



Romanian Post-Communist Political Elite Got Hysterical against Autonomy

On 20-25 July 2010, the Bálványos Summer University was held in Transylvania, Romania. Organized for the 21st time, the summer university is one of the most popular events in the region, aimed at bringing people together from around the entire Carpathian Basin in order to network, exchange views and debate on issues of social, cultural and political dimension, with focus on national and European integration.

Proposing a wide range of seminars and engaged debates, the event ended with a panel entitled "Central Europe -- the Centre of Europe?" hosting Viktor Orbán, Prime-minister of Hungary, Traian Basescu, President of Romania and László Tóké, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

The speakers of the panel, moderated by Zsolt Németh, Secretary of State of Hungary, focused on strengthening Romanian-Hungarian bilateral cooperation within a strong European Union, a common interest for both Member States. Reconciliation between the two countries and nations is therefore essential in the process, in order to build a competitive, self-sufficient and healthy Central European region with the help of Brussels, the speakers agreed.

In building strong regions within a strong Central Europe, in the context of several different seminars, including the closing panel, EP Vice-President Tóké, President of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania, raised the issue of autonomy as the most appropriate form of self-governance for the Hungarian community living in Transylvania, their number reaching 80% of the total population of Szekler Land (Székelyföld).

He has so far on numerous occasions - in different national and European forums - consistently raised his voice in the interest of cultural and territorial autonomy respecting the national integrity of the state. Inspired by the case of Kosovo, on this occasion he stated that the way the Albanian community of Kosovo succeeded in declaring independence from Serbia, the region of Szekler Land in Romania should continue the fight to reach territorial autonomy within the country, the two regions also being similar in size.

Similarly, he raised the case of the people of Catalonia who just recently exercised their democratic right to demand autonomy through peaceful street demonstrations. In drawing up these parallels, Mr Tóké expressed his full support for such peaceful, constitutional and democratic means for the Szekler people to voice their demands, in order to strengthen the stability and security of the region and at the same time bring prosperity and development.

Following these events, the Romanian media disseminated a series of accusations and misleading and flawed interpretations of the statements made by Mr Tóké, issued by different national political parties.

Accordingly, Mr Tőkés encouraged the Hungarian community of Transylvania to get out on the streets to protest in a sign of violent nationalism in order to reach autonomy, the same way the people of Kosovo did to reach their independence.

Similarly, the leaders of all major political parties in the country publicly condemned the Vice-President, characterizing him as an “extreme nationalist.”



The closing panel of the Bálványos Summer University with Viktor Orbán, Prime-minister of Hungary, Traian Basescu, President of Romania and László Tőkés, President of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (from left).

Titus Corlatean, Vice-President of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), said that the party would request the European Parliament to remove Mr Tőkés from the Vice-Presidency of the EP, as his appointment "endangers not only Romania, but the entire Europe". He further stated that the "separatist" comments of the Vice-President are "a clear and strong offense against Romanian statehood, as they stand for incentive to violent action".

Corlatean went even beyond, condemning the President of Romania, Traian Basescu and the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL), member-party of the EPP, supporting him, for giving their support to the election of Mr Tőkés as Vice-President. Romania is a unified, undividable and sovereign nation state, so neither autonomy, nor independence can be reached by democratic means, he added.

According to Mihai Voicu, the spokesman of National Liberal Party (PNL), the statements of Mr Tőkés were against the law and anti-constitutional, so he expects the PDL to cease its political support for the Vice-President.

Furthermore, Horea Uioreanu, deputy of PNL in Cluj, accused Mr Tőkés of treason for demanding autonomy.

Marius Nicoara, a senator of PNL requested the President to immediately convene the Supreme Defense Council to discuss the case, a step that would be entirely justified considering the danger it might bring. In the same context PNL asked the state authorities to reclaim the Order of the Star of Romania that László Tőkés was awarded in 2009.

Bogdan Diaconu, Vice-President of the Conservative Party (PC), stated that VP Tőkés publicly recommends that Europe "be decomposed into tribes following the model of the Huns and their leader, Attila, thus openly attacking the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Romania".

"Great and united Europe should be divided into small ethnic enclaves like Kosovo, a model Tőkés recommends to Spain as well. To reach this, ethnic minorities should get out on the streets, an expression of violent nationalism, seems to be the most suitable solution to Tőkés, who has the nostalgia of the wars in Bosnia", he added.

Corina Cretu, member of the Social Democratic Party and Member of the European Parliament, announced that in the fall of 2010 she would formally request the EP to remove Mr Tőkés from his position as Vice-President, as his statements are "a direct attack against Romanian national integrity".

As a response to the above mentioned offences, just a few from those widely disseminated in the press, Mr. Tőkés made it clear that Szekler Land strives for autonomy and not independence.

It is regrettable, that twenty years after the fall of communism in Romania, neither the media, expected to serve public opinion with reliable and fair information, nor the large part of the political elite were able to go beyond their anti-Hungarian mentality stemming from national communism.

Political resistance and repression of minority communities still continue to hinder development and the peaceful cohabitation of different communities within our country.

Europe is made out of regions of great cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. It is therefore Europe's interest and responsibility to make the best use of this diversity in the spirit of subsidiarity, so that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. As the case of Catalonia illustrates within the Spanish state, self-governance leads to better administration, and enables protection of minority and linguistic rights, respecting European values such as democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights.

In the same way, several other EU Member States allow the democratic development of autonomy on their territory, serving as viable models for the Hungarians in Romania, such as Belgium, Italy or Finland.

Keeping all the above in mind, it is clear that the biased attacks and accusations against President Tőkés lack any real foundation, and are nothing but the rough manifestation of the still persisting - traditional - Romanian nationalism and the national-communism inherited from the Ceausescu-regime.

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