

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNOVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

PH.D. THESIS

SUMMARY



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CLUJ-NAPOCA

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***PERCEPTION OF BRITISH POLITICAL IDEAS
IN HUNGARAIN CULTURAL LIFE IN
TRANSILVANIA BETWEEN 1900-1940.***

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1. KEYWORDS:

- *Hungarian minority,*
- *Transylvaniam*
- *Liberal thinking*
- *Classical/continental liberalism*
- *parlamentarism*
- *democracy,*
- *“third way”,*
- *Hungarian-British relations*
- *English Conversation Club from Kolozsvár/Cluj*
- *John Paget*
- *Transylvanian Unitarians Scholars in England and the United States*
- *The Független Újság weekly*

1. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The historical investigation of the Hungarian community in Transylvania in the interwar period represents an area of study of the history of the 20th century marked by the social and political unrest caused by the devastating effects of World War I. At the level of the Transylvanian Hungarian community we see an ample process of identity redefinition and cultural identification within Romania. The country extended its national borders, and in this context the adaptation to the new political realities became necessary from several perspectives. First, the problem of national and ethnic minorities in Central and South-Eastern Europe, during that period, represented and continues to represent a very controversial and widely debated subject in the literature, and it does not limit itself to literature only. Secondly, these transformations entirely marked the minority identity within the whole region. The different socio-cultural and politico-economic aspects represent a basic element in every study of the respective period, when the new continental political and global economic realities marked the evolution of minorities.

The present PhD Thesis is making an incursion into the life of the Hungarian elite from the inter-war period from Transylvania and into the influence of the British political thinking among the Hungarians from Transylvania. The study is intended to be a different approach to the politico-social history of the Transylvanian Hungarian community, where the identity chaos was substituted by an ample identity conservation process in which Western political ideas played a major role. How the liberal ideas, which were characteristic to Great Britain, influenced the political lives of the Hungarians after World War I, or how they defined the evolutionary path of the minority's political life, constitute the main subject of the present research.

Concerning Transylvanian liberal traditions, Artúr Balogh stated as follows: *"Intellectual freedom is absolutely necessary in Transylvania because it is the only way to reconcile the differences which have emerged between the three ethnicities – Hungarians, Romanians, Germans – and the six religious confessions. Liberalism has deep roots in Transylvanian history."*

We may raise the following question: to what extent may we talk about liberal tendencies within the Transylvanian Hungarian cultural and political environments, and which are the causes and the vectors which defined and modeled this attitude and the political perception at community level. This inquiry is relevant because

during the interwar period liberal ideas and the Westminster system were subjected to an assault by anti-democratic ideologies of fascist, nazi and communist origin. As a result, the aspirations of the Transylvanian Hungarian community and their attachment to the British model are understandable, and a closer look at this may offer us a clearer image of the social and political changes of the respective period.

During the interwar period, extremist ideologies offered simple solutions to the problems caused by World War I and by the Great Depression, with their devastating effects on the economic system at both continental and global levels. As a result, could we discuss about liberalism and parliamentarianism as a possible alternative, a "*third way*" in the survival strategy of the Transylvanian Hungarian community, a conservation method, which tried to follow the middle path between the two extremist ideologies?

As a conclusion, our investigation centers the exploration of the background in which the liberal thinking entered the culture of Transylvania, and the way it influenced the process of decision of the Hungarian community from the inter-war period. Here we put the question whether this process of decision was influenced by the British political way of thinking and whether was a direct and inborn influence based on the already existing contacts between Hungarians and the British people. At the same time, there must be made a separation between the theoretical and the practical liberal concepts, at least at the decisional level because the effects of the liberal ideas do not have a direct incursion, but they are the results of a conjectural situation on behalf of the majority.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The present investigation is based on two different toolkits of bibliographies. The first one is related to the delimitation of the geographical and temporal issue of the 20th century Eastern European history. We are talking about an important process which is the influence of liberalism to the political and social situation from Transylvania. The other one is to make a difference between the economical liberalism and the political one. The first one was having a general effect to the economical evolution from that time, but the other one was different because it influenced the entire colloquial life from that era. The second set of bibliographies squares up the relation between the British and the Transylvanian cultures, having their liberal connections in common. Next to these bibliographies there is a demand of interdisciplinary research based on three different directions of study.

The first direction makes the connection between the English and Hungarian societies based on historical relations and other ideological considerations from the middle of the 19th century. Here we have to talk about Berg Pál, Fest Sándor and Gál István who have contributed to the understanding of these two different cultures making a historical analysis of the different interactions between them on the political and cultural fields. This intercourse can be proven by numerous writings and taking of positions of the Hungarian leaders from that time. But no analysis of the impact of those issues was ever made.

The second direction is based on the study of liberalism in the Hungarian political field, especially in the Transylvanian one. Here we have to mention the magnitude of the context in which Hungarian liberalism was developed in Hungary during the years which preceded the World War I. This society was not open to these ideas even there was a level of well educated elite.

The last analysis is centered on the inter-war context and on the necessity of the survival of the Hungarian community among the Romanian majority. They had to find a *modus vivendi* with the majority. This analysis also kept track of the different thinking streams which were brought up for the interest of this issue by the Hungarian elite from Transylvania. First of all we should mention Miklós Krenner, who was a role model in Hungarian journalism during the interwar period. Almost all of his articles embraced the democratic ideas of civic and political consensus, which from the point of view of journalism represented the only chances of reconciliation and social stability for Transylvania and the Eastern European region. Ernő Ligeti,

György Bernády, who contributed to the development of open liberal politics by political and journalistic actions, also spoke in favor of democracy and liberal thinking.

We also have to mention the contributors of the *Független Újság* (The Independent Paper) from that time, namely Sándor Tavaszy, Áron Tamási, Károly Császár, Benő Karácsony, Géza Tabéry, Károly Molter, Sándor Szentiványi, Andor Járossy, Imre Lakatos, Sándor Kacsó, Ferenc Szemlér. They contributed by promoting the different liberal ideas which they considered to be the only way of salvation of the Hungarians from Transylvania. On the other hand, we must not forget other important personalities like Ferenc Balázs, a Unitarian minister, who had a rich experience in western liberal politics. Balázs studied in Great Britain, he also made a study of travel in the USA, Japan, China, India and Palestina taking over ideological concepts and turning them to account in the context of the Hungarians from Transylvania. From among the more important representatives of the Transylvanian Hungarian cultural and scientific fields it is important to mention Artúr Balogh, who was an international authority in the field of minority rights and of the legislation pertaining to the national and ethnic minorities. He emphasized the necessity of a truly liberal government which would offer guarantees to the constitutional framework favoring minorities. According to him, "*Without liberal governance the emancipation of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities is not possible. But without this emancipation people who are part of a minority will always be only second class citizens*". They are not the only intellectual Hungarians who provided liberal ideas in Transylvania. There were many of other citizens who thought that the violence is not the way of solving the situation. They thought that the only way was the self-determination of the Hungarian community from Transylvania.

We wanted to analyze, at the same time, the international dimension of these efforts of the Hungarian elites from Transylvania for promulgating the proper liberal ideas to the other European liberal parties. Here we have to mention the operating stream of Count Calergi of solving the European problems in a peaceful way in the spirit of Anglo-Saxon manner. That time this act was considered a Pan-European trend. This trend was welcomed and carried through by the intellectuals from Transylvania, but it seemed to be utopian.

We also have to mention the work of the contemporary writer Attila M. Demeter, *Kisebbség és liberalizmus és Republikanizmus, nacionalizmus, nemzeti kisebbségek*, which helps us in understanding the connection between liberalism and

the ethnical minority from the 20th century. This study is completed by the works of two other personalities, Károly Veress and Szilárd-Zoltán Ilyés who enlarge the analysis of this concept in context of dimensions of the daily life.

At the same time we have to mention the name of Sándor Biró and his work, *Kisebbségben és többségben. Románok és magyarok 1867-1940*. It is a relevant study about the problems of the Hungarians from Transylvania from the inter-war period. This work is completed by the study of Ferenc Sz. Horváth from 2007, entitled *Elutasítás és alkalmazkodás között A romániai magyar kisebbségi elit politikai stratégiai 1931-1940*, and the other work of Béla György from 2004, which has the title *A romániai Országos Magyar Párt története 1922-1938*.

3. THESIS STRUCTURE

Our thesis has 6 different chapters. Introduction (I); The Evolution of the Hungarian-British Relations (II); The Evolution and the Expansion of Liberalism (III); The Effects of the Liberal Stream on the Liberal Thinking of the Hungarians from the Inter-War Period (IV); Conclusions (V); References (VI).

The Introduction (I) analyzes the general frame of the study and the incursion of the references to its subject. Respectively, it defines the basic parameters on which the study is developed and it also answers the hypothetical question of it. **The Second Chapter (II)** makes a historical foray of the British-Hungarian relations. It also maps the main directions and streams of thinking of the Hungarian elite from Transylvania in the inter-war period. This is the chapter in which the cultural change between the Hungarian elite from Transylvania and the English culture from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. We have to mention the fact that this relation is mainly carried out by the exponential Protestant members from Transylvania having their inter-confessional connections with the British and American religious leaders. This connection between the Protestant Churches from Transylvania and from the Western Europe existed from the beginning of the Reformation and it continues up to the present day. We have to underline the tight connection between the inter-war Lutheran Church and Manchester New College. (The founder of the English Conversation Club, János Kovács was a scholar of this famous University.) This relation influenced not only the political thinking of Hungarians from Transylvania but it helped the lobby of the Hungarians in Europe. In addition, we have to talk about the influence of Sándor Bölöni Farkas and John Paget. Bölöni, during his trip into the USA, where he got in contact with the democratic system from the States and Paget became mentor of the pro-British intellectuals from Transylvania for decades. It is important to mention the fact that both of them contributed enormously to the political thinking of the late 19th century from this region; and this way of thinking could be found into the activities of the English Conversation Club from Cluj in 1876.

The last part of this chapter treats the role of the Hungarian scholars who made their studies in the USA and Great Britain and who, at the same time, brought Anglo-Saxon way of thinking into the Hungarian culture of the 19th century. Here we have to mention the work of István Gál who have tried to make a cultural comparison

between the East-European Hungarians and the Western British people from the inter-war period where he found a common issue, namely the national structure and the idols of people. Gal traces another parallel between the Victorian age and the age of the modernization of the Hungarian Kingdom. The pro-British stream could be found in the works written before Gál, for example, Sándor Fest, Horváth Jenő and János Kovács. The anglophilia was in mode among the Hungarian aristocrats, for example, in the year of 1799 Count György Festetics considered English language as a worldwide or internationally used language, but after the Latin, French, German and Italian. The ideas were asseverated in the year of 1796 by Count László Teleki who was the disciple of Count Miklós Wesselényi.

Jenő Horváth considers that the short period of time spent by István Széchenyi in England influenced his philosophy and his political thinking at a major level. This fact can be proved by his future actions. The English influence can be found in the architecture of the capital city of Hungary, Budapest, in the works of William Tierney Clark and Adam Clark. Here we can make a list of the Hungarian political leaders devoted to the Anglo-Saxon culture like Count Janás and Domokos Kemény, Count Miklós Bánffy, Count Miklós Jósika, József Zeyk, Ferenc Wesselényi, Ádám Kendeffy, Count Ferenc Béldy We also have to mention Sándor Bölöni Farkas, who played a significant role in the life of the Hungarian community from the 19th century. He was the one who started more cultural projects here and he was the father of the idea of Transylvanian Museum which was based on a British model. His purpose was to make an institutional frame for the preservation of the history and the promotion of the identity of Transylvania. At the same time, he participated to the initiation and the consolidation of the social reforms based on liberal ideas up to the 19th century.

Part III makes an inventory and an analysis to the evolution and to the main steps made by liberalism, and to the role of the formation of the European political thinking from the 19th and 20th century. The first part of this century presents the emergence of the liberalism as a way of political thinking, respectively its dynamics during the 19th century. Having in the theme of this thesis' subject, we are going put an emphasis on the historical interpretation of the liberalism from the Hungarian politologists' point of view.

The structure of this chapter includes an analysis of the evolution of the modern liberalism together with the exacerbation of the romantic nationalism from the 19th century, both of them, with their repercussions to the concept of eastern European statehood. This chapter ends with a review of the evolution of Hungarian

liberalism and the liberal thinking of the Hungarians from Transylvania being a minority in Romania after signing the Treaty of Trianon. Understanding the approaches toward liberalism during the interwar period requires knowledge about the Hungarian political realities of the second half of the 19th century, during which various political concepts shaped the Hungarian political thinking. The presence of liberal ideas among the Hungarian intellectuals dates back to the period of reforms initiated when a part of the nobility embraced the new ideas and promoted certain changes within society. This community takes the role of a modern bourgeoisie within the Hungarian nation. Two different trends gain ground: the national aristocratic liberalism and the bourgeois liberalism, both represented by important groups of the 19th century Hungarian society. Bourgeois liberalism, of course, originated later on, being characteristic to the late 19th century, and it is in great measure an answer to the problems to which aristocratic liberalism was unable to offer viable solutions and alternatives. These variants of liberalism are only echoes of Western liberalism. They also feature conservative elements adapted to the new trends of liberalism.

The founders of the Hungarian aristocratic liberalism were István Széchenyi and Miklós Wesselény, who had attempted, throughout their political careers, to implement Western liberal ideas into the Hungarian political monarchic framework. In his writings, Széchenyi emphasizes the classical concept of English liberalism – represented at first by Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith – at the same time giving proper importance to the concepts launched by the theoretician Jeremy Bentham. He considered that the aristocracy may form the layer which offers solutions and is by itself capable of building a functioning civil society in Hungary. His opinion may be explained by the fact that in Hungary the old social and political structures were not replaced by new structures, as it occurred in British society for example, so that the only social force for the making of reforms needed to be sought among the nobility.

Due to this, Széchenyi is considered to be among the first supporters of liberalism, a predecessor of aristocratic liberalism. Starting with him, the idea that the group of high nobles was the determining factor of state modernization began to circulate. Liberalism promotes, according to these concepts, the economic modernization of the country, a modernization which is possible only by ensuring the necessary amount of capital, even through loans, a capital which the high nobility has at its disposal.

Alongside the aristocratic liberal trend, the liberal concepts of the lesser nobility also found their way in. This layer desired greater involvement and real power in political life. It, however, did not have at its disposal the capital required to reach the goals set up by this group. The most important representatives of this trend were Ferenc Deák, Lajos Kossuth, József Eötvös, Ágoston Trefort, and Zsigmond Kemény. They wanted to counteract the initiatives and the directions imposed by the aristocratic liberals, concentrating their requests to the sphere of politics. They legitimized their role and purpose invoking common laws and rights originating in medieval history when the lesser nobility had had the mission of counteracting the power excesses of the high nobility, and of balancing power within the monarchy. This group supported the necessity of a parliament elected by citizens, a government that could be held accountable in front of the representatives of the people, and requested guarantees for respecting the political rights of all subjects.

Bourgeois liberalism appeared as a trend distinct from the aristocratic one, as a result of the consolidation of bourgeois power during the end of the 19th century. Through the creation of the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (The Social Science Association) and the appearance of the first issue of their magazine, *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), the basis of the institutional framework for promoting this trend was established. During the first phase of the publication's existence the most important financiers of the association were industrialists and economic tycoons. They were the only ones capable of financially investing in such an endeavor. It has to be noted that the relationship between the intellectuals behind the *Huszadik Század* and the upper middle class gradually deteriorated until it was entirely severed in 1906. The higher upper class reached a political agreement with the nobility in order to find its way into government. This act could not be placed within the ideological framework of the above mentioned association. Following this reconciliation of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the association and its magazine adopted a more radical tone and attitude called social liberalism, some of its members even began to embrace purely leftist ideas. This process was not peculiar, at the level of the liberal elite. An ideological reflux may be witnessed, which at the beginning of the 20th century manifested itself through a profound crisis of Hungarian liberalism. In the newly created political and social atmosphere moderate liberalism did not have the chance of an ample assertion in society.

Following World War I, and especially after the fall of the Soviet Republic lead by Béla Kun, respectively the installment of the regent Miklós Horthy's conservative-

authoritarian regime, the liberal ideology was considered an outright enemy of the nation. The regime said that the promotion of this ideology had led to losing the war, to the Treaty of Trianon, and to the dismemberment of the entire Kingdom of Hungary. The highly prestigious historian Gyula Szekfű, one of the greatest ideologists of the period, in his book *Három nemzedék* (Three generations), described the previous decades as being “a sad period of decadence” which, together with the liberal policies of the Hungarian elite, had led to the disastrous situation in which the country found itself in the moment when Horthy rose to power. This line of thought was adopted by a series of political groups, which militated and firmly supported the necessity of giving up liberal policies while promoting centralized policies with a conservative character.

This became the dominant trend of the age, but it has to be noted that several important supporters of liberalism also existed. The historian Antal Balla, in his study entitled *A liberalizmus történelme* (The history of liberalism), published in 1926, considered that anti-liberalism, “the Christian course” - according to which liberal ideas are obsolete and no longer correspond to current realities - basically offers no viable solutions, and draws upon older positions, characteristic of the Middle Ages and the feudal period. A similar opinion was also held by Artúr Balogh, the famous Transylvanian jurist who, in one of his studies that appeared in the '30s, characterized liberalism as an innovative trend, adequate for the development of the Hungarian society of Transylvania. According to him, this did not mean that it was a popular trend among Hungarians. Both voices brought solid arguments in support of liberalism and they militated for a policy of openness in the social and economic environment. They forewarned of the danger of creating premises for social and economic isolation, to which the centralist, conservative and autarchic politics generally lead.

It can be said that the Transylvanian Hungarian community responded to liberal ideas in an ambivalent manner. The modern philosopher Károly Veress, in his study *A liberális hagyomány értelmezési horizontjai a két világháború közötti romániai magyar kultúrában* [The interpretation horizons of the liberal tradition within the Hungarian interwar culture of Romania] underlines the validity of this observation, invoking the fact that the Hungarian population of Transylvania interpreted the Trianon Treaty as a direct consequence of promoting Western liberal politics, which led to the collapse of Greater Hungary. Hungarian liberalism is too

close to this Western liberalism, and as a result it is responsible in the same way for reaching the minority status.

This interpretation explains the fact that, following World War I, the Hungarian community in Transylvania shared anti-liberal feelings, sentiments which – according to Veress - also had a psychological basis. Meanwhile, the responsible leaders of Transylvanian Hungarian political and social life were conscious also of the fact that the protection of minorities or the achievement of local autonomy - desired and debated so fiercely within the political sphere of the community - could only be achieved within a liberal state. The way in which the Transylvanian Hungarians related to liberalism is based on this dualism. Firstly, they felt that they had reached minority status within the Romanian state, and that their interests could only be protected within a political framework based on liberal principles. Secondly, they were a community tied by countless threads to a national political tradition, and this heritage was in conflict with the principle of self-determination, which is specific to liberal ideology.

Practically these coordinates defined the political strategies and ideological orientations of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority during the interwar period.

Chapter IV is a study of the case of the present thesis as it squares up to the impact of the liberal thinking of the Transylvanian elite from the inter-war time. The analysis is opened by the contextualization of the political and judicial situation of the Hungarians from Romania and the specification of the strategies of this community which were going to be adopted to this new situation and its conditions. In this framework it is necessary to make an evaluation of the policies which were adopted by the Hungarian cultural institutions and their role to the evolution of the community during the inter-war time.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Hungarians in Transylvania became a minority, and for them, this meant a serious identity trauma. The integration of the Hungarian population into the newly completed Romanian state had been made more difficult due to this mentality. The historian Nándor Bárdi considers the Hungarian communities of Transylvania so-called “post-Trianon” societies, “compulsion-communities”, which adopted a siege mentality before the political, social and economic pressures. They had to face these pressures during the integration within the new state. After the declaration of unification on 1 December 1918 at Alba Iulia, the political leaders of the Hungarian minority adopted a passive resistance toward the new authorities, with the declared aim to contribute, as much

as possible, to the efforts of the Hungarian delegation at the Peace Conference, aiming to re-establish the territorial status quo from before the war. This passive political resistance policy was supported especially by the entire community of public servants. They were joined by many of the influential Transylvanian political personalities, proposing to themselves “to become grinding bark beetle within the foreign wood”.

This passive policy lost its meaning after the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty, which sanctioned the union of Transylvania with Romania. After 4 June 1920, the Transylvanian Hungarians began to organize themselves at cultural and political levels, in order to create identity defense structures against the newly imposed context. The leaders of the Transylvanian Hungarians acknowledged the minority status and considered that the only viable possibility for them is their active participation in regional and national political life.

Károly Kós's manifesto, *Kiáltó szó* (Shouting voice), is seen to mark the birth of the involvement policy of the Hungarian community in political and economic life. The article of 23 January 1921 mobilized the Hungarian minority toward adopting a policy of accommodation to the new administrative realities.

In January 1921 the creation of the Hungarian Union in Cluj can be considered as a first step toward the political organization and representation of Hungarians within state structures, and also at the international level, especially in the relation with the League of Nations. In parallel with this step, at Huedin, the Popular Hungarian Party was founded, with Lajos Albrecht as president and Károly Kós as secretary. A few months later, at the beginning of 1922, the National Hungarian Party was established. During the same year it merged with the party led by Albrecht and Kós, and so the political structure for decision making was formed. Later, it also participated in the Romanian parliamentary elections as the Hungarian National Party.

From an external perspective, the Hungarian community appeared as a monolithic one, especially after the establishment of the Hungarian National Party, but, in reality, ideological divergences continuously manifested inside it. Within the Hungarian National Party two separate factions can be distinguished, the conservative one and the left wing. The conservative group represents the Transylvanian political elite from before 1918, and its members were active politicians during the dualist period. The leftist wing of the party can be divided into two groups: the Transylvanian “radicals” and a group supporting pacifist, humanist

and internationalist ideas. The members of the second group were mostly Hungarian journalists, who came from Hungary after the rise of Horthy's regime, and Hungarian Jews. Beside the rightist and leftist orientations within the Hungarian National Party, beginning with 1925 a "reformist" trend began to take shape, whose leader was the famous and very experienced journalist Miklós Krenner.

This trend is also supported by personalities like István Kecskeméthy, Károly Kós and Károly Molter. By electing Count György Bethlen as president of the party, the conservative wing became the dominant power, and this fact led to the separation of the "reformists". Beside the party's "reformist" wing there was also a group of Hungarian intellectuals who were also unsatisfied by the Hungarian Nationalist Party's policy. They grouped themselves around the "Erdélyi Helikon" Society, an influential literary society, which promoted the concept of "Transylvanianism" and militated for a true solidarity between the nations living together in this region: Romanians, Hungarians and Germans.

The most efficient tools for spreading political ideas were the political newspapers and dailies. Through them, the representatives of these different groups were able to keep in touch with the large masses of the Hungarian population. The most important and the one with the greatest circulation was the *Keleti Újság* of Cluj. The first issue of this daily appeared on Christmas Day in 1918 under the supervision of editor Árpád Paál, who managed to give a liberal and progressive character to his newspaper. The articles appearing between 1918 and 1924 supported liberal-democrat and bourgeois values. From an ideological and political perspective, the published ideas were similar to the ones promoted in the *Huszdik Század* magazine.

The *Ellenzék* daily, also edited in Cluj, represented a much more conservative trend than the *Keleti Újság*. It continued the tradition of the ideologies characteristic to the dualist period on an editorial line focused on conservatism. During the mid '20s a reorientation occurred concerning the ideological plans of the more important newspapers. In 1927 the *Keleti Újság* daily came under the influence of the Hungarian National Party, and the *Ellenzék* newspaper was purchased by the politician Miklós Bánffy, who had recently returned to Transylvania. Bánffy contributed to reviving the political discourse in the pages of the newly purchased daily. In what concerns the shaping and modeling of the public opinion, one of the most important newspapers was the *Brassói Lapok*, which, during the 20's, promoted a radical leftist line, and then adopted a liberal ideology with social sensitiveness.

From the perspective of the subject, - the influence of liberalism in Transylvania - the most important Hungarian Transylvanian publications were *Független Újság* and *Brassói Lapok*. *Független Újság* appeared for the first time at the end of 1934 under the editorship of Ernő Ligeti, and during the next few years it became the main liberal press organ. The elevated style and the extreme exigency of Ligeti made the newspaper have high standards, but this also limited its impact upon the wider range of members of the Hungarian Transylvanian society.¹ The published articles zealously promoted liberal and liberal-democratic ideas, but they generally remained without wider echoes. The objectives were underlined from the very beginning: protecting the moral norms of Hungarian life, promoting the efficient cooperation among the minority groups of Transylvania, and the peaceful coexistence of the Hungarian community with the majority nation.

The articles published in *Független Újság* promoted the self-determination of peoples, the respect for individual and collective rights, and fully condemned rightist and leftist dictatorships. During the expansion of extremist ideologies, Hungarian politicians, writers and journalists, the ones who promoted liberal ideas felt compelled to raise their voices against tyranny and against the negative effects promoted by these trends of thought. Krenner, who had signed himself as “Spectator”, in one of his articles entitled *Csüggedni vagy feszülni* (Discouraged or tense) supported the idea of organizing a wide movement of minorities and the necessity of their unity on a wide scale. In the article, the concept of *building bridges among peoples and nations* became a key element. The concept required a complete reconsideration of minority policies in order to serve as a true means of drawing the Hungarians and Romanians nearer to each other. The newspaper was not only preoccupied with internal politics, it also took a stance on external political issues. Meanwhile, it remained up to date with the achievements in the European and Romanian literature of the time. The newspaper condemned fascism and analyzed in depth the political and economic relationships between Hitler’s Germany, Italy and Spain. Furthermore, it analyzed the perception of the Pan-European movement in Transylvania (writings about the unity of peoples of the Danube Basin were also included). The newspaper also dealt with the policies of the Hungarian National Party, and with aspects of the internal political evolution in Hungary.

During the late ‘20s and the beginning of the ‘30s the articles published in the Hungarian Transylvanian press clearly condemned fascist and national-socialist ideologies. In the early ‘30s, the *Brassói Lapok* daily warned on the dangers presented

by Adolf Hitler and his regime, pointing out that this policy would lead to a new world scale conflagration. The responsible journalists warned the Hungarian community also regarding the negative effects of the ideological homogenization of states. According to them this could have adverse consequences for minority populations: “in a reactionary Europe minorities would only be suppressed by the majority”.

The *Független Újság* weekly was also preoccupied with the problem of dictatorships which were increasingly situated in the foreground of the European political spectrum. A series of inquires were published by a journalist under the pseudonym Veridicus, with the title *Mit ígértek és mit adtak a parancsuralmi rendszerek?* (What did dictatorships promise and what did they give?). These articles systematically analyzed the political regimes of Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union. Veridicus tried to present the psychology of dictatorial regimes, their structure and functioning. The newspaper took up a clear position in what concerns Hitler's policy: “*We are angry with Hitler, because due to his policies the problem of minorities has become illusory everywhere. The international minority conferences in Geneva failed because of Hitler. Hitler suggested to the European states to emphasize nationalism and totalitarianism, he himself offering metaphysical and historical examples.*” The *Független Újság* weekly gave the direction on this issue. The journalists purposed a way of European thinking (see the leading article *Mit nyújt a Független Újság?*) which offered an alternative to the conservative stream of Hungarian thought from Transylvania. Of course, this close-up view has to be seen from a clear outlook of the political orientations of the Hungarian parties on the right and the left sides. This orientation cannot be considered a clear bench-mark for the entire period of time. This means that the entire scientific process has to be analyzed better contextually rather than in absoluteness. In the second part of this chapter we are talking about the liberal criticism to the totalitarian streams.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of the Transylvanian liberalism from the inter-war period which, as we told, was based on British origins, is caused indubitably by the present context, namely, the political and juridical evolutions after the World War I. They clearly had defined the evolution of the Hungarian community from the region. The role of John Paget and ones who were gathered around the English Conversation Club imposed the evolution of the Hungarian liberal way of thinking and brought an approach to the political problems into different discussions. All of these conversations were centered on the principles of liberty and to a consensus about the problems of the majority and the minority from Transylvania.

Certainly, there were voices of the critics of this political stream who considered that liberalism had to be blamed for the degradation of identity and of society (see József Venczel and the quotidian *Hitel!*). Kálmán Pongrácz even called it a supreme immorality of the last century. By all means, the role of the merit of the liberal thinking from that time cannot be called into question. Liberalism was responsible for the evolution of the Hungarian political way of thought and it was also responsible for the conceiving of the other political streams which considered that conservatorism was helpful, but cooperation and the dialogue are the main instruments for the elicitation of all kinds of rights. Erno Ligeti thinks that liberalism was the only way which opened the door for a re-equilibration of the social and political diversities in a proper way. And it would guarantee the freedom of the word, and a good representation of the minorities, and their voices from Transylvania.

By analyzing the presence of liberal ideas in the political thinking of the Transylvanian Hungarian community during the interwar period, we realize that the ideology of liberalism was not especially popular. Certainly, this reality is also tied to the economic crisis, which profoundly marked the public perceptions on this trend.

On a separate note, politicians and even common people considered that liberal ideas, and their promotion by the Hungarian elite during the dualist period, had led to the losses suffered during World War I, and to the treaties signed at Paris at its end. Many of the young Hungarian intellectuals, socialized after World War I, blamed liberalism for “the destructive anarchy which characterized social and economic life”.

The extremist ideologies were also firmly rejected by this generation. Some of them definitely supported the idea that only parliamentarianism and a liberal democracy may be the viable solution in solving the problems of the minorities. In this sense, a testimony extracted from the *Független Újság* is very significant: “... *to remain loyal to the liberal traditions of Transylvania. We cannot experiment with rightist or leftist ideologies. We may not afford ourselves this luxury, we must be democratic and liberal, honest and unreserved, because only a true democratic system is capable of bringing prosperity to minorities*”.

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¹ Horváth Sz. Ferenc, *op. cit.*, p. 281.