

**BOOK REVIEW – “TÂRGU MUREȘ 1990: BLOODY DAWN” THE 1989 – 1990 INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN THE NCSSA<sup>539</sup> FILES. TUDOR PĂCURARU AND FLORIAN BICHIR, BUCHAREST, EVENIMENTUL AND CAPITAL PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2021**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir capitalize, in the book “Târgu Mureș 1990: Bloody Dawn”, the information contained in the two volumes of the NCSSA File 091950 – th contribution of the “B” (counter-espionage) Office in Târgu Mureș to the Informative Bulletin – a daily material elaborated to inform the main decision makers of the Romanian state. The book is dedicated to “the Romanian officers, counterintelligence and anti-terrorism officers who, scorned by their own government, chose to do their duty to their Fatherland as best they could, under the boos of the hysterized crowd” and was published in 2021 by Evenimentul and Capital. On the basis of these documents, the authors reconstruct a detailed picture of the interethnic conflicts between 1989 and 1990, highlighting the complexity and depth of the tensions that marked that period. The book offers a unique insight into how these conflicts were handled, analyzing the reactions of both the authorities and the communities involved. It also emphasizes the essential role of the counter-espionage services in maintaining national order and security in the context of extremely tumultuous events. Through this book, Păcuraru and Bichir pay tribute to those who, despite difficulties and adversity, remained faithful to their mission to protect the integrity and stability of the country, while revealing the revisionist plans pursued by Hungarian intelligence services in recent decades.*

**Keywords:** transition, espionage, revolution, conflict, Romanians, Hungarians, Transylvania.

The book “Târgu Mureș 1990: Bloody Dawn” – The 1989 – 1990 interethnic conflicts in the NCSSA files written by Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir was published in Bucharest, by Evenimentul and Capital Publishing House, in 2021. Tudor Păcuraru is a retired colonel of the Romanian Intelligence Services (RIS<sup>541</sup>), a specialist in the analysis-synthesis of classified information while Florian Bichir is a Romanian historian and publicist, PhD in political science and PhD in theology. He is also a Scientific

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Researcher at the Center of European History and Civilization in Iași of the Romanian Academy and a member of the Romanian Commission of Military History. With this specialization, the two authors seek to offer a novel historical perspective on the historical dispute between Romania and Hungary over Transylvania, presenting historical information and data from the perspective of the intelligence and counterintelligence agencies, taking a complex and perhaps more difficult to accept approach, not being a classical narrative on the issues. Of course, always discussions about secret services and the behind-the-scenes plans of some political powers come with a dose of skepticism or suspicion, but the book includes numerous archival references, and the two authors have specialized expertise in this field.

Whether or not we choose to believe that Hungary's revisionist plans have spanned several generations based on a coherent and coordinated vision, the reality is that historical events have shown that Hungarian policy has always been directed towards the Carpathian arc, generating both open military and diplomatic conflicts as in 1919 – 1920 and 1940 and social tensions especially after 1989. The aspects and information presented in the book show that these conflicts were based on well-defined actions of the Hungarian intelligence services, aiming at the separation and redrawing of borders in Central and Eastern Europe. The authors present the *Virradat/Dawn* plan as the root of these revisionist efforts, a plan reiterated in several formulas from 1920 until the inter-ethnic conflict in Târgu Mureș on March 20, 1990. Thus, historical events are presented, including the disturbing moments in 1940 when, following the Vienna Diktat, the northern part of Transylvania was annexed to fascist Hungary, as well as the political underbelly of the communist camp when Hungarian political leaders constantly promoted a policy of eroding the Romanian legitimacy and authority in Transylvania, by cooperating with and drawing the Soviet Union into this sphere, especially thanks to Hungarian communists who were allegedly collaborators of the Moscow secret services:

“If the Virradat/Dawn Plan conceived by the minds of the Budapest leaders, schooled in the ‘Kominternist, KGB-ist and GRU-ist universities’ makes sense, then this sense can never be severed from the historical and geopolitical framework of the interwar period and ending with the collapse of the USSR and communism at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century”<sup>542</sup>.

All this culminated in the bloody events in Târgu Mureș, and the authors try to offer a new perspective and new information on the hidden actions of the Hungarian Irredenta in those tense moments marked by uncertainty, lack of authority of the Romanian state and mass manipulation. The work is structured into 7 main chapters,

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<sup>542</sup> „Dacă Planul Virradat/Aurora Zorilor conceput de mințile liderilor de la Budapesta, școlite în «universitățile kominterniste, KGB-iste și GRU-iste» are un sens, apoi acest sens nu va putea fi niciodată rup de cadrul istoric și geopolitic al perioadei interbelice și terminând cu colapsul URSS și al comunismului, de la începutul ultimului deceniu al secolului XX.”, in Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir, *Târgu Mureș 1990: Zori Însângerate. Conflictete interetnice din 1989–1990 in dosarele CNSAS [Târgu Mureș 1990: Bloody Dawn. The 1989–1990 interethnic conflicts in the NCSSA files]*, Bucharest, Evenimentul and Capital Publishing House, 2021, p. 5.

each containing a series of sub-chapters, as follows: *I. Imperiul scăpătat [The empire escaped]*; *II. Bacșișul slugilor [Tipping the servants]*; *III. Cântecele urii [The hate song]*; *IV. Terorism: mod de folosire [Terrorism: how to use]*; *V. Har-Kov*; *VI. Beția zorilor [Dawn drunkenness]*; *VII. Mahmureala zorilor [Dawn hangover]*. I have chosen to synthesize the main ideas, following the evolution of the *Virradat/Dawn* plan over the years, presenting its four iterations within the main chapters of the book, as well as the consequences of the latest version, namely the March 1990 events in Târgu Mureș.

### VIRRADAT/DAWN PLAN – 1: THE ORIGIN

The first version of the *Virradat/Dawn* plan, the one that considers the vision of the inter-war period, is presented after a brief introduction in chapter I in the following sections, more precisely chapter II.1 where its origin and then its evolution and subsequent stages are presented.

The authors present that following the 1920 elections in Hungary, which later led to Horthy's rise to power, the army was instructed to implement the *Virradat/Dawn* plan. The name was inspired by a literary work, namely Petőfi's poem entitled "In Life and Death", which has been described as a "masterpiece of chauvinist romanticism", in which he states:

"Croats, Germans, Serbs and Romanians, Why do you all rush towards the Hungarian?  
(...)/For you are nothing but ravens, filthy ravens, But the Hungarian still won't die.  
God forbid! And even with your blood He will paint the dawn in the sky (...)"<sup>543</sup>.

According to the authors, the plan envisaged the occupation of Vienna and Graz in 1921, their subsequent annexation to Hungary and a surprise attack across the Romanian-Hungarian border, which was enshrined in the Trianon Peace Treaty. Following the Romanian Army's visit to Budapest in 1919, Hungary was left with a severely depleted military strength. Consequently, the officers in charge of formulating a plan were unable to come up with a viable strategy. Instead, responsibility was transferred to Section VI<sup>544</sup>, Espionage-Subversion, which formulated a series of recommendations. These included victimizing Hungary, activating the rising movements of the Hungarian minority, seeking an ally in the East (in particular, the army of the White Russian counter-revolutionary Denikin) and bribing a Western power.

France was chosen as a negotiating partner on the understanding that it would take control of the railroads and a significant part of Hungarian industry. In return, France was expected to support Hungary's demands at the Peace Conference and provide arms

<sup>543</sup> "Te rác, te horvát, német, tót, oláhság, Mit marjátok mindnyájan a magyart? (...)/De a magyar még nem halotti test, Nem, istenemre nem! s hajnalt magának, Az égre a ti véretekkel fest.", in Petőfi Sándor, *Élet vagy halál! [Life or death!]* (Erdőd, September 30, 1848).

<sup>544</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

for 100.000 Hungarian soldiers to be deployed against the Bolsheviks. France remained steadfast, and the veteran Hungarian officers of the Hungarian army realized that, given the overwhelming military superiority of their adversaries, there was no possibility of conquering Northern Transylvania. As a result, the first Virradat/Dawn Plan was recorded in the archives of the 6th Section, where it was photographed by Mikhail Moruzov's SSI agents<sup>545</sup>. This is how the aforementioned details, together with other illustrative material, were unearthed and documented in the present volume.

## VIRRADAT/DAWN PLAN – 2: IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT

Subsequently, the authors present the second form of the plan, the vision and the evolution of the Hungarian leaders in accordance with it, but in the absence of a military force that could implement it. By the end of the 1930s, Hungary had amassed a military force of 30.000 men, a figure that was in line with the provisions of the Peace Treaty<sup>546</sup>. In addition, the country had concluded a treaty of friendship with the fascist state of Italy and had a prime minister who was particularly enthusiastic about the concept of “millennial Hungary”. This person was Count Miklos Horthy, at whose instigation the Virradat/Dawn Plan II was formulated, which entailed the occupation of Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia (already part of Yugoslavia), Subcarpathian Ukraine and the whole of Transylvania. As Hungary did not have the resources to deploy mountain infantry, Section VI – Espionage-Subversion proposed to set up a series of blockades and checkpoints manned by Hungarian guerrilla units trained on Romanian territory. The aggression would have been launched under the pretext of activating the revolt movement of the Hungarian minority in the targeted states, the entry of Hungarian “stabilization” troops, the organization of a plebiscite in which the population would decide on self-determination and then on annexation to Hungary<sup>547</sup>.

The authors discuss the fact that despite the territorial gains made by the Horthyst regime, which may appear to have been a gift, given that not a single bullet was fired in 1940 to obtain them, they came to cost much more than the Hungarian leaders had anticipated, because, as the authors say, everything that seems free ends up costing a fortune. It is argued in chapter II.3 that the so-called gift was a victory without glory, as Horthy became a useful pawn of the Reich. As a result, he was forced not only to accept, but even to execute Adolf Hitler's “final solution” unreservedly with regard to Jews and Roma and in many cases to mistreat Romanian communities as well: 593.000 innocent citizens, including those from occupied Transylvania, paid with their lives<sup>548</sup>.

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<sup>545</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.

<sup>548</sup> \*\*\*, “Murder of Hungarian Jewry”, in *Yadvashem*, n.d., Available at: [https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/fateofjews/hungary.html#narrative\\_info](https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/fateofjews/hungary.html#narrative_info), Accessed on February 7, 2024.

That moment caused a collective traumatic moment identified in many areas of northern Transylvania, but particularly in areas where Romanians remained a minority, such as Covasna, Harghita and Mureș. Fear-anxiety seems to be the underlying feeling of most Romanians who survived in this area. It thus becomes part of the local ethnic identity: to be Romanian in such a region almost necessarily implies anguish that something will happen to the community to which you belong. The shock of the surrender of Northern Transylvania is still felt, passed down from generation to generation<sup>549</sup>.

Many Romanians were deported to Germany and Hungary in order to reduce the number of Romanians in Transylvania ceded to Hungary. In the spring of 1944, for example, around 25.000 Romanians were sent to Germany to be drafted into labor or combat detachments. The repressive policy of discrimination against Romanians in Northern Transylvania continued under the Soviet military administration from October 1944 to March 1945<sup>550</sup>.

It is also presented in this chapter that during the period of Hungarian domination five radio stations were set up with the aim of disseminating propaganda. The station in Nyíregyháza, which was directed against our country, used a strategy of demonizing Romanians, broadcasting slander, insults and threats in order to discourage resistance from the Romanian population in Transylvania. The concept of ethnic cleansing was promoted under the slogan

“the more we exclude the foreigners who have crept into our ranks, the better we will get along with ourselves”<sup>551</sup>.

A parallel is drawn with the period after the 1989 transformations when the population of Harghita, Covasna and Mureș was subjected to a relentless propaganda campaign, including articles denouncing mixed marriages as a threat to the purity of the Hungarian bloodline. This was matched by a concerted effort by the Catholic and Reformed churches, with priests invoking the sanctity of the rite in their sermons.

The ratio of forces between Hungary and the states that were to be annihilated was now 1 to 25, which demonstrates the utopian approach adopted by Hungarian politicians. Consequently, the *Virradat/Dawn Plan – II* was hidden in the vaults of Section VI, from where it had been procured by agents of the Romanian Secret Intelligence Service. The detailed organization and modus operandi of the Hungarian espionage, counter-espionage, propaganda and counter-propaganda services, developed as a result of *the Virradat/Dawn Plan – II*, are described in detail in the

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<sup>549</sup> Radu Baltasiu, Gabriel Săpunaru and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Slăbirea comunității românești din Harghita-Covasna: raport de cercetare*, [The Weakening of the Romanian Community in Harghita-Covasna: research report], Bucharest, Ethnological Publishing House, 2013, p. 112.

<sup>550</sup> Ioan Lăcătușu and Vasile Stancu, *Dictatul de la Viena și consecințele sale asupra poporului român*, [The Vienna Dictate and its consequences for the Romanian people], Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2020, p. 43.

<sup>551</sup> „cu cât îi vom exclude mai mult pe străinii care s-au strecurat în rândurile noastre, cu atât ne vom înțelege mai bine cu noi înșine”, in Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir, *quoted work*, p. 39.

book “*Hungarian Espionage in Romania. 1918–1940*”, by Ioan Dumitru, published in 1990 at Concordia Publishing House<sup>552</sup>.

### **VIRRADAT/DAWN PLAN – 3 REALIZED FROM THE CHANCELLERY OF EUROPEAN FASCISM**

The Hitler-Stalin Pact was concluded on August 23, 1939. The authors claim that on the same day, Horthy instructed the Chief of the General Staff to present an update of the Dawn Plan. The third edition of the plan would thus have been presented to the Hungarian government in December 1939, by which time three of the necessary conditions had already been met. These were the enlistment of a major ally, the demonization of Romanians through radio propaganda and the establishment of the 5<sup>th</sup> column in Transylvania<sup>553</sup>. Consequently, the espionage-subversion compartment was tasked with preparing the sabotage of Romania’s critical infrastructure, destabilizing the Romanian Army and targeting mixed families (1.600 Romanian officials and officers who had established such families were inventoried). The dominant power in the West no longer relied on financial compensation; instead, Hitler’s Germany was prepared to offer pro-bono assistance. As the German army advanced towards Paris, Hungary was primarily interested in the original Treaty of Trianon. During the evacuation of the Treaty Archives from the French capital, Louis de Robien, the director of the archives, who was inclined towards collaborationism, handed over the original Treaty to the fascists, along with other agreements and protocols between Romania, France and Great Britain. In light of the evidence pointing to Romania’s collusion with the opposing camp, Hitler acted swiftly, forcing her to cede half of Transylvania. Chapter II.4 presents both the post-factum aspects after the annexation of Northern Transylvania, namely the Hungarian authorities’ approach to the administration of this territory, as well as the behind-the-scenes tactics of European diplomacy marked by the dominance of Nazi Germany and the Hungarian government’s collaboration with it. As a result of this political success, the authors argue that the *Virradat/Dawn* plan was partially realized without Hungary firing a single shot<sup>554</sup>.

In the aforementioned chapter II.4, a comparative analysis of the three Dawn plans is carried out, and it is emphasized that there were 18 common points throughout the different reiterations. These include: in order to achieve its goals, the Hungarian government attempted to form an alliance with a country in the East, to buy the support of another nation in the West, to promote irredentist ideas and to establish the “Fifth Column”. It has also tried to promote the concepts of self-determination and autonomy, create lists of friends and enemies, engage in ethnic

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<sup>552</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

cleansing, set up terrorist and sabotage units, invent a pretext for aggression, launch military threats, try to introduce “observers” to conduct a plebiscite, infiltrate institutions and influence politicians in the targeted countries. An analysis of the situation in 1989 – 1990 and how these common elements came together at that time is also proposed<sup>555</sup>.

#### **THE INITIATORS OF THE VIRRADAT/DAWN PLAN – 4 REPRESENTED. ELEMENTS OF SOVIET INFLUENCE**

Beginning with Chapter III the situation is presented in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and how it influenced Europe. At the same time the authors hypothesize certain links between Hungarian political leaders and Soviet secret services. They argue that in 1990, two politicians, Szűrös Mátyás and Gyula Horn, were in power in Hungary and from the perspective of Western observers, they were considered reformists. However, the Western press in the 1960s and 1980s took a negative view of Mr. Szűrös, citing his attendance at a Moscow institute headed by Andrei Yanuarevich Vashinsky, former USSR Prosecutor General Andrei Yanuarevich Vashinsky, and the fact that in November 1956 he was sent to Szolnok, where János Kádár needed the help of more supporters to revive the Communist Party of Hungary. It is alleged that Mátyás Szűrös was a member of the Communist Party with a long history of involvement in the Soviet Union<sup>556</sup>. He held a post in the International Department, where he collaborated directly with the KGB and other intelligence agencies “at any time necessary” (according to Larry Watts quoted in the book).

With regard to the second political figure, the authors report that Gyula Horn was born into a communist family and was recruited by the GRU in 1954 while studying in the USSR. In addition, the Hungarian press had revealed his role as a member of the puppet brigades set up by the USSR as a repressive force in the aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. In May 1989, the two held consultations in Moscow, where they were tasked with opening the border with Austria for East Germans. The book reports that they also discussed Romania, claiming that this country possessed nuclear weapons that posed a threat to Hungary. Another Moscow-educated Leninist, Kárpáti Ferenc, the defense minister who later admitted to sending “dozens of agents to Romania”, falsified the evidence. Kárpáti was in charge of coordinating the activities of espionage agents working against Romania<sup>557</sup>. He convened meetings in Balaton with General Stănculescu and a KGB colonel from Eastern Europe, during which discussions were held on Romania, as the Romanian historian reveals in the book *În sfârșit adevărul [At Last, the Truth]*

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<sup>555</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

by A. M. Stoenescu, in which the subject of the fate of communism was broached, as well as the fact that Romanians reject on principle everything that comes from Moscow.

The authors claim, however, that the Soviets were not fooled by the theory of the atomic bomb. In 2005, former Warsaw Treaty Secretary General I.P. Aboimov confirmed that

“Hungary requested our intervention in Romania in the hope of resolving the Transylvania problem”<sup>558</sup>.

Gorbachev tried to mediate between the warring parties, facilitating a meeting in Bucharest between Miklós Németh, Gyula Horn and Ceausescu. The Hungarians were extremely firm, asserting that Transylvania was rightfully theirs and that they would pursue international mediation on the matter. What is more, Horn did indeed spread this information, claiming that Romanian officials had informed him that Romania would soon be producing medium-range missiles. This was accompanied by speculation in the Western press that Romania was preparing for a nuclear war with its neighbors. This theme of demonization was very effective at the time, as more recent history has shown.

## WORKING WITH WESTERN LEADERS

In connection with the *Virradat/Dawn* Plan – 4 the authors state from chapter III.2 onwards that the Hungarian leaders had no difficulties in identifying a potential ally in the West. This person was, the authors argue, the French leader François Mitterrand as he was particularly dissatisfied with Ceaușescu due to the fact that the latter did not provide sufficient financial support for the French leader’s election campaign. As a result, upon taking over the presidency, the first foreign dignitary invited to Paris was János Kádár, and the inaugural foreign visit was to Budapest. Moreover, he broke a taboo by going to an eastern country (Hungary) without having made the “trip to Moscow” that none of his predecessors had dared to do, thus marking his refusal to accept the tutelage of the Soviet Union over Eastern Europe. But, at the same time, France continued to cooperate and trade with the USSR, particularly in the acquisition of natural resources such as Russian gas<sup>559</sup>. Mitterrand assured Hungarians that politically he would “change the situation”<sup>560</sup>.

The Socialist Party considers him the last great president of France. However, the details of his controversial past, including his involvement in the French

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<sup>558</sup> „Ungaria a solicitat intervenția noastră în România în speranța rezolvării problemei Transilvaniei”, in *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>559</sup> Marie-Claude Smouts, “The external policy of François Mitterrand”, in *International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 1983, p. 162.

<sup>560</sup> Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir, *quoted work*, p. 58.



collaborationist militias, pressuring the minister of justice to delay investigations into the Vichy regime's police chief and obstructing inquiries into the collaborationist regime's involvement in the Holocaust, have diminished his legacy somewhat. In any case, his latent fascist tendencies manifested themselves in his reprehensible behavior towards Romania.

### **“HUNGARIANS WILL DRINK ROMANIAN BLOOD AT EASTER”**

In Chapter III.3 “The Voice of Hatred”, those voices dominated by hatred and violence are presented in detail, mentioned in detail and in punctually, thanks to documents extracted from the archives of the NCSSA. After Mitterrand publicly adopted an anti-Romanian stance, Szűrös allegedly stated that all Hungarians living abroad should form a unified “great Hungarian nation”. The authors present statements and data taken from the files in the NCSSA archive on the actions and conceptions of ethnic Hungarians in Mureş County in the context of the inter-ethnic tensions at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990. Thus, it is stated that Romanians were presented as people that lack work ethic, are prone to cowardice, dishonesty, and the Orthodox Church is considered backward, passive and representative of an uncultured people, reviving the medieval idea of the Hungarian civilizer<sup>561</sup>. The authors reveal that following a period of intense heat, the Romanian counter-espionage services in Târgu Mureş, isolated by their own government and hampered by the lack of trust of their own people, began to pass on information indicating that a significant number of Romanians in Târgu Mureş had received written instructions to evacuate the city with their families. The director Hunyadi András urged the actors of the Hungarian section to be prepared to act, including the use of force, until all Romanians and Jews were driven out of Transylvania. Another person named Szász Etelka from the Glove Factory stated according to the NCSSA files that “the Hungarians will drink Romanian blood at Easter”<sup>562</sup>. Doctors Bartha András András and Nagy Endre from Sovata called on ethnic Hungarians to demand the departure of all Romanians from the town. Benedek Imre, a doctor and university professor, also declared at the time that he would only teach in Hungarian. In addition, Brassai Zoltán, the director of the medical faculty, indicated that he would only accept Hungarian students for exams.

The quotes from the NCSSA files continue and anarchist elements with criminal backgrounds are presented who later ended up in the CFSN, advocating the removal of Romanians from positions of responsibility at the Mureş Medicines and Textile Factory. Medical professionals such as Kecsí Károli, Szabó Árpád, Piros Fráncisc and Doczi Balázs are cited as having refused to provide medical care to patients of Romanian ethnic

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<sup>561</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 62.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63.

origin, including those who had suffered injuries on March 20–21, 1990. In another example, Ástalos Sándor, a designer at Metalotehnica, made the following remark:

“It won’t be long before you Romanians will be on your knees begging us Hungarians not to kill you all”<sup>563</sup>.

Similarly, Professor Gabos Dezideriu from Albești is quoted as saying that the struggle of the Hungarians in Romania would persist, even if force had to be used, until victory was achieved. The authors state that three hundred volumes were delivered from Hungary to the Book Distribution Center in Mureș, with a preface that read

“It would be prudent for Hungarians to persevere and avoid the pitfalls of cowardice”<sup>564</sup>.

“It is imperative that you demand autonomy and organize yourselves, since you constitute a formidable force”<sup>565</sup>.

The book gives examples such as Bereczki Ana, who had returned from Hungary to Târnăveni accompanied by a group of 12 young Hungarians who were flying Hungarian flags on their vehicles and were disseminating anti-Romanian and irredentist propaganda. Also, Kincses Mária Adrienne, a former nurse at the hospital in Târgu Mureș, who called a meeting of all Hungarian staff, proposed that all training should be conducted in Hungarian and spoke about the need to re-establish the Hungarian autonomous region. The ethnic Hungarians from mixed families were excluded from the meeting.

Matters known by the population of Târgu Mureș at a colloquial level are supported by the authors with evidence from the NCSSA archive and with documents from the files concerning investigations and surveillance from that period. In most institutions and enterprises, calls were made for the elimination of Romanians and the banning of the Romanian language, and ethnic cleansing lists were drawn up. Most of those responsible for these actions supported them because they were under the impression that “Hungary is with us”<sup>566</sup>. Mátyás Szűrös himself had given impetus to this feeling. For example, the authors demonstrate that it was impossible to attack 39 remote police outposts almost simultaneously, as it happened in 1989–1990, without professional coordination.

### **HUNGARIAN CITIZENS PRESENT IN TÂRGU MUREȘ AS “RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES”**

The volume continues by detailing the events of March 1990 in Târgu Mureș in Chapter IV. “Terrorism: How to Use it”. Specific episodes are selected, and moments considered key by the authors in the equation of the tensions of those moments. One

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<sup>563</sup> „Nu va dura mult până când voi, românii, veți fi în genunchi și ne veți implora pe noi, maghiarii, să nu vă omorâm pe toți”, in *Ibidem*, p. 71.

<sup>564</sup> „Ar fi prudent pentru maghiari să persevereze și să evite capcanele lașității”, in *Ibidem*.

<sup>565</sup> „Este imperios necesar să cereți autonomie și să vă organizați, având în vedere că voi constituiți o forță formidabilă”, in *Ibidem*.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

of these moments is related to the fact that at the Continental Hotel in Târgu Mureș, the World Red Cross rented a room, and a group of members of the organization “Asklepios”, who declared themselves representatives of the same institution, were also accommodated<sup>567</sup>. The authors claim that these persons were in fact Hungarian citizens who were collecting and passing on information about the violent actions that took place on March 20 and 21. Information and misinformation was disseminated, including the claim that the genuine World Red Cross vehicle was attacked, and its crew killed. The organization’s Geneva headquarters denied the claims, saying its staff was still alive. This puts forward the theory that the persons in question were members of the AVO (former Hungarian secret service) and were related to Hungarian employees of the PTTR Mureș<sup>568</sup>. They were apprehended while listening to technical conversations at the check table through which the special circuits of the Ministries of Interior and Defense and the Intelligence Section were passing.

The authors of the book argue that the initiators and sponsors of the information-operational and image aggression against Romania were the Hungarian politicians Gyula Horn and Mátyás Szűrös, who were involved in the communist movement and had links with Soviet espionage, these aspects being known to the Romanian counter-intelligence services. General Ferenc Kárpáti is also considered to have ties with the GRU<sup>569</sup>. Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir go on to claim that the Romanian services also list Király Károly as a person with Soviet influence, seconded by Mihai Șora (a person removed at the same time as Ana Pauker from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prevent access to secret documents), the individual who, from his position as Minister of Education, contributed to formalizing the Hungarian objective of separating education on ethnic grounds in Transylvania<sup>570</sup>.

It is presented in the paper as noteworthy that, despite the involvement of Soviet-affiliated individuals in initiating the fourth edition of the plan, Gorbachev unequivocally rejected the claims presented by the Horn-Szűrös couple regarding Transylvania. Its aim was to destabilize the Ceausescu regime and facilitate its collapse. Given the unexpected absence of a crucial element of the *Virradat/Dawn* plan, the two retaliated by accelerating the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and recalling Hungarian students from Moscow. They also initiated steps for the Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, which coincided with Sergiu Celac and

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<sup>567</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 99.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120.

<sup>570</sup> On February 3, 1990, the Minister of Education, Mihai Șora – at the request of some Hungarian teachers of the “Bolyai” High School – telegraphed an order to the County School Inspectorate and the Mureș County Council of the FSN that a new high school should be established from the Romanian classes of the “Bolyai” High School, which, starting with the second term, would temporarily move into the building of the school of sub-engineers, in Nándor Bárdi, *Primele forme de autoorganizare a maghiarilor din România, 1989–1990 [The First Forms of Self-Organization of Hungarians in Romania: 1989–1990]*, Cluj-Napoca, Documenta et studia minoritatum, Institute for the Study of National Minorities Problems, 2014, p. 246.

Stănculescu's efforts to facilitate the presence of Romanian students at the Institute of International Relations and the "Frunze" Academy in Moscow, while Romania was also engaged in negotiations for a Political Treaty with the USSR. The Kremlin showed no inclination to destabilize Iliescu's pro-Soviet regime or to empower the nationalist forces that emerged through the "Vatra Românească" organization.

### **THE "VATRA ROMÂNEASCĂ" ORGANIZATION WAS SUPERVISED BY THE SECURITATE, AND NOT SET UP BY IT**

In chapter V.5, the authors talk about the organization Vatra Românească Union, and in this context, they consider it noteworthy that even today there are people who claim that the Union was created by the Securitate and that it is responsible for the violence that took place in March 1990<sup>571</sup>. However, an analysis of the documents published by the NCSSA and presented in the volume shows that Vatra Românească was, in fact, the target of intelligence officers. The Mureș County Intelligence Section (SJI) was instructed by the central government in Bucharest to "pay attention" to the UVR Conference scheduled to take place in the town. The SJI subsequently issued a report on the matter. From SJI's pre-conference briefing, it can be inferred that the agents had selected the three initial names: the persons in question were Radu Ciontea, Ioan Sabău-Pop and Vasile Țîra<sup>572</sup>. As one of the book's authors, Tudor Păcuraru, is an intelligence analyst, he gives a more detailed account of the report. In a relatively small town, intelligence cadres never participate directly in actions. If they had to send four cadres, this indicates that

"at that time, in the environment of the Vatra Românească Union, there was no human intelligence apparatus in contact with SJI Mureș"<sup>573</sup>.

We are therefore left to wonder where the "thousands of secret service people" are who allegedly created it. These people would have existed exclusively in Hungarian propaganda. Radio Kossuth was the first to make accusations against Vatra Românească in connection with the violence in March. The following day, a group of intellectuals from Gyula, who identified themselves as both Hungarians and Romanians, issued a statement on the same station. They claimed that the events had been provoked by former Securitate fighters. In addition, the Hungarian radio station Radio Kossuth was used to disseminate false information. The agent Király Károly, a carpenter studying at the Central School of Comsomoliks in Moscow, was responsible for spreading false news that the UVR included activists, Manichaeists, secessionists and legionnaires. Former legionnaires were there at the time, but the authors claim elsewhere: SJI Mureș reported that one later became president of the

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<sup>571</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 127.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 131.

<sup>573</sup> „la acel moment, în mediul Uniunii Vatra Românească, nu exista un aparat uman de informații în contact cu SJI Mureș”, in *Ibidem*.

PSD at the local level, Sergiu Căunescu in Târgu Mureș, and others were infiltrators in the same party's organization in Câmpia Turzii. The agents gave all of them their names and backgrounds – proof that the subject was part of the intelligence gathering score – but there is no document in the background material that forms the basis of the volume that proves the penetration of the UVR by the legionaries<sup>574</sup>.

“The Vatra Romanian Union is made up of secessionists and legionaries and is perceived as a threat to Romanian democracy”<sup>575</sup>.

This opinion is presented by the authors as being spread by Hungarian propaganda both inside and outside Romania's borders. In the last three decades, this view has gained significant momentum, to the extent that many of those who advocate it are unaware of the implications of their actions for the victims. The continued focus on presenting this union in a negative light by Hungarian propaganda can be seen as a means of compensating for their own failures. This is particularly evident in the context of the formation of Vatra Românească in March 1990, which emerged as a key form of collective self-defense for Romanians. The formation of the Vatra Românească Union was a spontaneous reaction to the dissolution of the state, which was unaware of the real situation in Transylvania. The union's numerous branches prevented the realization of some of the objectives of Hungarian chauvinism at the local level for a long time.

#### **FROM THE DAY OF KÁROLY KIRÁLY'S APPOINTMENT AS VICE-PRESIDENT OF CPUN, THE ROMANIAN COUNTER-OPERATIVES KEPT SILENT**

Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir ask whether officials in Bucharest could have had a more comprehensive understanding of the details needed to make the most informed decisions at key moments in 1990? Apparently, from the moment then-President Iliescu appointed the Soviet-Hungarian agent Károly Király as vice-president of the CPUN (a position equivalent to second-in-command), the counter-espionage operatives in Târgu Mureș had not communicated with their superiors for over a month<sup>576</sup>. It was felt that sending further information would be unwise, given the risk of it reaching a foreign agent of influence. In February 1990, only a few brief notes were sent because Mr. Király was in Budapest receiving treatment for leukemia. It was later discovered that he was not actually ill, but rather had gone to coordinate with Hungarian intelligence on the upcoming events in Târgu Mureș, which the initiators hoped would serve as a catalyst for a civil war in which Transylvania would become a territory to be pacified by foreign military forces<sup>577</sup>.

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<sup>574</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 128.

<sup>575</sup> „Uniunea Vatra Românească este formată din secesioniști și legionari și este percepută ca o amenințare la adresa democrației românești”, in *Ibidem*, p. 129.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 174.

Uncovering details of the fourth edition of the *Virradat/ Dawn of Dawn* plan in the paper, we note that the authors argue that a new operational approach was introduced, building on the knowledge of the previous model and incorporating elements of Soviet espionage and subversion culture. This approach was shaped by the fact that many of the officers who ran the AVO had studied at the KGB's Dzerzhinsky Academy. It is worth noting that when Hungary assumed the role of chairman of the NATO Counterintelligence Committee, a significant international controversy arose. This was due to the fact that the head of Hungary's National Security Service had spent considerable time, some six and a half years, at the KGB Academy.

### **THE "POGROM" THEORY WAS LAUNCHED LONG BEFORE THE BLOODY EVENTS**

The book presents a number of clues that the events in Târgu Mureş were planned in advance. One such clue was Sütő's appearance on Hungarian television on March 20, in which he denounced the "pogrom" to which the Hungarian population was subjected. This happened shortly after a street clash between Romanians and Hungarians. The writer appeared healthy and in good spirits on TV, while in reality, at the time of the broadcast, Sütő András was in hospital after having injured his eye the previous evening. Apparently, the interview in which he spoke emphatically and convincingly about a "pogrom" had been recorded a few days earlier when there were indeed high tensions in Târgu Mureş. However, at the time of the broadcast, the streets of the city were still quiet and peaceful.

The authors also mention some inflammatory statements made by lawyer Kincses Előd ("Be vigilant, if the army is not with you, disarm them!") and Jakabffy Attila ("Now, let's get them, there are many of us!") in connection with the 10.000 Hungarian tourists who came to Romania on a Tuesday, March 20, "for recreation". The book also presents the possible actions of the 400 from Bicske<sup>578</sup>, the authors talk about the process of buying influence in Roma communities and compromising the UDMR through AVO actions, about the disappearance from the journalist Dorin Suciú's footage of the sequence in which "a detachment of solid individuals armed with short batons" broke the cordon of gendarmes that separated the Hungarian and Romanian demonstrators and many other issues that can be further investigated by reading the book published in 2021 by Evenimentul and Capital.

### **CONCLUSIONS. IMPORTANCE**

In conclusion, "Târgu Mureş 1990: Bloody Dawn" by Tudor Păcuraru and Florian Bichir provides a meticulously detailed account of the interethnic conflicts of 1989 – 1990, based on extensive documents from the NCSSA archives. The

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<sup>578</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

authors highlight the complex and deep-rooted tensions of the time, offering a unique insight into how these conflicts were managed by both the authorities and the communities. The book emphasizes the essential role of counterintelligence services in maintaining national order and security during these tumultuous events. Through their work, Păcuraru and Bichir pay tribute to the dedication of the Romanian officers who, despite significant challenges, fulfilled their duty to protect the country. This narrative not only enriches our understanding of a turbulent historical period, but also honors the endurance and commitment of those who served.

While the book provides invaluable information through detailed accounts, first-hand testimony and previously classified documents, it is important to recognize that some of the allegations presented may be difficult to accept, and some of the plans described may seem conspiratorial or exaggerated at first glance. This is all the more natural considering that these plans were allegedly conceived and implemented by secret services with specific, occult methods of operation, hidden from public view and contrary to the generally accepted narrative. However, the fact that this book is based on archival sources lends it credibility and underlines its relevance. These issues, though controversial, are essential to understanding the full scale of events and their implications. As such, they deserve in-depth analysis, debate and discussion, as illustrated in the book, in order to fully grasp the complexity of the ethnic conflicts and their wider impact on post-communist Romania.

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