

**Csaba Borboly**

**It is time for public  
self-analysis**

The present article was published in the daily newspaper of Krónika in Hungarian language on 27th of June 2014 (online can be accessed through <http://kronika.ro/szempony/borbo-ly-csaba-ideje-van-a-kozeleti-onvizsgalatnak>), as well as on the website of Transindex.ro: <http://reply.transindex.ro/?cikk=384>), and contains some reflexions upon the debates emerged around the subject of autonomy in Hungarian press in Romania, being a summary of the Hungarian version. In my opinion, instead of debates we need and we have to concentrate on working, since we do not have to be afraid of assimilation but of the consequences caused by emigration.

### It is time for public self-analysis

In the recent period, consumers of media are hardly able to keep up with the events happening in Seklerland, the number of all kind of public actions increasing day by day: being either about the legal processes launched for the unity, autonomy of Seklerland, for improving the Sekler people's life, or gathering of signatures. During the recent years, as county council president or as the president of DAHR's local territorial organization in Miercurea Ciuc, I did not get involved in organizing such events since I have been driven by the fact that people do not expect to launch legal processes and so on, but concrete things. For example the ones which concern the endeavour to offer help for local farmers and producers; to support the publication of a school book for strengthening the Sekler youth's identity, the program aimed at helping small villages; and last but not least the community work program.

It is impossible to ride two horses at the same time, as the saying tells us. The act of petitioning, actioning at law is a sort of public attitude, a role-taking, which has its place and role in public life. For this there are the political parties (The Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania – abbreviated as EMNP in Hungarian - or the Hungarian Civic Party - MPP), political advocacies (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania - DAHR), or the civil organizations being interested in public life (Szekler National Council - SZNT). However, local public administrative institutions, as the county council or local councils are, do not have this kind of role and activity sphere. And if we embark upon a deeper level then a difference has to be emphasized between the role of DAHR as the organization having parliamentary representation and other parties and civil organizations in public life, which are situated out from the parliament.

### We have to work

It is essential as more perspectives should be heard and the roles should not be mixed, since doing so, our interests' representation will be set back. Of course, there may occur such situations when the local and county level councils – taking into consideration their rights given by the law – are forced to petition or protest, for example against an unfavourable regionalization plan of the government. However, the role of such institutions concerns the issues related to everyday life of people and not else. I have said several times to the SZNT's leaders that in the public life of Transylvania, Seklerland, everyone should do with maximal efficiency what their duties are, and not dealing with what others should do.

I have been the only DAHR politician, having leader function, who was publicly beside the Hungarian collaboration and doing so when this issue was at stake, since the EMNP and MPP political parties had a stronger influence than now have in the political field. A role-sharing has to be decided in the Hungarian public life in Transylvania. Even more I ascertain that the foundation of the Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania and the Hungarian Civic Party were a boosting and renewing influence on the DAHR.

Thus, it is need for actions at law, for petitions, but working is also a great demand. We can say anything, we can scold the regional structure of Romania and everything related to it, but we have to admit and recognize that the greatest danger on preserving our national community is threatened by the emigration of youth, intellectuals. An interesting issue can be of how it is the current territorial division and after longer debates, how it will be, but it is totally regardless for such young members of the society (as well for their parents and grandparents), who after unsuccessfully graduating the school and not having found a job after trying for several months, order the flying ticket to London. In every corner of Romania, youth is emigrating, but this tendency – at the moment – is a little bit at a smaller level in Seklerland than in other regions.

The reasons are well known, basically the perspective of promising a better living than in homeland is the main factor which makes the youth to take this not-so-easy decision. If the adherents of petitioning and actions at law, are asked regarding the proposals for changing the current situation, their immediate answer would be South-Tyrol, where it is known that the fence is made from sausage. From their view, it is logic that



owned to some miracle a submitted autonomy status will be a publicised legal regulation in the Romanian Official Gazette, and then here too the fence will be made from sausage and everything will be great. Of course, the dreamers three meters above the clouds forget that South-Tyrol is situated in such a region (between North-Italy and Austria), which is one of the most prosperous regions of Europe since the Roman Empire, where small entrepreneurs have a fruitful activity, producing on the European market for centuries. Moreover, there also count the facts that such as collectivization or socialism did not take place. In addition, in this region if the farmers are mowing down the grass, then do not have to transport it immediately driven by the fear that if leaving it someone may steal it.

The economic possibilities of South-Tyrol, North-Italy are similar to Seklerland's, Transylvania's, Romania's possibilities. Their problems are not our problems. I suggest for everyone to make a parallel between the two regions very carefully. The so-highly praised autonomy model of South-Tyrol, treated as a basic reference point is not about economy, but about assuring multilingualism, as well as assuring the possibility to fulfil public functions by the Italian, German, Ladin speaking citizens according to their ethnic proportion. The essence of the South-Tyrol autonomy model lies in the fact of preventing the assimilation of 250 thousand German speaking citizens into the Italian community of 50 million people. It is about this and nothing else. However, we cannot speak about a South-Tyrol economic model, because the neighbouring regions, populated by Italians, are as developed as South-Tyrol itself. Hence, the following question arises: is it for sure that in Seklerland we have to be afraid of assimilation, and accordingly we have to think and follow the South-Tyrol model against assimilation, when based on the last census the rate of Hungarian ethnic people increased in every settlement historically belonging to Seklerland? In our region, as the recent census proves, we cannot speak about the assimilation of Hungarians into the Romanian society, maybe the situation is vice versa.

### A model against emigration is necessary

Which is a positive thing: Sekler people are not so easy to assimilate, at least not here in Seklerland. It is now for one thousand year that this ethnic group is living in one community block. We do not have to be afraid of assimilation; however we really have to be concerned about the population decrease caused by emigration. Thus, in my opinion, we should not think about models against assimilation but for the benefit of creating new jobs too, we should think about models against emigration. In this regard, we can learn from South-Tyrol indeed, as well from every Austrian, Italian, Swiss or French regions, situated at the foot of the Alps, who are without no exception in a good situation as concerns the economy structure developed on family and small enterprises. In all of these regions, which is the most important is that there are economic autonomies, meaning that not the farmer, the entrepreneur, the citizen is for the state – as here in our region –, but vice versa. For this very reason, in Valle D'Aosta region, which borders Austria, France and Italy – and it is the twinned county of Harghita County too – if the local farmer has milk surplus, then makes cheese out of it, puts in his or her car and transports it to a collection centre, which is not else but an abandoned mine. Here every cheese prepared on the same recipe, is dried in supports made from wood and afterwards are sold throughout Europe. I have been in such a cheese-drying mine and there is nothing magic about it: the cheese is dried as used to be for centuries. There is a great demand for these products, which are sold at a very high price. Moreover, the farmers do not have to tackle with selling issues; this is resolved by a selling cooperative and thus they do not have to give the surplus to the fattening pig, do not have to deal with storing and drying, they have only one thing to do: they have to milk the cow, prepare the cheese based on the given recipe and transport it to the collection centre. In my opinion, this is autonomy, since the essence of autonomy is the multiplicity of independent family existences.

My trouble is that the attention is distracted from the essence by the appeals, petitions of the SZNT, appearing from time to time. Our key to our autonomy, to our preservation is given by the enterprises creating and preserving jobs, families who are raising their children, teachers who are



preparing the young members of the society to life, public officers who are working for a small salary but having big responsibility, and not those, who are visiting the TVs, radios from morning to evening with the actual autonomy concepts.

Coming back to the cheese-drying mine, could this be realized in our land? In the minute we would open such, 15 authorities would rush on us and give serious penalties. And our main problem is then: what about in South-Tyrol? In my view, not this is our main concern but similarly to other post-communist countries in our region there are plenty of duties to be done yet within the perspectives of the state and citizen, state and enterprise relation. In this respect, at the moment indeed there is a quite low level of the citizens', enterprises' autonomy. The problem is not just this, but also that 25 years is a very short period for learning the democratic debate culture, especially in such sensitive issues as the ethnical coexistence. These kind of debates, in the majority of cases, are resulting in a deaf dialogue, thus in monologues.

There are no miracles, neither the South-Tyrol autonomy, nor other models in itself are not solutions for our problems. It is wiser if instead of waiting for miracles to happen, we are concentrating upon working, on things we have to do, since no one else will do it instead of us. If we are just dealing with petitioning and actioning at law, then we are just milling around in one place, taking the energy away instead of concentrating upon making our destiny better with community work and collaboration.

### **The politics has exhausted its reserves**

In the past 25 years, but we may also go back centuries too, it was proven that from the perspective of the Hungarian ethnic people's preservation in Transylvania, the determinative organizational structures are our historical churches. I see not only in the political life but also generally in the everyday life that the increasing problems, which are getting more and more complex, are due to stepping away from the basic teachings of the church. The politics has exhausted its reserves. The support and the voting participation on behalf of Hungarian people show a decreasing tendency, thus, the politics is losing space. In order to stop this process, I see here the solution for restoring the increasing tendency of DAHR, for the advocacy representation of the Hungarian people's interests. The list of outputs of DAHR realized the past 25 years, is considerably the following: receiving back schools, forests, lands and rights put into the law. But in order to use these rights, possibilities, in order to efficiently operate educational, social and healthcare institutions, to divide the small fish and bread as to everyone get a part of it, is such a task, which requires a stronger collaboration building of DAHR with the historic churches. I mean that the historic churches have to be involved more and better in solving public problems, because it cannot be done with the lack of love, and the church is the institution of love (<http://www.kronika.ro/archivum/offline/cikk/151133/szeretet-nelkul-nem-megy>).

In the majority of our settlements a local DAHR representation does not function, but church council, priests are in all Hungarian populated villages. In more and more places the politics starts to be withdrawn. This has to be acknowledged and politics has to adapt itself to this reality, by thus developing collaborations with the churches. Nowadays, the public politics is full of such subjects which are important mostly for politicians (in majority of cases because of election considerations). The discourse of autonomy is among one of these themes, but it can be said that this receives the greatest attention. I think this is not right, because I believe that the greater part of the Hungarian people in Transylvania have turned away from politics mostly because of this attitude, for the reason why they do not go to vote, because they feel politics does not deal really with their problems. I receive in every day letters describing the hard situation of families getting victims of house mafia, or because of a sudden accident or death, or the loss of the job puts the family in a total loss of faith. The parents and grandparents are always worried about the school studies of their children, such questions concern them as: what will be if our boy finishes school, will he stay at home or he will go abroad, and so on. For such kind of questions the newer and newer autonomy concepts do not give any answers. However, people still require answers and solutions for their problems. For this very reason the duty of politics, of each politician should be to use his or her energies, possibilities for searching concrete solutions for the problems actually concerning people.

For instance, there is the situation of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania. It is not a private university, as a matter of fact functions as a classical Romanian state university, with the difference that the Romanian tax-paying people's children's educational costs are supported by the Hungarian Government. This is not right, it is not a fair thing that the Romanian budget does not finance the Sapientia equally as other state

## It is time for public self-analysis

universities, from which there are 130 in the country. If Sapientia receives the Romanian state support and also the Hungarian, then could become a very competitive higher education institution not only of Transylvania, but also of the whole country. Is this a subject in public speech, are there any articles on this theme? The answer is no.

Mr. Azamfirei, rector, abides by the law what he thinks he should and what not he bypasses the topic by referring to the autonomy of universities. In my perspective, I see that unfortunately this attitude starts to be normal, for a period of time it is yet a topic and then everyone gets resigned to the fact that Mr Azamfirei does not want and then the topic is over. Meanwhile, we tend to forget that while we may look from different perspectives, there are 1 million

Hungarian nationality-voting citizens in Transylvania, with whom we cannot play, mostly those who receive their salary from their paid taxes. Hence, neither Mr. Azamfirei should do, in my opinion. Since 1996, without DAHR there is not a stable government. In each relevant state institution, starting from the Romanian National Bank, the Court of Auditors, to the Board of Supervisors, there are Hungarian members in each of them. Regarding the Constitutional Court, whose role is determinative, there are also Hungarians too. Our influence in the Transylvanian local and regional councils is determinative, still some think that we should deal with the prefects of counties.

We can talk about the draft law on minority cultural autonomy. There is not such a significant Romanian party who would not submit it to the parliament from the perspective of governmental position, however, still it is not in force yet. There is not a meaningful resistance to it, as a matter of fact everyone recognizes that this is important, however slowly will be erased from the agenda.

In Seklerland, at the moment there is cultural autonomy. From our perspective the existence of the related law does not matter so much, however in the peripheries and in regions where the Hungarians are not in majority, where regarding the ethnical proportion, the Hungarian population has a decreasing tendency, this would be highly important.

I could enlist more those public life subjects, which should be mentioned and measures, which should be accordingly taken for the preservation of our national community. However, I see that for a lot of public actors it is more comfortable to have debates on the autonomy subject than to face real problems and challenges. I think that the time has come to look in the mirror, stop scolding at each other and focus on real problems. Let's walk with open eyes and we will see that what is problem in our region, it is also in other regions as well. What we think it is a problem, it is also considered as to be in Banat, Dobrogea, Partium and Bucovina too. Thus, the aim should be to search for solutions together in collaboration, also as regards more rational regional development divisions too. We tend to have debates from the perspective of politics and ideologies, and so tend not dealing with professional arguments, we do not think with the other's head and then we are surprized if anything we put forward is received with total rejection. My writing happened to be considerably long, I do not continue to list my arguments, important is that my goal with the present article is to call the attention on the fact that a growing number of Hungarian people in Transylvania feel that – in my opinion it is right to feel that – politics is not dealing with their problems, but with something else. There are a lot of debates and less is the work; that is how people see the situation. If they see this, then politics should not explain that everything is good and beautiful, but to try to understand the dissatisfaction and substitute the deficiencies.

*(The author of the article is the president of Harghita County Council. The article was published in printed newspaper of the daily Krónika, as well as on online platforms already mentioned, during June 2014).*





