

## RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE ROMANIANS IN HUNGARY

(1993-2003)

In Hungary the so-called minority research has been and is being carried out in several places, but often without the ethnic minorities and not in the interest of them. This seems typically paternalistic in mentality. Before the change of regime minority researchers did not have the opportunity to study their fields as their principal occupation. Scientific research could only have been a kind of “*nobile officium*” besides their full-time job. Minority researchers in Hungary could not necessarily “rise to the top” adequate to their talent, skills, diligence and achievements.

The Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary was established by the Romanian intellectuals in Hungary – taking the advantage of their self-organizations - as they wanted to take part in getting to know their own minority themselves. Earlier their scientific work had been ad hoc-like – several requirements of efficient scholarly work were missing, e.g. continuity, regularity, the independent institutional framework, the co-ordination of research work, and the financial funds. The most important aim of the establishment of the Institute was to make the research work carried out in isolation more organized and well-considered, to set up priorities suitable for the interests of our ethnic minority, to take charge of the publication of the achievements, and to distribute the publications among the Romanians. The Romanian intellectuals increasingly think that the preservation of their national consciousness and their mother tongue is only realizable by organizing their own cultural life. If we accept that scholarship also has regional and ethnic dimensions, then there is no doubt that this initiative has a *raison d’etre*, too. The Romanians in

Hungary – just like any other minorities - can only fight for their survival and against assimilation on an institutional basis. They will do their best to have their own native institutions, because this is the only chance for them to preserve their national identity. *In this Institute the Romanian researchers in Hungary are able to do their work in their mother tongue, they are able to emphasize their individuality, and may create a national self-portrait. This is the place where the minority Romanian intelligentsia may be formed.* Without a highly qualified intelligentsia the preservation and improvement of the cultural heritage is unthinkable as the sense of identity requires a common picture of the future and tasks undertaken collectively. The intelligentsia is destined for drawing up these. Experiencing, preserving and fostering national identity is not only an individual right but also a collective one since national affiliation may only be experienced in the social form. The main aim of the Minority Act is to provide for circumstances and institutional framework in which the long-term survival of the ethnic minorities in Hungary is possible. A community, an ethnic group is viable until it is able to create values and is able to show these values to the world. The institutional framework has a *raison d'être* until it is able to provide for the framework for creating values and able to build up the framework of changing intellectual values. An ethnic minority may be mainly distinguished from the majority nation by its language, culture and ethnic consciousness. Culture is able to maintain the framework of nationhood, and is also able to preserve collective identity and disintegrated solidarity within the community. “A nation lives in its mother tongue” – as Széchenyi put it one and a half centuries ago. The validity and topicality of his warning have not decreased since then. His statement is even more true in the case of the minorities' mother tongue. The notion of language means more than the use of language in the narrow sense. Literature – that has sprung from the language -,

popular tradition and history are more and more implied in the notion of language. So nations and minorities alike live, survive and revive in their culture. That is why there is a need for minority research institutes where minority researchers – who are motivated by a kind of duality: professional honesty and communal calling - may work in their mother tongue. The vitality of a minority depends on to what extent the minority is capable of organizing itself as an independent community. The researchers are aware of the fact that they are fulfilling a special calling in connection with minority life. Special situations may arise from minority status. The task of minority experts or researchers - besides studying their fields – is the popularization of their work, the exploration of the sources and the transmission of them via different channels, and acquainting the majority society with their work. The establishment of this Institute may be considered a milestone in the history of the Romanians in Hungary.

The Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary operates as an association. It employs a full-time researcher-director, a part-time researcher and nine outside contributors. During the period between 1993-1997 the Institute's annual budget – similarly to the other minority research institutes - was provided by the Major Department of Minorities of the Ministry of Education. **In 1998 this public financing ceased without offering any explanation in spite of the fact that the annual budget of the Institute is guaranteed by three government measures: 1025/1993., 2281/1998 (XII.19), and 2023/2002 (II.1.).** The 6<sup>th</sup> article of the latter rules that: “ The Hungarian Government is expected to secure the necessary budgetary sources for the continuous operation of the Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary.” The Institute obtains money for research work, cultural and

academic programmes, conferences, publications through applications. The Institute got support from the intervention funds of the Ministry of Youth, from the Major Department of Minorities of the Ministry of Education, from the Major Department of Nationalities and Minorities of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage, and from the Public Foundation for the National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary. However, there is still a lot to do in the field of governmental support despite the development of a multi-channelled support mechanism in the last few years. Minority research institutes should be given more support in order that they would be able to create more full-time jobs, because only a stable research team can start greater projects and achieve results of high standard.

**The aim of the Institution** is the all-round examination of the Romanian minority in Hungary, the exploration and the analysis of its problems with scholarly methods, and – through doing this - its integration into the different spheres of scholarship and culture, and the publication of works representing the values and achievements of the Romanian minority in Hungary.

The Institute has three sections:

1. Historical
2. Linguistic- Literary
3. Ethnographic

**The main fields of research:**

- History – Cultural history – Local history  
(The press, the Church, the history of education and schools)

- Linguistics – Literary Studies – Philology  
(Mother tongue, bilingualism, dialectology, sociolinguistics)
- Ethnography – Folklore – Popular culture
- Demography – Sociography – Statistics
- Inter-ethnic research
- The identity of ethnic minorities – the consciousness of ethnic minorities

**The main themes of research (1993-2002) :**

- The history of the Romanian public elementary education in Hungary until 1945
- The institution system of the Romanians in Hungary during the period between the two World Wars
- The history of the Greeks and the Macedo-Romanians in Hungary
- The History of the Gozsdu Foundation
- The work of government commissioner József Sziegeszku in the light of documents
- The history of the Romanian Churches in Hungary (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1945
- The history of the Romanians in the Körös region
- Ethnic features in the material culture of the Romanians in Hungary
- Romanian culture in Pest-Buda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- The chronology of the Romanians in Hungary
- The popular beliefs of the Romanians in Hungary
- Clothing and garments of the Romanians in Hungary
- Burial customs of the Romanians in Hungary
- The meaning and symbol system of dreams

- The role of folk music and folk dance in the traditions of the Romanians in Hungary
- Customs and folk-poetry in the winter feasts
- Children folklore of the Romanians in Hungary
- Popular weather foretelling in the traditions of the Romanians in Hungary
- A research into the narrative structures of the folk-poetry of the ethnic minorities in south-east Hungary
- Folk-poetic narration in the bilingual communities in Hungary
- An aesthetic analysis of the proverbs of the Romanians in Hungary
- Contemporary Romanian prose – a literary historical and literary theoretical research
- The Romanian literature in Hungary
- The nationality question in Endre Ady's short stories
- Nationality relations in Rebreanu's novels
- A research into sociolinguistics and dialectology among the Romanians in Hungary
- A research into the history of names
- The nicknames of the Romanians in Hungary
- Bilingualism among the Romanians in Hungary
- Code-switching in the use of language among the Romanians in Hungary
- Variability of geographical names in interviews in Romanian
- A stratificational and mobilisational research among the Romanians in Hungary
- Romanian- Hungarian coexistence in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy
- The history and documentation of the Mocsáry College
- Inter-ethnic connections in Kétegyháza and Elek

### **The most important achievements of research work, publications:**

Since its establishment - through its research work - the Institution has considerably contributed to unfolding a deeper and more detailed picture of the culture, language, history, religion, traditions, and characteristic features of the Romanians in Hungary at the turn of the millennium. On the basis of the research work having been carried out for a decade in the Institution we may come closer not only to the understanding of the past but also the future. One of the measurements of the effectiveness of research work is the number and the quality of the publications, the other is the response of the profession. From this point of view the Institution has achieved much both in Hungarian and in Romanian relations. The publications of the Institute get through to foreign universities, museums, institutes of academies, etc. Several Romanian scholarly journals have published reviews of appreciation about the publications of the Institute. Through its scholarly achievements the Institution have reached appreciation and prestige in the Romanian cultural life – it has close professional contacts with several research workshops, university departments, and museums. The publications of the Institute up till now:

- SIMPOZION Volumes 1-11.  
(The documents of the annual conferences organized by the Institute)
- IZVORUL An ethnographic periodical  
(1-2 issues are published a year)
- LUMINA A periodical of cultural history  
(1-2 issues are published a year)

- CHITIGHAZ. Pagini istorico-culturale  
(Kétegyháza. Chapters of cultural history)  
Bp, 1993
- Maria Berényi: Romanii din Ungaria de azi in presa romana din Transilvania si Ungaria secolului al XIX-lea (1821-1918)  
(The Romanians in Hungary in the Romanian press in Transylvania and Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1821-1918) – Documents)  
Gyula, 1994
- Emilia Martin Nagy: Date etnografice despre romanii din Ungaria  
(Ethnographic data on the Romanians in Hungary)  
Gyula, 1995
- BATANIA. Pagini istorico-culturale  
(Battonya. Chapters of cultural history)  
Bp, 1995
- Maria Berényi: Istoria Fundatei Gojdu/ The history of the Gozsdu Foundation  
(1871-1952)  
Bp, 1995
- Elena Csobai: Istoricul romanilor din Ungaria de azi  
(The history of present-day Romanians in Hungary)  
Gyula, 1996
- ANNALES'96 A volume of bilingual studies  
Gyula, 1997
- BIBLIOGRAFIE  
(Personal bibliographies of the Institute's research workers)  
Gyula, 1998



- Elena Csobai – Emilia Martin: Vestigiile Bisericii Ortodoxe Íromane din Ungaria  
(The treasures of the Hungarian Orthodox Church)  
Gyula, 1999
- MICHERECHI. Pagani istorico-culturalale  
(Méhkerék. Chapters of cultural history)  
Gyula, 2000
- Maria Berényi: Cultura romaneasca la Budapesta in secolul al XIX-lea  
(Romanian Culture in Budapest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century)  
Gyula,2000
- ANNALES 2000. A volume of bilingual studies  
Gyula, 2001
- Borbély Anna: Nyelvcseré  
(Language change)  
Bp, 2001
- Maria Berényi: Viata si activitatea lui Emanuil Gojdu (1802-1870)  
(Emanuil Gojdu's life and work 1802-1870)  
Gyula, 2002
- Emilia Martin: Sarbatori calendaristice ale romanilor din Ungaria  
(The calendar feasts of the Romanians in Hungary)  
Gyula, 2003

## **Symposiums**

Our Institution has devoted and will devote an important part to organizing conferences. The annual international scholarly symposiums of the Institute (the XII.

was organized in the November 2002) are the most important cultural events of the Romanians in Hungary and at the same time the forums of the Romanian intelligentsia in Hungary. These meetings provide opportunity for the Institute's research workers to present the achievements of their research work. The lectures give an account of research work based on different surveys, regional and archival collection of material. Teachers and intellectuals in Hungary, Hungarian and Romanian experts are invited to the symposiums. They have the chance to get to know the most recent research achievements of the history, ethnography, and linguistics of the Romanians in Hungary. It is important to publish the material of the lectures as the volumes that have been published so far give much help to the Romanian teachers in teaching the minority studies, history and cultural traditions. These publications are useful supplementary materials in the Hungarian and Romanian cultural life for those who are carrying out research in connection with the Romanians in Hungary.

### **Ethnographic-historical- linguistic summer camps**

These camps are annually organized by our Institute together with the Cultural Association of the Romanians in Hungary and the Board of Directors of Békés County's Museums. The participants are the research workers of the Institute, secondary school students and undergraduates, Hungarian and Romanian historians, ethnographers, museologists and linguists. Historical-ethnographic-linguistic collection of material was carried out in the settlements populated by Romanians. The documents and audio cassettes are put into the data bank of the Institute and are available for other research workers. The importance of these

camps lies in their finds-saving and identity-strengthening function for the researchers and the youth.

### **The publication of scholarship- popularizing and educational supplementary material**

The aim of our Institution is to publish volumes on settlements populated by Romanians. So far three volumes have been published: Kétegyháza (1993), Battonya (1995) and Méhkerék (2000). The scheduled fourth volume will show the past and the present of the Romanians in Gyula (according to our plans it will be published in 2004). These publications are sent over to Hungarian schools teaching the Romanian language and to Romanian cultural societies operating in the different settlements. The volumes on Kétegyháza, Battonya and Méhkerék were very much in the public eye, and responses show that the volumes are useful supplementary materials in the lessons dealing with ethnographic and minority studies. The style and the structure of the books make it possible to use them both in primary schools and in the Romanian secondary grammar school. The identity-strengthening feature of the books lies in the fact that the Romanians in Hungary may read about the local history, the traditions, and the culture of the people living in these settlements, and the characteristics of the Romanian dialect spoken by the population of the settlements in their mother tongue. Hereby, an important part of the rich factual knowledge that can be found Hungarian and Romanian archives or is waiting for processing will be available for the public. The mass of facts gathered and available in the volumes may evoke a positive attitude towards the peculiar culture of the Romanians in Hungary, which promotes preserving identity. Our Institution annually

organizes a contest dealing with ethnographic and minority studies for senior section students of the Romanian schools in Hungary.

### **The writing of teacher's books and teaching materials dealing with ethnographic and minority studies**

The Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary is also a background institution that supports Romanian education in Hungary. Under par. 3 Sec. 45 of the Minority Act minority ethnography and getting to know the values, the traditions and the history of the minorities and the mother-country are expected to be secured. It is only now that minority schools in Hungary have the opportunity to teach the minorities' history, ethnography, traditions, and literature, etc. in the course of a subject dealing with ethnographic and minority studies. This subject requires teacher's books, textbooks, collections of documents and texts. The fellow workers of the Institute together with teachers are prepared to take on writing and compiling them. As the teachers in minority higher education in Hungary were not prepared to teach this subject there is a need for different in-service trainings. The programme of the trainings should contain themes including the history, the cultural history, the ethnography, the art, the literature, the social conditions and the linguistic status of the Romanians in Hungary. The Romanian researchers in Hungary are prepared to take on presenting the most recent research achievements in their lectures and proposing specialized literature for the teachers, which gives them suitable basic knowledge to teach ethnographic and minority studies.

The Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary held its scholarly symposium in 1993 in Kétegyháza to the memory of **Iosif Ioan Ardelean**, and in 1994 in Gyula to

the memory of **Moise Nicoara**. For the latter a statue was raised together with the Association of the Romanians in Hungary. On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1998 a dedication of memorial plaque and a commemorative scholarly meeting was held in honour of **Gheorghe Pomut** of Romanian birth, who was a captain in the Hungarian army during the War of Independence in 1848-49, and later became a general during the American Civil War. In recognition of Pomut's military achievements later he was the consul general of the USA in St. Petersburg for 12 years. Besides research work the Institution considers its aim and task the identity preservation of the Romanians in Hungary. That is why they want to raise a monument to the memory of several Romanians in Hungary who - through their lives and work - contributed to the enrichment of the history and culture of the Romanians in Hungary. The Research Institute of the Romanians in Hungary is practically the only institutional framework in the field of research work among the Romanians in Hungary. The publications edited by the Institute – their own volumes, annals, journals, symposiums – indicate the achievements of a workshop without which it would be difficult to get information about the culture of the Romanians in Hungary. Through its activity the Institution considerably contributes to the improvement of minority consciousness and sense of identity, the preservation of the mother tongue, the formation of the Romanian intelligentsia in Hungary, and to the development of dialogue between the majority and the minority.

Maria Berényi