVIM-Sixty Four County Youth Movement), an extremist Hungarian youth organisation, commemorated the day as marking the formation of the Székely (Szekler) Division in 1918. During the commemorations of December 1 between 2010 and 2014, the interethnic symbolic conflicts between Romanians and Hungarians have intensified, as mutually provocative symbolic banners, hymns, and flag scandals have multiplied.
- 51 The Civil Forum of Covasna, Harghita, and Mureş Counties, representing local Romanians, together with the local representatives of the Orthodox Church, and the tacit consent of the government office and law enforcement agencies, regularly invited members of the New Right Wing to the national commemorations of Sfântu Gheorghe. In the seven years between 2009 and 2015, the organisation participated five times in the commemorations. Organisation leaders said the purpose was to celebrate with the local Romanians – but in fact, the aim was to stimulate the local interethnic atmosphere and intimidate the local Hungarians.⁵¹ As a response, the local Hungarians distanced themselves even more from the national holiday, and on several occasions held a meeting in the days preceding the national holiday to recall the promises of the Declarations of Alba Iulia. The members of HVIM regularly commemorated the Székely Division in their centres in Târgu Secuiesc, Sfântu Gheorghe, and Baraolt (Barót).
- 52 In 2015, another special event with an interethnic aspect was reported by local newspapers. The Romanian Directorate for Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) and the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) obtained a warrant on the night before December 1 to search the house of the local HVIM leader. They accused him of terrorism, and placed him in pre-trial detention. One month later, the same happened to the president of the organisation's Transylvanian branch. The action was highly mediatised. The defendants suffered years of legal proceedings, were imprisoned for several months, and finally, on July 4, 2018, on the basis of numerous questionable accusations and in the absence of specific evidence, sentenced to five years in prison. The Hungarians of Szeklerland have been stamped collectively with a reputation for

terrorism by the national media, provoking the tensest moments yet concerning the commemorations of December 1.

Quo vadis December 1?

- 53 The incorporation of December 1 into the Romanian Constitution as a national holiday, following the regime change, clearly determined the destiny and defined the significance of this commemorative day. The selection of the date as a national holiday has been accepted by the majority of Romanians, but refused by most of the Hungarians living in Romania. The discrepancy indicates the disputability of the commemorative event from historical, interethnic, and political points of view.
- 54 As the day which marks, most specifically, the unification of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania, the selection of December 1 as a national holiday invigorates a long-standing conflict over a historical situation. It does not just celebrate the creation of the contemporary Romanian nation-state. It also insists that Transylvania is more rightfully Romanian than Hungarian. It also underscores the vision of Transylvania as the cradle of the Romanian nation.
- 55 In the field of competing Romanian and Hungarian nation-building, the selection by the central power of December 1 as the paramount national holiday to be celebrated in Transylvania has created more favourable conditions for the Romanian party, thus increasing the tension in the interethnic atmosphere, year after year. Meanwhile, the national government still blocks initiatives that could lead to decentralisation or regionalisation.⁵² Thus December 1, as a national holiday, reveals the problems of two conflicting nation-building models and of two conflicting country models. Miklós Bakk writes about the implementation of the Declarations of Alba Iulia as follows: “it became the distorted proof of centralist state-building of Bucharest and leached out the specificity of Transylvanian Romanian nation-building, which supported the ‘confederacy’ of ‘parallel societies’ in Transylvania.”⁵³
- 56 Romania’s most important national holiday is a good example of how the central power, following the French homogeneous nation-state model, is trying to eliminate the diversity that has been Transylvania’s characteristic feature for centuries, of which Transylvania’s Romanian culture is an integral part. Moreover, Germans and Jews in Romania had already fallen victim to this endeavour in Ceaușescu’s time.⁵⁴
- 57 By means of the anthropological method of participant observation, I have several times made detailed documentation of the commemorations in the Trei Scaune area.⁵⁵ These analyses confirm the results of media representation research and the results of structured interviews as further evidence that the celebrations of December 1 became established gradually in the twentieth century in Szeklerland, and that following the regime change of 1989, an initially marginal holiday was consciously selected to become the most important national commemoration day in Romania. Moreover, it became one of the most important tools in the identity building of Romanians living in Szeklerland and a priority area for creating interethnic tensions. The evolution of January 24 commemorations was similar after the regime change, however, these local events usually went rather unnoticed across the country.
- 58 In 1999, on the occasion of December 1, a large, highly mediated commemorative event with strongly national discourses took place for the first time in Sfântu Gheorghe.

Afterwards, the repertoire of interethnic tensions around the fest expanded, and in its amplitude became increasingly intense and absurd. Starting with flag and banner wars, besides the regular messaging and provocation of extremist groups, national media and public opinion were loud after the celebrations in 2015 over the absurd accusations of terrorism and the imprisonment of Hungarian leaders. On the eve of December 1, in the year of its centenary, the central power tried to revive this celebration against the Hungarians and with their enemy image. It achieved this with the powerful collaboration of scientific bodies, secret services, and the Orthodox Church.⁵⁶

- 59 Although the Romanian political and intellectual elite have had the opportunity to develop the modern Romanian nation as a western liberal democracy, it has nevertheless made use of well-established old nationalistic methods. Meanwhile, the Romanian-Hungarian dialogue remains deadlocked. From the viewpoint of the Hungarian community, the message announced by George Ivaşcu, Minister of National Identity and Culture, on April 17, 2018 was not necessarily a positive one: the centenary celebration series were to be extended for up to three years, ending only in 2020.⁵⁷
- 60 We can conclude that although by the mid-1990s the celebration of December 1 began to lose importance at the national level, commemorative events taking place in Szeklerland continue to gain much emphasis among Romanians living in the cities with a Hungarian majority. Hence official commemorative events related to January 24 and to December 1 in Szeklerland not only serve the remembrance and identity building of the local Romanian community, but with the help of political, ecclesiastic, and academic elites and in light of Hungarian-Romanian coexistence, they build, form, and reformulate the collective memory in the present. Even more, these commemorations perform a historical memory about this charged and strained coexistence.

NOTES

1. The Romanian variant of the city names appears first with the Hungarian in parentheses. Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) is located in Transylvania, in the geographical centre of Romania, in the area of the former historical Szeklerland in the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin. For stylistic and reading ease, the editor has omitted the variant name in later appearances unless it is important to include for analytical purposes. The reader should take note, however, that the choice of local variant can matter greatly in representations of identity and memory.

2. The city of Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely) is the most eastern city in the Carpathian Basin where ethnic Hungarians form a majority.

3. The historic Szeklerland is located in the east and parts of the middle of the Transylvanian Basin within the Carpathian Arc. It originated during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries as a privileged territory of the Hungarian crown. The Szekler were for a long time frontier guards in various border areas – most recently settled on the eastern border of the Kingdom of Hungary – and received as such collectively special privileges. They sustained their territorial autonomy until the beginnings of dualism in the 1870s. They were originally either a specific ethnic Hungarian-speaking group or a community formed by the granting of special rights within a

particular territory. Ninety percent of the historical Szeklerland is located in the current counties of Covasna (Kovászna), Harghita (Hargita), and Mureş (Maros), it being noted that “Covasna and Harghita are composed of 100 percent each from parts of the historical Szeklerland. On the other hand, this is only true about 40 percent for Mureş County.” ARENS Meinolf, *Ausgewählte magyarische Forschungen zu Ethnographie und Geschichte des Szeklerlands und der Szekler nach 1989* [Selected Hungarian researches on the ethnography and history of the Szeklerland and the Szekler after 1989], *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. 63/64, 2004/2005, p. 422–429, here p. 424.

4. Legea nr. 171/2014 pentru declararea zilei de 24 ianuarie, Ziua Unirii Principatelor Române [Law no. 171/2014 declaring the day of January 24, The Day of Unification of the Romanian Principalities], *Monitorul Oficial*, Partea I nr. 922, 18 December 2014, online: http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/legea_171_2014_declararea_zilei_24_ianuarie_ziua_unirii_principatelor_romane_zi_sarbatoare_nationala.php (accessed in March 2015).
5. Constituția României 1991 [Constitution of Romania 1991], online: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/act_show?ida=1&idl=1&tit=1#t1c0s0a12 (accessed in January 2019).
6. BARTH Fredrik, *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organisation of cultural difference*, London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1969; and “Régi és új problémák az etnicitás elemzésében” [Old and new problems in the analysis of ethnicity], *Regio*, vol. 7, n° 1, 1996. p. 1–14.
7. ERIKSEN Thomas Hylland, “The Cultural Context of Ethnic Differences,” *MAN, The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1991, p. 127–144, here p. 143.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
9. ILYÉS Zoltán, *Mezsgyevilágok. Etnikus interferenciák és nemzeti affinitások térbeli mintázatai a Kárpát-medencében* [Borderlands. Spatial patterns of ethnic interferences and national affinities in the Carpathian Basin], Budapest, Lucidus Kiadó, 2008, p. 15.
10. ASSMANN Jan, *A kulturális emlékezet. Írás, emlékezés és politikai identitás a korai magaskultúrákban* [The cultural memory: writing, memory and political identity in early civilisations] (translated by Hidas Zoltán), Budapest, Atlantisz, 1999, p. 43–57.
11. HIRSCH Marianne, *The generation of postmemory. Writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2012, p. 5.
12. This study is a short summary of part of my doctoral thesis, which also considered the commemorative events of May 9–10 and August 23.
13. ANTAL László, *Tartalomelemzés alapjai* [Basics of content analysis], Budapest, Magvető Kiadó, 1976; Krippendorff 1995, cited by KÉRDŐ Andrea, *A tartalomelemzés elméleti és gyakorlati alkalmazása* [Theoretical and practical application of content analysis], Budapest, Budapesti Gazdasági Főiskola, 2008, p. 10–17, 55.
14. The local Hungarian newspapers used for the research are: *Székely Újság*; *Székely Hírlap*; *Székely Újság*, merged with *Székely Hírlappal*; *Népi Egység*; *Megyei Tükör*; *Székely Hírmondó*; *Háromszék*. Due to the high number of articles in the local Hungarian newspapers, the examination of the local Romanian press goes beyond the scope of this study and will be the subject of further research.
15. The interviews were conducted in 2015. The respondents are Romanian and Hungarian women and men living in and around Sfântu Gheorghe of different age and educational backgrounds. When selecting the interviewees, I used the same periods as during the analysis of the newspaper article: from 1940s to 1960s – four interviews; from 1965 to 1989 – four interviews; celebration habits after 1990 – four interviews and four interviews with organising committee members. The period 1919–1944 was covered by those interviewees who still had memories of this period from their childhoods.
16. FOUCAULT Michel, *A diskurzus rendje* [The Order of Discourse], 1991 [1971].

17. HORVÁTH István, BOGDÁN Andrea, MOHÁCSÉK, Magdolna, *The 25 years of minority protection policy making. 25 years of minority legislation. A contextual analysis of the Hungarian minority in Romania*. Cluj (Kolozsvár), Kós Károly Akadémia, Wilfried Martens Centre, 2016, p. 17.
18. VARGA E. Árpád, *Erdély etnikai és felekezeti statisztikái a népszámlálási adatok alapján, 1852–2011*. Varga E. Árpád 2002-től kiegészített adatai [Ethnic and denominational statistics of Transylvania based on census data, 1852–2011. Data sets of Árpád E. Varga supplemented since 2002], online: <http://nepszamlalas.adatbank.transindex.ro/?pg=3&id=964> and <http://nepszamlalas.adatbank.transindex.ro/?pg=etnikai&id=29> (accessed in March 2020).
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. BARTH, “Régi és új problémák az etnicitás elemzésében,” *op. cit.* p. 4–5.
22. Astra, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, is a cultural association founded in 1861 in Sibiu. It had an important role in the cultural life and the movement for Romanian national awakening in Transylvania.
23. In January 1928, Nastasi Cornel was elected Mayor of Târgu Secuiesc. With his support, Dr. Bidu Valer, Chief Medical Officer of the Hospital, on November 22, 1931, established Astra’s branch organisation in the city (DIMÉNY Attila, *A polgárosodás társadalmi és kulturális hatásai Kézdivásárhelyen (1750–1944)*, *Dissertationes Ethnographicae Transylvanicae*, [The social and cultural effects of bourgeois in Kézdivásárhely (1750–1944)], Kolozsvár, János Kriza Ethnographic Society, 2018, p. 160–161).
24. *Székely Újság, egyesülve a Székely Hírlappal*, 1932, December 4. Translated from the original by the author.
25. The most important national fest of this period was May 10, which marked the day on which the Romanian Kingdom was proclaimed in 1881.
26. *Székely Hírlap*, 1925, February 2. Translated from the original by the author.
27. The theory – which was highly instrumentalised during Ceaușescu’s dictatorship – traces the origin of the Romanians to the meeting of Romans with native Dacians. One implication of the theory is that it would establish Romanians as the only indigenous people in Transylvania.
28. BOIA Lucian, *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The myths of Romanian communism], Bucharest, Editura Nemira, 1998, p. 16; *Două secole de mitologie națională* [Two centuries of national mythology], Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, p. 39.
29. *Népi Egység*, 1946, December 2, my emphasis.
30. BOIA Lucian, *Történelem és mítosz a román köztudatban* [History and myth in Romanian public consciousness] Bucharest, Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1999, p. 71.
31. CIOROIANU Adrian, “Lumina vine de la răsărit. ‘Noua imagine’ a Uniunii Sovietice în România postbelică, 1944–1947” [Light comes from the east. The ‘new image’ of the Soviet Union in post-war Romania, 1944–1947], in BOIA, *Miturile comunismului românesc*, *op. cit.*, p. 21–68.; BOIA, *Történelem és mítosz*, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
33. Interview with T. C.
34. *Népi Egység* was edited from 1944 to September 1946 in Brașov, and from March 1946 to March 1948 (i.e. until its cessation) in Sfântu Gheorghe. Thus, it can be assumed that residents of Sfântu Gheorghe were informed of this newspaper, and the numbers of the *Népi Egység* were therefore documented in the Bod Péter County Library of Sfântu Gheorghe (SIPOS András, “Press Historical Memento,” *Brassói Lapok*, 4 March 1983).
35. BOTTONI Stefano, *Sztálin a székelyeknél. A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány története (1952–1960)* [Stalin by the Szeklers. History of the Hungarian Autonomous Province (1952–1960)], Csíkszereda, Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 2008; VÁRY O. Péter, *Háromszék magyar nyelvű írott sajtója* [Hungarian-language written press of Trei Scaune (Háromszék)], in *Háromszéki olvasókönyv*, Sepsiszentgyörgy,

Bod Péter Megyei Könyvtár, Kovászna Megye Tanácsa, Kovászna Megyei Művelődési Központ, 2006, p. 149–158, here p. 151–152.

36. BOTTONI, *Sztálin a Székelyeknél*, op. cit., p. 168–180.

37. BOIA, *Történelem és mítosz*, op. cit., p. 76–77.

38. Labour Day in Romania was celebrated for the first time in 1890. It was a popular event associated with political propaganda during the communist era. However, after 1989, Labour Day was toned down to simply be a day off work and a holiday marked with social events.

39. On May 9, 1877, the Romanian Parliament adopted the declaration whereby the country denounced Ottoman suzerainty. On the next day, May 10, which also marked 11 years since King Carol's arrival in Bucharest, the country's independence was officially proclaimed. At a later date, communist-written historiography separated the two events, and made the latter a holiday. Accordingly, Romania's independence was eventually proclaimed and celebrated as May 10, 1877.

40. On this date in 1944, Romania suddenly quit its former allies and soon ended the war on the side of the victorious powers. The date of the royal coup, primarily through the propaganda of the Communist Party, soon became the memorial day of the "anti-fascist armed uprising" and the "national and social, antifascist and anti-imperialist liberation revolution" (BOIA, *Történelem és mítosz*, op. cit., p. 83).

41. Interview with P. S.

42. *Megyei Tükör*, August 23, 1985. Translated from original by the author.

43. The monument was set up on the left bank of the town's train station, itself on the left bank of the Olt River, where a new housing estate was built for a large number of Romanian-speaking residents coming to work in the industrialised city from other regions of the country. Online: <https://www.kozterkep.hu/12303/roman-katona-emlekmuve> (accessed in February 2020).

44. Interview with K. J.

45. BUCUR Maria, "Birth of a nation. Commemoration of December 1, 1918 and national identity in twentieth-century Romania," in Maria Bucur, Nancy M. Wingfield (eds.), *Staging the past. The politics of commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the present*, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2001, p. 286–326; ÁDÁM Biborka, "December elseje valós háttere," *Korunk*, 28/3, 2016, p. 117–121.

46. Originally Háromszék was an administrative county (*comitatus*) of the Kingdom of Hungary. Situated in south-eastern Transylvania, its territory is now in central Romania (in the counties of Covasna, Braşov, and Bacău). The capital of the county was Sepsiszentgyörgy (now Sfântu Gheorghe). *Háromszék* is also the name of a local Hungarian newspaper in County Covasna.

47. In 2001, Hungary passed the Status Law, which legally recognised a Hungarian nation that extended into its neighbours' territory (as a kin-state for ethnic minorities) with the aim of protect the cultural identity of Hungarian minorities in lands where they have lived for centuries.

48. Named after the counties Covasna and Harghita, the report was released by the Romanian parliament. It concerned on actions against Romanians in these two counties during the December 1989 revolution. The report was discussed in the parliament within days of the autonomy proposal, timing that many Hungarians viewed as intentional. The RMDSZ condemned the report, they considered the events rather as a consequence of the revolution in 1989 and not ethnically motivated.

49. In November 2006, two lecturers at Babeş-Bolyai University placed Hungarian inscriptions on the wall of the university, protesting that the university's 2005 decision in support of multilingualism had not been enforced. In response, the university senate removed the two lecturers from the university's teaching community.

50. Interview with P. B.

51. ÁDÁM Biborka, "Zum Einfluss der Wirtschaftskrise auf den Zuwachs der Noua Dreaptă (Neue Rechte) in ungarisch besiedelten Gebieten Rumäniens," in Thede Kahl, Larisa Schippel (eds.), *Leben in der Wirtschaftskrise – Ein Dauerzustand?* Berlin, Frank & Timme Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur, 2011, p. 137–150, here p. 142–147.
52. BAKK Miklós, "Román és magyar 'határontúliség': állam-vagy nemzetépítés?" [Romanian and Hungarian 'borderlands': State or nation building?], *Korunk*, vol. 3, no. 12, 2014, p. 16–21, here p. 19; TÁNCZOS Vilmos, "Kettős hatalmi szerkezet a Székelyföldön" [Dual power structure in Szeklerland], *Magyar Kisebbség*, vol. 4, no. 12, 1998, online: <http://epa.oszk.hu> (accessed in October 2018).
53. BAKK Miklós, "Román és magyar 'határontúliség,'" *op. cit.*, p. 19.
54. After the First World War, 600,000 Germans lived in Romania (ROMSICS Ignác, *Magyarország története a XX. Században* [The history of Hungary in the twentieth century], Osiris Kiadó, 2010, p. 145–146), by 2011, their number had dropped to 36,000 (PAN Christoph, PFEIL Beate Sibylle, VIDESOTT Paul, *National minorities in Europe. Handbook of European national minorities*. Vol. 1, Second Edition, Vienna, Verlag Österreich, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2018, p. 173).
55. The commemorative events of 2008 and 2009 in Sfântu Gheorghe are documented here: ÁDÁM Biborka, "Etnikai határátlépések Székelyföldön" [Ethnic border crossings in Szeklerland], in István Dobos, Sándor Bene (eds.), *Határátlépések. A doktoriskolák III. nemzetközi konferenciája, Kolozsvár, 2010. augusztus 26-27* [Border Crossings. Doctoral schools III. International Conference, Cluj-Napoca, August 26-27, 2010], Budapest, Nemzetközi Magyarástudományi Társaság, 2011, online: <http://mek.oszk.hu/> (accessed in October 2016). The commemoration of 2014 in Sfântu Gheorghe is documented in "December elseje Sepsiszentgyörgyön," *Korunk*, vol. 28, no. 12, 2016, p. 76–85.
56. See also the ten-point statement of the Romanian Academy of Sciences on the occasion of the centenary: Academia Română și Centenarul Marii Uniri. See Hungarian translation of the text by PÁSZKÁN Zsolt, "Centenáriumi Románia – Nemzetépítés és zűrzavar," *Kisebbségi Szemle*, 2018, vol. 1, p. 21–24.
57. "We have extended the centenary anniversary until 2020 because it is about historical truth. We cannot forget to honour and remember in January 2019 the United States of America who recognised Romania in January 1919. We are continuing to commemorate the treaties that recognised Great Romania until 1920. This is the essence of the extension." Online: <https://ab.prefectura.mai.gov.ro/> (accessed in October 2018).

ABSTRACTS

The Hungarian community of Romania became part of Greater Romania directly after the First World War, a century ago. Since then the historic Szeklerland has formed a Hungarian island in the geographical centre of Romania with ethnic Hungarians as a vast majority of the population. The study examines the Hungarian media representation of the two most well-known Romanian national holidays, January 24 and December 1, in the two biggest cities of County Covasna where the majority of inhabitants are ethnic Hungarians. The main research objective is to present, analyse, and interpret the attitude of the local majority towards official Romanian national celebrations. Furthermore, with the means of content analysis and structured interviews, the study systematically analyses comprehensive changes that occurred in the significance, meaning, and structure of these fests between 1919 and 2015. As a result of this research, one can conclude

that official Romanian commemorative events in Szeklerland not only provide a good frame for a symbolic re-occupation of space (i.e. they not only serve the remembrance and identity building of the local Romanian community), but they build, form, and reformulate collective memory in the present.

La communauté hongroise de Roumanie a été intégrée à la Grande Roumanie juste après la Première Guerre mondiale, il y a un siècle. Depuis lors, le Szeklerland historique (Pays sicule), dont la grande majorité de la population est d'origine hongroise, forme un îlot au centre géographique de la Roumanie. Cet article s'intéresse à la représentation dans les médias hongrois des deux plus grandes fêtes nationales roumaines, le 24 janvier et le 1er décembre, dans les deux principales villes du comté de Covasna, où la majorité des habitants est d'origine hongroise. L'objectif principal de la recherche est de présenter, d'analyser et d'interpréter l'attitude de la majorité locale à l'égard des célébrations nationales roumaines officielles. En outre, grâce à l'analyse du contenu et à des entretiens structurés, l'étude examine systématiquement les changements globaux qui se sont produits dans la signification, l'importance et la structure de ces fêtes entre 1919 et 2015. On peut en conclure que les événements commémoratifs officiels roumains dans le Szeklerland fournissent non seulement un bon cadre pour une réoccupation symbolique de l'espace (c'est-à-dire qu'ils servent à la mémoire et à la construction de l'identité de la communauté roumaine locale), mais qu'ils construisent, forment et reformulent également la mémoire collective dans le présent.

INDEX

Geographical index: Roumanie

Keywords: Romania, commemorative fests, borderland, interethnic relations, ethnic representation

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