*Information about interviewee:*

*Antilla Korodi is a Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) Member of Romanian Chamber of Deputies. Interview conducted in the Romanian Parliament in Bucharest, Romania.*

*R= Respondent – Antilla Korodi*

*I=Interviewer – Sam Wrighton*

I: Does Romania ever respond to Hungary’s kin-state policies?

R: What Hungary has done for the Hungarian community members, all of these are checked and debated with the Romanian authorities. I think it is good policy. It is very important what Hungary has done, to be in line with the registered framework. What Romania has also done for the Romanian community members, neighbouring countries are all very similar Moldovia, Ukraine, Serbia, I think it is good. Romania begin this procedure before Hungarian state. For this reason, it was not blocking situation from Romania side. But, sometimes, yes, I feel there are some members in the political field, they manifest awareness about it or them angry about it. They are making double standard issue, it means for us it is ok to do for the Romania side of the borders, but not for the others. These elements are also in the political debate, sometimes also in parliament. But the main political factors are very careful about the issue and what is good that Hungary is also realising in a positive way that when they offer something for Hungary outside the border tried to, had discussion about acceptance with the neighbouring countries.

I: As far as I am aware, the reason why Hungary is giving out citizenship to transborder Hungarians is to answer a demographic crisis in Romania //

R: No.

I: No. Ok.

R: No, it is/ Also if you put this forward to Hungarian situation, I think it is very blaming for the Romanian community or the Hungary community is when the mother countries make these steps. Why? This community is a native community they are autonomous regions. The border is more from east to west, west to east, in the same choice, but the communities are native. Important is to give instruments for these communities who had the chance also to add value for the next centuries. To be present. To be stronger and to put something diversity of the regions. This is actually the main reason why the mother countries offer these instruments. Also we had for example the person I think many years ago, of the minister saying that for us it is important, we can take from this country, the members, the Hungarian community rejected, very firm with this. We don’t find instruments, they make weaker communities, we don’t want these ones they make impossible to give our community in a good condition.

I: How has citizenship change? Because Hungary has had a strong relationship with the ethnic Hungarian community here in Romania. How has citizenship actually changed?

R: Good question. Yes, or no, I don’t know. In the day by day life are sometimes in situation, for example, our elections simply the best, then we ask they community members they want a part, to be a part of the election procedures in Hungary, create a system for these communities who make the vote. It is a procedure, some members wanted to be part of the election procedures, to support political parties, they also had a vote, these communities outside the border. But, on the other hand, ok, sometimes when we are saying that Hungary create for the families with big members or the new families established, financial support, and the instrument to begin the family life. So this, unfortunately had a negative impact on our young community members. They had an opportunity to move Hungary and also is saying very clear, ok, when Hungary does these instruments and don’t want to separate the communities and these instruments to be somehow in some way, also for the members, Hungary community members outside the borders to use it at the home region. Otherwise it can be as an assumption, a mechanism of sort, a young person to go to Hungary. So, this is not very good for our point of view, but, as policy for Hungary for the families, it is a positive instrument who support their families in day by day life. So the other different things. But what is clear, the citizenships don’t have important day by day life.

I: Some people I have spoken to have argued that against state policies have developed in order to attract people towards Hungary. Do you think this is the case or not?

R: To vote?

I: No, to migrate.

R: I don’t think. How I mentioned, yes, can be people thinking in this way. But the state policy is not in this way. They make weaker the Hungarian communities across the border in neighbourhood countries, where there are natives in the regions, they also make weak the Hungary, that make weak our community life in the whole Carpathian basin. So, we cannot say Hungary is only the state. The Hungarian community, the Hungarian nation are speak in different states.

I: So what is the intention from Hungary? What is the objective or goal?

R: I think it is/ You need to extend the question.

I: Hungary is investing a lot of money to Transylvania and Zakarpattia, Vojvodina and all these areas and spending a lot of money in Hungarian institutions.

R: Education is important culture. And also in the local economy. It isn’t very simple to keep these communities in a better life condition. And to have them to be stable there and to be creative there, that means to contribute for our state society but also for the Hungarian state society and for this diversity that we have in this world. This is the main reason. Sometimes in Romania we had unfortunately the situations that the state policies seeing not the lows, but the solution of the investment policy isn’t so are reoccurring in the major Hungarian counties in cooperation with other counties. And for this reason, somehow, we need this support. Therefore for us it is more difficult to have Hungarian Transylvania communities, good education, good natural life, good economy, then we are a minority community.

I: Do you think this is deliberate, the areas where there is large proportion of ethnic Hungarians, are they being deliberately excluded from //

R: // It is simple, also Romanian political life, from these counties and from these cities, in the government, in the political decisions, are members only when the members are a member of the coalition, when the RMDSZ is a member of decision-making procedure. Otherwise, all the Romanian parties are not interested to create and to bring their instrument. Why? They don’t have their act right. It is simple.

I: They are not represented, unless they are in government coalition, they don’t get representative funding. And what is the relationship between Hungarian states and your political party?

R: I think reasonable. It means not depending which government. When Budapest wanted to act for us, to bring some positive instrument or bilateral issues Romania, Hungarian issues. To represent opposition, what is necessary for the Hungarian community and when Budapest acts in all the interest and the interest can be described as Hungarian community in Romania then it is a failure. And also with this Fidesz government, this is better this way.

I: And year on year, the funding from Budapest is increased quite dramatically //

R: // Not dramatically, but this is/ Ok, dramatically, you know, in a Hungarian language, negative when you say something like that.

I: Ok, significantly.

R: Significantly.

I: Do you see this continuing?

R: I don’t think it will be increased more and more, but, what begin, I hope also has the designs also to bring in accordance the EU framework of financing private sector and in accordance with Romania law to co-finance some core political projects. We also bring also as RMDSZ we support the Hungarian government can bring instruments to develop local economic culture and food industry and agriculture and suppliers, it is added value and, in this way, but perhaps in the next few years, we there will be some investments again.

I: Has there been any response from the Romanian government about the increase in funding, either positive response or negative response?

R: It’s simple and those also the Hungarians understand it, we don’t want to create discrimination that means these investments are focussed to the local communities in different regions of Transylvania and those also Romanians can apply for it. It is not discriminative, also in Mureș County, some Romanians also receive resources.

I: I understand that the Hungarian community in Romania is shrinking because of the emigration, is this one of the biggest challenges //

R: // It is one of the biggest challenges, but not only for the emigration also modern lifetime lowers mortality that was before, but Hungarian was created in such a way of the speed as a whole Romania state mortality and, also immigration. Emigration, generally in Romania, higher than the Hungary community, but also for us it very high. For us, in the community, very high. And the focus countries, not Hungary, Great Britain, Germany, the Nordic countries.

I: Some places that I have been on my fieldwork trip, have considered these kin-state policies an intrusion. So, in Slovakia for example, or Ukraine, the reaction when I was speaking to government officials, is very different than it is in Romania or in Serbia. Why is this?

R: I think Ukraine doesn’t realise in this moment, what it means European perspective for the Ukraine society. Ukraine made the same favours for the Romanian minority communities in Ukraine. Such Hungarian communities blocked all the positive legislative framework public administration on education, culture life, they are using the mother language to learn in the mother language, children, so everything was blocked in the last year with Poroshenko. But now it can be equilibrated little bit. The reason was simple, they didn’t want to deliver new instruments for the Russian community. But we send it also for the Romanian for the parliament a lot of key messages for this type of messages are very negative in the European perspective. Hungary are more vocal in this issue. Fortunately. Unfortunately Romanians are not sufficiently vocal. So this is the perspective. The Bratislava perspective, I cannot explain, I think I need more information about it. But Bratislava have a more restrictive and rigid policy under the framework.

I: Last week I met with a Professor who had, I don’t know if you are aware of these, but some controversial opinions, the Romanian state and the Hungarian state had an agreement to allow for dual citizenship in Romania, because ultimately it would lead to Hungarians moving to Hungary and to Romania would be happy with that //

R: // I think it is speak of social scientists, they are aware in analysing data and the data show, yes, then Hungary made it easier for the community members on the one side of the border to be in the integrated into Hungarian society, then it social, but I am aware that Hungarian government policy does not want these types of a measures, they made these measures but then it was very clear that for the Hungarian communities, it is a symbolic question about citizenship.

I: He also mentioned that Romania has one of the most complex and thorough minority rights legislation in the world, well, Europe.

R: He said something about this?

I: He said there is 1092 pieces of texts referring to the minority situation //

R: // Yes. But effectively under the middle of the European policies so that we are better than Greece, France, but we are much lower like a normal Western society, so, it is very lots of policies on the paper, just for the proud question state, but we looking how were these policies work in the field, lot of problems. It is a problem that Romania don’t want to accept that not only the individual but also the communities had rights to act together on the interest.

I: Yeah, he agreed, he said that on paper that there is lots covered, but in practice it is too complicated and not enough political will //

R: // Yes and unfortunately, in the last year, thinking groups from nationalist, from Romanian side, realise that when they used the justice system to attack different rights, they were not simply voted but in the sense of the law The justice system and the 99% decided It is not a very positive period. The best year was between 2010 and 2012. The year 2007, the accession was very positive, creating specific framework and then was a stable period after 2012 attack on the minority rights to minimise these rights. So, it is not an easy question.

I: And I understand that it is a nationalist bit of battle from ethnic Romanians, I was told a story from Mayor of Cluj who painted Romanians //

R: // Now the nationalists are more sophisticated methods justice system and they looking on some very symbolic minority issues, high school, now we have a high ethnic conflict connected to military cemetery but it also Hungarian, so Austro-Hungarian cemetery more and more. All of these affect symbolic questions.

I: Is this problem getting worse?

R: A lot of frustration.

I: What can be done to solve it?

R: It simple. The Romanian political decision makers, parties, need to make more steps forward not just say everything is ok. Nothing ok. Ok, you are better than the Greece, the Greece don’t allow it or for example, the education, in the kindergarten to having the own native language ok, we can help you also in the education system, and somehow in the university life but not fully.

I: If we can talk now about autonomy claims, where is your political party on at the moment on this?

R: Where we are? I think we are far away from this very simple instrument, for what we need to have to be sure that we can help Hungarian community in better condition in the next decade. We focus in the two aspects, one aspect for the Scandinavian instrument saying that on the education culture life, the communities had the right to organise their own system, with state finance, also Hungary made, somehow our national councils with the different nationalities, and there are also such kind coordinators in education, with Serbia for example but in Romanian nothing. I think. This is one of the laws for example, saying since 2005. And nothing happened. And the second, for example South Tyrol not only for the German, Austrian community, they in South Tyrol on German speaking community, but also for the Italian which means they give more instruments to parts of the Italy, and then, inside this region, the certain German speaking community, the Italian community and the collating community create the bands in these regions. Also we want for the second part of the country, also for Székely Land. I think it is a simple instrument that was developed to bring peace and prosperity in this region. All the regions, they accept this type of the measures. So, but, on this question, we have always not very negative but a very long negative rejection.

I: Are you optimistic that in the future this will clear //

R: // I am very opportunistic which means this is the way. This isn’t the only way, but we as a society as whole don’t accept that this will be done. Romania is too big country to remain very centralised country. Now we are very centralised country.

I: If I can ask a more theoretical question, about dual citizenship, some people that I have spoken to in the Baltic states, for example, said that dual citizenship can be a threat to national security.

R: They have an issue; they have an issue about the Russian question. It is not about the Russian question. Here we have the neighbouring countries, both in EU member and NATO members and everything together. The Romanian have similar instruments for the Romanians. The Hungarians have got instruments for the Hungarians. So, it is not a problem. We cannot compare the problem with these two situations that about particular countries, the Romanian Hungarians nation. We don’t have the threat.

I: No. Some might say that it makes it harder to govern a population if they have split allegiances between/ Split support?

R: No. But it is better for the community members. The minority community members always, in all societies, when that society has sufficient instrument to be competitive in the country to, where in a similar level as a citizen, who have all the rights, and to not general rights. To be a Hungarian in Romania for example, then they need to have some or other instruments to support, to supply this. And when get support from Hungary for example, for families, to bring their children in the schools, we in the Hungarian language courses, I think it is a positive thing. Always the Romanian authorities cutting finance for the schools, cutting, so, somehow in the balance.

I: Some people were being critical of Fidesz and Orbán for increasing state policies to get points. Do you/ Can you see this argument?

R: Everyone votes for outside also the left made campaign for votes in Transylvania for the national election. But, you know, it is very important in the Hungarian parliament, the votes they can be many thousand, a hundred thousand, for example, being only two or three members in the Hungarian parliament. So, the communities cannot de-balance or cannot bring a high number of the MP’s in the Hungarian parliament, only some members. These members represent, I think, we can make a two percent of everything, I think.

I: Ok, and I understand that in recent years, the Hungarian state has invested in Hungarian media companies in Transylvania, private media?

R: They make some venture, yes.

I: And has this affected the community?

R: I don’t know, I don’t want to discuss these questions, for the simple reason that the Hungarian media in Transylvania had covered all fields, opinion fields. Sometimes had financing from Budapest, some had financing also from the media state budgets connected to the Hungary community, from the private, so the diversification of the press in the Hungarian language is high. The problem is economically this diversity cannot be supported without some ventures. Then 1.2 million consumers for newspapers in every county, for example, cannot be realised economically. Salaries, papers, everything. And these funds support this to provide this for this media. The local media to survive this. It is not financially very positive experience to publish day by day.

I: Does your political party have any relationship with other Hungarian political parties, say in Vojvodina or Zakarpattia?

R: Yes. Strong relations, yes.

I: And do they always go through Budapest?

R: No, it is a direct relation.

I: And how does this relationship manifest?

R: Always we are going together in our events. Or we are involved in some public statements necessary for another communities, for example, last time for the Hungarian communities in Ukraine, also I am a member in the Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe and also, I was under the limitation of the rights in education in Ukrainian Hungarian, Romanian children or we are very connected with what happens in Serbia, they developed a better frame/ Serbia developed a framework on the monetary law, minorities rights in Romania, high, more higher than/ They had unfortunately a lot of negative experience and for this reason, they realise this is the only way to give prosperity and peace. And also with the Slovakian Hungarian community, they are not very well now, they outside for the parliament, outside for the European parliament, they very effective from this point of view.

I: And in Zakarpattia there was a recent attack on the ethnic political party’s headquarters there.

R: Yes.

I: I met with the spokesperson Darsci Carolina she said that there is a rising anti-Hungarian sentiment in Ukraine, is that the same here, Romania at an individual level?

R: I don’t know. I don’t remember the statistics, but statistics show it is a medium high level. The problem is, like for example, last two and a half years one of the main opposition party’s liberal put it in on your agenda in the Hungarian question, attacked us every day on the debates about the new frameworks, on the different issues of practices of the minority rights and these hysterical debates affected also the simple people.

I: Why are these debates resurfacing?

R: From an electoral point of view, it is very catchy and attractive.

I: So, just to get votes, they have to put a question in the agenda?

R: Yes. Always.

I: And the relationship between at a political level, is it good?

R: For example, it is very bad with opposition parties. Now we try to find the communication ways. With the government parties was, is ok. We have conflict on this cemetery issue. Always we have different issues, they spit at us and we try always to find communication ways with them. But it not easy. For example, they are showing it from an electoral point of view, very positive to attack us further, then they do it.

I: Hmm and it is different behind closed doors? Away from the public view //

R: // They think sometimes the behind the doors, you can say it is nothing very important. But it is important. We cannot say we didn’t saw it happened, what appear, what migration/ What different issues.