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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH; JANE MESSENGER
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assessment

SUBJECT: ROMANIA'S ETHNIC HUNGARIANS: BIOGRAPHICAL
INFORMATION ON KEY LEADERS AND POLITICIANS

Classified By: POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ROBERT GILCHRIST FOR
REASONS 1.4 B AND D

1. (U) Summary: Romania's ethnic Hungarian party, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, (UDMR) has supported or participated in governing coalitions in Romania since 1996. Post provides below updated biographical information on a dozen key ethnic Hungarians, inside and outside the UDMR, who have an impact on political life and who regularly appear in the press or Embassy reporting. End Summary.

2. (C) Post divides the ethnic Hungarian political class roughly into two groupings: the Moderates, who have taken a gradualist approach toward greater ethnic rights and autonomy for Romania's ethnic Hungarians; and the so-called "Radicals", who seek more rapid reform. Since 1993, the Moderates, led by Bela Marko, have dominated UDMR politics and achieved their goals via cooperative dialogue with incumbent Romanian parties and leaders. The Radicals are divided into many factions, and include many former UDMR members disenchanted with the slow pace of change or lack of opportunities for younger members. Some also seek changes such as nearly complete autonomy for the Szekler land region in Central Transylvania, and a completely segregated education system. Key Radical groups include the National Council of Hungarians in Transylvania (CNMT), the Hungarian Civic Union (UCM), and the National Szeklers' Council (CNS).

3. (U) Post also provides biographic information on two young up-and-coming ethnic Hungarian politicians as well as biographic information on two prominent local leaders in Cluj-Napoca and Maramures County.

THE MODERATES

BELA MARKO: UDMR President and Minister of State

4. (SBU) Bela Marko remains the UDMR's most prominent politician. He has led the party as president since 1993 and served in Parliament since 1990. In December 2004, he was tapped by incoming National Liberal Party (PNL) Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu to serve as a Minister of State, one of the three senior "Vice Premier" positions in the government. Marko's official responsibilities as Minister of State are for Culture, Education, and European Integration. In real terms, however, his placement in this senior slot was intended to reinforce politically the UDMR's position within the ruling coalition.

5. (C) Known for his seemingly perpetually calm demeanor, Marko has focused the UDMR's efforts on working with the established political parties rather than against them. Indeed, when he was first elected as president of UDMR, he stated in an interview that moderates such as himself have the "same goals" as more radical ethnic Hungarians. The difference, he said, lay only in the means used to pursue those goals. He subsequently led his UDMR on a path toward greater cooperation with other Romanian parties, effectively defining the UDMR's role as a centrist "dealmaker" party tipping coalition majorities to the left or right. Over time, this strategy has paid off, on issues such as the creation of separate Hungarian language schools, the restitution of important Hungarian religious properties, and the use of native languages other than Romanian in courts and other official settings.

6. (C) Marko has also thus far kept more radical factions of the ethnic Hungarian movement in check, although not without strong dissent from vocal opponents such as Reformed Bishop Laszlo Tokes or Zsolt Silagyi (see below). He has refused to enter a dialogue with the Hungarian Civil Union (UCM), a Radical faction within UDMR. He and those around him have repeatedly expressed concern that by seeking to run its own candidates against the UDMR, the UCM risks dividing the ethnic Hungarians vote. Such a division would make it difficult for any ethnic Hungarian party to meet the five percent threshold necessary for entering Parliament. Marko's grouping in the UDMR has repeatedly taken measures to prevent the UCM from running as a party, such as successfully challenging the validity of a petition the UCM circulated in order to run as a party

in June 2004 elections. UDMR contested that some of the over 40,000 signatures on the UCM's petition were not valid. The constitutional court ruled in UDMR's favor.

7. (C) Personal relations between Marko and Tariceanu are good, according to Embassy contacts. This is despite the fact that -- as is the case with many in UDMR -- Marko is known to prefer working with PSD-led governments. Prior to the November/December 2004 national elections, the UDMR under Marko's leadership had negotiated a planned coalition with the PSD. However, after PNL-PD presidential candidate Traian Basescu's surprise victory in the fall 2004 elections, and the latter's appointment of Tariceanu as PM, UDMR insiders tell us Marko saw no other option than to enter new negotiations with the PNL-PD. This fit squarely with his philosophy that the party can achieve success best through incremental change and through cooperating with both political blocs.

8. (U) Prior to assuming the leadership of the UDMR, Marko was a writer, poet, and the Editor-in-Chief of a Hungarian language literary magazine. He was born on September 8, 1951 in Targul Secuiesc, Romania. He is married with three children. He speaks Hungarian, French and Romanian, and has basic knowledge of English and Russian. (An interpreter is required for English.)

LASZLO BORBELY:

Minister Delegate for Public Administration

9. (C) Lazlo Borbely is one of the three powerful, behind-the-scenes moderates within UDMR, commonly called "the Neptun Three." Together with Gyorgy Frunda (see below), and Gyorgy Tokay, he held a secret meeting in the seaside town of Neptun in 1993 with the PDSR party, the current day Social Democratic Party (PSD). At that meeting, he negotiated the UDMR's first cooperate dialogue with a mainstream Romanian political party. Leaders of the Radical movements (see below) frequently point to this initial cooperation with the PSD as a form of betrayal.

10. (C) Borbely is known for his affinity with PSD leaders, and for his strong organizational and negotiating skills. He was the key ethnic Hungarian architect of the UDMR-PSD cooperation protocols, signed annually between 2000 and 2004 while PSD was in power. During this period, the UDMR supported in Parliament the minority PSD government in parliament in exchange for incremental concessions provided in the protocols. Borbely was outspokenly disappointed with

the surprise victory of Basescu's presidential election in November 2004. He did not hesitate to inform Embassy staff the day following Basescu's victory that UDMR would continue its cooperation with the PSD party, although just a few weeks later the UDMR would join the coalition led by the Liberal-Democratic (PNL-PD) Alliance.

11. (SBU) Borbely has been a Chamber of Deputies member of Mures County since 1990. In addition to being a Cabinet member, Borbely also serves as Executive Chairman of UDMR, the second most position within the party.

12. (U) Borbely was born on March 26, 1954, in Targu Mures. He graduated from the Institute of Economic Sciences in Timisoara followed by post-graduate studies at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. He is married with one daughter. He speaks English, Romanian, and Hungarian.

GYORGY FRUNDA: Senator, Moderate UDMR Leader

13. (SBU) Many would consider Gyorgy Frunda "the most European" among UDMR leaders. He was a prominent member of Romania's parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe (COE) and has strong ties with EU Parliamentarians. He is charismatic and many UDMR members characterize him as the best speaker within the party. His primary professed goal has been to "ensure Western European rights for ethnic Hungarians, and other minorities." He is currently the chair of the Senate Human Rights Commission. His background as a human rights lawyer has also aided the UDMR on a number of occasions.

14. (SBU) Frunda was a member of the parliamentary commission that drafted Romania's Constitution in 1992. One of the original "Neptun Three" who first negotiated with the mainstream PSD, he supports Bela Marko's "policy of small steps." Frunda ran as the UDMR presidential candidate in the 1996 and 2000 elections. Within the UDMR, he chairs the Council of Representatives, a so-called "mini-Parliament" for setting policy within the movement.

15. (U) Frunda has been an MP since 1990, first as a Deputy, and from 1992 onwards, as a Senator representing Mures county. He was born on July 22, 1951 in Targu Mures. He graduated from the University of Babes-Bolyai, Faculty of Law and also attended post-graduate studies at the Salzburg Seminar. He is married with two daughters. He speaks fluent English and French, and has basic knowledge of German.

ATTILA VERESTOY: Senator, Leader) UDMR Senate Group

16. (SBU) Verestoy represents the rare UDMR politician who became a multi-millionaire businessman. Weekly Romanian economic magazine, Capital, recently named him one of Romania's 300 richest people, estimating his fortune to be between USD 38 to 40 million, ranking him as the 60th wealthiest Romanian. He has a PhD in chemistry and was a researcher by profession during the Communist period. He earned his wealth in the timber and food industries after the fall of Communism. Since 2003, his wife and son have largely managed his businesses.

17. (SBU) Verestoy reputedly had close business ties in the early 1990s with representatives of the anti-Hungarian party, National Union of Romanians (PUNR). He is also known to have close ties with PSD leaders, having been one of the architects of the signed protocols of cooperation with PSD between 2000 and 2004. Thanks to his economic influence, Verestoy is one of the most powerful members within UDMR. He is the UDMR's faction leader within the Senate group.

18. (U) Verestoy is the Senator representing Harghita County. He was born on March 1, 1954 in Odorheiul Secuiesc. He attended the Polytechnic School of Bucharest in the Faculty of Chemistry. He is married with one child and speaks English, French, Hungarian, and Romanian.

IULIU WINKLER: Minister Delegate for Commerce

19. (C) Appointed Minister Delegate for Commerce in December 2004, Winkler has been active in ethnic Hungarian politics for more than a decade. A thoughtful, soft-spoken interlocutor, Winkler is well-liked within and without the UDMR. In private conversations with Embassy staff, he has articulated pro-US, pro-business points of view that reflect considerable insight and reflection.

20. (SBU) An electronic engineer by training, Winkler has risen through the ranks of the UDMR since he first joined in 1991. From 2000 to 2001, he was Vice-president of the UDMR-Hunedoara Organization and in 2001 he became its President, re-elected in 2003. As an MP from 2000-2004, he was a member of the Chamber of Deputies Budget and Finance Commission and of the EU Integration Commission.

21. (SBU) Winkler speaks fluent English, as well as Hungarian, Romanian, and German. He holds two bachelors degrees and is a 2003 graduate of the Bucharest-based National Defense College. He has also attended several postgraduate courses

in Romania and abroad. He took business courses in Germany, Hungary and France and studied civic and political action at a US-affiliated school in Timisoara.

PETER ECKSTEIN-KOVACS:

Senator, Human Rights Advocate

22. (SBU) A lawyer with expertise in human rights and local public administration, Eckstein-Kovacs remains a staunch advocate for minority rights in the Human Rights and Legal Affairs Commissions of the Senate. During a one-year period in 1999, he was also the Minister for Ethnic Minorities. In this role, he repeatedly criticized and opposed the actions of the former extreme nationalist mayor of Cluj.

23. (SBU) Eckstein-Kovacs is a founding member and President of the Liberal Club Union within UDMR, which advocates economic liberalization and aligns itself more closely with the National Liberal Party (PNL) than with other mainstream parties. He is also a founding member of several local human rights NGOs and a strong advocate for the restitution of Hungarian churches and other religious properties seized under communism.

24. (SBU) During the campaign for 2004 local elections, Eckstein-Kovacs outwardly supported a DA alliance candidate rather than a PSD one. This was despite the fact that the UDMR supported the PSD government at the time. He was also outspoken in expressing dissatisfaction with the UDMR-PSD cooperation protocols. He voiced strong support for PNL-PD presidential candidate Traian Basescu during the December 12, 2004 presidential election run-offs, although the UDMR had already arranged an electoral pact with the PSD. With his free market economic views, his outlook contrasts greatly with the larger number of UDMR politicians who espouse social democratic views.

25. (U) Eckstein-Kovacs has represented Cluj county in the Senate since 1996. He was born on July 5, 1956, in Cluj-Napoca to parents of both Jewish and Hungarian descent. He graduated from the University of Babes-Bolyai, Faculty of Law. He attended post-graduate studies at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. He is married with one daughter. He speaks English, German, French, Hungarian, and Romanian.

THE RADICALS

LASLO TOKES: Protestant Reformed Bishop

26. (SBU) Tokes is commonly known in Romania and internationally as the priest who sparked Romania's revolution. After Tokes criticized publicly the Ceaucescu regime in December 1989, hundreds of Romanians surrounded his house to protect him from threatened internal deportation by the former secret police. This was the first large-scale public protest against Ceaucescu's regime and produced the first bloodshed. In return for his important role at the outset of the so-called "Revolution," the UDMR awarded Tokes the title of Honorary Chairman. In the initial post-Revolution years, Tokes was an important face for the UDMR internationally and among the most influential members within the movement

27. (C) However, his radical agenda of pressing the UDMR to demand full autonomy for ethnic Hungarians has isolated him over time, particularly as other UDMR leaders took on a moderate approach. At the same time, his prestige has diminished domestically and internationally, as accusations surfaced of embezzlement and collaboration with the former internal intelligence service. Between 1996 and 2000, when UDMR was part of the then center-right ruling coalition, Tokes continuously pressured the UDMR to withdraw from the government.

28. (SBU) In 2003, the UDMR revoked Tokes' position as Honorary Chairman. He left the party and has since become one of the fiercest critics of UDMR leadership and policies. During the 2004 electoral campaign for mayor of Cluj, for example, he asserted that he would prefer "an extremist Romanian" to a "a treacherous Hungarian," casting his support behind extreme nationalist Gheorge Funar over the moderate UDMR candidate.

29. (C) Tokes is presently the Chairman of the National Council of Magyars from Transylvania (CNMT), an ethnic-Hungarian faction. UDMR leaders have repeatedly expressed that Tokes' opinions do not remotely represent the party's majority views. Many lament that it is unfortunate that Tokes, who once was the symbol of Romania's "Revolution," is now viewed more as a marginalized radical.

30. (U) Bishop Tokes was born on April 1, 1952, in Cluj. He attended the Theological Institute of Cluj. He is married with two children. He speaks English, Hungarian, and Romanian.

ZSOLT SZILAGYI, Former UDMR Deputy

31. (SBU) Zsolt Szilagyi became the youngest Deputy in the Chamber of Deputies when he entered Parliament in 1990 at the age of 21. He was known as the protege of Bela Marko early in his career. Their ideologies diverged over the years, however, and by 2004 Szilagyi had become the most vocal Radical. In 2004, together with 17 other members, he walked out of the UDMR. His attempts to create a rival ethnic Hungarian party -- the Hungarian Civil Union (UCM) -- have been unsuccessful to date. But he has vowed to continue trying to form an electoral alternative to the UDMR. His efforts have gained the support of Hungary's Opposition Party, FIDEZS.

32. (SBU) No longer in Parliament, Szilagyi now resides in Oradea. He is a strong supporter for both Bishop Tokes and the latter's push for autonomy in the Szekler Land region. In addition to his leadership of the UCM, he is also Vice Chairman of the Transylvanian Hungarian National Council, led by Tokes.

33. (SBU) Szilagyi was born on July 29, 1968 in Oradea. He graduated from the Polytechnic School of Timisoara in Construction Management. He is married and speaks English, German, Hungarian, and Romanian.

TWO UP-AND-COMERS

ATTILA MARKO: State Secretary for Inter-Ethnic

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Relations

34. (SBU) Human-rights expert Attila Marko is an up-and-coming UDMR politician currently serving in the politically appointed position of State Secretary in the Department of Inter-ethnic Relations. He began his political career as the founding member of the city of Brasov's UDMR branch. With a solid background in legal issues, he soon became human rights advisor to UDMR president Bela Marko.

35. (SBU) In 1997, Attila Marko began his career with the department which he presently heads. He witnessed de facto the development of the department, then named the Department for the Protection of National Minorities. He has served in various positions in the Department, becoming State Secretary in January 2005. Besides being an expert on human rights, Marko is also a specialist on property

restitution issues. He has been Vice President of the commission in charge of the restitution of religious property) formed by the so-called Law 501/2002 - since 2002. Like his contemporary, Anton Niculescu, Marko is more of a technocrat and not involved in party infighting.

36. (U) Marko was born on September 27, 1968, in Brasov. He attended the Law School of Budapest. He is married and speaks English, Hungarian, and Romanian.

ANTON NICULESCU, State Secretary

37. (SBU) Anton Niculescu was appointed State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in spring 2004. From 2003 until his appointment, Niculescu was UDMR's Executive Vice President, heading the party's EU Integration Department. Before 2000, he worked for the rightist coalition government, first as Deputy Secretary General and then as State Secretary for European Integration. In between the governmental positions, he also worked as a Political Specialist for the U.S. Embassy.

38. (SBU) A young and dynamic politician, Niculescu has been involved in a broad range of activities since his student days. In the early 1990s, he was a journalist at a Hungarian-language publication and a contributor to Radio-Free Europe. He later became political counselor to the Freidrich Naumann Foundation, Foreign Affairs advisor to the UDMR President Bela Marko, and Parliamentary Expert in the Senate. During the electoral campaign in 1996, he was the spokesperson for UDMR presidential candidate Gyorgy Frunda.

39. (SBU) In more recent years, Niculescu has specialized in EU integration issues, working as Director of the Open Society Foundation and advisor to other EU-funded programs. He is known to dislike squabbling within his party, and known to Embassy Officers to be even more moderate than the moderates of the UDMR. He may possibly follow in Frunda's footsteps and pursue a career focused on EU integration. Although Niculescu lacks Frunda's legal background, he is highly knowledgeable in EU issues and well connected to the EU Parliament.

40. (U) Niculescu was born on May 6, 1964, in Targu Mures. He graduated from the Polytechnic School of Bucharest, Faculty of Chemistry. He also has a Masters in International Relations. He is divorced. He speaks English, German, French, Hungarian, and Romanian.

Two Prominent Local Leaders

GYONGYIKE BONDI: PREFECT, MARAMURES COUNTY

41. (SBU) Gyongyike Bondi represents the rare female ethnic Hungarian who has risen to a position of significance within the UDMR. A Communist Party member during the Ceausescu period, Bondi was a founding member of UDMR and held her first important position within UDMR as the party's Secretary in 1998. Between 1996 and 2004, she represented Maramures County in the Chamber of Deputies for two terms. In 2004, she left Parliament and was appointed to Prefect of Maramures County, holding also the title of Executive President within UDMR's branch in Maramures. Bondi's focus as Prefect has been on the economic, industrial, and tourism development of her county. During a visit by an Embassy Political Officer, Bondi expressed tremendous interest in the flow of U.S. direct investments and the possibility of tourism development targeted at foreigners in her county of high potential.

42. (C) At present, no UDMR female members are present in the Parliament or in State Secretary positions. Indeed, several ethnic-Hungarian politicians have lamented to Post "the apparent lack of equal opportunity" within the UDMR leadership. Bondi currently represents the exception to the rule to this barrier.

43. (U) Bondi was born on October 2, 1952, in Cluj. She graduated from Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics. She is married with two children and she speaks English, French, Romanian, and Hungarian.

JANOS BOROS: VICE-MAYOR, CITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA

44. (SBU) Boros has been Vice-Mayor of Cluj-Napoca since 2000 and is known to have a close working relationship with influential PD Mayor, Emil Boc. In his second term as Vice-Mayor, he is closely involved with the Mayor in city renewal projects such as the development of new housing for young families, the restoration of the city center, and the creation of more parking spaces within the city limits. Separately, he also oversees the provision of basic infrastructure for the whole city. Boros has held positions of increasing responsibility in the Cluj County branch of the UDMR. Prior to being elected Vice Mayor, he was Secretary of the City Council and City Councilman of the UDMR from 1995 to 2000.

45. (C) During several meetings with an Embassy Political Officer, Boros repeatedly indicated his strong support of U.S. investments in Cluj-Napoca. He recently partnered with an American investor in the opening of "Justin's," an upscale caf-bar named after his American partner.

46. (U) Boros was born on January 24, 1948 in Cluj-Napoca. He received a B.A. in Engineering from the Technical University of Cluj. He also studied four years of theology at the Roman-Catholic Institute of Theology in Alba-Iulia. He is married with one daughter; his wife is currently a physics professor in Budapest. He speaks some English, Romanian, and Hungarian.

47. (U) Amembassy Bucharest,s reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website: www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 001584

SIPDIS

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EUR/NCE AARON JENSON
E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2016
TAGS: HU, PGOV, PHUM, PREL, RO

SUBJECT: ETHNIC HUNGARIAN PARTY STRUGGLES FOR GREATER
MAGYAR AUTONOMY, POLITICAL MARKET SHARE

Classified By: DCM Mark Taplin for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Under pressure from more radical Hungarian ethnic parties and the need to retain sufficient support to remain in parliament, the Democratic Union (or Alliance) of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), has been more vocal of late in its calls for greater territorial autonomy for ethnic Magyars. UDMR leaders told us they are seeking territorial autonomy for ethnic Hungarian (Szeckler and Magyar) areas in Romania. UDMR President Marko Bela declared at the recent party congress that his party wanted to give the Hungarian language official status in Hungarian-majority regions. While the party has demanded cultural autonomy in the past, this is the first time the UDMR has publicly pushed for territorial autonomy. Party discipline is problematic, since the UDMR is less a formal party structure than an alliance sharing a common ethnicity and a shared interest in benefiting from participation in the ruling coalition. While UDMR has cobbled together a decade of incumbency as part of one or another governing political alignment, its members have ideological views that run the gamut from conservative to radical. End Summary.

Why Autonomy Now?

2. (C) In recent weeks, the UDMR has become increasingly vocal in advocating for greater administrative and territorial autonomy in areas where ethnic Hungarians (both Szecklers and Magyars) are in the majority. Although cultural autonomy and language rights have been a feature of the UDMR platform since the early 1990s, the push for it is only recently that they have been bringing up the issue of greater territorial autonomy and control over local budgets and resources. In meetings this fall with Poloff, Senator Csaba Sogor, Senator Peter Eckstein Kovacs, and Viktor Sata, Personal Advisor to UDMR President Marko Bela, all observed that UDMR calls for autonomy were increasing because of electoral politics in their home base, as more radical elements in the Magyar community, including the Hungarian Civic Union and the National Council of Transylvanians, have racketed up their rhetoric calling for greater autonomy. This pressure from other political formations and from more radical elements within the party have also forced UDMR President Bela to adopt a more aggressive position.

3. (C) One concern within the UDMR is to arrest a slide in vote share, which is a critical preoccupation for Bela and others (note: the party received 6.2 percent in the 2004 election, down from 7.5 percent in 1992. The UDMR's current polling suggests support for the party is currently hovering even closer to the 5 percent electoral threshold necessary to ensure parliamentary representation). Our interlocutors noted that this slide has been due to two main factors: the defection of potential voters to other political groups, both Hungarian-minority and Romanian, and the declining number of ethnic Hungarians in Romania. Many ethnic Hungarians have left or are leaving the country to work in the EU, UK, Canada, Australia, Israel and the United States.

4. (C) UDMR President Bela has acknowledged that new legislation is necessary to make autonomy possible, including a proposed National Minorities bill. The bill would essentially enshrine the UDMR as the only officially sanctioned ethnic Hungarian party, and also proposes making Hungarian an official language in predominantly ethnic Hungarian areas. The bill would also create a university curriculum taught in the Hungarian language, a long-sought UDMR goal. But building support for a law on minorities has proved an uphill struggle. Efforts by the UDMR's Bela and his allies last spring to bring forward a bill on national minorities quickly ran into trouble, both because Bela was caught in the angry political crossfire between the presidential and prime ministerial camps and because, according to former Basescu political strategist Claudiu Saftoiu, the Romanian president believes the UDMR is thoroughly corrupt and deserves to lose

the support of the Hungarian minority. Subsequently, the UDMR has been unable to even get a quorum to allow discussion of the bill since all other major Romanian party leaders have spoken out against granting greater territorial autonomy for ethnic Hungarians.

What Does the UDMR Have Against The Proposed Anti-Corruption Agency?

5. (C) Our UDMR interlocutors in fact give some credence to the view from Cotroceni Palace in trying to justify the UDMR's adamant opposition to the proposed National Integrity Agency (ANI). While Sogor insisted that the party was opposing the bill because of "procedural" issues; Kovacs and Sogor acknowledged bluntly that there was some truth to public perceptions that the UDMR had a history of corruption and that some UDMR members were reluctant to support the creation of a strongly-empowered anti-corruption agency. Kovacs noted that "it isn't all the money they have now, it's about the first million dollars they made." Kovacs and Sogor evinced concern that an ANI-type body could pursue allegations of early misdeeds among its longer-standing members, and that some of them could not withstand that type of scrutiny.

Security Chiefs' Vote a Result of Political Deals?

6. (C) While most UDMR legislators voted in favor of President Basescu's choices to head the Romanian domestic and foreign intelligence services, Kovacs said he opposed the two candidates, domestic intelligence chief Meyer and foreign intelligence head Saftoiu. Eckstein hinted that he had information about past "anti-Hungarian" actions taken by the two, but would not elaborate. There is no question, however, that presidential political aides, including Saftoiu, have actively tried to undercut support for the UDMR within the Hungarian minority by reaching out to alternate Hungarian political groups, even some which are more hard-line on the autonomy question. While some might argue that Cotroceni has been playing with fire by courting Hungarian nationalists who might challenge Bela and the UDMR mainstream, Basescu's approach may well have provided additional leverage over the UDMR leadership. Still, our interlocutors all denied press reports that UDMR President Marko Bela had thrown his support behind the two candidates in exchange for an assurance that the Hungarian Civic Union, a competing ethnic Magyar organization, would not be allowed to register as a political party.

Comment

7. (SBU) The UDMR's current push for greater ethnic (and budgetary) autonomy in predominantly Magyar regions appears doomed to failure, given the pressures of

shrinking demographics, growing competition from alternative Magyar organizations, and determined opposition from all of the main political parties in Romania. The UDMR has carved out a niche for itself as a perennial coalition partner to larger parties, but it is an open question whether the UDMR can maintain its control over the ethnic Hungarian political agenda in Romania and continue to get past the 5 percent threshold for parliamentary representation. The dilemma for the party is that the ethnic Hungarian minority will lose political power if it cannot rally behind a single banner, but the politics of the Hungarian minority in Romania is looking increasingly fragmented and the UDMR increasingly looks less like a coherent party than a "big tent" alliance whose members' views on self-rule and minority rights run the gamut from radical to restrained. End comment.

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STATE FOR EUR/NCE - WSILKWORTH
E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2016
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PHUM, SOCI, HU, RO

SUBJECT: CLAMOR SURROUNDING ETHNIC HUNGARIAN FRINGE
GROUP'S PLANNED DECLARATION OF "AUTONOMY"
REF: 05 BUCHAREST 2423

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Taplin for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. Ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) leader and Deputy Prime Minister Bela Marko told the Ambassador on March 10 that Marko and his party do not support a March 15 ethnic Hungarian "autonomy proclamation," slated to occur in a small Transylvanian town. He predicted a small and peaceful event, although senior GOR officials insist they are worried about a violent confrontation. Marko expressed frustration, however, with the center-right government's failure to pass a draft law on minority status, blaming President Traian Basescu and his Democratic Party (PD) for the impasse. Basescu's advisers claim that they are angry the UDMR has not supported recent anti-corruption legislation. The UDMR is looking at the "big picture" -- EU Accession in 2007 -- and is unlikely to formally break with the center-right coalition. End Summary.

A Celebration in the Szekler Homeland

2. (C) A tiny group of extremists within the ethnic Hungarian "Szekler" community has chosen March 15, the date Hungarians around the world commemorate the Revolution of 1848, to proclaim "autonomy" for the "Szekler land" region in Transylvania. However, mainstream ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) leader and Deputy Prime Minister Bela Marko told the Ambassador

March 10 that the UDMR has unequivocally disassociated itself from this endeavor. The event in question is slated to occur in the mid-sized Transylvanian town of Odorheiul Secuiesc, smack dab in the heartland of the Szekler minority. Marko stressed that he -- and the vast majority of Romania's ethnic Hungarians -- viewed March 15 as a sort of "Hungarian national pride" day without a specific political context. Marko stressed that since 1997 Romanian presidents and prime ministers had sent a congratulatory message to ethnic Hungarians every March 15.

3. (C) Marko stressed to the Ambassador that March 15 was "a big festival" for ethnic Hungarians of virtually all political stripes and that the vast majority of attendees at the March 15 event in Odorheiul Secuiesc would be there for a "celebration," not an overt political display. Marko stated that he, like most ethnic Hungarians, did not want March 15 "to be used for political purposes." He predicted that the event would transpire peacefully and without untoward incident, as the "organizers will be very careful." Marko recommended against a uniformed police presence in Odorheiul Secuiesc March 15, wryly opining that if one person "gets slapped" there would be a media uproar. (Note: A senior intelligence official told the Ambassador on March 9 that while the GOR was worried about the prospect of violence at the event, it planned a "discreet" security presence. End Note.) Marko mentioned that he and the Hungarian Ambassador would attend and participate in another town's festival marking March 15.

4. (C) Marko told the Ambassador that, in his view, the proposed autonomy proclamation was an effort by a splinter group of radical Szeklers to thwart the political standing of the UDMR, which is a member of the governing center-right coalition. According to Marko's personal advisor Viktor Sata, the National Szekler Council (CNS), the party which is leading the move to proclaim autonomy March 15, has a membership of less than 2,000. (Note: About 1.5 million ethnic Hungarians live in Romania. End Note.) Marko characterized Odorheiul Secuiesc Mayor Jenő Szász as a man "with no values, only interests," focused exclusively on advancing his own political agenda. UDMR leaders, including Marko, predict a relatively modest turnout in Odorheiul Secuiesc, between 5,000 and 10,000 people. Marko did acknowledge that the opposition FIDESZ party in Hungary might be attempting to gain votes in the upcoming Hungarian elections by appealing to the more radical Szeklers, whose relatives live in Hungary.

5. (C) According to several ethnic Hungarian sources, the draft proclamation has not been finalized. Even the ethnic Hungarian senator representing Odorheiul Secuiesc told PolOff that he had "not seen" the proclamation. According to various sources, the proclamation may be either a relatively straightforward list of

demands for greater civil liberties and cultural protections for ethnic-Hungarians in the Szekler region or an outright "declaration of independence." Odorheiul Secuiesc Mayor and CNS leader Jenő Szász told EmbOff that the Szekler minority is "tired of waiting" and impatient with what he described as Romanian bureaucratic indifference. He asserted that ethnic minorities in other countries achieved results through "active resistance."

6. (C) The planned Odorheiul Secuiesc autonomy proclamation might have gone largely unnoticed on the national scene but for Corneliu Vadim Tudor's extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), always ready to fan the flames of ethnic unrest. In recent days, the PRM has called for a counter-demonstration of 100,000 Romanians in Odorheiul Secuiesc on March 15. Marko dismissed as hyperbole the possibility of Tudor staging a massive rally there, noting that the region is "almost entirely ethnic Hungarian" and that, in any case, Tudor would not receive an assembly permit from Mayor Szász. Nonetheless, Tudor's vitriolic denunciation of the proposed autonomy declaration has received wide press coverage.

Against a Background of Partisan Politics...

7. (C) During the meeting with the Ambassador, Marko acknowledged that relations between the UDMR and President Basescu's Democratic Party (PD) were at a low ebb. Echoing observations made by other UDMR leaders, Marko stated that his party -- and the ethnic Hungarian constituency -- was frustrated that the PD had failed to deliver on its promise to pass a law giving "cultural autonomy" to regions with a majority of ethnic Hungarians (Ref). Marko stressed that when the UDMR ended its alliance with the PSD and joined the center-right alliance in late 2004, the center-right Alliance promised the passage of a cultural autonomy law as the key condition for the UDMR entry into the alliance. Marko underscored to the Ambassador that, within the center-right coalition, only the PD opposes the UDMR's proposed legislation. According to Marko, the other two coalition partners, the National Liberal Party (PNL) and Conservative Party (PC), back the UDMR's proposed legislation.

8. (C) Marko told the Ambassador that Basescu and his party opposed the draft legislation on purely political grounds, in order to gain traction with nationalist voters. (Note: Earlier this week, Marko publicly denounced Basescu for attempting to "improve his popularity through nationalistic rhetoric." End Note.) The Ambassador stated that he had heard reports that Basescu might travel to Odorheiul Secuiesc March 15. Marko rejoined that he had not heard Basescu was

planning on attending, adding that his presence there would add to tension and would be a "big mistake." Marko asked the Ambassador to urge Basescu to support the proposed minority law and also to urge the Romanian president to refrain from traveling to Odorheiul Secuiesc. The Ambassador promised to discuss these issues with the Romanian president during a planned meeting March 13.

9. (C) Marko told the Ambassador that the UDMR would "not quit the coalition at this time because EU accession on January 2007 is our biggest priority." He opined that the political tumult that would result from the UDMR's withdrawal from the coalition, ending the center-right alliance's parliamentary majority, would create political instability that would, in turn, put January 2007 EU accession in jeopardy. Nonetheless, Marko noted, without elaborating, that a "very droll situation" would result if a suitable law on minority status does not eventually pass.

10. (C) Presidential Domestic Policy Adviser Claudiu Saftoiu told visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Pekala and DCM March 8 that Basescu was in fact considering the possibility of showing up in Odorheiul Secuiesc March 15, although Saftoiu did not elaborate on why Basescu might go or what he might seek to accomplish. Saftoiu stated that Basescu and his senior advisers concluded that the UDMR had "retaliated" when the draft law on cultural autonomy failed to pass by refusing to support recent anti-corruption and judicial reform legislation. Saftoiu suggested the real reason for the UDMR's reticence reflected the fact that "the UDMR has been in power for ten years" under various governments and included many "corrupt leaders" who feared effective anti-corruption laws. Prosecutors, he suggested, should actively investigate some of them.

11. (C) Comment. The UDMR is the only ethnic Hungarian party (or ethnic party of any stripe), which has obtained the five percent threshold required for entry into Parliament. The vast majority of Hungarians have no truck with the tiny CNS or its radical demands. That said, what might have been a little-noticed local event in an obscure Transylvanian town could conceivably become a flash point for the tensions among Basescu, his erstwhile coalition partner the UDMR, and the followers of extreme nationalist Vadim Tudor. As emotional as some of our GOR contacts have been in recent days in expressing their fear of an ugly confrontation at the March 15 event, our assessment at the moment is that there has been at least as much political theater as sober thinking applied by Cotroceni and the intelligence agencies. EC Delegation head Scheele, who spoke to Ambassador on March 10 after a meeting with Basescu, agrees and generally discounts the chances of a major flare-up next week among Szeklers and Romanian nationalists. Bela Marko is resolutely looking at the big picture, even as he angles for a more

favorable position on the minorities legislation. UDMR leaders have told us that Romania's EU entry represents the best possible outcome for Romania and ethnic Hungarians. They, at least, have no intention of sabotaging Romania's 2007 EU accession chances by provoking a political crisis. End Comment.

12. (C) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website: www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 000436

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STATE FOR EUR/NCE - WSILKWORTH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PHUM, SOCI, ECON, ENRG, EINV, MARR, HU, RO

SUBJECT: BASESCU PREDICTS CALM ETHNIC HUNGARIAN
"AUTONOMY DECLARATION," TOUTS NEW ENERGY INITIATIVES

REF: A. BUCHAREST 410

B. BUCHAREST 278

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Taplin for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. President Traian Basescu predicted to the Ambassador during a March 13 meeting that a planned March 15 "autonomy declaration" organized by a fringe ethnic Hungarian group would be a relatively low-key event. He characterized it as the product of a power struggle between the mainstream ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) and radical fringe activists, adding that he had taken steps to prevent the occurrence of a "counter demonstration" by Romanian nationalists aligned with Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor. He also made it clear he suspected nationalists in Hungary of stirring the ethnic pot in Romania, citing Victor Orban and Fidesz specifically. In response to the Ambassador's expression of interest in Basescu's views on energy security, the Romanian president asserted that while Romania was less dependent on external sources of energy than many other European countries, he was exploring various options for energy diversification. Basescu claimed Romania would take a position within the next month regarding its planned acquisition of F-16 aircraft, saying the GOR hoped to acquire F-16s from either the Netherlands or the U.S. At the same time, he ruled out acquisition from Israel. End Summary.

"Intelligent" Response to Ethnic-Hungarian Gathering

2. (C) During a March 13 meeting in Basescu's office, the Ambassador expressed his concern over the prospect of violence at an ethnic Hungarian gathering in the Transylvanian town of Odorheiul Secuiesc March 15, where a tiny, fringe ethnic Hungarian group's declaration will reportedly make a declaration of "autonomy" (Ref A). The Ambassador reaffirmed the U.S. strongly supported Romania's EU accession in January 2007 but added that any "untoward incident" on March 15 could have a negative impact on May 15 (the date of Romania's crucial EU spring accession report.) Basescu immediately assured the situation would remain under control. "We are intelligent," he stressed, continuing that "we will let the Magyars talk...and we will block the Romanians from going to Odorheiul Secuiesc." Basescu said he had recently spoken with extreme nationalist and Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor and warned him not to go to Odorheiul Secuiesc or to send followers there. The Romanian president reported that security forces would block the roads and turn back any attempt by ethnic Romanians to travel to Odorheiul Secuiesc for the March 15 event. (Note: March 14 press reports quoted Tudor as stating that following discussions with Basescu, Interior Minister Vasile Blaga and Romanian Intelligence Chief Radu Timofte he had canceled plans to hold a counter-demonstration in Odorheiul Secuiesc. End Note.)

3. (C) Basescu affirmed that for the majority of ethnic Hungarians March 15 was "a celebration...a holiday for them." The GOR would only react to the Odorheiul Secuiesc declaration if "Romanian territorial integrity" were called into question. The issue, he explained, was "whether the declaration will be followed by actions that are unconstitutional." In response to the Ambassador's question, Basescu promised he would "follow constitutional means." He acknowledged that he has been in contact with the organizers of the March 15 declaration, including the Mayor of Odorheiul Secuiesc, to see if they would "modify their statements." In response to the Ambassador's question as to whether he planned to travel to Odorheiul Secuiesc, Basescu admitted he was "thinking about it," but would only go if he was assured any declaration would not be "against the Constitution."

4. (C) The Ambassador told Basescu that he had recently met with mainstream ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) leader Bela Marko, who had claimed that the impasse over the proposed minorities law, a subject near and dear to the heart of UDMR members, had contributed to the splinter group's planned autonomy declaration. (Ref A) Basescu retorted that "the minority law is not the issue, the issue is the internal dispute within the Hungarian community." He pointed to a power struggle between the mainstream UDMR's leaders and radical ethnic

Hungarians as the root of the problem. Basescu also blamed outsider agitators, singling out Viktor Orban, "one of Europe's last extremists," and Hungary's Fidesz party, and expressing the hope that "Orban won't push for undemocratic processes." Basescu asserted that the "standard for minorities in Romania is very high compared to other European countries." He ticked off a list of benefits enjoyed by ethnic Hungarians, such as schools, a university and theaters employing the Hungarian language. Basescu concluded by reiterating his earlier promise to handle the March 15 events "with intelligence," assuring the Ambassador that the day's events would not negatively affect Romania's EU accession prospects.

Diverse Energy Options

5. (C) The Ambassador stated that the U.S. supports a competitive and diverse energy sector in the region. Basescu remarked that Romania is relatively less dependent on imported energy sources than other states in the region, observing, however, that its dependence on imported gas, in particular, became more acute in winter months. Last year, at the EU Hampton Court gathering, he had advocated that other European countries consider "relaunching their nuclear plants," an idea which only Berlusconi had seconded. Germany, he observed, along with the Scandinavians, were sitting on the fence. The Ambassador agreed that Romania had some domestic energy sources but pointed out that it would require more energy in the future to fuel a growing economy. Basescu asserted "we are putting huge amounts of dollars into supporting undemocratic states" which produce oil, implying that these resources could be better spent elsewhere. He stated that Romania supported the Nabucco natural gas pipeline, explaining, "we don't want energy from one source."

6. (C) Basescu also bruited the possibility of building a compressed natural gas terminal at the Black Sea port of Constanta for Qatari gas, noting that Qatar currently supplies natural gas to Japan, India and Spain. According to Basescu, "Romania is prepared to receive Qatar's natural gas...and we can build pipelines to Poland and Ukraine." Romania is preparing to "do a study to determine what part of Europe can be supplied (with natural gas) from Constanta," adding that unspecified "other European countries" could pitch in. Basescu added that he would like American compressed natural gas handling equipment, which he had seen during his February visit to Qatar, and which he labeled as "the best." Basescu, a former sea captain, asserted that 300-meter ships carrying gas from Qatar would have "no problem" passing through the Bosphorous, since the Turks in recent years had taken the necessary safety measures for this type of ship traffic.

Come Fly With Me: Romania Evaluates F-16 Acquisition

7. (C) Basescu reported that Romania planned to take a position "in the next month" regarding its planned acquisition of F-16 aircraft. He stated that Romania's decision would be based upon the underlying premise of "how we can adapt our armed forces to NATO standards." Basescu said it was "clear" that Israeli-provided fighters "are not a solution" and Romania has "drawn a line through" the possibility of acquiring F-16s from Israel. Basescu continued that Romania would choose between "new F-16s (from the U.S.) or Dutch F-16s." He noted that the "Dutch price is good" but expressed uncertainty about the maintenance contracts for the Dutch-provided F-16s. Basescu described Romania's ultimate goal as the acquisition of Joint Strike Fighters (JSF) and speculated about whether new or used F-16s would provide the "best access to the new JSF." He stated that he would appreciate guidance on whether it was better to obtain new or used F-16s, but stressed he was conscious of the advantages of acquiring new planes. The Ambassador observed that proper aircraft maintenance would be vital, and took note of the fact that Romania had experienced some difficulties in meeting the less complex requirements for keeping up its modest fleet of C-130s.

8. (C) Comment. Although Basescu was deliberately evasive about whether he would attend the March 15 event in Odorheiul Secuiesc, he appeared confident the gathering would unfold peacefully, twice assuring the Ambassador of an "intelligent" response by the GOR. Basescu's polite but forceful insistence that the March 15 declaration was in no way linked to the Romanian parliament's failure to pass a minorities law sought by the ethnic Hungarian community suggested that this episode is as much about domestic politics as it is about national security. The fact that Basescu acknowledged he has been in direct contact with Hungarian minority politicians who are behind the Odorheiul Secuiesc event -- and vying for political leverage with their UDMR rivals -- suggests that the Romanian president is, as usual, playing all the angles. End Comment.

9. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website: www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE

E.O. 12958, AS AMENDED: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, SOCI, RO

SUBJECT: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER RESIGNS

REF: A) BUCHAREST 531 B) BUCHAREST 540 C) BUCHAREST 581 D)
BUCHAREST 612

1. (SBU) A belated casualty of the failed attempt to remove President Basescu, deputy prime minister Marko Bela has resigned. Marko, recently re-elected to a fifth term as leader of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), stated at a July 3 press conference that he wanted to focus entirely on reconnecting with the Hungarian community and his party position. He insisted that his decision was not the result of "any dissatisfaction" concerning his work in government. Nor should it be viewed as presaging the fate of the UDMR's governing partner, the National Liberal Party (PNL) of PM Calin Popescu-Tariceanu. Marko stated that the UDMR would not leave the government and that he would be engaged in coordinating the activities of the remaining UDMR ministers in the Tariceanu cabinet.

2. (SBU) Marko initially announced his intention to leave the cabinet on May 21, two days after the failed referendum to dismiss president Traian Basescu. Under his leadership, the UDMR officially aligned itself with the so-called "anti-Basescu coalition," even while many regional UDMR leaders were distinctly cool to Basescu's 30-day suspension and the subsequent May 19 referendum. (On May 19, Basescu was overwhelmingly returned to Cotroceni by the Romanian electorate, with three quarters of those voting registering their opposition to the Romanian president's ouster.) One surprise outcome of the referendum vote was the high

percentage of UDMR supporters--between 60 and 66 percent according to exit polls--who disregarded the party line to vote in favor of retaining President Basescu. This incipient rebellion among UDMR members prompted Marko Bela to acknowledge a "deficit of communication" with the UDMR electorate and vow to concentrate more on restoring the confidence of minority Hungarians in the party.

3. (SBU) Comment. Marko's decision to resign as Deputy Prime Minister in order to concentrate on party activities underscores the continuing impact of his ill-fated decision to join the anti-Basescu bandwagon. Marko is also under pressure from rival UDMR leaders including Senator Peter Eckstein-Kovacs, who has publicly urged Marko and other UDMR leaders to resign from their party positions. More evidence of the gap between the UDMR leadership and the ethnic Hungarian community can be found in two recent opinion surveys which suggest that the party currently does not have enough support to pass the 5 percent threshold for parliamentary representation if elections were held today. This data is especially worrisome for the UDMR leadership as Romania will soon enter a cycle of five back-to-back elections (including Euro-parliamentary, local, parliamentary and presidential contests) over the next thirty months. Finally, there are persistent reports, including in the Romanian media, that Marko and other leading UDMR figures may be facing corruption charges in an ongoing investigation, another factor which may have contributed to his decision to leave the Tariceanu government's second-ranking position. End comment.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000911

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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE
E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2017
TAGS: PGOV, KCOR, KJUS, PREL, RO

SUBJECT: LASZLO TOKES CHALLENGES UDMR LEADERSHIP AND
STRUCTURE

REF: BUCHAREST 0777

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for 1.4 (B) & (D)

1. (C) Summary: Romania's ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR), the Liberals' coalition partner government, risks failing to meet the five percent electoral threshold in upcoming elections, starting with this fall's European Parliamentary race. The candidacy of controversial Bishop Laszlo Tokes could divide the ethnic Hungarian vote if he runs as an independent in the Euro-Parliamentary elections. The UDMR leadership is seeking to maintain its presence on the political scene by attempting to co-opt Tokes and other rival voices and by attempting to convince ethnic Hungarians that UDMR remains the only party that can advance ethnic Hungarian interests on the national stage. End summary.

2. (C) Reformed Bishop Laszlo Tokes, a controversial figure who played a key role in the 1989 uprising in Timisoara against Ceausescu, is emerging as a serious challenger to the leadership of Romania's minority Hungarian party (UDMR). Tokes collected 137,000 signatures early this year to become Romania's only independent candidate in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections. By mounting an independent campaign, Tokes may split the ethnic Hungarian vote,

confronting the UDMR with the likelihood of falling short of the five percent electoral threshold and of possibly removing all ethnic Hungarian representation should his own campaign falter.

3. (C) Tokes' campaign manager, Zsolt Szilagy, told PolCouns August 2 that the big question was whether Tokes should accept UDMR leader Bela Marko's July 30 offer of a place on the UDMR's list or campaign independently. He said Marko had refused Tokes' earlier proposal for a joint list last October, but that following corruption investigations against prominent UDMR politicians (including Marko) and the failed referendum to impeach President Basescu, a weakened UDMR now needed all of the ethnic Hungarian votes it could gather. Recent opinion surveys suggest that the party's support rate has fallen to only 3 percent of likely voters. He argued that the UDMR needed greater internal competition if the concept of a single ethnic Hungarian party was to work.

Views From Within the UDMR

4. (C) Marko resigned as Deputy Prime Minister on July 3, fulfilling a vow to take responsibility for the failed May 19 referendum President Basescu. Exit polls had indicated that a majority of UDMR voters had ignored Marko's urgings to vote against Basescu (reftel). Marko's foreign policy advisor, Kinga Tontsch, admitted that Senators Attila Verestoy and Peter Eckstein-Kovacs were developing separate factions within the UDMR. Tontsch described an embattled Marko as relying on a small group of loyalists including former IT Minister Zsolt Nagy, Minister of Public Works Laszlo Borbely, and the UDMR's new Executive President Hunor Kelemen, but added that Marko "likes to be the one who makes the decisions in the party." She said that Hunor Kelemen is the first person that Marko has supported as a possible successor, and remarked that Kelemen is a "perfect copy" of Marko, sharing his opinions and even mannerisms.

5. (C) In a separate June 26 meeting, Senator Kovacs admitted that the minority government's collaboration with the Social Democrats was problematic. Every draft law was discussed with PNL and PSD and the PSD now had a chance to promote its laws, even at the cost of blowing the budget. Kovacs dismissed Marko as being a "symbolic vice premier" adding that the real problems were within the UDMR: "Marko is the old generation -- worn out." Eckstein said that Marko, along with Verestoy and Nagy, had problems with corruption and that the UDMR had not helped its public image by resisting anticorruption measures.

6. (C) Kovacs argued that Marko had "lost control" of his political base and predicted that if Tokes runs for European Parliament outside of the UDMR, the party would "lose the 5% threshold." He cited polls suggesting the UDMR would receive only 39% of votes from its traditional electoral base, while Tokes would get 22%, with 39% undecided. Kovacs said he preferred to see the UDMR's Executive Bureau opened up to political competition within the party, as currently, "there is no debate in the UDMR." He also argued that the party should open its doors for the people who left the UDMR.

Next Steps

7. (C) Szilagyi said negotiations will continue August 9, headed by the two campaign managers, Keleman and himself. Szilagyi said he would press the UDMR to change the law on local elections that currently requires political parties not in parliament to gather 25,000 signatures in order to compete. This law prevented the Hungarian Civic Union (UCM) from competing in local elections in 2004 even though it had collected 8,500 signatures in one town that only had a population of 40,000 -- enough to win possibly half the seats on the town council. Szilagyi said a common candidate list was possible, but only if the UDMR took measures to open itself to internal competition, or at least agreed to a positive campaign aimed at mobilizing Hungarian voters to turn out for the election. He said that if there was no agreement on a common list, Tokes could throw his support behind Eckstein in the battle to succeed Marko.

8. (C) Regarding attempts by other political actors to affect internal UDMR dynamics, Szilagyi said that six ethnic Hungarian organizations had been active in campaigning against Basescu's impeachment and enjoyed good relations with the Democratic Party (PD). He opined that the PD's interest was in creating a more "democratic" UDMR rather than in supplanting the UDMR as the ethnic Hungarian party. Szilagyi also accused the Social Democrats (PSD), Liberals (PNL), and even the Greater Romania Party (PRM) of supporting the status quo within the UDMR.

9. (C) Szilagyi insisted that Tokes' campaign would focus on Szekeler autonomy, but insisted that it would not be "politically radical" -- i.e., that the focus would be on governance and the democratic process, rather than on sensitive matters such as the integrity of Romania's borders. Other issues included education and restitution matters. He noted that the ethnic Hungarian community could disappear from the Romanian scene, as it had shunk in the past 15 years by 250,000 to 1.4 million. Szilagyi, who recently returned from the U.S. on an international visitor grant

focused on civic education, concluded that now was a good time for greater dialogue on ethnic issues, given the more stable external environment provided by NATO and EU membership.

10. (C) Comment: A combination of factors—including demographic pressures and Marko's failed attempt to remove Basescu, as well as the re-emergence of the charismatic Tokes as an alternate locus of ethnic Hungarian support—now provides a unique challenge to the tight grip that Marko and his circle have exercised over ethnic Hungarian politics in Romania. The cards remain stacked in Marko's favor given the significant barriers to entry of new voices in ethnic politics. Another factor will be whether President Basescu will be willing to resist the temptation to meddle in ethnic politics, as he has done in the past. Basescu recently made a very public tour of majority ethnic Hungarian areas, pointing to the underdevelopment in health care, transportation, and other infrastructure areas. These remarks were widely interpreted as a pointed criticism of poor governance under Marko's leadership of the UDMR. End Comment.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000315

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
STATE FOR EUR/NCE
E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2018
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, RO

SUBJECT: ETHNIC HUNGARIAN PARTIES FACE NEW ELECTION
CHALLENGES

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Ethnic Hungarian political contacts predicted that the UDMR and the rival Magyar Civic Party (PCM) would not be able to reach an accommodation before the registration deadline for candidates in the upcoming June 1 local elections. They predicted that both sides saw the election as a bellwether for gauging their relative strengths prior to the fall parliamentary elections. They noted that regardless of the parliamentary election results, the ethnic Hungarian parties would show flexibility in forming alliances with either Basescu,s PD-L or with the PNL-PSD camp. End Summary.

2. (C) UDMR Senator Peter Eckstein-Kovacs told poloffs 4/14 that negotiations between his party and the newly-registered Magyar Civic Party (PCM) were the key issue for the ethnic Hungarian community going into the June 1 local elections. Eckstein said because both sides realize they cannot reach the 5 percent threshold for parliamentary representation by going it alone, negotiations between UDMR and PCM concern practical issues such as who the candidates are and how to avoid a head-on competition that would weaken both parties. He admitted that the PCM was stronger in Hargita and Mures counties, but noted the UDMR had greater appeal and better established candidates in other ethnic Hungarian strongholds in Transylvania. Asked about the relative strengths of the two parties, Eckstein guessed that the UDMR probably would receive around two-thirds of the

ethnic Hungarian vote; the PCM would get the remaining third. Eckstein acknowledged that the emergence of the PCM had a radicalizing influence on both ethnic Hungarian parties, as both were now competing for the Magyar vote by stressing increased autonomy. He said that the local elections were important as a bellwether in establishing the relative strengths of the two parties going into the fall parliamentary elections.

3. (C) Eckstein-Kovacs described President Basescu as the "godfather" of the PCM; Basescu had promoted the creation of a new party as revenge for the UDMR staying in alliance with the PNL in the Tariceanu government, and as a way to split to the ethnic Hungarian vote. He predicted that Basescu's divide-and-rule strategy was creating a dynamic where parties were reluctant to ally themselves with the Basescu/PD-L camp. Given that the PD-L probably would not receive a majority of votes in parliamentary elections this fall, the likely outcome would be the creation of an anti-Basescu alliance comprised of the PNL, PSD, and the UDMR. He acknowledged, however, the Hungarians were flexible, and said that his party was one of the few remaining actors on the Romanian political stage which could still either join the PNL and PSD, or cast their lot with the PD-L. From this perspective, he said, it was useful to have the PCM as a partner since their relations with the Basescu camp were excellent.

4. (C) Similarly, UDMR Deputy Tibor Toro (a close confidante of Bishop Laszlo Tokes and a UDMR maverick whom some have speculated would soon defect to the PCM camp) told poloffs 4/15 that despite efforts by Bishop Tokes and himself to close the gap between the two ethnic Hungarian parties, there had been no success reaching a pre-election agreement before the April 22 deadline for registering candidates for the June 1 local election. He confirmed that the current mood on both sides was to use these elections as a "test run" to gauge their relative strengths before a new round of negotiations prior to the fall elections. He added, however, that the mood for cooperation varied by county. In Cluj County, for example, the two parties were likely to reach some sort of informal accommodation; other local compromises were also possible given the two parties, different regional strengths and weaknesses. (Note: his estimate for the strengths of the two parties was similar to Eckstein's--e.g., two-thirds for the UDMR and one-third of the votes for the PCM.)

5. (C) Toro bemoaned the fact that the PCM side was "unrealistic" about its electoral chances, since many in the PCM were extrapolating from Tokes' strong performance during last November's European Parliamentary contest. The difference was that although Tokes was a charismatic politician and a symbol of

the fight against Ceaucescu's regime, others in the PCM were political unknowns and newcomers. He said that Tokes' position was to stand "above the fray" and support any ethnic Hungarian candidate who was "authentic" in their demands for Hungarian autonomy. Toro confirmed that the intent was to promote a more radical stance on the part of both parties. (Note: UDMR foreign affairs advisor Kinga Papp-Tontsch recently told us that the reason for Tokes' studied neutrality was more personal, since his falling out with PCM President Jenő Szász).

6. (C) Toro also described the "special relationship" between the PCR and Basescu, noting that Basescu had been instrumental in the PCM's being able to register as a new political party over the objections of the UDMR. He said that while Basescu's motivation might have been to divide and control the ethnic Hungarian bloc, the upshot was a more pluralistic system for the Magyar minority. Whatever the outcome of the fall parliamentary election, the Hungarians would be "flexible" enough to play their traditional "kingmaker" role by allying with the party or group of parties most likely to form a government.

7. (C) Comment: It is likely that no ethnic-Hungarian political strategy will develop as hoped. The effort by the ethnic Hungarians to be politically relevant through a more radicalized platform favoring autonomy will be a deterrent to the mainstream parties without some "quid pro quos" on support for a mainstream (read: not Hungarian-centric) platform. The traditional flexibility of the ethnic-Hungarian political leadership also probably will come into play by the time of the national elections, leading either the UDMR or the PCM to ally with a more mainstream party and thus splitting their electoral power, or force the two Hungarian camps to unite in a brokered deal that would likely further empower the Basescu camp through his PCM proxies. End Comment.

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, SOCI, KDEM, SCUL, RO

SUBJECT: SPLITTING THE ETHNIC HUNGARIAN VOTE: COURT
GREENLIGHTS UDMR RIVAL PARTY

1. (SBU) Summary. On January 29, after four years of delays, the Bucharest Court registered a new political party representing ethnic Hungarians, the Hungarian Civic Party (PCM). The new party aims to provide an alternative to Romania's Democratic Alliance of Ethnic Hungarians (UDMR), seen by some as a corrupt party whose leaders have abandoned the Hungarian community's interests in favor of their own. Until now, the UDMR has been the only significant party representing Romania's approximately 1.5 million ethnic Hungarians. The organization has supported or participated in every government, regardless of orientation, since the fall of communism. Since its establishment in 2004, the PCM has been a proponent of the territorial autonomy of the so-called "Szeklerland." The new party, overtly backed by President Basescu, will run candidates in upcoming local elections and may seek to negotiate joint slates with the UDMR in the general elections. Although the PCM's emergence is a matter of serious concern for the UDMR, UDMR sources disagree on whether their party would cooperate with the PCM for the general elections. If the two ethnic Hungarian parties run separately in the parliamentary elections, the split of the ethnic Hungarian vote, amounting to about six percent, may bar the ethnic group's representation in Parliament. End Summary.

2. (U) On January 29, the Bucharest Court finally approved the registration of the PCM, a new party for ethnic Hungarians, which hopes to provide an alternative to the UDMR. Jenó Szász, the PCM's leader and mayor of Odorheiul Secuiesc, holds radical views and fiercely supports the autonomy of ethnic Hungarians. The PCM's avowed goal is to secure the autonomy of the "Szeklerland," a primarily ethnic Hungarian region including Harghita, Covasna, and Mures Counties. The PCM eagerly awaits their share of the funds that the Romanian government normally gives to the UDMR. In 2004, the UDMR allegedly tried to prevent PCM's registration and the party has faced declining support and charges of corruption among its leaders. Ethnic Hungarian opposition leaders accuse the UDMR of sacrificing party values and hopping into bed with any ruling party or coalition. For the first time since the fall of communism, UDMR's monopoly over ethnic Hungarian voters is genuinely challenged.

3. (SBU) Basescu has openly supported the PCM, evidenced by the president's repeated visits to Szász' fiefdom last spring. After last November's European Parliament elections, Basescu promised support for independent ethnic Hungarian Europarliamentarian László Tókes, who entered the European Parliament with the support of the PCM and other ethnic Hungarian groups allied against UDMR. UDMR leaders allege that Basescu is intent on splitting the ethnic Hungarian population, thus removing UDMR's hold on Parliamentary representation and gaining revenge against the UDMR for supporting his suspension last May. After the PCM's registration, UDMR Executive President Hunor Kelemen declared that, besides the Liberal Democratic Party (PD-L), President Basescu now "has an ethnic Hungarian party as well."

4. (U) Last year, the PCM supported an unofficial National Szekler Council-sponsored referendum on the autonomy of the Szeklerland in areas with a majority ethnic Hungarian population. Proponents of Szeklerland autonomy have repeatedly drawn parallels between their situation and Kosovo's, calling for the adoption of a law of Szeklerland autonomy. Presumably feeling the pressure of PCM competition in the upcoming local elections, UDMR deputy Antal Arpad Andras recently stated that ethnic Hungarians "should use efficiently the manner in which the situation of Kosovo is resolved." Independent Europarliamentarian László Tókes spoke in favor of the Szeklerland autonomy; however, tempering his statement with the clarification that he did not mean independence, "even if Kosovo might create a precedent in this regard."

4. (SBU) The PCM plans to put forth its own candidates in the local elections, although Szász would not rule out cooperation with the UDMR in some localities.

The UDMR, dismissing PCM's attempts to be viewed as an equal partner for years, predicted that the PCM would not stand a chance in either the local or general elections because the party lacks "charismatic personalities." The UDMR plans to take advantage of developing cracks in PCM leadership to attract defections from the new party's ranks.

5. (SBU) Comment: The upcoming local elections, likely in June, will test PCM's mettle. If the party wins a significant percentage of the ethnic Hungarian vote, the UDMR would likely be forced to accept the PCM as a partner for the general elections. The vote percentage garnered by PCM would determine its hand in negotiations with the UDMR. If the parties win fairly equal percentages and refuse to run joint slates, intramural competition could shut both out of Parliament. End Comment.

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SUBJECT: ELECTION-TIME ANGER, ANGST IN HUNGARIAN-MAJORITY
REGIONS

Classified By: DCM JERI GUTHRIE-CORN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

Summary

1. (C) During a recent visit to ethnic Hungarian areas in Transylvania, UDMR leaders said they would join a new government no matter which party won the elections. However, they admitted the PD-L was not their first choice as a coalition partner due to conflicts over the issue of Hungarian autonomy in Transylvania. While confident that the UDMR will surpass the five percent threshold needed to enter Parliament, they worry about increasing polarization, apathy, and radicalization among Romania's ethnic Hungarians. Meanwhile, ethnic Romanian leaders--a distinct minority in Covasna and Harghita counties--are disappointed in the central government and distrustful of their Hungarian counterparts. Nevertheless, the ethnic Romanian electorate remains so politically divided that their candidates may not win in districts where they still comprise the majority. In the more mixed county of Mures, the PNL is attempting to make inroads by fielding Hungarian speaking candidates, while the PD-L mayor of the county capital, Targu Mures, has made it a point to work with the Hungarian minority. The relatively prosperous city of Targu Mures offers a more hopeful--but not perfect--model of interethnic cooperation and tolerance in an otherwise politically tense region. End Summary.

2. (U) Poloff and FSN visited the Transylvanian counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mures on November 18-21 to speak with local government officials, party leaders, candidates, religious leaders, academics and NGOs about the upcoming Romanian

parliamentary elections. Covasna county (population 222,000) is 74 percent ethnic Hungarian and 24 percent ethnic Romanian; its capital is economically-depressed Sfantu Gheorghe, a windswept town of 61,000 ringed by communist housing blocs. Harghita county (326,000) is 85 percent ethnic Hungarian and 14 percent ethnic Romanian, the largest percentage in the country. Its well-planned but frigid capital of Miercurea Ciuc (42,000) hosts Romania's first and largest Hungarian-speaking University, and the country's best hockey team. The ethnic balance is quite different in Mures County (580,000), with a majority of ethnic Romanian residents (55 percent to 40 percent ethnic Hungarian). Similarly proportioned is its capital of Targu Mures, a clean, prosperous city of 146,000 that would not feel out of place in northern Europe.

UDMR Declares It Will Join New Government

3. (C) Leaders of the largest ethnic Hungarian party in the country, the UDMR, told us unequivocally the party would join the ruling governing coalition regardless of whether the new government was led by the PSD, PD-L or PNL. "Our opinion is that we can do much more for Hungarians by being in administrative positions," said Sf. Gheorghe Mayor Antal Arpad. Added Covasna County Council President Tamas Sandor, "the key is how many guarantees we'll have for our wish list. If I'm a lawyer, my goal is to sign a contract. I don't care when or with whom, I just want to sign the contract."

4. (C) When pressed if they had a preference, our interlocutors admitted that the PD-L was their least-preferred partner. "We had a negative experience cooperating with the President Basescu's Party" said Sandor. The PD-L "hasn't kept its promises" regarding development in the Hungarian-dominated regions, Harghita County Council President Csaba Boboly told us in a separate meeting. "This is a widely held viewpoint in the UDMR." Moreover, the UDMR feels let down by the failure of the PD-L to support a bill addressing cultural autonomy for Hungarians despite Basescu's promises, Csaba explained (septel). According to UDMR officials in all three counties, the UDMR's best case scenario is for the tightest possible race among the PNL, PD-L and PSD in order to maximize its own bargaining power. While Boboly admits that the UDMR has "collaborated well with all of them," the PNL may be the preferred coalition partner, Boboly said.

Ethnic Hungarian Expectations - and Divisions

5. (C) Currently polling between 6 and 7 percent nationally, the UDMR has been a member of the government for the prior 12 years and is perceived by ethnic

Hungarians and Romanians alike as the more pragmatic—and corrupt--of the ethnic-based parties. Arpad declared there was "no doubt" the UDMR would surpass the 5 percent threshold required to enter Parliament. The new uninominal rules were not likely to impact the UDMR in areas with strong ethnic Hungarian majorities (Covasna and Harghita) or solid minorities (Mures). However, the UDMR would suffer in areas with smaller ethnic Hungarian minorities, Arpad explained. "Under the previous system, in counties where ethnic Hungarians are a small minority, we would get at least one representative to parliament because of party lists," he said. "In this system, we'll never get one from the smaller regions. Smaller parties are sidelined now."

6. (C) The Hungarian Civil Party (PCM), a small spin-off from the UDMR, feels especially sidelined. The PCM formed when disaffected UDMR members concluded the party was not pursuing Hungarian autonomy with sufficient zeal (septel). "The UDMR always mentions autonomy at election time. There are no actual concrete steps. Autonomy becomes a rubber bone for the dog - the voter, "a member of the PCM-affiliated National Szekler Council told us in a meeting in Sf. Gheorghe city. UDMR corruption while in the Government and general inattention to local communities "provoked the creation of the Civic Party," said a CSM member: "Now, the UDMR is trying to re-create a monopoly as a single party. We sat down and proposed an electoral alliance with them. They rejected our proposal. They didn't want to cooperate with us...Their purpose is not to create pluralism among Hungarians in Romania."

7. (C) With no UDMR agreement in hand, the PCM debated whether to run candidates at all. Local PCM leaders in Sf. Gheorghe wanted to do so, but were overruled by the PCM National Board, which decided instead to support six independent candidates. This decision resulted from "the hysteria created by the UDMR that we're creating a schism and endangering parliamentary representation for Hungarians in Romania," said a local PCM leader. "We don't have high expectations from these elections in terms of entering Parliament or addressing autonomy. Lacking financial resources, it's difficult to run. It's even tougher to have candidates in other regions where we're a small minority." A Sf. Gheorghe PCM official chimed in, " But here in town, we're frustrated. We feel we could have won under our party banner." (Comment: under the uninominal electoral rules requiring 50% plus one vote, the independent candidates have little hope of victory. Arpad, the UDMR mayor of Sf. Gheorghe, told us matter-of-factly "none of them will enter Parliament." End Comment).

....And Angst

8. (C) The UDMR-PCM split has demoralized the ethnic Hungarian community, we were repeatedly told. UDMR officials expected low turnout across the three counties, with estimates at 40-45 percent. "This region traditionally has a higher turnout than other areas, " said Sandor. "This time we think it will be the same as the rest of the country. The Hungarian Civic Party's emergence is not giving us additional votes, of course. Their political discourse is highly negative, which leads to greater absenteeism." Nemes Elod, President of the Association of Hungarian Youth, agreed. "Since the Civic Party is not running but only backing independents, there is widespread apathy among youth because of the sense that there's no competition." In the ethnic Hungarian-dominated Covasna and Harghita counties, campaigning has been slow. Most towns in these two counties have only one candidate - the UDMR representative, with no apparent ethnic Romanian or Hungarian Civic Party competitors. In the county capitals of Sf. Gheorghe and Miercurea Ciuc, we saw virtually no evidence of the campaign, save for the occasional UDMR poster. The ethnic Hungarian-majority villages that cling to Transylvania's twisting, two-lane highways displayed more campaign posters, but the vast majority of them were UDMR.

9. (C) Do most ethnic Hungarians blame the UDMR for not bringing benefits to the county? Do they blame the Civic Party for exacerbating the split? According to Miercurea Ciuc Mayor Robert Raduly (UDMR), neither. "Villagers here have a fatalistic view. Life is tough and we have to survive. We can solve problems by ourselves. Urban residents are more exposed to the consumer economy, and yearn for higher standards." As a result, the UDMR has maintained strong levels of support in the countryside, where officials can more easily campaign door-to-door, while the Civic Party has made some inroads in the larger towns, where life is a bit less of a struggle and issues like autonomy are debated. Still, "the Civic Party is merely a 'protest vote' for Hungarians...They're not a problem for the UDMR here. The big problem for us is turnout, explained Boboly, the Harghita County Council President. "We need a high turnout with a majority, so votes can be redistributed to other districts."

The Mood Worsens: Ethnic Romanians Suspicious, Irritated and Divided

10. (C) PD-L Deputy Petre Strachinaru, the only ethnic Romanian MP in Covasna county, told us "We're just pretending to run a campaign here. Romanians know we'll lose." He painted a bleak portrait of the ethnic Romanian situation in Covasna and Harghita counties. Most ethnic Romanians were disgruntled, fed up with the

ethnic Hungarians who claimed to represent them and with ethnic Romanian national politicians who ignored their plight. "Here, the problems are much larger than the rest of the country. We have a high unemployment rate, among the highest nation wide. Investment per capita decreased in 2007. Salaries are lower here," Strachinaru explained. Advancing a view we heard from other ethnic Romanian politicians in the region, Strachinaru blamed UDMR politicians for subverting development in order to preserve the Hungarian ethnic advantage; too many job opportunities, the thinking goes, would open the gates to an ethnic Romanian flood and leave the ethnic Hungarians in the minority. "The PD-L has stated all of this publicly. We've promised to bring some funding to the county." The PD-L also stands to benefit from a recent Basescu visit to Covasna county. "He's the only head of state who came here during his term. Ethnic Hungarians love him for that. During the referendum debate [regarding Basescu's suspension], the UDMR voted for the suspension but the population here overwhelmingly was against it."

11. (C) When asked if UDMR participation in a governing coalition with the PD-L would improve matters, Strachinaru equivocated. Non-participation of the UDMR in the government would radicalize its supporters and enflame tensions between ethnic Romanians and ethnic Hungarians, he said. On the other hand, the UDMR had little to show for the last decade-plus it has been in the government. Encapsulating a view we heard from ethnic Romanians elsewhere, he asked rhetorically "Nothing has been done here. Why should they [the UDMR] be in the government?"

12. (C) Perhaps more frustrating to a cross-section of ethnic Romanians than the UDMR leadership was their own inability to unite around a single ethnic Romanian political party. Romanian Orthodox Bishop Ioan Stelejan of Covasna and Harghita counties told us political divisions had prevented ethnic Romanians from emerging as an electoral force in his two county region; ethnic Romanians knew it, and felt ignored as a result. In contrast, he continued, the ethnic Hungarian population remained disciplined and will vote for the UDMR. Even in areas where the ethnic Romanians are in the majority – one voting district in Harghita and Covasna counties – the ethnic Romanian parties have put up their own candidates, thereby dividing the vote. "It's possible none of them will get to Parliament," Stelejan said. PSD Deputy Mircea Dusa, the only ethnic Romanian MP from Harghita County, is running in the one ethnic Romanian majority district in Harghita county. His competition is fierce, he told us in Miercurea Ciuc before rushing back to his district. "The 40 percent of the ethnic Hungarians that make up the district will vote UDMR. And it's too late for some accord among the

remaining three ethnic Romanian parties to horse-trade to ensure a Romanian victory in a ethnic Romanian-majority area." A similar phenomenon may occur in Mures county, where ethnic Romanians comprise a 55 percent majority. Dorin Florea, the PD-L Mayor of Tirgu Mures, the county capital, predicted the same outcome county-wide: the 40 percent of county that was ethnic Hungarian would vote UDMR, while the PD-L, PSD and PNL would divide up the remainder.

Cooler Heads in Mures County

13. (C) Time and time again, local ethnic Romanian politicians in Covasna and Harghita counties complained that their ethnic Hungarian counterparts were raising the issue of Hungarian autonomy to stir up ethnic Hungarian voters. "The media here are controlled by ethnic Hungarian politicians," said Harghita County Prefect Strujan. "They transmit the messages the politicians want and the don't inform locals what the Romanian state does for them. This is very harmful." Dusa separately told us that "ordinary folks in the county don't have many conflicts with each other. The problems emerge with the politicians....of course, minority Romanians are irritated." Targu Mures Mayor Dorin Florea (PD-L) echoed these thoughts: "The UDMR leaders try to keep the population ignorant. They're not interested in infrastructure, economics, real issues." Governing in a mixed city, the mayor selected an ethnic Hungarian deputy mayor, "and now he's under pressure from the UDMR not to cooperate with me. It's outrageous that we have important projects concerning infrastructure and real estate here and we have no UDMR ministers or parliamentarians trying to implement those projects. Instead, they encourage their NGOs to block them."

14. (SBU) Nevertheless, Mures Deputy County Prefects Zamfira Pora (PNL) and Gyozzo Baczi (UDMR) described a "voter friendly" campaign in their county that lacked the aggressive tone in the neighboring ethnic Hungarian-majority counties of Harghita and Covasna. "There have been small attacks against opponents but not nationalistic attacks," said Mures County Council President Eموke Lokodi (UDMR). "Nothing outrageous." Ethnic Hungarians in Targu Mures City "have more problems with the Hungarian candidates here than with the Romanian candidates here. Now, we have fights between Hungarians and Hungarians and between Romanians and Romanians," Lokodi said. Interestingly, cross fertilization has begun. The ethnic Romanian parties are playing on the UDMR-PCM split to capture Hungarian voters, while the UDMR is seeking to attract ethnic Romanian voters because as ethnic Hungarian divisions have weakened the UDMR in certain districts, even that of UDMR President Marko Bela. "Imagine! There are bilingual posters on both sides!" Pora said.

15. (SBU) The PNL, in particular, has been at the forefront of fielding ethnic Hungarian candidates. Many of these Hungarian PNL candidates are virtual unknowns. "A danger that arises -- but is not of concern yet -- is that this will confuse some of our voting base," Pora said, referring to ethnic Romanian PNL supporters. One thing remains certain, though: the Romanian parties in Mures County are in intense competition and remain divided. The Hungarians should win here, Pora predicted, but since they comprised only 40 percent of the county, they would need Romanian assistance to govern. The need to build coalitions means that there may be more contact between Romanians and Hungarians in Mures county than in deeply divided Harghita and Covasna Counties. "Here we try to understand each other as people, not just based on our political affiliations." Pora said. "Targu Mures is a small city," said Smaranda Enache, President of the NGO Pro Europa League. "People have to find a way to cooperate, and they generally do."