

**Revising the Picture on “Successful” Hungarian Ethnic Advocacy in the U.S.  
Nation Concept of Hungarian American Diaspora Organizations and its Implications for the  
Choices of Advocacy Goals and Strategies**

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## **Introduction**

This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the operating dynamics of Hungarian American ethnic groups who advocated for Hungarian minority communities living in Romania during the Cold War. It will accomplish this by evaluating reasons for the choice of goals and strategies made by ethnic groups and in so doing it will show a clearer picture of “successful” ethnic lobbying carried out by Hungarian Americans. The literature on ethnic advocacy tends to focus on the conditions leading to achieving influence. Despite the growing leverage of Eastern European communities on U.S. legislation from the 1970s onwards, there seems to be an agreement between researchers that there were few exceptions during the Cold War era that Eastern European ethnic advocacy had a real impact on the decisions of U.S. foreign policy regarding Eastern European bloc countries. (Garrett, 1978, Weed, 1973) Less attention has been given to the rationale behind specific goals being chosen or why they followed and applied strategies and techniques that ultimately proved to be advantageous (or disadvantageous) for their objectives.

While the Communist regime of Hungary “followed the policy of official silence”, or – as Ludányi puts it, it suffered from “programmed amnesia” – (1995, cited by Warebury, 2010, p. 38), diaspora members still remained concerned regarding their co-ethnics living beyond the borders of Hungary. Each successive Hungarian immigration wave to the United States had different causes and purposes of emigration and different attitudes towards Hungary and Hungarian identity, thereby preserved a special organizational culture operating within its own network, reflecting its own claims and needs. They mostly failed to be able to cooperate with each other and with the next waves of immigrants. (Papp Z., 2008, cited by Kovács, p. 6)

While scholarly attention thus far has focused on the results achieved by second-generation Hungarian Americans advocating Romanian Hungarian minority groups, especially on the activities of HHRF (Kovács, 2017), this paper will highlight the differences in the values of various generations of Hungarian Americans. It attempts to prove that some of the organizations founded by first-generation diaspora members also had some less spectacular outcomes in affecting policy. More than a decade before the Helsinki Process some of them framed their arguments in terms of human rights, but others remained rooted in a nationalistic stance even long afterward. Therefore, not all their aims served the long-term interests of the very community they wanted to advocate for.

The paper begins with a theoretical introduction, followed by a historical account of advocacy activities in the U.S. for the Hungarian minority groups in Romania in a chronological order from the 1960s to the suspension of the country’s Most-Favored-Nation status in 1987. The third section of the study will elaborate on the background of these developments. It will analyse the underlying philosophy guiding the leaders of Hungarian American organizations and the nation concept of these diaspora groups: their relationship to both their homeland and their ethnic brethren in the neighboring countries. Furthermore, it also discusses

advocacy goals and strategies followed by each organization. The summary will discuss how these goals and strategies interrelated with each of these background philosophies. The paper does not, however, attempt to uncover the reasons for mobilization of Hungarian American masses which would be a distinct research topic.

### **Ethnic Lobbying versus Diaspora Political Activities: A Theoretical Overview**

Ways of defining diaspora are widespread in the literature of both social and political science. While some researchers define diaspora groups as ethnic minorities living in countries which neighbor their home country (e.g. Waterbury, 2010), most researchers refer to diaspora as communities formed as a result of migration, scattered in various countries far away from their homeland. Up until the 1960s, the term was built upon the classic example, mostly limited to the religious realm. Since then, the definition has undergone significant changes and acquired a more positive meaning: it has become secularized and the original cultural identity of migrants was no longer considered by social scientists “to be something that was bound to disappear”. Diaspora became a word capable of describing “the world of the past as well as the contemporary world”, “the state as well as the network”. (Dufoix, 2008, p. 1366-1368). According to Brubaker, nowadays we can experience the “diaspora” of the diaspora. He thinks of diaspora rather as “a category of practice, project, claim, and stance, rather than a bounded group” (Brubaker, 2005).

Regarding the political activities of diaspora groups, positivist conceptualizations have so far dominated the field, viewing diasporas as multigenerational groups of migrants who share a similar identity and maintain recurrent contacts with their country of origin. (Koinova, 2010, p. 150) These positivist methods mostly use the term “ethnic lobby”. They concentrate on the processes of assimilation, on the migrant group’s connections with the host country

while preserving ties to their homelands. They particularly focus on the conditions leading to success in lobbying activities as well as the reasons for their failure. While some of these researchers consider ethnic lobbying to be a threat to the host country's national interests – as do Samuel P. Huntington, Tony Smith Bruce Robbins, Arthur M. Schlesinger – others regard ethnic lobbies as beneficial for the United States – as Yossi Shain or Thomas Ambrosio (Kovács, 2013, p. 203-204). Accounts of both of these sides, however, mostly regard diasporas – referring to them as ethnic groups – as unitary actors of elites with a shared identity. They examine correlations and causality between dependent and independent variables. (Koinova, 2010, p. 150) and stress a number of different factors as conditions for success.

Tony Smith argues that because Congressional elections are crucial for gaining influence, the distribution of their members in a congressional district and their ability raise funds for campaigns is crucial to winning over Congress members to their cause. They also have to present organizational unity by creating cohesion, tackling opposing ideas and personal rivalries, and ensuring ideological consensus within the organization. Additionally, they must elaborate a well-established political agenda, find allies and to be able to formulate a winning strategy. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of reaching the American public opinion, to have good ties with media outlets, and closely monitoring and defining the policy-making process, which is mostly possible through the legislative and not through the executive branch. (Smith, 2000)

Patrick J. Haney and Walt Vanderbush lay out the following conditions for success: *organizational strength* (unity, professional lobbying apparatus and financial resources), *membership unity, placement and active voter participation, assimilation into American society* while *having intensive ties to the homeland*, being able to win over the host country's public ("*salience and resonance of the message*"), promoting goals that are already in the

government's political agenda ("*pushing on an open door*"), being able to access the government, whether it is open or not ("*permeability of and access to the government*"), establishing *mutually supportive relationships* between themselves and policymakers. (1999, p. 344-346)

In their book David M. Paul and Rachel A. Paul (2009) define four main methods interest groups can use to effectively alter politics: *direct lobbying* (by persuading politicians to support the groups causes in exchange for ethnic votes and information, p. 60-62), *indirect or grassroots lobbying* (by mobilizing their membership through mass demonstrations to exert pressure on politicians to listen to constituents, by influencing media, by forming and financing research groups and fact-finding missions, p. 63), *coalition building* (with executive and legislative branch, other agencies, media and other interest groups to build common strategies, implement policies together, p. 65-66) and *monitoring policy-making process* to understand current political processes and find ways for influence (p. 66).

In contrast to positivist theories, constructivist approaches draw out more complexity, through inquiry. For instance, how diasporas emerge, who belongs to them, how identities affect the political world or are affected by it. (Koinova, 2010, p. 150). These approaches suggest placing diaspora groups in the transnational field and examining their complex interconnections.

Gabriel Sheffer emphasizes that the triadic relationships among the diasporic communities, the host land, and the homeland, influence the identity of a diasporic group. He sees political engagement as a formulation of strategic and tactical policies and their implementation and considers it to be a key to group identity formation. He also believes that diaspora communities contribute to both positive and negative inputs to their four-sided

connections among homelands, host lands, international organizations and brethren residing in other host lands. (Sheffer, 2006, p. 131, cited by Singh-Singh, 2008, p. 154)

Other researchers examine diaspora elites as independent political actors. Michel Laguerre identifies the diaspora as “the locus of a new form of political practices”, which “allows to establish the linkages between the diaspora and host-land politics, between the diaspora and homeland politics, and between diasporic communities in various sites”. According to him, research should document how diaspora politics affects all of these elements while contributing to the integration of the diaspora into the receiving country. He states that “ethnic politics” is just one of these components that “should not be subsumed incorrectly under the rubric of domestic politics or international relations”. He sees diasporas’ political agents as “cosmopolitan politicians who straddle and participate in two political systems or more”. According to him, the diasporic political system is a system that “does not have a fixed territorial space but has an evolving form of governance without a government”. (2006, p. 2-3) This latter perspective is also stressed by Milan and Anita Singh who argue that – as in the case of general lobby groups who represent only a part of their potential membership – the political representation of diaspora communities cannot claim to be directly mandated by the populace. It is rather directed by various opinion leaders from the community. (2008, p. 155) Laguerre thinks that diasporic lobbying implies three different processes: the willingness of the “diasporan to engage in politics in the host-land on behalf of the homeland”, “the interaction of the diasporan with host-land political actors and institutions”, and “the interaction of the diasporan with homeland political actors and institutions”. (2006, p. 74) Besides those lobbying methods described by Paul and Paul cited above, Laguerre also calls attention to the distinction between “cold” and “hot” lobbying. While the former consists of contacting elected officials in the hope of changing their minds

or influencing them and is a long-term commitment, *hot lobbying* is done for immediate result and is accompanied by mass demonstrations to attract public attention. He also distinguishes between *positive* and *negative lobbying*. By the former, he means action taken by activists to ask officials of the government of the host-land to engage in activities they consider beneficial to the people. In the case of *negative lobbying* officials are asked “to stop doing beneficial activities vis-à-vis the home-country” or “to adopt a negative stand vis-à-vis the homeland’s government”. (2006, p. 99-100)

Eva Østergaard-Nielsen uses the term *transnational political practices* defining them as “various forms of direct cross border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees, as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country or international organizations”. These can take the form of *immigration-, homeland-, diaspora- and translocal politics*. (2003, p. 21-22) She thinks that when examining these activities, we have to consider the followings: *mode of migration* (the given diaspora’s path into the host-land: refugees who left on a collective bases take a more active political stance than migrants who left on an individual basis), the *length of its stay* in the host country (the number of generations it has been functioning: second and third generation tend to involve in the politics of the host country rather than in homeland politics), *migrant’s structural* (societal and economic) *position in the host country* (contexts that are less receptive of immigrants tend to encourage a stronger identification with the homeland) and the *political opportunity structure* for migrants’ political participation in the host country (more open political structures can contribute to the institutionalization of ethnic organizations, while closed ones contribute to the development of the transnational aspect of diasporic political practices). (2003, p. 18-21) Furthermore, she also challenges the term ethnic lobby success, arguing that “to measure transnational networks’ effectiveness in terms of

their ability to influence changes in government behavior only, is too ambitious and narrow a yardstick for success". Therefore, she suggests to establish other criteria: according to her, the establishment of channels of dialogue between political groups and political representatives and institutions of the host country in itself can be a measure of effectiveness. (2003, p. 30)

Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth argue that both constructivist and liberal approaches are important when examining diaspora political activities. According to them, a diaspora's "identity is not the starting point to be captured to influence interests, practices, and policies; identity is both the starting and the end point" (2003, p. 455). I.e. diasporic communities attempt to maintain their home-state national identity because their interest is to maintain their self-image in the host-state. Therefore, their identity is flexible, they have a certain readiness to maintain "their ethnonational identities in their host countries... and support their homelands". (Sheffer, 2003, 78, cited by Singh-Singh, 2008, p. 154)

Furthermore, as Dufoix put it, political exiles live in a different space and time than the rest of the nation. They cannot afford to have contacts with the homeland territory, and most often refuses it because they consider any such contact with the territory, they are fighting for to represent the recognition of the present situation. Therefore, "their politics can only develop if they organize suspension of time and space, as though neither were linked to the homeland anymore". During the modern period, however, space has become more and more independent of time. This potential "double presence" explains also the reasons for second-generation's involvement in homeland affairs. (Dufoix, 2008, p. 1369-1370)

With no intention to argue with the necessity of examining the conditions of success of diaspora politics with positivist approaches, this paper aims to reconcile different paradigms and contribute also to the understanding of the background of advocacy activities. In the case of the Hungarian Americans we can find that each of the organizations founded by

different migration waves reflect a unique political history and circumstances of their home country which also left a strong mark on their ways of thinking, their ability to adapt to their host countries, and thereby on the form of their political activism.<sup>1</sup> Their strategies were influenced not only by their host land, by the practices and opportunities offered by international organizations, but also by two homelands at the same time. Not only the political situation of Hungary and Romania, but the fate of Romania's Hungarian minority and their continuously evolving network influenced their political behavior. Thus, to be able to understand advocacy practices in depth, besides evaluating paths to success, the paper will also examine the background of their political agents, who acted on behalf of the diaspora organizations in the complex interconnections of a continuously changing transnational political arena.

## **History of Ethnic Advocacy During the Cold War**

### **Early Cold War era (1948-1968).**

Ethnic advocacy of the Hungarian minority in Romania in particular began to unfold from the early 1960s when émigrés who had left after WWII became politically more active. After WWII, a shift to the right in U.S. policy led to a ban on immigrating Communists as threats to national security, while right-wingers were allowed in. (Puskás, 2000, 283) Thus, the United States accepted a large number of displaced persons (DPs) from Europe (Verovsek, 2018, p. 154), whose organizations were funded by the U.S. in the framework of the plan of “organized political warfare” to counteract Soviet influence in Europe. (Kádár Lynn, 2013, p. 8) Both the fall of the Horthy regime in 1945 and of the first democratically elected government in 1947 forced a great number of Hungarians to migrate. (Puskás, 2000, p. 264-265) 1945-er immigrants were strong anti-Communists who represented “all shades of the deposed elite”.

Their organizations were mostly veteran military and local associations, the leaders of which were strongly committed to revisionist goals. (Puskás, 2000, p. 285 and Várdy, 2005, p. 251) The 1947-ers were also anti-communists but they had hopes for the establishment of democracy after the eviction of the Nazi occupiers. (Ludányi, 2014, p. 75-76). The first organization established with the goal to represent the Hungarian minority groups in Romania was the *American Transylvanian Association (ATA)*, founded in Cleveland in 1952 by 1945-er political émigrés. (Hermann, 2011, p. 7.)

The Hungarian freedom fight in 1956 marked an important turning point in ethnic advocacy for several reasons. Firstly, it triggered a new emigration wave that was characterized by being younger and from various societal backgrounds (Puskás, 2000, p. 271-274) By this time, Hungarian Americans were split into two major groups: a larger, more conservative cluster favoring the rejection of the Kádár-regime and a smaller cluster believing in the possibility of the erosion of the communist totalitarian system. Young 1956-er new arrivals and second-generation Hungarian Americans tried to find a path to connect with their homeland in a different way than earlier groups. They found a new organization independent from U.S. funding which marked a birth of a new diaspora consciousness from the late 1960s onwards. (Ludányi, 2014, p. 77-78) Secondly, Hungarian minority members in Romania were also exposed to political persecutions and imprisonments that alerted Hungarian American communities. New organizations were established and organizations found earlier became more active in the minority issue. A group of freedom fighters formed their own organization in 1956 in Cleveland, named *Committee of Transylvania (CT)* (Newspaper clipping, 1981, Teleki legacy). Furthermore, the official umbrella organization of Hungarian diaspora groups, the *American Hungarian Federation (AHF)*, originally founded in 1902, in the leadership of which

the “national” emigrants of 1945 and 1947 gained control by the 1960s (Puskás, 2000, p. 284), also turned to the cause. (Hermann, 2011, p. 28)

During the early 1960s, a large number of Hungarian organizations tried to gain support for the implementation of UN resolutions concerning Hungary in 1962. (Várdy, 1982, p. 179) In 1963 ATA used the public attention of the “Hungarian case” and worked together with human rights and left-wing Hungarian diaspora organizations to organize a press conference and to send memoranda to Secretary-General, U-Thant. Due to this, the UN put the question on the agenda that contributed to the amnesties granted to prisoners and deported persons to forced labor camps by the Romanian government. (Hermann, 2011, p. 54-56)

At the same time, ATA also attempted to draw the attention of U.S. officials together with AHF and to coordinate their efforts, they established the *Transylvanian Executive Committee* (TEC) in 1965. Advocacy activities were also encouraged by various reasons. Firstly, AHF called on to make efforts to gain influence in political parties and to affect policies from within the system, and the Republican Party had decided to win over ethnic votes, that were traditionally owned by the Democratic Party.<sup>2</sup> (Várdy, 1982, p. 178) Secondly, although U.S.-Romanian economic relations began to expand due to the liberal trade policies of the Kennedy and Johnson cabinets, the majority of Congress and Senate members remained still anti-Communists (Courtney-Harrington, p. 207-211 and p. 233). Information campaigns to the legislative branch were launched in joint efforts of the organizations, during which Western newspaper articles about the Hungarian minority were used to back up arguments in 1964 through 1965.<sup>3</sup> (Hermann, 2011, p. 59-60) Due to this, several Congress members from both parties proposed resolutions, in favor of the political amnesties of the Hungarian minority members.<sup>4</sup> (Hermann, 2011, p. 40)

Furthermore, organizations tried to seize every opportunity to draw the attention of State Secretary officials to the persecution of Hungarians in Romania and pleaded to the executive branch for linking human rights to trade negotiations. AHF and smaller organizations<sup>5</sup> had opportunities to express concerns during official visits at the State Department from 1962 onwards. (Száz, 1988, p. 73) In 1963 ATA drew the attention of the President, the State Department but their answers remained blunt. Nevertheless, it is also known that State department officials brought up the cause of political imprisonments and the basic human rights issues in general during informal talks with Romania. (Hermann, 2011, p. 50-53) ATA and AHF pleaded directly and indirectly<sup>6</sup> to President Johnson and State Secretary Dean Rusk to link the guarantee for the respect for human rights of Hungarians in Romania to trade concessions from 1964 to 1966, in vain. (Hermann, 2011, p. 58, p. 61-62, Száz, 1988, p. 73) Although the government was reluctant to link the improvement of human rights records to trade concessions, the pressure of the anti-Communist majority of the Houses contributed to the fact that Most-Favored-Nation status was not granted to Romania until 1975. (Mount, 2011, p. 120-121) In this regard, ethnic organizations “pushed an open door” in their lobbying activities in this era, nevertheless, they were not able to reach significant changes in the political direction of the U.S. regarding trade relations with the Soviet satellite.

### **Détente years (1969-1980).**

From 1968 onwards new obstacles were placed in the way of the advocacy of the Romanian Hungarian minority. Romania’s non-involvement in the Warsaw Pact countries’ invasion of Czechoslovakia implicated that she was increasingly being regarded positive in the eyes of Western political leaders. A growing number of journals and the U.S. embassy in

Bucharest reported that the situation of the Hungarian minority would have eased, that increased authority would have been granted to them, and that there would have been a “gradual liberalization” in the field of human rights. This also coupled with other foreign policy priorities of the State Department: Secretary of State Kissinger saw a possibility in Romania to intermediate between them and the Chinese People’s Republic and Romania was also the only one in the Soviet bloc that established diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany and did not sever relations with Israel after the Arab-Israeli War. (Mount, 2011, p. 101-103, p. 123)

Therefore, no substantive progress could be made from 1968-1974: there were vain attempts by AHF leaders to protests against the U.S.-Romanian agreement to build a nuclear plant in 1968 that was regarded by them as a threat to the security of the U.S. and to the Hungarian minority (Száz, 1988, p. 70), and to persuade Kissinger and Brzezinski about the importance of the issue in 1969 (Hermann, 2011, p. 70).

Meanwhile, an internal split emerged between the diaspora communities aiming to advocate Hungarian minorities in Romania. In 1974 two non-American diaspora organization decided to reorganize Hungarian emigration for the more effective advocacy of Transylvanian Hungarians, and they aimed to establish an umbrella organization to coordinate actions throughout the Western world under the name *Transylvanian World Federation* (TWF). Its founders contacted ATA but its leader, Béla Teleki refused the cooperation on the grounds that the ideologies of their organizations were so far from each other that it was impossible to unite their activities in one entity. Another reason for the split was the issue of free emigration for ethnic Hungarians. After the Soviet Union rejected the offer of Most-Favored-Nation status in 1972, talks with Romania began about its Most-Favored-Nation status during the Nixon government in 1974. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 381) Romania accepted the

linkage between trade and free emigration of Jewish people (Weiner, 1988, p. 134), the Jackson-Vanik Amendment (Section 402) that had originally been prepared for the Soviet Union by two Senators. During the talks, TWF leader Albert Wass sent a memorandum to President Ford in late 1974 pleading for the right of free emigration of all ethnic minorities and for the right of family reunifications of U.S. citizens (Hermann, 2011, p. 83). At the same time, AHF persuaded Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) to propose Section 409, a so-called “technical amendment” to Jackson-Vanik, promoting free emigration of very close relatives of persons residing in the United States from nonmarket countries seeking trade. (Hermann, 2011, p. 84, Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 389) Since many families have been torn apart across the Atlantic that concerned also U.S. citizens, too, the issue also called the State Department’s attention, thereby the technical amendments were accepted by the President together with Section 402. (Mount, 2011, p. 121)<sup>7</sup> ATA leader tried to counterbalance the damage he presumed TWF’s demand had caused. Having received letters that confirmed the Romanian authorities definitely encourage Hungarians to emigrate when they requested permission to leave the country for visits abroad, he sent a memorandum in 1975 to President Ford enumerating several discriminatory steps of the Romanian government. He also prepared a letter to Senators dealing with the Trade Agreement, arguing that the ease of the process of the emigration does not counterbalance the Romanian decrees violating human rights of Romanian minorities. Additionally, he argued that the elimination of discriminatory decrees should be a minimum condition of granting the MFN status for the country. (Hermann, p. 81-86) He also cooperated with AHF to advocate religious freedom at the Senate, due to which days before Congress approved MFN status for Romania, 38 Senators asked the President to link the guarantee of minority rights to the trade concessions. (Mount, 2011, p. 121)

Leaders of the U.S. and Romania signed the Helsinki Final Act in the course of the same year. In exchange for a renouncing of the use of force as a way of changing their boundaries, signatory countries committed themselves to human rights that allowed diaspora communities to use the provisions to challenge and undermine their home countries' governments. (Mount, 2011, p. 107) AHF persuaded 20 Congressmen to join the initiative of Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ) to establish the *Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (Száz, 1988, p. 71), a Congressional Commission that regularly oversaw the implementation of the Helsinki Accords and at which all major American Hungarian diaspora leaders testified each year from the time of its establishment.

This and the U.S.-Romanian Trade Agreement gave the main framework to raise awareness of human rights violations for ethnic groups. Section 402 of the Agreement namely permitted the President to waive the condition of free emigration for one year for any Communist country if he had received assurances that the practices of the country would lead substantially to the achievement of the objectives of free emigration. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 384) If the Houses disapproved the waiver of the President, MFN status would have been suspended. Therefore, both Houses held hearings before their Trade and Financial Committees before presenting resolutions and debates. Consequently, accepting the Jackson-Vanik Amendment "as a criterion for MFN, Romania unknowingly opened her internal politics to Congressional scrutiny". (Courtney, 1991, p. 389)

This coincided with troubling news about the deprivation of collective human rights of Hungarian communities in Romania. An article published in a Swiss journal, the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* in 1975 about Hungarians in Romania prompted the second-generation of American Hungarians to take action: in 1976 they published a full-page article unveiling the repressive policies of Romania and organized a mass demonstration for the coordination of which they

established the so-called *Committee for Human Rights in Romania* (CHRR). In close cooperation with ATA, its leaders gave regular testimonies at Hearings of various congressional subcommittees. After the appearance of their article, Congressman Ed Koch (D-NY) a firm believer of human rights negotiated with them about the issue and henceforth he was one of the strongest supporters of their case in Congress. (Kovács, 2017, p. 11) He also assisted them in getting in touch with the organization *Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry* (SSSJ) and with rabbi Jacob Birnbaum, another key ally in their struggle opposing MFN status. (Hermann, 2011, p. 91-92) In 1977, a Communist Hungarian minority leader, Károly Király protested against discriminative measures in Romania and his letter was smuggled to the West with the help of ATA and CHRR members. (Hámos, Margit, personal communication, August 2010) They used it to inform State Department officials and built it into their testimonies at Hearings and advocacy at Senators and Congressmen for resolutions denying the extension of MFN-status from Romania.<sup>8</sup> The main argument of their testimonies was that free emigration is just one of the many human rights but several others are denied from Romanian minorities. (Hermann, 2011, p. 95 and Kovács, 2017, p. 11) They were also able to get in touch with campaign manager of the presidential nominee, James Carter (HHRF Archive, 15/ 1090, p. 8.) through whom they further find important allies later in the government.

AHF members also recognized the opportunity of Congressional Hearings and gave regular testimonies at Hearings from 1975 onwards. In 1976 its foreign relations expert, Zoltán Száz persuaded 68 Congressmen to write letters to President Ford to directly negotiate the minority issue and the problem of family reunifications with Ceausescu and he also could reach that American ambassador, Henry Barnes invited him to Bucharest. He visited several Transylvanian towns and meet Hungarian minority leaders and gave an account of his journeys in his testimony<sup>9</sup> (Száz, 1988, p. 74). He also tried to persuade officials of the Kádár regime to

intervene at the Soviet Union on behalf of the Hungarian minority in Romania directly, through personal visits in Budapest, and indirectly, through the Hungarian referent of State Department, Thomas Gerth. The Hungarian government, however, reserved itself from such a cooperation. (Bottoni, 2016, p. 16-17)

After negotiations in April 1976 between US ambassador, Barnes and George Macovescu during which the Romanian Foreign Minister refused to talk about the situation of minorities (Bottoni, 2016, p. 8), State Department officials assuaged the fears of Congressmen by stating that restrictions apply to all Romanian citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 399)

Although human rights received higher priority during the Carter Administration, this ultimately did not affect Romanian-American relations. The Administration saw the yearly extension of the MFN status to exert international pressure on the Romanian government to improve her human rights record. It did not want to give up this opportunity, despite the growing need of the Congress to link the availability of foreign assistance programs with the given country's human rights practices. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 415-416, p. 433) Even though the policy of differentiation between Soviet bloc countries remained a priority of the economic policy of the Administration, some changes were still implemented: Carter appointed a black career diplomat as Romanian Ambassador that angered Ceausescu enormously, and set up the *Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs* headed by Patricia Derian, a civil rights activist (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 417), who became an important ally of CHRR. Besides its continued efforts to give testimonies at Hearings and persuade House members to present resolutions suggesting to suspend MFN status, CHRR continued to organize mass demonstrations, one of them on the event of Ceausescu's visit in New York City in 1978. At this time, CHRR ally and NYC mayor Ed Koch called Ceausescu upon

the Hungarian minority question and journalists brought him to book for the human rights practices of his regime at a press conference.<sup>10</sup> It was not by accident that this was the last time the Romanian leader visited the U.S. and began to take a defensive stance. (Bottoni, 2016, p. 26)

From 1979 moderate organizations (ATA, TC and the Alliance of Hungarians in Canada) established a working committee to coordinate their advocacy effort named *Coordinating Committee of the North American Transylvanian Organisations* (CCNATO). CHRR continued to inform high ranking State Department officials and the legislative branch about tortures of Hungarian intelligentsia and the internment of Károly Király. The presidential waiver of 1979 marked an important turning point. CHRR members disseminated Király's newest letters among Congressmen and Senators during congressional hearings, where ATA members gave testimonies, too. After the Hearings, Senator Richard Schulze presented a resolution to suspend MFN (H.R. 317) which was not adopted but had long-term consequences. (Courtney-Harrington, 470) Congress members wrote letters to Carter and Ceausescu indicating that although they accept the waiver, they are concerned about Romania's human rights practices. The President's answer to both letters indicated that he wanted to keep the issues of emigration and human rights apart from MFN status. (Courtney-Harrington, p. 459) CHRR's participation at the Helsinki follow-up meetings also helped to keep the issue at the foreground of U.S. Romanian relations, since Senators were also participants on these events. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 13) In 1980 they participated at the conference in Madrid, where the President also appointed two Hungarians in the official U.S. delegation. Due to their activities, the U.S. delegation mentioned the situation of the Hungarian minority and handed over a detailed summary based on evidence collected by CHRR. This was the first time that

the U.S. made an official claim in this regard at an international conference. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 32)

### **Second Cold War (1981-1989).**

By the end of 1980, even though U.S. Romanian trade had reached over one billion dollars, Romanian imports from the United States began to decline as Bucharest tried to reduce its growing foreign currency debt to the West (especially to the IMF) and reoriented its trade toward Soviet bloc. Growing Soviet pressures upon Romania's autonomy, the breakdown of détente, global economic recession and domestic mismanagement of Romania were the long-term destabilizing factors that ultimately led to the slow demise of the regime. (Weiner, 1988, p. 136)

From the beginning of the 1980s, AHF lobbyist, Zoltán Száz supported the idea of self-determination: 30 Congressmen supported H.R. 397 presented Gus Yatron (D-PA) that contained self-determination rights in 1982 and he persuaded 121 Congressmen to sign the letter of Robert Lagomarsino (R-CA) sent to State Secretary Haig asking for diplomatic negotiations between the two countries before the extension of the MFN status regarding the Hungarian minorities. Having received severe critiques from the State Department, neither was it brought up in U.S. Romanian talks, nor was it presented to the U.S. Helsinki Commission. (Száz, 1988, p. 77)

After the election of President Reagan, CHRR continued its efforts of direct lobbying. Encouraged by Richard Schulze's resolution in 1980, several people gave testimonies concerning the extent of religious persecution in Romania and continued impediments to Jewish emigration, thereby continuing the link between emigration and the larger issue of human rights. (Courtney-Harrington, p. 487) By 1981 this reached the Administration that

began to follow human rights situation in Romania from this year on, mainly due to the appointment of an anti-Communist as U.S. ambassador to Romania, David Funderburk. (Courtney-Harrington, p. 491) Another important factor that played a role in this turn of events was that Reagan nominated a new Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Elliot Abrams. CHRR managed to get an appointment for negotiation with him in December 1981, with the support of its important ally, the Hungarian born Congressman of Jewish origin, Tom Lantos. (HHRF Archive, 15/1090, p. 42) Partly due to these developments, this was the first year when Reagan included “humanitarian problems” in his note asking for the extension of MFN-status. (Kovács, 2017, p. 9)

At the beginning of the 1980s CHRR assisted the clandestine transfer of copies of the *Ellenpontok* [Counterpoints] samizdat journal from Romania to the West, the editors of which, Attila Ara-Kovács, Géza Szűcs were arrested, tortured and threatened with lawsuits of high treason. After the defection of his fellow editor, Attila Ara Kovács from Romania, CHRR developed a news service from Romania called *Hungarian Press of Transylvania* (HTP) in close collaboration with Ara-Kovács. The information center was originally set up in Budapest, then after Ara Kovács’s defection to Austria, in Vienna. He forwarded information gathered about the Hungarian community to the CHRR headquarter in Manhattan by fax through an extensive clandestine network of Hungarian and Romanian Hungarian volunteers (mainly university students) who worked independently. CHRR members submitted information to reliability check, translated them in English and released to Western media outlets. (Hámos, L., July 5-6, 2016) Both HTP and the publication of Counterpoints helped in raising the awareness of the deplorable Romanian human rights situation in Western countries. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 49) The arrests of Géza Szűcs had consequences on US-Romanian relations, too. Another ally of CHRR, Senator Chris Dodd (D-CN) wrote to Lawrence Eagleburger, U.S. Deputy State

Secretary before his visit to Romania about the issue, to which he received the answer that they have mentioned their concerns during negotiations with the Romanian partners. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 54) In 1983, Tom Lantos (D-CA) also visited Romania, where he negotiated with Ceausescu about MFN status, exerting pressure on him to improve human rights records. For these talks, he used materials prepared by CHRR and HTP. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 55)

At the same time, Száz also intervened in the issue of Géza Szócs. Using the news of the samizdat journal *Counterpoints*, he persuaded Don Ritter (R-PA) and 59 Congressmen in 1982 to exert pressure on Ceausescu to release Szócs and stay his proceedings (Száz, 1996, p. 131), which happened in early 1983, due to the growing international pressure. From 1983 on Száz continued his efforts in persuading Congressmen to present resolutions containing self-determination rights (H.R. 147 in 1983 – Száz, 1988, p. 77 and H.R. 56 in 1985 – Száz, 1996, p. 134-136)

After assuming the official support of the cause of Slovakian Hungarians in 1984, the CHRR renamed itself *Hungarian Human Rights Foundation* (HHRF). By the middle of the 1980s, its members regularly reported to officials in several agencies of both branches: their reports were taken into account by the State Department,<sup>11</sup> and by the U.S. Helsinki Commission. The latter forum was important because both Houses has asked its opinion on matters related to Eastern-European affairs. (HHRF Archives, 15/1090, p. 54) Among the eleven Helsinki follow-up conferences and other events of CSCE in which they participated, the most important was the Budapest Cultural Forum in 1985. During the official program, they organized an informal reunion with representatives from ten countries in the apartment of a Hungarian wood sculptor born in Romania, Tibor Szervátiusz. This was the first time HHRF managed to make understand the members of the U.S. delegation to see in depth why the protection of human

rights of Hungarians in Romania is so important, by making a presentation, showing the exhibition of folk artifacts, inviting minority intellectuals and spreading multilingual documentation on the situation of Hungarian national minorities. (Hámos, L., July 5-6, 2016, HHRF Archives, 5/559, p. 82-84)

The hearings for the MFN status in 1985 marked also an important turning point. Five different Congressional Committees have investigated the ever-worsening human rights picture in Romania by this year. (HHRF Archives, 4.2./ 360, p. 64.) In 1985, the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Congress also held hearings for the first time to examine the situation in Romania, due to which the president of the Subcommittee sent a letter to the State Department because of the violation of human rights. (HHRF Archive, 15/1090, p. 80) Congressmen became shocked by the public's outrage over religious persecution and other brutal human rights violations, therefore, emigration was not the issue anymore.<sup>12</sup> Three Congressmen, Chris Smith (R-NJ), Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Tony Hall (D-OH) decided upon to make a fact-finding mission to Romania in July 1985. By this time, Romanian priests also found a way to express their grievances about religious persecution in Romania, and the visit of the Congressmen was hence sponsored by Christian and human rights organizations. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 536) Upon their return, they introduced H.R. 3599 to temporarily suspend Romania's MFN status. A similar resolution was introduced in the Senate, S. 1817 by Paul Trible (R-VA) and William Armstrong (R-CO). On the demand of Congressman Wolf, HHRF members advocated the resolutions directly in both Houses. (HHRF Archive, 4.2./ 356, p. 27) This growing congressional disapproval forced the Administration to press the Romanian regime to improve her human rights records, but MFN status was not yet suspended. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 541) The seriously indebted Romanian economy and the worsening human rights records caused a legitimacy crisis for the regime which explains why

Ceausescu reacted negatively after 1985 to the Gorbachev's reform plans of Communism which on the other hand, further worsened U.S.-Romanian relations. (Bottoni, 2019, p. 1-2)

In the meanwhile, Száz continued his efforts to advocate cultural autonomy at Congressmen. He found an ally in Steven Symms (R-ID), a fundamentalist Christian and steady anti-Communist who merged the provisions for cultural autonomy with human rights demands of minor denominations who were persecuted because of their religion in Romania. The fact that the Congress had 99 representatives who belonged to any kind of minor denominations gave new opportunities to lobbying. Symms presented H.R. 945 with human rights demands of religious and minority groups as an Amendment to the Appropriations Bill suggested by the State Department in November 1985. Although this was not voted in Congress, the Conference Committee in its report dealing with the Appropriations Bill mentioned the importance of the collective rights of minorities asking for U.S. aids. This was the first time that the collective rights of a minority group were mentioned with regards to financial aid. (Száz, 1996, p. 153-158)

By 1986 it could be seen that the majority of the Congress opposed to American foreign policy towards Romania, but the economic trade-off of the suspension that has to be paid by this time was high: the Commerce Department estimated that MFN interruption would cost America about 5000 jobs, without any proof that the suspension would improve Romania's human rights record. The Administration therefore still supported the waiver. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 561) Congressman Wolf knew that to be able to affect U.S.-Romanian trade relations on the long term, it is not enough to protest the yearly waivers of the President. He sought instead a solution that linked human rights practices to preferential trade agreements, and there was a bill already under debate to which he could present an amendment to suspend MFN status for Romania for six months with favorable conditions in

1987.<sup>13</sup> He proposed an amendment to H.R. 3 to the Trade and International Economic Policy Reform Act, an all-encompassing bill including provisions for trade remedy reforms, negotiating authorities, export enhancement, and agricultural exports. The resolution passed together with the Wolf Amendment as Section 1501, and a similar amendment was accepted to the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1987 by the Senate in June (S. 1420), on the proposal of Senators Armstrong and Dodd. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 566-573) Both CHRR members and Száz and his fellow lobbyists launched all their efforts to win Congressmen to vote these resolutions.<sup>14</sup>

In the meanwhile, Száz was lobbying also with regards to another bill. He persuaded Congressman Dornan (R-CA) in 1987 again to present a resolution with the same content as his H.R. 56 in 1985 that was adopted by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Congress in March 1987, acknowledging self-determination rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania. After that, Száz also convinced Senator Pressler (R-SD) to propose a similar resolution at the Senate and with minor changes it was also adopted in May 1987. Before however, both adopted resolutions could have been inserted in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, a major conflict emerged between the two branches of Hungarian American organizations. Congressman Dornan received a letter signed by Christopher Dodd and Ernie Konnyu (R-CA) formulated by an HHRF member, arguing against self-determination rights. HHRF feared that by the adoption of these resolutions, suspension of the MFN status could not come through and that the international community will henceforth see the Hungarian minority as a destabilizing factor in the area. They reached that the formulation of self-determination rights was omitted from both resolutions and that the resolutions had been adopted by the Houses before these propositions came to debates to House-Senate conference committees of the Trade bill. (Száz, 1996, p. 153-158)

During these debates, the Administration made a last attempt to force a change in Romania, but by September 1987 Ceausescu knew that the Omnibus Trade bill would ultimately be passed and that with new terms for MFN, requiring major reforms in human rights practices, it would not be worth to appeal for an extension. Therefore, he informed the State Department to resign of Romania's Most-Favored-Nation status, and the President announced that he will not renew the extension for another year, thereby it will expire. (Courtney-Harrington, 1991, p. 580-581) This, however, did not put an end to the struggle for human rights of the people of Romania, since the regime continued its oppressive policies until the revolution in 1989.

### **Underlying Philosophy, Advocacy Objectives and Strategies of Hungarian American Organizations**

#### **American Hungarian Foundation (AHF) and Transylvanian World Federation (TWF).**

The leadership of AHF was taken over by anti-communist political exiles mostly 1947-ers, some of whom were more moderate,<sup>15</sup> some of them more rightists.<sup>16</sup> Although they also participated in advocacy activities, the most important characters of the AHF during the Cold War were not as much those who held official positions in the organization but rather the person who was actually acting as a lobbyist, Zoltán Száz, son of a defected military officer of the Horthy-regime.<sup>17</sup> (Száz, 1996, p. 7-10)

Advocacy activities of AHF can be divided into three main phases during the Cold War: from 1965 to 1974, from 1974-1977 and from 1977. Because AHF activities were supported by TWF from 1977, this sub-section will also elaborate on the background philosophy of its leaders, too.

From the middle of the 1960s, information sources were inspired and travel expenses for this work were supported by the TEC. In this period the objectives of AHF were defending collective human rights of the minority, and its main strategy was *direct lobbying*: memoranda were sent to State Department and the President, congressional alliances were built, background materials for resolutions were prepared, and this was the first time that representatives of the Houses supported the cause in the form of resolutions. (Hermann, 2011, p. 41-44, Száz, 1996, p. 60)

In the middle of the 1970s, AHF's advocacy activities were carried out by Zoltán Béky, President of AHF, Zoltán Száz and László Eszenyi, foreign relations expert of the organization. In this period their main objective remained the same: although they did not formally recognize the borders set in WWI, they did not openly insist on it either, being aware that this could not be raised before international forums. (Száz, 1996) Besides directly appealing to representatives, they began to give oral and written testimonies regarding MFN status from 1975. Besides drawing attention to the violation of collective rights, they built their argumentations on historical grounds that gave the impression that the issue was merely a dispute between Hungary and Romania. (United States Senate, June 6, July 8, 1975, p. 60-75) Although AHF also launched letter campaigns to Congressmen, both of these above-mentioned periods lacked much needed widespread support among Hungarian Americans.

As mentioned above, from 1977 onwards advocacy activities of AHF were carried out with the financial support of TWF. The main leaders of this latter organization, István Zolcsák,<sup>18</sup> and Albert Wass<sup>19</sup> were both born in Transylvania and were 1947-er or 1956-er migrants who did not have the first-hand experience of minority existence. Lacking political experience in both their host and home countries, fluent English knowledge and American socialization, they developed a strong nationalistic stance regarding territories and self-determination rights of

Hungarians. They demanded the territory of Transylvania to be reannexed to Hungary, or any Hungarian part of it and saw the complex issue of the Hungarian minority of Romania and the American-Soviet hostility during the Cold War merely from this perspective. Consequently, they did not take into consideration the realities of the Helsinki Final Act 1975, either. They also thought that to claim that there were less than three million Hungarians in Romania was an act of high treason. (Száz, 1996, p. 92-93) These ideas caused great splits with not only ATA but also with CHRR and later on, the conflict of interest also hindered the cooperation between AHF and CHRR, too. During their advocacy activities from 1974 to 1977, TWF leaders focused on the rights of free emigration, family reunification, and religious freedom, and from 1977 onwards they funded the activities of AHF.

Consequently, AHF's official stance, goals, strategies and applied techniques became increasingly radical. Száz took upon himself the objective of TWF regarding self-determination rights that were not presentable in the international political situation. (Száz, 1996, p. 92-93)<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in his *direct lobbying activities*, Száz also made several steps to undermine his own credibility: he asked several of Congressmen for personal loans, without paying them back that caused a general distrust among Congressmen to deal with Hungarian issues. (HHRF Archive, 13/1007, p. 44) Additionally, in 1987 he had disagreements with Congressman Ernest Konnyu (R-CA) about the issue of self-determination rights in a letter sent to several other Congressmen. (HHRF Archive, 13/1007, p. 61) It was also fruitless move to make connections with the homeland and trying to persuade the Kádár-regime to protect the rights of the Hungarian minority on an international level. Száz's trips to Romania did not only have any tangible results but also endangered the cause itself, as Romanian intelligence services used his trips to neutralize advocacy efforts of CHRR. (Bottoni, 2016, p. 8)

Their *“hot” tactics* had also a revisionist character: Száz cooperated with a chauvinist radio program host, regularly appeared in Hungarian in his broadcasts regarding Transylvanian Hungarians and organized revisionist mass rallies. Although he was successful in building alliances with representatives above party lines and with fundamentalist Christian groups, he was far from reaching strategic alliances in the executive branch to be able to affect its policies. (Száz, 1996)

### **American Transylvanian Association (ATA).**

The membership of ATA was recruited by 1945-er DPs who had had a leading role in the political and cultural life of Transylvanian Hungarians during the interwar years and WWII. Some of them were right-wing intellectuals being accused or were in fact anti-Semites who lived through the years of minority existence in Romania in the interwar years, others were much more moderate who suffered from persecutions by Romanian authorities during this period. They were either member of the Transylvanian Party (TP) as invited representatives of parliament by the Horthy-regime from the reannexed territories of Romania to Hungary,<sup>21</sup> or editors of right-wing journals.<sup>22</sup> As the former president of TP, Béla Teleki<sup>23</sup> was a doyen of the American Hungarian diaspora of Transylvanian origin and acted as their unelected representative during the Cold War. Being in leading positions of both organizations ATA and TP, he believed that only the people of Transylvanian origin are entitled to represent the Hungarian minority because unlike Hungarians living in Hungary, they have the necessary qualities (sense of duty, accountability, generosity) to represent their own interests. As an exiled politician, his aims were to convey an authentic image of the situation of the Hungarian minority and to plead to politicians for the amelioration of the human rights of the Hungarian minority. He saw a possible solution of the Transylvanian question in an independent federal-

based democratic state with strong canton autonomy according to the Swiss model in a federative “Danube Republic”,<sup>24</sup> thereby rejected nationalistic stances that caused conflicts with the later established TWF.<sup>25</sup> From the early 1960s onwards, he recognized that advocacy work can only be effective if the improvement of the situation of the minority is linked to the protection of human rights as conditions to trade agreements. (Hermann, 2011, p. 11, p. 41)

According to archival research, the advocacy work of ATA can be divided into two phases: before and after 1975. Pre 1975, Teleki and his fellow members preferred a stay-behind operation in *direct lobbying*: background work and alliance building with human rights organizations and leftist exile groups. They tried to cooperate with other organizations, the AHF in particular, of which ATA was a member organization since 1955. ATA rather preferred to send memoranda to State Department officials and Congressmen, and to prepare background materials for negotiations with U.S. executive and legislative branches of AHF. They regarded monitoring Western and Transylvanian Hungarian and Romanian media outlets to be crucial in gaining trustworthy news. They also operated their own periodical, for which they tried to obtain as many authentic information as possible from correspondence with Romanian Hungarians, from accounts of visitors and newly arrived immigrants. They regarded “hot” tactics and most *indirect lobbying methods*, such as mass demonstrations appalling, as Teleki wanted to restrain from any kind of provocation for the sake of the integrity of the Hungarians in Transylvania. Even if they chose to use these methods, they cooperated with human rights organizations and preferred to remain in the background.

Since Teleki thought that lobbying should be left to the younger generation and he had sought a solution for this already from the 1960s, the organization cooperated with CHRR in the framework of CCNATO in a number of ways in the era that can be considered as ATA’s second advocacy period. ATA members gave oral testimonies at Congressional hearings,

helped them to coordinate Hungarian minority leaders when visiting from Romania, organized fundraising events, got in touch with a sponsor for them, and gave them political advice. (Hermann, 2011)

**Committee of Human Rights in Romania (CHRR) / Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (HHRF).**

All of CHRR's founding members were second-generation American Hungarians, owning a double American Hungarian ethnic identity. Most of them were American citizens being the children of 1945-er DPs<sup>26</sup> or 1956-ers<sup>27</sup>, others had defected Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s because of their involvement in the Hungarian revolution in 1956 at a young age.<sup>28</sup> All of them studied at U.S. universities and most of them joined civil rights movements in the 1970s in the U.S. At the same time, as children of post-WWII immigrants or immigrants themselves, they "had a tendency to carry on a more salient ethnic identity", and "the traumatic experience" of political refugees "was partly transmitted" to them, that is why "they were willing to engage in political activism to help their co-ethnics in Romania". (Kovács, 2017, p. 5)

There are many similarities in the background philosophy between ATA and HHRF: both associations were appalled about the idea of territorial claims, and both associations based on their demands on individual and collective human rights. HHRF, however, went further in admitting that pressure had been exerted on Romanians to assimilate before WWI. They also insisted on the fact that trying to help the Hungarian minority was more of a humanitarian, moral responsibility than a nationalist agenda, and even rejected the usage of the historical term "Transylvania". (Kovács, 2017, p. 10-12) Not having an official program, their long-term goal was to support the minority to live in a free, humanitarian, democratic

country, without oppression. They regarded human rights as important tools for these two objectives and not as the ultimate goal. In practice, they advocated demands that minority leaders requested for the Hungarian community or that the concerned parties from authentic sources proposed.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, the giving up of the Romanian government of the persecution of Hungarians and the execution of anti-minority measures and secondly, the granting of cultural autonomy as a positive minority right. The idea of territorial autonomy however, was rejected by HHRF. (Hámos L., May 1, 1989)

Their *direct lobbying efforts* distinguished from others in many aspects. In their professionally compiled testimonies written with a fluent English knowledge, they emphasized factual information on violations of human rights, arguing that it is clear from the language and logic of the Jackson-Vanick Amendment that it was intended to protect far more than just one human right. (Kovács, 2017, 9) They only used double-checked information either from personal visits and meetings with Hungarian minority leaders or from clandestine news service they financed. Due to their translation services, they were also able to maintain friendly relations with some of the late Kádár-regime's officials and many Hungarian democratic opposition leaders. (Hámos L., July 5-6, 2016)

They built *long-term alliances* with Congressmen and Senators of Hungarian origin (Tom Lantos, Ernie Konnyu) and with supporters of human rights across party lines (James Buckley, Ed Koch, Tony Hall, Christopher Smith, Frank Wolf, etc.). They achieved this not only with the help of persuasion and minor campaign financing campaigns, but also by being employed by them (Christopher J. Dodd) or by maintaining personal contacts with officials from several Departments and international organizations.<sup>30</sup> They also cooperated with human rights organizations,<sup>31</sup> interest groups fighting for religious freedom and Jewish organizations<sup>32</sup> but not with fundamentalist Christian organizations. (Hámos, L. July 5-6, 2016)

They were able to mobilize American Hungarians nationwide as never before by effectively using “hot” tactics in their *indirect lobbying*. Through their letter campaigns, they encouraged American Hungarians to exert influence on political representatives by providing them information, individualizing each letter. (Kovács, 2017, p. 11) In organizing mass demonstrations they were very cautious about their image building in the eyes of the American public: they confiscated all boards that displayed nationalistic messages. (Transylvania, 1976) Having established their own news agency, they were able to acquire accurate information that they published in testimonies, press releases and in articles of leading American journals.

## **Conclusion**

Ethnic advocacy of the Hungarian minority in Romania in particular began to unfold after the Hungarian freedom fight when American Hungarians became politically active in the 1960s. Human rights argumentation was used as a tool of advocacy from this time and reference to collective and human rights and their linkage to preferential trade agreements became widely used only after the Helsinki Final Act. This coincided with the growing political representation of Hungarians in American political life from the late 1970s. Despite this, some of the ethnic organizations remained nationalistic and refused to acknowledge borders and political realities.

While first-generation American Hungarians had also some minor results,<sup>33</sup> some of their objectives did not always serve the long-term interests of the community they wanted to support. Thereby, some were very cautious in their activities, others jeopardized the authenticity of the cause. Being traumatized by persecution through personal experience or having relatives still living in Romania, their ideas for settlement were either too idealistic,

insisting on regional independence in cooperation with other ethnic groups (ATA) or too radical, stressing the demand of self-determination rights of Hungarians (AHF, TWF). They were either extremely afraid of causing persecution of their co-ethnics and thereby restrained themselves from “hot” tactics (ATA), or on the contrary, they did not care enough about the consequences and were extreme in the execution of their actions (TWF). While some of them were able to reach partial results by cooperating with human rights and leftist groups and by drawing the attention on human rights violations (ATA), others were entirely hindered from being authentic due to their lack of English language fluency, setting high value in historical facts (AHF), secessionist way of thinking and insisting on demographic data based on erroneous calculations (TWF). Due to their ignorance of international realities and of the true face of the Communist regime (TWF) or being threatened by lawsuits against them (ATA) they did not recognise the necessity of going underground or were not allowed to travel to Romania, thereby could not maintain relationship with the minority elite in Romania and opposition leaders in Hungary. Filled with internal conflicts, they were unable to unite their efforts during the 1970s and to find long-term alliances. This split had also negative effects on the second-generation diaspora.

Although second-generation Americans (HHRF) were concerned for their ethnic brethren as much as first-generation diaspora members, they were able to show the importance of linking human rights conditions to trade agreements, without being biased in a nationalistic way. As Kovács (2017, p. 4-5) argues, even though they did not personally experience persecution, they neither did go through a “linear assimilation process” that would have resulted in a “symbolic ethnic identity”. Instead of this, they had a “thickening, reactive ethnic identity”, being well aware of the oppression of their co-ethnics. This was due to the fact that they also received education from Hungarian diaspora communities, and that they

had regular fact-finding missions to Romania and Hungary. Thus, they were able to maintain a widespread clandestine network with the democratic opposition both in Hungary and Romania. At the same time, unlike for first-generation Hungarian diaspora members, the former Hungarian borders had no importance for them. Furthermore, the advice of the more moderate first-generation political exiles contributed to the fact that they were able to navigate in a political environment that was entirely strange for them at the beginning and find moderate but still efficient advocacy strategies. Due to their American socialization, they worked with proficiency, had fluency in English, and also had the necessary networking and mobilizing capabilities. The fact that the cause of Hungarian minorities united the 1.5 million Hungarian American population, that political representatives of Hungarian origin entered political arena at this time and that human rights arguments were widely used because of the Helsinki process helped them to make use of the opportunities American democracy and international organizations could offer.

Even though advocacy cases described in the historical part of this study are yet to be explored in depth, the general assumption can be drawn that the migration patterns and background philosophies, the relationship with homeland, host land, and ethnic brethren of diaspora members and leaders are deeply interrelated with their advocacy objectives, strategies and techniques. This paper aimed to show that besides using assimilationist methods focusing merely on “success” or “failure” per se, it is also fruitful to complete research in ethnic advocacy with constructivist methods, focusing also on diaspora politicians’ background and stances, which also can clarify what is meant by “success” more precisely.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian Academy of Sciences conducted a research about the ethnic identities, organizations of American Hungarians with micro sociological methods. Their research results are also available in English. See Papp Z., 2008

<sup>2</sup> The most successful such newcomer was László Pásztor, a '56-er who became the Republican National Committee's Hungarian adviser on ethnic affairs and in 1969 he was promoted to the directorship of the National Committee's Nationalities Division, organizing National Republican Heritage Groups Council nationwide, thereby he successfully enlisted the support of a significant portion of the formerly Democratic vote. He coordinated efforts of the Eastern European ethnic groups to direct the Republican Party' attention toward continuing the liberation of the captive-nation policy. (Várdy, 1982, p. 178) Pásztor was also a member of the American Hungarian Federation's board from the 1970s onwards. (Eszenyi L., Béky Z., Száz Z., May 13, 1975)

<sup>3</sup> ATA also had a failed attempt to organize a field trip to Romania for two Congressmen, (Hermann, 2011, p. 63-68) and handouts about the situation of the Hungarian minority were spread in both Houses in 1964 through 1965. (Hermann, 2011, p. 59-60)

<sup>4</sup> In May 1964, Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) spoke about the necessity of political amnesty for all prisoners in Romania, as the minimal condition to negotiate trade concessions with Romania. Zoltán M. Száz, the foreign relations expert of AHF convinced Congressman Seymour Halpern (R-NY) to file a resolution that received bipartisan support, although not enough to pass in March 1965, and then another one together with Edward Patten (D-NJ) in August the same year. (Hermann, 2011, p. 40.)

<sup>5</sup> Local organizations, such as the United Hungarian Societies' of Cleveland, Ohio also visited the State Department with Senator Frank Lausche (D-OH) and U.S. ambassador to Romania, Richard Davis in 1963. Nádos J. (April 12, 1965) The Vice President of ATA, Alexander Szentiványi also took part in the negotiations. (Szentiványi A., May 21, 1965)

<sup>6</sup> Zoltán Száz, lobbyist of AHF persuaded 52 Congressmen to appeal to State Secretary Dean Rusk, asking for diplomatic intervention in trade negotiations in March 1966. (Száz, 1988, p. 73)

<sup>7</sup> Also see Memorandum of Conversation, November 3, 1974

<sup>8</sup> Senator James Buckley (NY) presented Senate Resolution 511 in August which was followed by similar resolutions in the Congress supported by Edward Patten (R-NJ) with House Resolutions 1476, 1477, 1522 and after the hearings Edward Koch (D-N.Y.), Robert Drinan (Mass.) and Christopher Dodd (D-Conn) presented House Resolutions 1556, 1596 and 1597 that demanded more than the original resolution suggested by Patten: it would

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have guaranteed administrative conditions to re-evaluate human rights records of Romania. (HHRF Archive, 15 / 1090, p. 6.) This was the first time that a Hungarian American community could persuade political actors without having Hungarian constituencies. (Bottoni, 2016, 2016, p. 17)

<sup>9</sup> With the financial support of the State Department and in the name of the AHF, Száz travelled to Romania in May 1976. He was welcomed by Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga and Trade Minister Nicolae Nicolae. Romanian authorities wanted to neutralize actions of CHRR and thereby permitted him to travel on the countryside and the meeting with several Hungarian minority leaders. Since he was not supposed to meet with real opposition leaders, he was not satisfied with the experience which was also seen in his accounts about the journey prepared to the State Department. (Bottoni, 2016, p. 15)

<sup>10</sup> The internment of Károly Király, former Hungarian minority leader also contributed to the international outcry. Due to the effective agency of CHRR members, journalists of renown American newspapers who travelled in Romania were able to make interview with him in 1978. Another reason for the outcry was that several Hungarian intelligentsia members were arrested and tortured by Romanian authorities. (HHRF Archive, 15 / 1090, p. 12)

<sup>11</sup> Such an occasion was when Congressmen from the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the Congressional Friends of Human Rights Monitors sent a letter to State Secretary Schultz, based on news collected by HHRF on imprisonments. (HHRF Archive, 4.2./401, p. 20)

<sup>12</sup> HHRF's friend, Reverend Alexander Havadtoy of the Calvinist Reformed Church described the Bible recycling process at a press conference of the Congress on June 5. Approximately 20 thousand Bibles sent from to Western pressure to Romania were turned into toilet papers. The press release had a great impact on Western media. Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, 1985. (HHRF Archive, 15/1090, p. 79)

<sup>13</sup> Romania would have been welcome to reapply for MFN benefits, provided certain key human rights conditions were met. Therefore, this solution would not have relinquished U.S. leverage, as critiques suggested, but would have actually opened the door to improvements and provide the incentive for their implementation. (HHRF Archives, 4.2./ 360, p. 64.) An important critique of the amendment was that emigration to the U.S. would stop, that it would weaken the country's economy, thus the U.S. would only be hurting the people it is trying to help. (Kovács, 2017, p. 14)

<sup>14</sup> After the vote, Senator Dodd told Laszlo Hamos the following: *"Together with many of my colleagues, I am very grateful to you Laszlo, for the splendid work you have done. You deserve a lot of credit for what happened in the Senate today. You have, what is most important in this business, credibility. You provide timely and reliable information, and you obviously have a well-organized network of supporters nationwide."* (HHRF Archives, 4.2./360, p. 23.)

<sup>15</sup> Like Bishop of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Zoltán Béky. (Száz, 1996)

<sup>16</sup> Like former staff-officer of the Horthy militia, László Eszenyi, or a filmmaker, István Mikó, the leader of the New York branch of AHF who led lobbying in the 60s. (Száz, 1996)

<sup>17</sup> Száz was born in Budapest in 1930, to a colonel father of the Horthy regime and part of the invading troops of Northern Transylvania. They migrated to the U.S. with his family through Germany at a young age. He earned his M.A. and PhD degrees at American universities in the history of Transylvania due to which he became acquainted with political émigrés interested in the fate of the Hungarian minority and thereby started to engage in politics very early. He had a teaching position at an American university, too, but his career did not advance as he had expected partly due to his anti-communist ideology and support of the War in Vietnam that drove him towards advocacy activities from the late 1960s. (Száz, 1996, p. 7-10)

<sup>18</sup> The president of the Transylvanian World Federation, István Zolcsák was born in 1921 in a village near Satu-Mare, that was annexed to Romania two years before his birth, in a family with a traumatized history, marked by brutal attacks from Romanians. He became a '56-er migrant, settled in Brazil and established an own car factory. He founded TWF in 1974, for the Vice-President of which he asked Albert Wass. (Száz, 1996, p. 92-93)

<sup>19</sup> Wass was a well-known Transylvanian aristocrat and one of the most controversial authors of Hungarian literature. He studied at universities abroad, hence he also did not spend his socialization as a minority citizen in Romania, nor did he have any kind of political experience. He got ousted from Romania in 1946 because of war crimes. While being a university professor in Florida, he established the American Hungarian Literary Guild with the goal to disseminate publications about the Transylvanian question. (Hermann, 2011, p. 75)

<sup>20</sup> CHRR members refused to cooperate with him since they believed that it would undermine their own credibility because the idea threatened the geopolitical status quo in the area, that could not be supported by the State Department. (Hámos, László, personal communication, December 2011)

<sup>21</sup> Apart from the leader, Béla Teleki most former Transylvanian Party members lived in Europe, like the extreme right-wing minded Dezső Albrecht, the leader of the Transylvanian Association of Paris. (Borbándi, 1992, p. 23-24) Another former secretary of TP was György Páll, who lived through several persecution during the interwar

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years. After his defection to the U.S. he became an Economic Research Assistant at Columbia University and was the editor of ATA's official journal, *Transylvania – the Transylvanian Reporter* (Transylvania, 1975, p. 2-3)

<sup>22</sup> Such members were or Gyula Zathureczky, former editor of the Transylvanian journal *Ellenzék* [Opposition] but who renounced from his job after German occupation and in emigration distanced himself from his anti-Semitic views. He became the leader of the Organizing Committee of Transylvanians of Munich and participated in the work of Federal Union of European Nationalities in the name of ATA and was a recognized and respected among leaders of European minority leaders. (Hermann, 2011, p. 32) Another such example was Ferenc Koréh, former editor of *Székely nép* [Sekler people] who also distanced himself from his anti-Semitic views but who was attacked in the U.S. because of his former stance and sentenced to expulsion to Romania. (Borbándi, 1992, and HHRF Archives. Undigitized materials. Folder "Ferenc Koréh")

<sup>23</sup> Béla Teleki was an aristocrat and a distant relative of Pál Teleki, prime minister of Hungary. Being a lawyer and agriculturist, he was an important figure of the interwar years' minority life, as the vice-president of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association which became a stronghold of self-organization and protection of the Hungarian minority. After being elected as President of TP, he was striving for the independence of Hungary from the Axis powers, later on he could reach that Cluj-Napoca was spared of destruction by the Soviet army in 1944. However, he had to leave from the Romanian Communist regime to Austria and then to the Cleveland. He settled in New York City as a realtor but left his family behind, who could only come to the U.S. in the early 1960s. (Borbándi 1997, p. 450-451., Tibori Szabó 1993, p. 11-12.)

<sup>24</sup> An idea emphasized by Archduke Otto Habsburg during his negotiations with Roosevelt in the WWII – see above the historical chapter of the paper. A cooperation with the Archduke continued during the 1960s in the form of ATA's European activities. (Hermann, 2011, p. 11)

<sup>25</sup> Further reasons for this split were: the demographic question (according to TWF, there were 3 million Hungarians living in Romania, according to ATA only 2 million) and Teleki's opinion that only Hungarians of Transylvanian origin were entitled to represent the cause. (Hermann, 2011, pp. 52-53)

<sup>26</sup> Founder of the organization, László Hámos was born in Paris in 1951 to Hungarian aristocrats originating from Romania and Transylvania. He attended University of Pennsylvania, and although he did not earn a degree there, he soon was employed by a legal administration office. Besides pursuing advocacy activities, he worked at the law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore for 3 and a half years, then he owned a company which performed legal research and litigation support services for law firms in midtown Manhattan. (Hámos, L., July 5-6, 2016, HHRF Archive, III/B Biography of László Hámos) Another child of '45-er exiles originating from Slovakia was Jenő Brogyányi, who graduated from Columbia University and was employed there. He also led a theater company and translated many plays of Hungarian writers to English. He was responsible for the connections of the HHRF with the media. (HHRF Archives. 15/1081)

<sup>27</sup> The current director of HHRF, Emese Latkoczy was born to '56-er Canadian American parents in Toronto and received a MA at NYU in filmmaking and worked in the film industry for years while volunteering at CHRR. (Latkóczy, E., March 18, 2016)

<sup>28</sup> Such members were Károly Nagy and Bulcsu Veress. Nagy, a sociologist, scientific and literary organizer who defected from Hungary to the U.S. He earned degrees in Psychology and Sociology at American universities, and became a college teacher. As one of the founders of Movement of Mother Tongue in 1970, he was responsible for keeping contacts with the American Hungarian diaspora nationwide at CHRR. (Nagy, Károly, January 20, 2008) Veress had Romanian Hungarian heritage, but was born and raised in Budapest. He took part in the revolution in 1956 but was not ousted from University of Budapest, due to his excellent study results. After graduating he joined the state administration and defected Hungary in 1970 at a postgraduate course. He obtained an M.A. in Political Science and International Affairs from Columbia University. He became a human rights consultant of Senator Chris Dodd, and as such, had good connections in both Houses that helped the work of CHRR. He also has become irreplaceable because of his deep understanding of the US political system and internal procedures of the Congress. (HACUSA, November 22, 2012)

<sup>29</sup> These authentic sources were Károly Király's (the vice-president of the Workers' Council of Hungarian Nationality) letter and a samizdat journal, *Ellenpontok* (Counterpoints).

<sup>30</sup> A couple for these contacts were: Patricia M. Darian Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (1977-81), Julius Varallyai at IMF, Csanad Toth at State Department, Steven Benko at the presidential office, Zsolt Szekeres at UN. (Hámos, L. July 5-6, 2016)

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch from the 1980s. (Hámos, L. July 5-6, 2016)

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Birnbaum, from the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. (Hámos, L. July 5-6, 2016)

<sup>33</sup> Such successes were the political amnesties of prisoners through the pressure of international organizations in 1963-64, pushing an open door with drawing the attention of the cause of the Hungarian minority before 1975 when Congress members were anti-communists and opposed trade agreements with Romania, the acceptance

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of technical amendment to Jackson-Vanick Amendment in 1975 with family reunification and free emigration of other ethnic groups, or the acceptance of self-determination rights by the legislative branch in 1987.