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# Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Romania Elections 2004

OANA-VALENTINA SUCIU

## SOME THEORETICAL AND LEGISLATIVE EXPLANATIONS

The ethnic party is just one of the newly-born parties after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, among the parties of mass democratic movements, the remnants of the former communist parties, the so-called "historical parties", the religious parties (mainly Christian-democrats), the nationalist parties and the "new politics" parties such as the Greens or the feminists. Romania is no exception from these trends.

A variety of electoral paradigms for the ethnic minorities has been established. For the region's largest minorities – the ones who were able to mobilise enough in order to pass the electoral thresholds – the parliamentary representation has been secured through proportional representation<sup>1</sup>. But this is not a natural phenomenon, since not all the countries in the region considered that the voices of the ethnic minorities should be heard in the legislative body of the country. This is how the situation of the political representation of the ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe stands for the time being:

**Table 1**

*Political Representation of Ethnic Minority Groups  
in Central and Eastern Europe*

Country	Percentage of Minorities	Legal Situation	Parliamentary Representation
Albania	3%	Opposed to representation	YES
Bulgaria	8.5%	Opposed to representation	YES
Czech Republic	–	Recognition but not granting parliamentary seats	YES – 1990 – 1992 NO – 1996 – 1998
Hungary	4%	Recognition but not granting parliamentary seats	NO
Moldova	13.8%	Ignorance of minorities	NO
Poland	1.3%	Recognition but not granting parliamentary seats	YES

<sup>1</sup> Carlos FLORES JUBERIAS, "Postcommunist Electoral Systems and National Minorities: A Dilemma in Five Paradigms", in J.P. STEIN (ed.), *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe. State-Building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*, East West Institute, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, New York, 2000.

Country	Percentage of Minorities	Legal Situation	Parliamentary Representation
<b>Romania</b>	10.5%	<i>Grant of a parliamentary seat</i>	YES
Russia	3.8%	Ignorance of minorities	NO
Slovakia	10.6%	Recognition but not granting parliamentary seats	YES
Slovenia	3%	Grant of a parliamentary seat <sup>1</sup>	NO
<b>Ukraine</b>	22%	Ignorance of minorities	NO

Source: Rubén RUIZ RUFINO, "Ethnic Parliamentary Incorporation in Central and Eastern Europe: Finding a Mechanical Explanation", Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduate Student Retreat of the Society for Comparative Research, Madrid, 2002, p. 16.

However, the successful ethnic parties (see not only the positive case of Romania, but also the one of Bulgaria, which is less favourable from the legislative point of view, since the Constitution officially bans any ethnic based organization to run in elections as a regular political party) have won a long-lasting electoral support and have maintained a relatively high degree of party discipline, while the electoral stimuli for majority party initiators to sharpen the ideological differences only managed to exacerbate rather than soften the ethnic conflicts. Moreover, the parties are not only mediators of conflicts but also, as Lipset and Rokkan<sup>2</sup> have proposed, they place themselves as attraction poles that act as professional brokers of ethnicity.

According to these criteria an ethnic party is an organization that aims to represent an ethnic group; it introduces itself as the bearer of the interests of an ethnic group to the exclusion of others (which means that representation is the central pillar of the party's mobilizing strategy) and aims to win political power in order to increase the impact of relative power and of the position of that ethnic group.

The political demands of minorities are based on one fundamental concern: the desire to preserve their identity and protection against discrimination. In addition, access to resources managed or controlled by the state is a great concern to many ethnic minorities.

We reach at this point the issue of political representation through parties. According to Best and Cotta<sup>3</sup>, representation is "the 'hinge' between society and polity,

<sup>1</sup> According to Deets, there are two seats, one for the Hungarian minority and one for the Italian minority, the so-called "historical minorities" (Steven DEETS, "Reconsidering East European Minority Policy: Liberal Theory and European Norms", in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2002, pp. 52-53). The system clearly grants positive discrimination, but the practice has been criticized by other ethnic groups, such as the Serbs and Croats, who were not provided with the same advantages, although their numbers exceed the ones of the Hungarians and Italians. For more details, see Ciprian-Călin ALIONESCU, "Parliamentary Representation of Minorities in Romania", in *Southeast European Politics*, June 2004, vol. V, no. 1, pp. 60-75.

<sup>2</sup> Seymour Martin LIPSET and Stein ROKKAN, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments", in IDEM (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, The Free Press, New York, 1967, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich BEST and Maurizio COTTA, "Elite Transformation and Models of Representation since the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Some Theoretical Considerations", in IDEM (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe: 1848-2000*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 3.

through which social conflict and authority structures are translated into political action, but at the same time political actors guide, reshape and reinterpret the demands of society". Representation is never a purely passive process of translation of society into politics. In fact, it is also a much more active process through which social elements are "politicised" and thus in fact changed. The political actors of representation (be they individual leaders or organized groups such as parties) are a relatively independent variable that shapes the political expression of society<sup>1</sup>. One of the main concerns of the ethnic movements is represented by influencing the governing process, as we shall see in the case of the most recent general elections in November-December 2004 in Romania. The rational request to efficiently convert political resources into power generates, at least within the pluralist democracies, the tendency to politicise the ethnic differences too. This might be the explanation, at least in the Romanian framework, of the existence of over 30 ethnic based organizations, out of which 19 have parliamentary representation. It should be added that, if the rules of the electoral game would make no exceptions, only the Hungarian minority representatives would be able to pass the electoral threshold.

The "representation" of the ethnic party is defined as the average percentage of seats won by the party when compared with the percentage of the population that forms that group<sup>2</sup>. From the consociational point of view, the essential factor that promotes accepting democracy among the ethnic group is the degree in which that ethnic group is proportionally politically represented.

Immediately after the Romanian appraisal in December 1989, the position of the ethnic minorities visibly improved<sup>3</sup>. However, many gains were considered reversible because they lacked firm legal safeguards. Leaders of ethnic minorities were concerned over certain articles in Romania's new Constitution, which defined the country as a "unitary national state" with prohibitions on activities deemed to be "separatist". They feared that this could provide a constitutional underpinning for a possible future ban on ethnic political parties. Although this did not happen, the phrasing can still be found in the new shape of the Fundamental Law, adopted through a referendum in October 2003. According to the Constitution: "Each of the organizations of citizens belonging to national minorities, that meet in elections the number of votes for being represented in the Parliament, have the right to one deputy seat under the condition of the electoral law. The citizens of a national minority can be represented only by one organization". But as far as ethnic minorities are concerned, the Electoral Law has a restrictive, even discriminatory, character. Art. 4, align. 1, stipulates that "under the present law, by an ethnic minority we understand the ethnic group represented in the National Minority Council"<sup>4</sup>. The article hence drastically limits the possibility for an ethnic based formation, which is not represented in the Council, to run in elections, as if only this organism were entitled to accredit the membership to a certain ethnic group. The law also mentions in Art. 4, align. 2, that "according to Art. 62, align. 2 of the republished Constitution of Romania, legally founded ethnic minority organizations, defined

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> John ISHYIAMA, "Ethnopolitical Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Post-Communist Eastern Europe", in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, Autumn 2001, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Janusz BUGAJSKI, *Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe: A Guide to Nationality Policies, Organizations and Parties*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Legislație privind alegerile parlamentare și prezidențiale 2004*, Editura Regia Autonomă „Monitorul Oficial”, București, p. 6.

according to align. 1, which did not obtain a deputy or a senator mandate, have the right to a deputy mandate, if they have obtained a number of votes equal to at least 10% of the average country number of valid expressed votes for the election of one deputy"<sup>1</sup>. The ethnic parties/formations (except UDMR) represent politically 2.17% of the country's population (stressing that, due to the Electoral Law, 0.71 of the individuals belonging to an ethnic minority group are parliamentary represented).

By accepting a lower electoral threshold of votes<sup>2</sup> for the minority organizations in parliamentary elections, one promotes a form of positive discrimination. Although the provision favours the small ethnic groups, it encourages competition rather than cooperation among these groups. Moreover, only one of the minority organizations (or parties) officially recognized has the right to obtain funding from the National Minority Council. The representation system starts from the false presumption that ethnic parties are unitary political actors. For example, Art. 4, align. 3 stipulates that "the ethnic minority organizations that are represented in the Parliament can run in elections", whereas similar organizations, but not parliamentary represented, are subjected to much harsher conditions – they have to gather signatures from at least 15% of the citizens who are listed by the most recent census (2002) as belonging to that particular ethnic group. But this reference does not take into account an aspect of individual rights, that is the fact that each citizen of a country can declare himself or herself in the census as belonging to a certain ethnic group (the majority one, most of the times), even if he/she actually belongs to another ethnic group. It is a strictly personal matter, and a law in this regard only comes to narrow both the individual and the collective rights.

Since 1990 the ethnic parties have undergone a professionalisation process, along with those who work in these organizations: they run in elections as normal parties – due to the proportional representation system they can present the same list in several constituencies, since the Electoral Law allows that "organizations of citizens belonging to national minorities can submit the same candidates list for the Chamber of Deputies in several constituencies"<sup>3</sup>.

## THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BUREAU AND THE CANDIDATES' ODYSSEY

According to the same Law, elections are organised by the Central Electoral Bureau. In the case of the 2004 elections, this institution represented one of the corner stones for the ethnic minority organizations that intended to run in elections. Through the documents that it has released starting with mid-October 2004, one could say that the Central Electoral Bureau set the basis for two trends that marked

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> While a deputy needs 70 000 votes, the representative of an ethnic party only needs approximately 6 000 votes to be elected in the Parliament. The problem lies with the ethnic minorities that do not exceed 5-6 000 members (for more details, see Table 2). In this case, the candidates try to target the majority population as well and in some cases they even manage to obtain votes – the most interesting cases are represented by the Albanians, Armenians, Macedonians and Ruthenians, who obtained 10, sometimes even 15 times more votes than the figures indicated by the censuses.

<sup>3</sup> *Legislație privind alegerea parlamentare...*, art. cit., p. 7.

the electoral campaign: by refusing the right to run in elections of certain organizations it has generated what the central media labelled as the "Hungarian-Hungarian conflict", and on the other hand it sharpened the internal conflicts with the organizations of other ethnic minority groups.

### *The "Minoritarul" Case*

The most frequent excuse used by the Central Electoral Bureau for rejecting candidatureship was the unsuitability or of the lack of originality of the electoral signs: this is the situation of organizations such as the Cultural Albanians' League, the Szeklers' Union, the Civic Hungarian Union or the Ukrainians' Democrat Union. Other organizations that were denied entry to the electoral game in 2004 are the Cultural Union of Ethnic Poles, the Russians' Association and the Italians' Association in Romania. In the latter case, random checks cross-verified with the census information proved that the Suceava and Iași counties, where the Association had raised around 500 signatures (according to the Electoral Law this figure being enough), are inhabited by less than 100 Italians. The Szeklers' Union and the Russians' Association were excluded because they are not members in the National Minority Council, whereas the Cultural Union of Ethnic Poles represented the investigation topic of the prosecutor's office for the very simple reason that the signatures represented Romanian names! It is probably forbidden in the view of the Romanian prosecutor's office to have a typical Romanian name and to be at the same time a member of a minority ethnic group<sup>1</sup>.

The positive discrimination that was initially intended generated in fact conflicts within the different ethnic groups since, as previously noted, these are not unitary actors, and indeed often embark on interminable conflicts for control over the resources. The relationship between the members of a minority ethnic group and those who claim to represent this group is a complex one. Organizations of representatives of ethnic minorities can take many forms, and the ethnic-parties are just one variety of patterns. Often the borderlines between political, cultural and religious organizations representing minorities are very thin; for instance, UDMR includes sixteen different parties and associations, its membership being "organized in a loose structure of local chapters that were in turn grouped into autonomous county branches"<sup>2</sup>. The membership of the number of people that are actively involved in these organizations varies. They also receive different levels of support among those whom they claim to represent. Within the democratic political systems, the measurable support for parties and movements ranges from percentages that might not allow them to pass the electoral thresholds to about 90% of

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<sup>1</sup> However, in the 2000-2004 legislature the fact that the last name of the former Italian's representative ends in "-escu" did not meet any protests, even though the representative herself has very loose links with this ethnic group. Indeed, the Italians' Association in Romania and the ROAS-IT contested the right of the former MP to re-run in elections. Moreover, she has been contested by the other organizations of the Italians, especially since in 2000 she ran for an organization – Italians' Community in Romania (CIR) that chose not to present the same candidate in all the constituencies.

<sup>2</sup> Janusz BUGAJSKI, *Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe: A Guide to Nationality Policies, Organizations and Parties*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, p. 217.

the minority population. When representatives of minorities are politically divided, forming competing and quarrelling parties and movements, the discord may be the result of the socio-economic, political ideological or cultural differences within the minority population. More often however, this is caused by the conflicting ambitions of parties and movements and individual politicians, and does not actually reflect the situation of the voters. It is the case of the Ukrainian minority: the Ukrainians' Democratic Union in Romania – UDUR – contested the registration of the Ukrainians' Union in Romania – UUR, based on the allegations that the latter had collaborated with the communist secret services, Securitate (these facts did not prevent though the election of UUR's candidate in the Chamber of Deputies). The same applies to the Polish minority: the Poles' Union in Romania, officially supported by the Polish Embassy in Romania, contested the Arad's Youth's Assault and the Poles' Cultural Union (with the headquarters in Craiova). The Polish MP was worried that a possible defeat in the race for the deputy seat might translate into a lack of funding in support of the Suceava county cultural premises, a North-Western region where most of the Romanian Poles are located.

On November 18<sup>th</sup> 2004, the *Cotidianul* daily printed the following heading: "The Minoritarian Affair – Entering the Parliament has become lucrative business. This is how many of the eligible places of many of the minority organizations are occupied by Romanians, who have absolutely no connection with the minority in question"<sup>1</sup>. It is the case of deputy Vasile Savu, whom, according to Varujan Pambuccian, the leader of the ethnic minorities parliamentary group, nobody had seen in Parliament for over 18 months during a four-year term. Trade union leader in the Jiu Valley<sup>2</sup> and close to the former governing party PSD, Savu had apparently "discovered" his Macedonian roots and even established an association (the pre-existing organization of the "Slavic Macedonians" had excluded him from its ranks); in this way he also entered in conflict with Sorin Dimitriu, former top PNȚCD member and director of the State Property Fund, who admitted that he does not possess Macedonian origins but feels professionally close to this ethnic group, whom he would enjoy to represent.

The same daily identifies the situation of Mihai Florin Luican, former Bucharest prefect, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> at the internal elections in PSD, who re-appeared at the top of the list of the newly-founded Bulgarians' Cultural Association, competing, eventually unsuccessfully, with the Banat Bulgarian Union.

Also in the case of the Croats, shortly before elections, the former PSD senator Ion Vela, former chancellor of the "Eftimie Murgu" in Reșița<sup>3</sup>, re-vitalised the Croats' Democratic Union, an organization that during the 2000 elections had not succeeded to pass the special electoral threshold. It did manage to gather 7 000 votes in 2004, however insufficient to defeat the well-known Croats' Union in Romania, led by deputy Mihai Radan. The latter declared that he did not fear his counter-candidate, who actually admitted not having Croatian origins, but

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<sup>1</sup> "Afacerea 'Minoritarul'", n.a., <http://www.cotidianul.ro>, accessed November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, Savu was the one to replace the notorious coal miners' leader Miron Cozma (himself one of the subjects to be tackled with during and immediately after the electoral campaign) after his imprisonment in 1999. During the 2000 elections even the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia found this candidatuship outrageous and had issued an official contestation, especially since it is not clear if such a minority actually exists in Romania.

<sup>3</sup> Information extracted from *Cartea Albastră a Democrației. Un ghid al instituțiilor publice centrale din România*, Asociația Pro-Democrația, București, 2001, p. 82.

that in this way the "constitutional principle advancing the representation of minorities" was not respected. Dare we note that such a consideration enters in conflict with the justifications provided by the Central Electoral Bureau itself when it had rejected the candidatures of several formations based on the Romanian sonority of the names! Art. 4, align. 3, stating the obligation to confirm one's membership to a certain minority through the census seemed to be forgotten.

### *The "Hungarian-Hungarian" Conflicts*

As for the relationship between the organizations that represent the Hungarian minority in Romania, tensions could be observed between the Hungarians' Democratic Alliance (UDMR), the Hungarians' Civic Union (UCM – separated from UDMR not long before the local elections in June 2004) and the Szeklers' Union in Romania. The Central Electoral Bureau prevented the latter two from running in the general elections. Both of them resorted to enrolments on the lists of other organizations, a manoeuvre accepted by the Electoral Law. The Szeklers' Union<sup>1</sup> initially moved towards the New Generation Party (PNG), but the limited support granted to this party determined their orientation towards the Great Romania Party (PRM), a quite bizarre change of direction in the context of the anti-Hungarian behaviour of this party from its very beginnings in 1990. But even the second place on the list for the Senate in the Mureş county, generously offered by PRM to Kálman Kiss did not lead to the parliamentary representation of this formation.

The relationship between UCM and UDMR is even more complicated. For the second time (the first time being during the local elections, in June 2004) the latter prevented the former to apply for running in elections. The central media from October 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2004 participated to the competition with titles that usually hook the public: "Hungarian-Hungarian War at the Central Electoral Bureau" (*Evenimentul Zilei*), "Once Again – UCM Prevented by the PSD-UDMR-PRM Coalition to Run in Elections" (*Curentul*), "Bleak Days for Béla Markó<sup>2</sup> – UCM Applies for Elections" (*Cotidianul*), etc. The press communiqué released by the Central Electoral Bureau justified the invalidation solution by the fact that the checking of the support signatures for this formation presented irregularities such as signatures belonging to deceased or fictitious people, to persons from the majoritarian population, all of which eventually led to an insufficient number of supporters. At the same time, the response came one day later than the deadline for enlisting as a candidate party, preventing UCM to record its electoral sign, a sign contested by the Green Party in Romania. Moreover, some of the supporters received phone-calls and direct inquiries from the Prosecutor's Office or from the Police, which, in the opinion of UCM's president, Zsolt Szilagy, is in itself an act of intimidation<sup>3</sup>. The Executive Board of UDMR came forward to support the Central Electoral Bureau's decision and released a communiqué in this regard. The question regarding to the

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<sup>1</sup> This formation is not a new one. In the 90s it ran in elections under a different name (The Liberal-Democrat Union of the Hungarians), and it is the reason why during the 2000 local elections UDMR missed by 800 votes the City Hall of Târgu Mureş (out of which 700 went to the party led by Kálman Kiss).

<sup>2</sup> UDMR's candidate for the presidential elections and the president of the party.

<sup>3</sup> Press conference given on Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup> 2004, by deputy Zsolt Szilagy.



manner in which UDMR got hold of detailed information regarding the non-valid signatures is explained through the presence of one UDMR member in the Bureau, who could verify the validity of the information.

The conflict was alleviated by the offer launched to UCM on October 28<sup>th</sup> 2004 by the Popular Action; the former conditions though the partnership by the inclusion of the autonomy issue onto AP's programme and by the placement on the top positions of the UCM candidates in the counties with a predominant Hungarian population. In Mr. Anton Niculescu's opinion<sup>1</sup>, "they should have been constructive, if they really wanted to represent the community. The fact that they accepted to run on AP's lists proves that they only want to get us out of the Parliament"<sup>2</sup>. But the party did not exceed 0.5% on average per country at the November 28<sup>th</sup> elections, even less than the public opinion polls run on the Hungarian population had predicted before the elections<sup>3</sup>.

## CAMPAIGN LOG

The topic of "autonomy" is not an "original" one, and it can be traced through the UDMR programmes starting with 1996 electoral campaign; it was resumed in 2000 and then forcefully revived during the 2004 electoral campaign. It is the red thread of UDMR's programme, which also counts chapters dealing with the economy, justice and health systems. These latter three topics are to be found in the programmes of other formations such as the German Democratic Forum (FDGR). Since our space for analysis is a limited one, the focus will lay on three case studies: UDMR, FDGR and UAR (the Armenians' Union in Romania). The relevant information has been gathered from the sites of these organizations or through interviews with their representatives; in fact, these are the only formations that introduce themselves to their constituencies and to the rest of the voters through well-designed and comprehensive web pages.

Apparently, the issue of Internet accessibility might seem frivolous and inconsequential, but it is the only instrument (except face-to-face interviews) that provides information regarding the political activity of the representatives of the ethnic minorities. If the lack of communication could be understood through the limited financial possibilities, their lack of parliamentary activity cannot. For instance, "between December 2000 and February 2003, the yearly average number of parliamentary speeches made by the 17 MPs from the group of non-Hungarian minorities (not counting the group leader<sup>4</sup>) was only 5.6 (the same average for UDMR was 17.5, and for one of the opposition parties, the National-Liberals, 21.1).

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Anton Niculescu is executive vice-president of the UDMR responsible for European Integration issues and EU counsellor of President Béla Markó.

<sup>2</sup> Interview taken on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004, at the UDMR headquarters in Bucharest.

<sup>3</sup> A public opinion poll ordered by UDMR in September 2004 to the Centre for Research of Interethnic Relations (CCRIT) shows that UCM was credited with 4.7% of the votes of the Hungarians living in Romania. Nevertheless, it is difficult to count how many votes the UCM really received in the elections of 2004 – what is clear though is that in the counties inhabited mainly by Hungarians, AP (the "host" of UCM) received most of the votes, exceeding the country average (3 295 in Covasna and 3 819 in Harghita, which still mean less than 4.7%).

<sup>4</sup> Deputy Varujan Pambuccian (n.a.).

The absolute record in this regard belongs to the representatives of the Italians, Russians and "Macedonians": one intervention each in more than two years; and their one intervention was the oath of allegiance to Romania, compulsory for all MPs!). Also, throughout the period surveyed, they endorsed just one legislative proposal<sup>1</sup> (written by another MP)<sup>2</sup>. Should one still wonder at the quality of the political representation provided by such a "peaceful" and "silent" group!

### *UDMR – The Hungarians' Democratic Alliance*

UDMR's slogan is "Together for Autonomy", and the organization's candidate to the presidency of Romania based his electoral programme on three main slogans: EU integration, autonomy and wealth (or well-being). A new element in the electoral supply of UDMR is the proposal to modify the list of developing regions and speed up the decentralization process, (the target group for these issues representing the Hungarian electorate in the counties of Harghita, Covasna and Mureş). UDMR's political programme is an extremely specific one<sup>3</sup>, being co-ordinated by the MPs from the parliamentary committees, according to the topic of interest. In the file on economy, UDMR's programme is liberal in orientation<sup>4</sup>; further, it also speaks about the importance of having civil society keep the state institutions under its control, and of maintaining these institutions strong and independent in their turn. UDMR is an organization that declares double-objectives, ethnic and national ones. The main ethnic objective refers to the elimination of discrimination and with changing the anti-Hungarian feelings in Romania. It also supports the requests for "cultural and regional autonomy", including separate educational institutions and autonomous churches. It asks for the local autonomy of the prefects and the civil servants from the Transylvanian counties with a majority of Hungarian population, and is careful to present these claims more in the context of reform of the local public administration, rather than as specific questions dealing with the ethnic minorities.

As a further expression of the quest for autonomous self-government, UDMR restructured itself in 1993 on the model of a mini-Parliament. For many years, it had been the only Romanian party that organized "primaries" before deciding

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<sup>1</sup> The bill for a Law of Ethnic Minorities (also put forward by Mr. Pambuccian, in an attempt to erase what he called "the ethno-business"), eventually rejected by the plenary session of the Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> Ciprian-Călin ALIONESCU, *art. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> During this interview I asked Mr. Anton Niculescu if they had taken into account the amount of patience that is required of the sympathizers willing to read this programme, considering that the published version exceeds 30 pages. He responded that: "No one really reads programmes. What I want to stress here is that, starting with 1996, the economic aspects became stronger, more important than before. There are much more social issues, there are many promises, plans related to less ethnically specific issues. We had the same programme in 1996 and in 2000, worded/elaborated by very many experts in various domains of general interest. This year's novelty is the fact that we have received a lot of inputs on our website from people who thought that they had something important to say in this respect, and we have included a lot of suggestions. The coordinators of the draft programme were the deputies and senators from relevant standing committees of Parliament".

<sup>4</sup> N.B. "Liberal" in the classical sense, i.e. on a left-right spectrum heading towards the right.

who is going to run in elections. Although a very democratic method, it is nevertheless a very expensive one, maximizing the risk to have only the members of a certain professional group as potential representatives. In 2004 UDMR allowed people of Hungarian descent, but who were not necessarily members of the Union, to run in the internal elections, seeking to present further proof that the candidates' lists are not marshaled at the Bucharest headquarters<sup>1</sup>. It is a transparent manner that even their political opponents admire.

But what do Hungarians in Romania want? A public opinion poll run by the Centre for Research of Interethnic Relations (CCRIT) in September 2004 shows that the most ardent problems of the average Hungarian are: wages/pensions – 53%, tax reduction – 43.4%, eradicating corruption – 40.3%, whereas the top issues in UDMR's programme gather much lower percentages: the Szeklers' regional autonomy – 9.2%, proportional representation – 9.2%, and Hungarian departments within the Babeş-Bolyai University – 6.5%. The questions perceived by the Hungarian leaders to be extremely important are, in fact, even less important for the Hungarian electorate: the retrocession of property – 7.2%, cultural autonomy – 3.9%, and the retrocession of Church buildings – 3%. We cite the explanation offered by Mr. Anton Niculescu: "It has always been like that, one could suspect Hungarians of schizophrenia. The main concerns, requests, and problems of the Hungarians are almost synonymous with the ones of the majority. And it has always been like that; there is nothing new here. This is what we found in our surveys. The issue of autonomy, the university, even EU integration, are somewhere not on the top of the list. However, why do Hungarians vote for UDMR, who has a backwards-positioned agenda? Because these mainly emotional, apparently 'less-valued' elements on its agenda do not exist in the supply of the other parties. Hungarians know that if Markó is to be the Ministry of Economy, points 1, 2, 3, 4 are still not going to be solved. However, PNL, PD, PSD do not have projects that cover our specific requests in their programmes. So, it is positions 7, 8, 9 for which Hungarians vote for UDMR. This might be the explanation. Otherwise, Hungarians have exactly the same problems as Romanians do. On the other hand, they have a few requirements that are not being satisfied or nothing is being promised in relation to those specific issues, desires, needs. It is the law of supply and demand". This opinion is confirmed by a brief research on the web-sites of the main Romanian political parties. The offer related to the rights of ethnic minorities is totally lacking. Moreover, in an intervention dated April 8<sup>th</sup> 2003, Eugen Nicolăescu, a top member of the National Liberal Party, notes: "UDMR launched several messages, proved that it could play with anybody if things turn out all right, without caring, which we do not mind, but there is a problem when the elementary norms of functioning of the Romanian society are trespassed through protocols for parliamentary support". The text refers to a possible enclavisation of Romania, based on the creation of economic development regions based on ethnic criteria.

The same survey reveals that, in September 2004, 78% of the Hungarians would have agreed to a possible collaboration with PSD; however, even at that time, UDMR had not excluded collaboration with other political parties: "Based on clear and firm conditions we could collaborate with both political poles. It is only natural.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Anton Niculescu, this democratic approach is precisely the explanation for the attacks to which UDMR has been subjected after the defeat of several non-UDMR members (UCM representatives) in the "primary" elections.

We do have our own interests, but Romania is also interested to collaborate with the Hungarians" declared the president of UDMR<sup>1</sup>. Constant in the options of his electorate, Béla Markó oriented his presidential campaign mostly towards the Hungarian voters, as opposed to his predecessor in 2000, Gyorgy Frunda, who permanently targeted with his messages the majority of Romania's electorate.

In rational choice terms, it is however very probable that Hungarians will not participate in the political activities of UDMR since they do not expect to receive "benefits" that could exceed the "costs" of participation. Since ethnic parties do not generate private benefits for their constituencies, there should be another explanation for choosing these parties. It seems that the benefits offered by UDMR to its voters are those public goods that provide for general well-being. Moreover, UDMR is a long term oriented political party, a fact that might not be that clear to its electorate; nevertheless, the voting outcome proved that these objectives (decentralization, autonomy, the retrocession of property, market economy) did eventually appeal to the Hungarian electorate. This aspect, coupled with the discipline of the Hungarian voters<sup>2</sup>, explains the constant success of the party in the elections. Due to the voting history – both the figures (although these decreased in recent years), and their territorial distribution – the number of UDMR MPs, as well as the constituencies that they shall represent, are quite easy to guess.

### *FDGR – The German Democratic Forum in Romania*

The German Democratic Forum in Romania represented the pleasant surprise of the local elections, held in June 2004. Except the by now famous case of the mayor of Sibiu, Mr. Klaus Johannis, another 8 German mayors were elected, together with 11 country councillors and 96 local councillors<sup>3</sup>. This is quite a success, when nowadays, at least officially, less than 60 000 Germans live in Romania. These results occasioned the proliferation of the opinion that voting on ethnic criteria was out of fashion; some analysts even spoke of a change in mentality, since it was absolutely clear that the Romanian population had supported the FDGR candidates. These were also backed by the Hungarians, who in turn had been voted by the Romanian population on several occasions.

Under these circumstances, FDGR started to aspire to its own parliamentary group and launched a unique list for the Chamber of Deputies in the electoral struggle for the general elections, supporting an independent candidate, Mr. Eberhard Wolfgang Wittstock, for the Senate race.

The cornerstone of the Forum's programme was represented by the economic chapter, stressing the necessity and importance of attracting foreign investors. Supporting the young people was another important aspect ("so that they would not leave the country" – this is not only the case of the German or Hungarian minorities; a simple look at the census data proves that during the last decade the

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Curentul* daily, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Hungarian voters that did turn out in the second round of the presidential elections on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2004 apparently followed the recommendation from the centre, i.e. to vote for Adrian Năstase, is only illustrative in this regard.

<sup>3</sup> *Divers* News Bulletin, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2004.

number of most of the ethnic minorities, except the Rroma, has decreased<sup>1</sup>), together with the education and health systems (objectives that are extensively developed in UDMR's project too), culture, international relations, and, last but not least, urbanism and architecture (as the traditionally German counties cherish a very important architectural heritage).

The results of the elections proved though that rational choice functions in the case of the voters in Romania: the very high electoral stake of the general elections in November 2004 (an emphasis that was quite different from the case of the local elections) determined the voters to avoid wasting their votes on small parties, which would have been far from passing the electoral threshold anyway. These decisions were evident in the case of the ethnic based parties, and especially in the case of FDGR. Only 60% of the German electorate supported the Forum, the rest headed towards other parties, probably reasoning that the party will gain enough votes to obtain one seat in the Chamber anyway, whereas other political parties might need the vote to strengthen their position, on much higher stakes.

### *UAR – The Armenians' Union in Romania*

The Armenians' Union in Romania remarked itself on the political stage with an apparently "dangerous" message for an ethnic based organization, first of all, and a very small one – which is the case of the Armenian minority, in the second place. The message of UAR's candidate, Varujan Pambuccian, targeted not his own ethnic group, but the whole Romanian citizenry, and the IT&C community in particular (the group that produces 10% of the GDP<sup>2</sup>). The arguments that stayed at the basis of UAR's candidacy were the bills that he had initiated and supported in the previous legislature, some of which are already in place (the e-signature Law, the e-commerce Law, the Law against e-criminality), and others which are pending at the beginning of 2005 (the Law of the e-notary, the demonopolisation of the communication market, the cancellation of the taxes for digital cameras, decreasing the income tax for the soft engineers to 8%). The UAR's electoral promises were not too many<sup>3</sup> and they targeted the same group – the one of software clients and

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<sup>1</sup> Other ethnic groups have increased in number are the Greeks, the Croats and the Turks. However, there are reasons of serious concern here: on one hand, it could be that in 1992, continuing the social habits learned during communism, individuals from ethnic groups other than the majoritarian one did not dare to declare this to the census operators. It is the obvious case of the Rroma minority, since estimates of experts belonging to this group evaluate the number of Rroma people to be at least twice the official record; in 1992 it was also the case of the religious minority of Greek Catholics, who did not declare their real denomination for fear of repercussions. This could explain an increased number of Greeks in 2002. On the other hand, in the case of the Croats for instance, the larger number of people declaring to belong to this ethnic group, as well as the spectacular jump from 486 votes in 1996, to 11 084 in 2000, and 10 331 in 2004, could be explained through the fact that deputy Mihai Radan has obtained double citizenship and Croatian passports for the members of Croats' Union in Romania, which meant traveling without a visa in the Schengen space until 2000, and an automatic EU citizenship after 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Romania's agriculture produces, comparatively, 13% of the GDP and it presumes involving half of the country's population (data extracted from the interview of Mihai Stepan Cazazian with Varujan Pambuccian, in *Ararat*, no. 21 (306), 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with deputy Varujan Pambuccian, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

providers, of those interested in communication and in the formation of a regional market in the field or in the introduction of simple and clear procedures with the public authorities.

The solution initially seemed an extremely risky one, but it managed to convince the target group; Mr. Pambuccian stressed that he would have liked the implementation of these laws and the adoption of new ones to be a gift of the Armenian minority to the majoritarian population, but that since the very low number of Armenians (officially, under 2 000) and the Electoral Law prevented this gesture, the support of the IT&C community was essential under the circumstances. The votes received in elections seem to confirm the support of the IT&C group (as the UAR scored almost 10 000 votes with an ethnic community surveyed as five times smaller), although Pambuccian might be facing another obstacle: losing the support of his own ethnic group, who could feel neglected.

## D DAY - ELECTIONS

According to the Electoral Law (Art. 4, align. 12), "Through derogation from the provisions of Art. 5, align. 8, the organizations belonging to the national minorities can submit the same list of candidates in several constituencies"<sup>1</sup>. The ethnic minorities are listed together with the rest of the candidates and anyone can vote for them. Deets showed that the proportional voting on lists avoids the problem of forcing each individual to choose a single legal identity in order to maintain the manoeuvres of the "minority" voters<sup>2</sup>. This means that the people who are not members of an ethnic minority do not have too many incentives to vote for these organizations. Since the ethnic identities are randomly defined through the Electoral Law, the simplest manner to evaluate the level of political representation is to compare the figures from the latest two censuses, on one hand, with the votes received by these groups, on the other. One should observe, first of all, that there are ethnic groups that did not figure in the 1992 census (like the Albanians or Italians), but who occupied a parliamentary seat for several legislatures. Other less numerous groups, such as the Armenians, Croats, Jews or Greeks, manage to rally around the flag and gather much more votes than in the case of the official census data. Indeed, if one were to build the calculus on pure mathematics, even more bizarre results might be observed: Armenians got 551% of the votes of the community, the Croats 151%, the Jews 146%, the Greeks 111%. But cases even stranger are the ones of the Albanians with 1.050%, the Macedonians with 1.402% and the Ruthenians, with 1.117% (see Table 2). All these three groups met with internal conflicts and also with contestations from within and outside their rank and file: Oana Manolescu was accused that she does not even speak Albanian, Vasile Savu was contested not only by the Romanian Macedonians but also by the Republic of Macedonia, whereas Gheorghe Firczak turned from Hungarian into Ruthenian in 2000 and was contested by the entire opposition. It is also very probable that these groups have been over-motivated and the results confirm Deets's theory<sup>3</sup>, according to which there might be a logical explanation between the size of the minority

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<sup>1</sup> *Legislație privind alegerile parlamentare...* cit., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Steven DEETS, *art. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

and the total number of received votes. With the exception of the Hungarian minority, the bigger the minority is, the lower the percentage of voters in favour of that organization. The logic is that it does not make any difference if the German Democratic Forum, the Rroma Party or the Lipovans' Russians Community receive 7 000 or 20 000 votes, since they shall receive a parliamentary seat anyhow, and since the 2002 census data do not show any ethnic group to exceed 70 000 people (with the exception of the Rroma) it is less probable that these would pass the electoral threshold in a "natural" manner. And it is also a confirmation of the fact that the hopes from June 2004 regarding renunciation to the ethnic vote still do not have any real basis.

The oddest example refers to the organizations that claim to represent the Italian minority: from six in 1996, they were two in 2000 and three in 2004, while this minority was not even mentioned in the 1992 census. However, the group did have a political representative, although a highly contested one, since 1996. The fact that the majority of Italians are concentrated in one city (for example, Iași) merely fuels the suspicion that the ethnic entrepreneurs only form ethnic parties in order to obtain a parliamentary seat. It also the case of other groups, who receive "concentrated votes": the Bulgarians in București and Botoșani, the Macedonians in Hunedoara, the Russians in Tulcea, the Poles in Suceava, the Germans in Sibiu, the Tatars in Constanța, the Armenians in București, Iași and Constanța, the Croats in Caraș, the Serbs in Timiș and Caraș. The increasing numbers of these representatives (13 in 1992, 16 in 1996, 19 in 2000 and 18 in 2004) come to support this supposition. Another explanation to this increased number of ethnic organizations is the fact that some of the minorities used to constitute a single (common) ethnic party<sup>1</sup>, namely the Turks/Tatars (who were the first to separate, in 1990), the Serbs/Croats (the latter withdrawing from the party and founding their own organization at the beginning of 1992) and the Czechs/Slovaks (who apparently split after the visit to Romania of the Czech President, Vaclav Havel). In the first two cases the situation is by now quite clear, and each of the four minorities involved have their own organization and political representative in the parliament (actually, there are three or four organizations representing the Turks and one the Tatars, one representing the Serbs, and two the Croats – in this latter case, it is even more spectacular that Mihai Radan managed to gather enough extra-votes to surpass his newly-born challenger, the Croatians' Democratic Union in Romania, who also got over 7 000 votes). The Czech/Slovak case is more complicated though. The Democratic Union of the Czechs and Slovaks in Romania (UDSCR) was founded in 1990, and presented itself as a strong and serious party during the elections that were held during that year and in 1992. Apparently, the smaller Czech minority has been overshadowed by the higher number of Slovaks, which led to a split in 1996, and to the creation of the Czechs' Union in Romania (UCR). Since the former common organization refused to change its name, on the grounds that it still had ethnic Czechs among its ranks, UCR could not be parliamentary represented in the 2000-2004 legislature (although it had managed to pass the electoral threshold for ethnic minorities), since the Constitution and the Electoral Law stipulate that only one ethnic party can represent a minority. Since the legislative provisions did not change in 2004 (on the contrary, the conditions for enrolling in elections became even more demanding – such as gathering signatures from 15% of the members of

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<sup>1</sup> Ciprian-Călin ALIONESCU, *art. cit.*, p. 69.

the ethnic group, according to the census figures), the Czechs' representatives gave up running in the elections, since there was no chance for them to obtain a separate MP seat.

The explanation might also lie in the dispute for the resources that entitles one ethnic group to a parliamentary position; it is the case of the Turks, the Macedonians, the Bulgarians, the Italians, the Poles and the Croatians. Under these circumstances, the ethnic groups have nine new MPs.

Furthermore, the Romanian law generates a basic theoretical question about fairness, in spite of the good intentions that support this type of positive discrimination. For example, all the ethnic minorities (with the exception of UDMR) received less than 37 000 votes and obtained a parliamentary seat, whereas parties such as PNȚCD (with 188 268 votes) or PER (with 73 001 votes) received none. However, one could argue that one's identity as an ethnic minority is more important than that of a Christian Democrat or a Green (or of other parties that may represent one's interests), because in a way they cannot represent minorities. Eventually, one could admit that many political elites, as do average voters, might think in ethnic terms – considerations that involve, however, pragmatism rather than liberal rights.

**Table 2**

*Results Obtained by the Ethnic Parties/Organizations in Romania  
at the November 26<sup>th</sup> 2000 and November 28<sup>th</sup> 2004 General Elections  
(in Bold-italic the Groups that Obtained An MP Seat)*

Ethnic Party/Organization	No. of valid expressed votes on November 26 <sup>th</sup> 2000	No. of valid expressed votes on November 28 <sup>th</sup> 2004	% from the ethnic group in November 2004	1992 Census	2002 Census
<b><i>The League of Albanians Association</i></b> The Albanians' Cultural League	<b>10 453</b> 7 798	<b>5 011</b> –	1.050%	Not figuring	<b>477</b>
<b><i>Armenians' Union in Romania</i></b>	<b>21 302</b>	<b>9 810</b>	551%	<b>2 023</b>	<b>1 780</b>
Bulgarian Union from Banat The Bulgarian Cultural Association	<b>20 085</b> 8 092	<b>15 283</b> <b>6 240</b>	190%	<b>9 935</b>	<b>8 025</b>
The "Bratsvo" Bulgarians' Community in Romania	5 923	<b>4 065</b>			
The Union of "Pavlicheni" Bulgarians in Romania	497	–			
<b><i>The Democratic Union of the Slovaks and Czechs in Romania</i></b> The Czechs' Union in Romania	<b>5 686</b> 1 539	<b>5 950</b> –	34%	<b>20 672</b>	<b>17 226</b>
<b><i>Croatians' Union in Romania</i></b> The Democratic Union of the Croatians in Romania	<b>11 084</b> 2 059	<b>10 331</b> <b>7 769</b>	151%	<b>4 180</b>	<b>6 807</b>
The Democratic Leagues of the Croatians in Romania	1 329	–			
<b><i>The Greek Union in Romania</i></b> The Greek Community – Iași	<b>15 007</b> 2 072	<b>7 161</b> –	111%	<b>3 897</b>	<b>6 472</b>
The Greek Community – Prahova	1 992	–			
The Elpis Greek Community – Constanța	449	–			
<b><i>The Jewish Federations Community in Romania</i></b>	<b>12 629</b>	<b>8 449</b>	146%	<b>9 107</b>	<b>5 785</b>



Ethnic Party/Organization	No. of valid expressed votes on November 26 <sup>th</sup> 2000	No. of valid expressed votes on November 28 <sup>th</sup> 2004	% from the ethnic group in November 2004	1992 Census	2002 Census
<i>The German Democratic Forum in Romania</i>	40 844	36 166	60%	119 436	59 764
The League of the Italian Communities in Romania	16 266	–		Not figuring	3 288
The Italian Community in Romania – Iași	21263	5 181			
<i>Italians' Association in Romania RoAsIt</i>		6 168	187%		
The Slavic Macedonians Association in Romania	8 809	9 595		6 999	695
<i>Macedonians' Association in Romania</i>	–	9 750	1.402%		
Poles' Union in Romania	5 055	–		4 247	3 559
<i>"Dom Polski" – Bucharest Poles' Union in Romania</i>	1 619	5 473	153%		
The Cultural Union Association of Poles in Romania	–	5 159			
<i>Roma's Party</i>	71 786	56 076	11%	409 723	535 140
The Christian Centre of Roma in Romania	12 171	–			
<i>The Lipoveni Russians' Community</i>	11 558	10 562	30%	38 688	35 791
<i>The Cultural Union of the Ruthenians in Romania</i>	6 942	2 871	1.117%	350	257
<i>The Serbs' Union in Romania</i>	8 784	6 643	30%	29 080	22 561
<i>The Democratic Union of The Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania</i>	10 380	6 452	27%	24 649	23 935
<i>The Turkish Democratic Union in Romania</i>	6 675	7 715	24%	29 533	32 098
The Turkish Community in Romania	3 953	–			
Ethnic Turks' Association	–	7 396			
The Muslim Turkish Union in Romania	–	6 527			
<i>The Ukrainians' Union in Romania</i>	9 404	10 888	18%	66 483	61 098
The Democratic Union of the Ukrainians in Romania	5 843	–			
The General Union of the Associations of the "Huțul" Ethnic Group in Romania	1 225	–	–	Not figuring	Not figuring

The high number of MPs representing minorities in Romania (with the exception of the Hungarian one) and the procedures through which they are elected were the subject of media criticism. It is true that in a country that counts 485 MPs (anyway, far too many when compared with the size of the population), 18 ethnic minority representatives might raise a question mark. The answer lies in the voting behaviour of their parliamentary group<sup>1</sup>, which was considered, with no exception, since 1990, the safest ally of any government, always voting in its favour, according to the protocols. Consequently, all the post-1989 governments were interesting

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

in maintaining (and even increasing) the political representation of the ethnic minorities through positive discrimination. The 2000-2004 PSD government made no exception to the rule, especially since its position was not as secure as the party claimed it to be, at least in the beginning of the legislature. On the other hand, the minority MPs probably did not want to endanger their presence in the legislative body – especially since a single amendment in the Electoral Law might have severely reduced (and for some of the group even put an end to the political representation through very drastic conditions). In the case of the smaller ethnic group it was also better to find solutions to their claims and problems through negotiations rather than through arguments with the government, in spite of the accusations from the media and civil society of “collaborationism”. What is clear is that many of the voters for ethnic parties such as Albanians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Italians, Poles, Ruthenians or even “Macedonians”, for different reasons, do not actually belong to the minority which they voted, as one could see above.

As far as UDMR is concerned, the party still represents the Hungarian minority in the Parliament. In spite of the pessimistic predictions<sup>1</sup>, UDMR obtained slightly more than 6% for both chambers, a similar result with the one of the previous elections. The diminished percentage could be explained with the decrease of approximately 200 000 of the Hungarian population (a drop of 11.7% since 1992) either through an increased rate of mortality, a decreased birth rate, as well as through emigration to either Hungary or Western European countries. The phenomenon characterises the Romanian society as a whole (for instance, the Romanian population decreased with almost one million – which means around 5% – since 1992, due to the same factors; the most drastic diminution is known by the German minority, with a drop of almost 50% caused by immigration to Germany and Austria) only that in the case of the minorities the effects are amplified by the relatively small size of the group. The Roma minority, explainable by the traditionally high birth rate of this group and an increase of its self-awareness, gives the only exception.

The figures in Table 3 show not only the decrease in rough numbers of the pro-UDMR votes; this fact is also reflected in a decrease of the number of parliamentary seats: from 12 to 10 in the Senate, and from 27 to 22 in the Chamber of Deputies. According to the statements of several UDMR leaders<sup>2</sup>, UCM’s participation on the AP lists did not influence the results, the decrease being actually caused by the low turnout rate of the Hungarian electorate. The number of votes and the territorial distribution shows that nearly all Hungarian electors support UDMR in the parliamentary elections, confirming the results of the pre-electoral polls (which credited the level of support within the Hungarian population at about 85%). It is for the first time though that UDMR faces competitors in general elections, even if both challengers had to enrol on the lists of other parties. This move to which UCM had to resort was denounced by this formation as a the ultimate evidence for the lack of freedom and democracy. The UCM representatives considered that UDMR made its way to the Parliament on the margin of democracy, and with the help of

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<sup>1</sup> The electoral threshold is 5%. In several public opinion polls, ordered by different organizations and performed by professional pollsters, UDMR was not exceeding this limit: CURS survey, September 6<sup>th</sup> – 5%, INSOMAR survey, September 22-25<sup>th</sup> – 5%, INSOMAR computer assisted interviews, October 4-5<sup>th</sup> – 5%, ISS survey, October 7-10<sup>th</sup> – 4.47%, CURS survey, October 14-20<sup>th</sup> – 5% (data extracted from <http://www.politic.ro/sondaje.php>).

<sup>2</sup> *Divers News Bulletin*, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

the incumbent government<sup>1</sup> (i.e. PSD). However, the elections results show that there is actually no clear relationship between the party's inclination to collaborate with any type of government on one hand, and the support granted by its members on the other.

**Table 3**

*Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) –  
Chamber of Deputies and Senate, 1990-2004*

	Votes – Senate	% of Votes – Senate	Seats – Senate	% of Seats – Senate	Votes – Chamber	% of Votes – Chamber	Seats – Chamber	% of Seats – Chamber
1990 – Elections	1 004 353	7.20	12	10.08	991 601	7.23	29	7.29
1992 – Elections	831 469	7.58	12	8.39	811 290	7.46	27	8.23
1996 – Elections	837 760	6.82	11	7.69	812 228	6.64	25	7.29
2000 – Elections	751 310	6.90	12	8.57	736 863	6.80	27	7.83
<b>2004 – Elections</b>	<b>637 109</b>	<b>6.23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7.14</b>	<b>628 125</b>	<b>6.17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6.72</b>

Source: Pavel CÂMPEANU, "Electoral Research in Romania", in Hans Dieter KLINGEMANN, Ekkehard MOOCHMANN, Kenneth NEWTON (eds.), *Elections in Central and Eastern Europe – The First Wave*, Sigma, Berlin, 2000 + calculations of the author for the 2000 and 2004 elections.

On the whole, UDMR managed to do well in the 2004 elections, in spite of the splinters that did not exist four years ago. These results might be also explained through the fact that Hungarian voters started to perceive in reality the positive effects of decentralization, mirrored in the increased funding and support granted to the local communities.

## POST-ELECTORAL NEGOTIATIONS

After November 28<sup>th</sup> 2004, UDMR started the negotiations for a very likely participation in government. Within this framework, UDMR seemed to be more and more interested to actively promote several of its campaign themes: autonomy and decentralization. The experience from the previous legislatures (especially since 1996) shows that the minority representatives placed themselves on the side of the government each time important motions or laws were voted. That is why their support was important. But not all the "minorities" sold their votes cheap.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The results of the elections, in which none of the two main competitors (the National Union PSD+PUR on one hand, and the D.A. Alliance – PNL-PD – on the other) managed to obtain the majority, led to an increased importance of the votes of the ethnic minorities representatives, either Hungarian or any other ethnic group. Even one week after the elections, the leader of the minorities' parliamentary group, Varujan Pambuccian, avoided a clear-cut answer, whereas his colleagues expressed diverging opinions regarding the collaboration with the two main political actors in the Parliament.

UDMR wanted to hold office, but the lack of a clear majority and the uncertainty of the results of the second round of the presidential elections made it look undecided; because of this lack of firmness it is accused by the media of bluffing, of trying "to force the hand", and of playing double games. One week after the first round of elections, UDMR starts negotiations with the PSD+PUR Union, apparently convinced by the fact that this is the only formation able to form the government that could be backed up by a parliamentary majority. UDMR's requests through negotiations aim not only at local autonomy and decentralisation (e.g. the Covasna prefecture is offered to PSD in return for the chair of the County Council), but also even a vice-premiership position and several other ministerial positions (calculated on the basis of an algorithm). All these in return for supporting PSD's candidate, Adrian Năstase, in the second round of the presidential election.

Although the Hungarian electorate who voted in the second round (although in a much lower degree than in the first round) did in fact respect the recommendations of their political leaders, and voted for Năstase, the incumbent prime-minister lost in front of the D.A. Alliance's candidate, Traian Băsescu. Even if for a few days a cohabitation was envisaged (between a D.A. President on one hand, and a PSD+PUR+UDMR government on the other), all these predictions were shattered by a blunder of the still functioning president of the country, Ion Iliescu, to pardon the coal miners leader Miron Cozma, imprisoned for 18 years for undermining the state power. Even during the electoral campaign, Béla Markó, UDMR's presidential candidate, had declared that he refuses to take into consideration the possibility of pardoning Cozma, characterised this as a hypothetical gesture (at that time) with a purely electoral character, and condemned it as such<sup>1</sup>. On December 17<sup>th</sup> he defined the pardoning as "stuttering", and finally mentioned the beginning of negotiations with the D.A. Alliance<sup>2</sup>. It was a logical move, since an opposite one would have meant a gesture of discreditation. One week later, the UDMR was a full-rights member in the Government of Romania, having signed a clear protocol with the D.A. Alliance. It obtained the vice-premiership position (Béla Markó – also delegate for the coordination of activities in the fields of culture, education and EU integration), as well as the leadership of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Zsolt Nagy), together with the deputy positions in the Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Management (Laszlo Borbely) and of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce (Iuliu Winkler),

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Național* daily, November 6<sup>th</sup> 2004. This aspect is important not only from the ethical point of view, but also because it represents a proof that Ion Iliescu's gesture during the very last days of his mandate should not have come as a shock to the political body and civil society taken together. A closer look at the central print media dating one a half months before shows that this was a maneuver that (as long as Bela is asked by a journalist about it) was known and calculated before.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Ziua* daily, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

and the Prefectures of the counties Bistrița Năsăud (Janos Szilagy), Maramureș (Gyöngyike Bőndi), Mehedinți, and the county of Covasna (György Ervin – a position that PSD did not want to grant to UDMR).

## CONCLUSION

The Romanian case is very striking, due to its type of representation and to the structure of competition. The fact that UDMR managed to obtain not only a significant parliamentary representation, but also to play a pivotal role between PSD and the D.A. Alliance, granted the leadership of this party a great deal of influence (much more, for instance, than the one enjoyed by the similar party in Slovakia). The interests of the ethnic representatives are mainly linked with the offer of the Government (e.g. linguistic and educational rights), but also to the negotiations regarding autonomy and decentralisation (a task left by the other ethnic parties mainly to UDMR and explainable through the relatively large dimension of the group compared with the rest of the minorities).

We noticed that ethnic parties in general, and the Romanian ones in particular, do not fall completely into the framework of the existing definitions and characteristics of political parties. However, drawing on Katz and Mair<sup>1</sup>, we could consider that the ethnic parties did not begin as integrative organizations (they primarily represent the interest of their own ethnic group, rather than primarily seeking to broaden their appeal to other groups). Also, most of the Romanian ethnic parties often did not begin as electoral organizations, but as pressure groups or cultural organizations; however, over time they sought to place their representatives into the power structures, due to a shift in goal orientation that occurred as the temptation to pursue political power grew (when it became more apparent that the most effective means to influence power relations was to hold office). In order to do this, the Romanian ethnic parties had to make appeals across the borders of their own groups. However, the extent to which they managed to accomplish this goal depended on other factors such as: the institutional rules of the game, the strength of the existing party system, and the structure of the competition.

During the last decade, UDMR started to resemble more and more a genuine political party<sup>2</sup>. For instance, the party placed one senator in each parliamentary committee, based on the professional background of that person, so that it would fit best the profile of the senatorial committee. When compared with the rest of the parties, it managed to maintain its electoral support, a fact that can be explained though more through the ethnic vote and less through a better performance than the rest of the parties<sup>3</sup>. This support is mirrored in the maintenance of the number of MPs who have been elected on the UDMR lists. Moreover, a rough calculation proves that the incumbency rate is approximately 83% for the Senate and 66% for

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<sup>1</sup> Richard S. KATZ and Peter MAIR, *Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy*, Sage, London, 1995, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Zoltan KANTOR and Nandor BARDI, "UDMR și coaliția guvernamentală (1996-2000)", in *Sfera Politicii*, no. 97-98, 2001, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

the Chamber of Deputies<sup>1</sup>, which means that the party is experiencing a professionalization of its representatives at the parliamentary level.

These facts come to support the hypothesis of the "cartelisation"<sup>2</sup> of the ethnic parties, and especially of UDMR, which presents several of the features of the cartel party: a relatively diffused level of distribution of politically relevant resources, the fact that politics is regarded as a profession, the basis of party competition needs managerial skills and efficiency, some of the party's resources come from the state, the party gains privileged access to state-regulated channels of communication. The electoral battle is led for better access and control of the state resources. An illustrative example is given by the vote for the Constitution in 2003, when PSD, PNL, PD, UDMR, and the ethnic minorities cartelised in a relatively homogenous political class and voted for a Constitution that guaranteed their long-term interests<sup>3</sup>.

The support granted by UDMR and the rest of the ethnic minorities to the PSD government until 2004 seems to have affected somehow the relationship between the minorities and the rest of the parties. The frictions exist, but they are not unsolvable. If in the case of a "regular" party, participation in government does affect the relation with the voters, in the case of the ethnic parties the participation in government should be considered also from the point of view of the relation between the other parties and their own voters. Because the electorates, the party cadres, and the members are socially heterogeneous, this aspect might lead to factionalism and tensions, when the ethnic parties are asked to support certain governmental socio-economic policies in return for institutional reforms in the benefit of the ethnic minorities. A more drastic measure might lead to losing the voters since parties could be punished for participating in government<sup>4</sup>. In the case of Romania, it was clear that this participation, or the parliamentary support and sharing the responsibility, together with the compromises and bargains regarding certain less popular socio-economic measures, did not lead to the loss of support from the electorate of the ethnic minorities.

However, it seems that UDMR and its smaller scale partners have reached a crossroads. If they continue to focus on their traditional voters, their political future will be limited to the role of "balancing the scales", which could be a risky position. Yet, another alternative may be no less risky since, if the emphasis on minority rights disappears from their manifesto, the ethnic voters might lose the clear motivation to vote for the only party that emphasizes their needs. In terms of needs, the hope to reconcile the Hungarians' request for a higher degree of institutional autonomy with the majority's apprehension of the fragmentation of the state sovereignty still stands as challenge for the representatives of the ethnic minorities. On the other hand, scholars like Stroschein<sup>5</sup> consider that the Romanian ethnic par-

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<sup>1</sup> Calculations of the author based on the data contained in *Cartea Albastră a Democrației. Ungăid al instituțiilor publice centrale din România*, Asociația Pro-Democrația, București, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> For more details see Richard S. KATZ and Peter MAIR, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-25.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă. Politică și societate în România postcomunistă*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Nemira, București, 2004, pp. 273-274.

<sup>4</sup> In Western Europe, for instance, the Basque and Catalan parties have avoided this dilemma by refusing ministerial responsibility, whereas the Italian Lega Nord did not gain any sorts of benefits after participating in government.

<sup>5</sup> Sherill STROSCHEIN, "Measuring Ethnic Party Success in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine", in *Problems of Post-communism*, vol. 48, no. 4, July-August 2001, p. 68.

ties demonstrate the highest degree of success when compared with their correspondents in other Central and Eastern European countries. It is true that they demonstrate a lower degree of success in the counties where they are either the majority or the minority, and higher levels of party success in counties with split demographics.

With all the deficiencies, there are several advantages of the political representation system in Romania: first of all, it guarantees a broad representation of ethnic minorities, and secondly it is quiet easy to administer (since it does not require any supplementary efforts or procedures when organising elections). One of the biggest disadvantages is that it starts from the presumption that ethnic minorities are unitary actors, while in reality the system encourages a tough competition for resources between representatives belonging to the same ethnic minority group. This is also fuelled by the vague provisions in the Constitution and the ones dealing with the Council for National Minorities (which, in the opinion of many ethnic representatives, is only a tool of equalising the otherwise extremely different "weights" of the ethnic groups and turning them into servile instruments in the hand of any government). Other problems lie in the representation of splitting minorities or non-existing minorities (such as "Macedonians") or in the fact that individuals claiming to represent a certain ethnic group are not actually the bearers of that ethnicity.

However, even with its drawbacks, the Romanian system is preferable to the ones in which the political representation of ethnic minorities is neglected or even forbidden.

## ANNEX

*Names and Acronyms of the Political Parties Used in the Text*

Romanian	English	Acronym
Alianța "Dreptate și Adevăr" PNL-PD	"Truth And Justice" Alliance	D.A. PNL-PD
Ațiunea Populară	Popular Action	A.P.
Partidul Democrat	Democrat Party	PD
Partidul Ecologist din România	The Green Party	PER
Forța Democrată	The Democratic Force	FDR
Partidul Național Liberal	National Liberal Party	PNL
Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat	The National Peasant Party Christian Democrat	PNȚCD
Partidul Noua Generație	New Generation Party	PNG
Partidul România Mare	Greater Romania Party	PRM
Partidul Social Democrat	The Social Democrat Party	PSD
Partidul Umanist din România (Social Liberal)	The Humanist Party in Romania (Social Liberal)	PUR-SL
Uniunea pentru Reconstrucția României	The Union for Romania's Reconstruction	URR
Asociația Liga Albanezilor din România	The League of Albanians Association	AABR
Liga Culturală a Albanezilor din România	The Albanians' Cultural League	LCAR
Uniunea Armenilor din România	Armenians' Union in Romania	UAR
Uniunea Bulgară din Banat	Bulgarian Union From Banat	UBB
Asociația Culturală Bulgară din România	The Bulgarian Cultural Association	ACBR
Comunitatea "Bratsvo" a Bulgarilor din România	The "Bratsvo" Bulgarians' Community in Romania	"BRATSVO"
Uniunea Democratică a Slovacilor și Cehilor din România	The Democratic Union of The Slovaks and Czechs in Romania	U-SLOVACI
Uniunea Cehilor din România	The Czechs' Union in Romania	UCR
Uniunea Croaților din Romania	Croatians' Union in Romania	UCR
Uniunea Democrată a Croaților în România	The Democratic Union of the Croatians' in Romania	UDCR
Liga Democrată a Croaților din România	The Democratic League of the Croatians in Romania	LDCR
Uniunea Elenă din România	The Greek Union in Romania	UER
Comunitatea Elenă – Iași	The Greek Community – Iași	
Comunitatea Elenă – Prahova	The Greek Community – Prahova	
Comunitatea Elenă Elpis – Constanța	The Elpis Greek Community – Constanța	



Romanian	English	Acronym
Federația Comunităților Evreiești din România	The Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania	F EVREI
Forumul Democrat al Germanilor din România	The German Democratic Forum in Romania	FDGR
Liga Comunităților Italiene	The League of the Italian Communities in Romania	LCI
Comunitatea Italiană din România – Iași	The Italian Community in Romania – Iași	C ITALIANĂ
Asociația Italienilor din România RoAsIt	Italians' Association in Romania RoAsIt	ROASIT
Asociația Democratică a Macedonenilor Slavi din România	The Slavic Macedonians Democratic Association in Romania	AD-MACEDONENI
Asociația Culturală a Macedonenilor din România	Macedonians' Cultural Association in Romania	AC-MACEDONENI
Uniunea Polonezilor din România	Poles' Union in Romania	UPR
Uniunea Polonezilor din România "Dom Polski" – București	"Dom Polski" – Bucharest Poles' Union in Romania	DOM POLSKI
Asociația Uniunea Culturală a Polonezilor din România	The Cultural Union Association of Poles in Romania	AUCPR
Partida Romilor Social Democrată din România	Roma's Party	ROMII
Centrul Creștin al Romilor din România	The Christian Centre of Roma in Romania	CCRR
Comunitatea Rușilor Lipoveni din România	The Lipoveni Russians' Community	C-RUȘI LIPOVENI
Uniunea Culturală a Rutenilor din România	The Cultural Union of the Ruthenians in Romania	U-RUTENI
Uniunea Sârbilor din România	The Serbs' Union in Romania	U-SÂRBI
Uniunea Democrată a Tătarilor Turco-Musulmani din România	The Democratic Union of the Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania	UDTTR
Uniunea Democrată Turcă din România	The Turkish Democratic Union in Romania	U-TURCĂ
Comunitatea Turcă din România	The Turkish Community in Romania	CTR
Asociația Etnicilor Turci	Ethnic Turks' Association	AET
Uniunea Turcă Musulmană din România	The Muslim Turkish Union in Romania	UTM
Uniunea Ucrainenilor din România	The Ukrainians' Union in Romania	UUR
Uniunea Democrată a Ucrainenilor din România	The Democratic Union of the Ukrainians in Romania	UDUR