

The village of Poiana Micului in Bukovina and the avatars of Romania's relations with Czechoslovakia and Poland

RADU FLORIAN BRUJA

„Ștefan cel Mare” University in Suceava (Rumunsko)

The village of Poiana Micului in Bukovina does not enjoy a reputation in the Romanian space. Few people know that, since 1842, an ethnic community that is defined as being of Polish origin lives here. During the twentieth century its history was influenced by the policies pursued by Czechoslovakia (respectively Slovakia, for the years between 1939 and 1944) and by Poland. The rivalry between the two countries to achieve strategic supremacy in Central Europe, and especially the territorial dispute in the border region of Teschen (Czech: Těšín), spawned a competition for defining the Slovak-Polish community in Bukovina. The reason of otherness of the Poles and Slovaks in relation to the Romanians was born from this rivalry. In turn, Romania treated the mentioned community with pragmatism according to its interest at the time, successively encouraging once the idea of Polish origin, and later the idea of Slovak origin of this ethnic group.¹

In her turn Bukovina province became an ethnic and confessional composite, result of the significant metamorphoses suffered by this region while it belonged to the House of Habsburg. Among the peoples who settled in southern Bukovina, one group came from the Kysuce, Spiš and Orava regions in present-day Slovakia at the end of the eighteenth century. By the permission from the Habsburg authorities they colonized a territory of southern Bukovina as workers in the glass workshops or in wood exploitation.

They established settlements later called Solonețul Nou, Pleșa and Poiana Micului, where they became the majority but they also settled in districts with mixed Polish and German population, as were Huta Veche,

¹ Florin Anghel: *Identitatea duală a unei comunități etnice: poloni și slovaci în Bucovina, 1937-1944. Manipularea etnică în timpul crizelor politice internaționale*. In: *Altera ANUL X*, 2004, nr. 25, pp. 37 – 38. Accessible on internet: <http://www.altera.adatbank.transindex.ro/pdf/25/004.pdf>.

Davideni, Banila, Panca, Păltinoasa și Tereblecea. According to the Polish historiography their origin was Polish, because they were coming from the Polish villages situated on the historic Slovak territory. Instead they had strong Slovak traditions and habits. They were of the Catholic confession and belonged to the Diocese of Lemberg (now Lviv), with German or Polish priests. They spoke the "Goral" dialect that was similar to the Polish language. For these reasons the population in the villages Poiana Micului, Pleșa or Solonețul Nou was gradually "Polonized", or was denationalized. During the period in which Bukovina belonged to the Habsburg Empire, many of the inhabitants of these villages were noted in the censuses as being Poles, benefiting from a privileged status granted by the Austrian government and from the right to use the Polish language. In the mid-nineteenth century other emigrants from the region of Trenčín (present Slovakia) settled in rural Bukovina, a group estimated at about 1,000 people in 1910.² In the interwar period, they were registered as Poles with a school in Polish language. According to the 1930 census, considered exactly, 481 Czechs and Slovaks were registered in Bukovina (without distinguishing between them), compared to 28.041 Poles. Czechs and Slovaks were assigned to the counties as follows: 33 in Câmpulung County, 233 in Chernivtsi region, 62 in Radauti County, 110 Storojineț County and 43 in Suceava County.³ Aurel Morariu wrote in 1905 that the Slovaks established the localities of Pleșa and Solonețul Nou.⁴ Ion Nistor favoured the Slovaks of Bukovina, and in his paper published in 1930 he exaggerated the numbers of the Slovaks.⁵ The Romanian historian of Slovak origin Paul Dincu made a series of studies concluding that this ethnic group was of Slovak origin and that they settled here in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶ Instead, Polish historians have denied

² Krzysztof Nowak: *Problem ludności „słowackiej” na Bukowinie w XIX i XX wieku*. In: Zbigniew Kowalski, Helena Krasowska (eds.): *„Bukowina. Tradycje i współczesność.”* Piła – Czerniowce – Suczawa, 2006, pp. 213-222. The Polish historian resumed the theme in the study: *In the County of Czadec and in Bucovina*. In: *Polonus*, nrs. 4-6 (77-79), April-June 2000.

³ Poiana Micului was situated in the County of Câmpulung, but we have no data on the distribution of the rural population. In: Ioan Scurtu, Ioan Dordea (eds.): *National Minorities in Romania, 1925-1931. Documents*. Bucharest, National Archives of Romania, 1996, doc. 82, table H, pp. 464, 466.

⁴ Aurel Morariu: *Bucovina, 1774-1914*. Bucharest : Suru, 1915, pp. 44-45.

⁵ It showed 622 Slovaks in Poiana Micului and 725 in Solonețul Nou.

⁶ Florin Anghel: *op. cit.*, p. 40.

the Slovaks influences in these localities, acknowledging only that they came from an area with strong ethnic interference but that they, although originating in the territory of Slovakia, were Poles.⁷ Newly, the historian Constantin Ungureanu reiterated the idea of Raimund F. Kaindl supporting the Slovak character of the community, but he concluded that through school they were “Polonized” since the nineteenth century.

The conflict between the Poles and Slovaks for the land in region of Čadca (present Slovakia) reverberated in Bukovina as well. As neither the Poles recognize the existence of the Slovak community in Poland, nor the authorities in Czechoslovakia recognized the cohabitation of a Polish community in Czechoslovakia, the question of the origin of the inhabitants in Bukovina villages has gained too much importance compared to their number. At the initiative of some professors from Kraków, Polish militants with Czechoslovak citizenship from Zaolzie were used for propaganda in favour of the Polish cause in Čadca and Bukovina.⁸ In 1925 a school inspector from Gura Humorului visited the village of Solonețul Nou concluding that the local school there is subjected to propaganda for the Polish language though the inhabitants are Slovaks. His investigation reached the Ministry of Education but it was rejected. A counter-inquiry of the Safety Service has determined that the residents were Poles.

Moving Poland away from the system of alliances created by France after the First World War, and the dangerous approach to Germany in the period when the foreign affairs in Warsaw were led by Józef Beck (who was in rivalry with the Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu), has brought the issue of ethnic origin of the inhabitants of Poiana Micului, Pleșa și Solonețul Nou back into discussion. There was not a common opinion among the Romanian authorities whether these people were Poles or Slovaks because of their origin in the controversial region of Teschen (Czech: Těšín, Polish: Cieszyn, German: Teschen). A decade later, in 1935, a delegation of the Parliament of Czechoslovakia came in Plesa village for a survey on the ethnic origin of the inhabitants of the three villages. A year later, the priest Peter Makoš began a propaganda activity in

⁷ Idem, *Polish and Slovaks in Bucovina. Manipulation of the ethnic identity during political crises*. In: *Historical Magazine*, New series, tom XIV, nr. 3-4, May-August 2003, p. 85.

⁸ Krzysztof Nowak: *In the land of Czadec and in Bucovina*, part 2. In: „Polonus”, no. 5 (78), May 2000, p. 8.

favour of the Slovak identity inhabitants of these townships.⁹ Specialist in the history of ethnic minorities in Bukovina, historian Daniel Hrenciuc believes that Slovak propaganda had the support of a foundation close to Andrej Hlinka, and even of some circles of the extreme right in Romania.¹⁰ Minister of Czechoslovakia in Bucharest Jan Šeba broke out the conflict in 1936 when he published a critical paper against Poland's foreign policy, and questioned the Slovak character of the community, triggering a genuine conflict of statements on the subject. He came into conflict with the diplomatic representatives of Warsaw accredited in the Romanian capital: Mirosław Arciszewski and Roger Raczyński. Their reactions were taken by the Polish and Slovak language media in Romania. In a time when Romania's relations with Czechoslovakia were good and those with Poland were cold because of Titulescu's policy towards Germany, with which Poland temporarily understood, the Bukovinian Slovaks were favoured. The School agreement concluded between the two countries in October 1936 obliged Romania to support the schools teaching in the Slovak language.¹¹ A month later, Romania was signing a similar agreement with Poland without taking care of the schools with teaching in Polish or Slovak.¹²

That is how a school teaching in the Slovak language appeared in Poiana Micului and a branch of the Slovak Cultural Society was opened in Nădlac.¹³ Under the agreement, in Poiana Micului, Solonețul Nou și Boian Slovak teachers were brought. Based on the data provided by the historian Raimond Friederich Kaindl, they waged propaganda in favour of the idea that the inhabitants of the village were of the Slovak origin. Rudolf Kovalik Ustianski's arrival and subsequently the arrival of Hilda Gudernová from Czechoslovakia triggered the conflict locally with the

⁹ Krzysztof Nowak: *Problem ludności...*, p. 218-219.

¹⁰ Daniel Hrenciuc: *A destiny for history: Polish in Bucovina (1774-2008)*. Iași : Princeps Edit, 2008, p. 345.

¹¹ Although the Arrangement between Romania and Czechoslovakia cared primarily in the Czech language courses for Poiana Micului, Romanian authorities have closed their eyes accepting the school to receive the Slovak language teachers. Gheorghe Gheorghe: *The International treaties of Romania, 1921-1939*, vol. II. Bucharest : Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, doc. 458, p. 483.

¹² *Ibidem*, doc. 462, p. 486.

¹³ Ondrej Štefanko: *Overall Guideline on the Slovaks in Romania*. Nădlac : Cultural and Scientific Society Publisher „Ivan Krasko”, 1998, p. 26.

Polish teacher Kazimierz Urbański. Peter Pavol Duvál, director of the newspaper *Naše snahy národné, kultúrne i hospodárske. Časopis Slovákov a Čechov v Rumunsku* (Our national, cultural and economic endeavors. The magazine of Slovaks and Czechs in Romania), asserted that there were 10 000 Slovaks living in Bukovina and that only 2500 Slovaks lived in Pleșa. The Slovak newspaper *Naše snahy* published extensive material about the Slovak community in Bukovina, bringing them into the public consciousness. Warsaw's reaction was prompt, accusing Romania that it was politically "converting Poles into Slovaks".

On the other side, Czechoslovakia was accused of wanting to create an ethnic border between it and the Soviet Union through Bukovina.¹⁴ In February 1937 the Polish Foreign Ministry sent an official letter to the Romanian Legation in Warsaw with accusation that the action of "turning into Slovaks" was being supported with funds from the USSR and that the intention of Czechoslovakia and the USSR was to achieve a common border. An *Aide-Memoire* of the Polish Legation in Bucharest depicted the situation in Poiana Micului as extremely serious with dark colours that never existed. The document claimed that Jan Šeba instigated violence. The Poiana Micului school building was supposedly entitled "Czechoslovak school" and on Pilsudski's commemorating day Slovak teachers had created unfortunate incidents.¹⁵ In reality, the authorities in Prague had never had the intention to break the Romanian territory part where a small ethnic Slovak group was living. The Czechoslovak-Polish conflict reverberated in the Romanian Parliament. In the same month, several deputies representing the political right spectrum of the Chamber of Deputies questioned Victor Antonescu, Titulescu's successor at the head of Foreign Affairs Ministry, on the issue of Jan Šeba's assessments. The latter had made a series of assessments regarding the border between Romania and the USSR, which would be broader to the detriment of Poland. Even Józef Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, visited Bukovina and met the residents of the three villages.¹⁶

¹⁴ Florin Anghel: *Polish and Slovaks...*, p. 86.

¹⁵ Dumitru Preda (ed.): *Romania – Polonia. Diplomatic relations I 1918-1939*. București : Univers Enciclopedic, 2003, doc. 92, p. 188-190.

¹⁶ Daniel Hrenciuc, *op. cit.*, p. 350-351.

Discussions and debates on the origin and ethnic identity of the inhabitants of Poiana Micului and neighbouring villages came amid severe tension between Czechoslovak and Polish relations and were questioning the whole European balance on the border with the Soviet Union. Romania had taken active part in these discussions. Câmpulung Moldovenesc County Deputy, Alexander Procopovici, spoke about quarrels arising between inhabitants of Poiana Micului. Each of the sides was supported by a teacher: one native Polish and one Slovak who had later come there. He believed that the Poiana Micului minority population had been mistakenly registered as Slovak. „In the Romanian state school in Poiana Micului”, Procopovici shows, „Polish and Slovak languages are now taught. Quarrels between the two teachers carry on, even children are being instigated against each other, their parents have feuds, village is divided into hostile camps.”¹⁷

In autumn 1936 the teacher Rudolf Kovalik arrived to Poiana Micului. He supported the Slovaks and promised that those who declare themselves as Slovaks will receive cattle bred in Czechoslovakia. A school and a factory of cloth were to be built, where only those of Slovak ethnic origin would work. He had the support of the Romanian director of a village school and that of the German priest Bensch. Soon, the Poles found that the action taken by Kovalik was seeking to destroy the Polish influences in Bukovina and to turn the Poles against Slovak autonomy militants in Zaolzie.¹⁸ Security Service spoke in April 1937 that Kovalik's promises had an impact on identifying of some Romanians and Ukrainians as Slovaks. This situation created confusion even in Prague. Also in this case the reaction was immediate in Warsaw. Many Polish farms were upgraded with financial support from Poland, the house of Poles was built (*Dom Polski*) and Polunt dairy farm was opened to encourage cattle breeders. In 1938 a camp for the students and teachers was inaugurated that reached a record number of 600 visitors. Slovak government didn't stay behind and it opened a similar camp for Slovaks but only 21 teachers and students came to Poiana Micului. Kovalik's death in March 1938 and the political difficulties in Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement

¹⁷ Apud Florin Anghel: *Dual identity...*; p. 42.

¹⁸ Krzysztof Nowak: *In the land of Czadec and in Bucovina...*, no. 5 (78), May 2000, p. 9.

did not allow financial support any more.¹⁹ *The Czechoslovak Union of Romania* became in 1938 *The Union of Romanian Czechs and Slovaks* and had subordinated *The Slovak Economic Society of Nădlac* with a branch in Poiana Micului.²⁰ Finally a Chernivtsi pro-Polish prefect Col. Teodorescu closed the Slovak school in Poiana Micului.²¹

During 1938-1939, Romania and Poland became close once more in foreign policy, both being threatened by the USSR. The situation was resolved in favour of the Poles because the Chernivtsi County deputy prefect decided to transfer the students to the Polish school, based on a Ministry of Education order. According to the content of the letter, learning of Polish or Slovak language would be made at the request of parents. So, he closed down the Slovak school in Poiana Micului.²² Ion Nistor tried a last resort to preserve the identity of Slovak inhabitants of the three villages. In autumn 1938, he invited Jan Šeba to give a lecture at the University of Chernivtsi to demonstrate the Slovak origin of the Polish settlement. Polish leaders resumed charges using the newspaper *Kurier Ilustrowany Codzienny*.²³ Gradually, by the summer of 1938, most people had given up declaring themselves as Slovaks. The newspaper *Kurier Ilustrowany Codzienny* in Kraków on November 6, 1938 published an extensive article entitled "Slovakization of the Polish population in Bukovina", showing that in Romania a real "debauchery" propaganda had been triggered with the aim of bringing the Soviet Union closer to the Little Entente. It is true, the columnist admitted that „Polish mountaineers in Bukovina came from Slovakia but they came from villages in Čadca that now (after the occupation of Teschen) are being returned to Poland!”²⁴ In support of the population Grzegorz Szymonowicz, lawyer in Chernivtsi, also became involved, the Polish consul in the capital of Bukovina, Tadeusz Buynowski, who visited the mountaineer villages in 1939, and Kazimierz Grabowski, a Major in the Polish army and the son of a family of teachers from Poiana Micului, also supported the cause of Poles in the village. He had planned

¹⁹ Florin Anghel: *Polish and Slovaks...*, p. 87.

²⁰ Ondrej Štefanko: *op. cit.*, p. 50.

²¹ Forin Pintescu, Daniel Hrenciuc: *op. cit.*, p. 137.

²² Daniel Hrenciuc: *op. cit.*, p. 349.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 350.

²⁴ Florin Anghel: *The dual identity...*, p. 45.

to establish a *Credit Union*, a dairy farm and a swimming pool in Poiana Micului.²⁵

The disappearance of Czechoslovakia took effect in Poiana Micului. Romania became interested in Poland and securing the common treaty that binds the two countries against the USSR. Instead, the Little Entente alliance system was collapsing. Romania perceived Slovakia as a part of the German alliance system. In Bucharest Slovakia's independence was regarded in German note and the Anglo-French guarantees granted to Romania in April kept the country outside the Axis. Slovakia was born under German patronage and any position in the international arena had to take into account the "godfather" in Berlin.²⁶ Then the turn came with the well-articulated Polish propaganda in favour of the inhabitants of the region. The Polish newspaper *Kurier Polski w Rumunii* claimed that Czechoslovakia was a "branch of the Comintern", bringing to debate the issue of Teschen region. Also, *Kurier Polski w Rumunii* stated that the residents of Poiana Micului came from Slovakia but from the Polish villages.²⁷ Moreover, with the occupation of Teschen by Poland, some Polish villages in Čadca region returned to their homeland.

After a visit of Chernivtsi and Campulung Moldovenesc Prefects, accompanied by the Polish community leader, to Poiana Micului, figures were released according to which 70 % of the villagers were Poles and only 30 % Slovaks.²⁸ Nandriș Grigore, a professor at the University of Chernivtsi with a PhD in Kraków, and Mieczysław Malecki, professor of the dialectology at the Jagellonian University in Kraków, came to Poiana Micului to speak to locals about the Polish character of their origin.²⁹

Their research, retrieved later by the contemporary Polish historians, have established that in terms of spoken language residents of Poiana Micului and the neighbouring villages were Polish mountaineers from the Spiš, Orava and Podhale regions. Bukovinian historian of Polish origin

²⁵ Alfons-Eugen Zielonca: *Solonețul Nou. Village and parish history*. Suceava : Union of Poles in Romania, 2014, p. 231.

²⁶ Radu Florian Bruja: *Establishment of Romanian-Slovakian Diplomatic Relations in 1939*. In: „*Globalization and Intercultural Dialogue. Multidisciplinary Perspectives. Section History*”. Tg. Mureș, Arhipelag XXI, 2014, pp. 355-363.

²⁷ „*Kurier Polski w Rumunii*”, 8 August 1937, p. 3.

²⁸ Florin Anghel: *Polish and Slovaks...*, p. 88.

²⁹ Idem, *The dual identity...*, p. 43.

Marian Gotkiewicz claimed that Poles settled here three decades before the Slovaks.³⁰ He also concluded that there is a linguistic relationship between Poles in the three villages and those in Czechoslovakia, in the region of Čadca. His theory is confirmed by the existence of common names both in the Teschen and Bukovina.³¹ A group of residents from Poiana Micului visited Poland, during the Feast of the Nowy Sącz Mountains, part of an awareness raising campaign about the Polish origin of inhabitants.³²

Professor Silviu Dragomir's Report of November 5, 1938 argued that residents of Poiana Micului were Slovak that came under the authority of the Catholic Church of Poland, concluding that „... it is easy to explain how the Slovak population – apart from its national trunk [However, the information that until 1918 there was no State of Poland, does not appear.] – living under Polish influence, having the same Slavic origin, has turned almost completely Polish in a relatively short time. Today, elders speak the Slovak language somewhat altered by elements of Polish infiltration, the younger generation, however, has become entirely Polish. Taken into consideration the nationalist feelings, the entire population of Slovak origin presents itself as belonging to the Polish community.”³³ He felt that Kovalik's activity strained the atmosphere in Poiana Micului but that after his death and the appointment of a Polish teacher the “dispute subsided”.³⁴ For strengthening the relationship between Poland and Romania the Poles were favoured.

With the outbreak of World War II, things took a new twist. The disappearance of the Polish state in September 1939 and the new diplomatic

³⁰ Marian Gotkiewicz also kept a diary for the years 1937-1954 the reported the links of Poles in Bukovina with those in Čadca. Marek Gotkiewicz: *Związki dr. Mariana Gotkiewicz z Bukowiną*. In: „*In the world of the Polish-Romanian relations*”. Suceava : Union of Poles in Romania, 2005, p. 98.

³¹ Daniel Hrenciuc: *op. cit.*, p. 346-347.

³² Krzysztof Nowak: *In the land of Czadec and in Bucovina...*, no. 5 (78), May 2000, p. 9.

³³ Dumitru Preda (ed.): *România – Polonia. Diplomatic relations...*, doc. 92 (Appendix memories Professor Silviu Dragomir, General Commissioner for Minorities, addressed to Nicolae Petrecu-Comnen, Minister of Foreign Affairs on the situation of minorities in Bucovina), p. 190-191.

³⁴ Dumitru Preda (ed.): *România – Polonia. Diplomatic relations...*, doc. 92, p. 190-191.

relations between Slovakia and Romania changed things again. Newspaper *Naše snahy* resumed propaganda for Slovaks, claiming in 1940 that the inhabitants of "Poiana Micului Slovak national community" were Slovaks brought here under the orders of the Habsburg authorities.³⁵ The change of the political regime in Bucharest after the second Vienna Agreement enabled the rapprochement between the two countries in autumn 1940. Since the ultranationalist political regime in Budapest sought to suppress any free manifestation of the Romanian or Slovak minority, Bucharest and Bratislava found themselves on the same side.³⁶ Relations with Slovakia were part of a broad diplomatic offensive aimed against the Vienna Agreements and to combat anti-Romanian and anti-Slovakian policies in Hungary.³⁷

A subject that brought close the two countries was the presence of the Slovak minority in Transylvania and Bukovina. Thanks to the legislation concerning minorities in Romania, Slovaks enjoyed a much better situation than in the Austro-Hungarian period. The Slovak community in Transylvania and Banat played an important part in the cultural bonding of Romania and Slovakia. They were the beneficiaries of a cultural treaty between Romania and Czechoslovakia, signed in 1936 that favoured the development of education in the mother tongue by the arrival of teachers from Slovakia and building schools. The agreements of 1936 were not cancelled after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. And there was the education law from May 1939, allowing the Slovaks to keep schools and cultural institutions. Thus, in localities that had 20 school children the classes with teaching in the Slovak language were permitted. The treaty was renewed in the autumn of 1939 between the Romanian and the new Slovak Republic on the same principles.³⁸ After 1940, both Romanians and Slovaks coming under Hungarian occupation experienced a more difficult

³⁵ Florin Anghel: *Polish and Slovaks...*, p. 89-90.

³⁶ Milan S. Ďurica: *The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republik*. Padova-Trieste : Edizioni Lint, 1984, p. 27.

³⁷ Ioan Chiper: *Objectives, means and methods of Romanian diplomacy in 1941 (I)*. In: „ Historic Magazine”, new series, tom II, nr. 3-4, March-April 1991, p. 134.

³⁸ Miroslav Kmeť: *Slovaks in Romania along history and at the end of the Second World War*. In: *The events of August 23rd 1944 in România and National Slovakian Insurrection on August 29th, 1944. Their consequences on the release of Romania and Slovakia and of the end of the Second World War*. Banská Bystrica – Alba Iulia : Academy Romanian – Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2012, p. 108.

status. Both countries were concerned to protect ethnic communities under Hungarian occupation and they needed a similar if not common action plan.

Even economically, Slovakia had taken a number of contracts that Romania had with former Czechoslovakia. Thus, under the old Romanian-Czechoslovak conventions significant quantities of timber, grain and petroleum products were exported to Protectorate and Slovakia and manufactured goods, textile and chemical took the road to Romania.³⁹ Romania and Slovakia signed a trade agreement on December 4, 1939, an occasion on which the unanimous opinion was expressed that the widening of cultural relations as an objective will be pursued, being in the interest of the Slovak minority in Romania.⁴⁰ Between the Propaganda Ministries of the two countries various forms of cooperation have been signed, supported by the Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihai Antonescu. Romania during the regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu supported the Slovakian character of Poiana Micului village.

The Cultural Convention negotiated between the two countries, now partners and allies in the Axis, provided academic and school exchanges and support of the Slovak school in Poiana Micului. It was nothing more than a total reversal of the ethnic system of values brought from Poland and used until 1939, now turned in favour of the Slovak Republic. The Romanian State has refused an investigation, preferring an ambiguous or circumstantial position in this "strange war" of manipulation.⁴¹ The Slovak teacher Vendelín Úradník came to Poiana Micului, resuming teaching in Slovak. Gejza Minárik and Tobiáš Kutík,⁴² who supported the Slovak cause when the relations between Romania and Slovakia were sponsored by Berlin, joined him in 1940. A first form of education organization in the Slovak language under the new conditions was brought with the gathering of Slovak teachers in Romania in January 8, 1941.⁴³ In February 1941, the Central Directorate of the Slovak schools in Romania arose, based in Nădlac, with

³⁹ Livia Dandara: *Romania into the whirl of 1939*. București : Scientific and Encyclopedic Publisher, 1985, p. 280.

⁴⁰ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E.), fund 71 Slovakia, vol. 11, f. 82.

⁴¹ Florin Anghel: *Polish and Slovaks...*, p. 91.

⁴² Daniel Hrenciuc: *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁴³ Pavel Huszárík: *Events after 23 August 1944 concerning the Slovaks in Romania in school and church archives documents*. In: „*The events of 23 August 1944 in Romania ...*”, p. 113-114.

several subsidiaries, including Poiana Micului. At the head of this institution was named teacher Pavel Horský.

Along with the reorganization of the *Romanian-Slovak Society*, cultural exchanges also intensified. The peak of these contacts was the drafting of a cultural agreement between the two countries.⁴⁴ The Cultural Agreement between Romania and Slovakia provided for the establishment of a *Romanian-Slovak Cultural Association* in Bucharest and Bratislava in order to contribute to strengthening ties between intellectuals of the two countries. *Slovaks Abroad Association* requested, in turn, the agreement to be completed as quickly as possible, as they also had the Slovaks in Romania in their supervision. The association wanted „... to codify the current state of Slovak schools in Romania, to prove through it to the foreign countries how well Romania understands to treat the Slovak minority compared to the harsh treatment that this minority has in Hungary”.⁴⁵ The media in Slovakia has allocated ample spaces to Romania and the bonds of friendship between the two peoples and the aspects of life of Slovaks in Romania.⁴⁶ In Poiana Micului branches of *Slovak Cultural Society* and *Slovak Economic Society* of Nădlac were reopened. The Romanian-Slovak Cultural Agreement was signed in 1942 and resigned two years after.

Under Soviet offensive on the night of April 30 to May 1, 1944 the German army burned the village of Poiana Micului, forcing its residents to take refuge in the mountains and later to settle with relatives in other towns.⁴⁷ The change of Alliance on 23 August 1944 again affected the inhabitants of Poiana Micului by cancelling the ethnic recovery program of Slovaks. After August 23, the situation of the Slovak community in Poiana Micului suffered. An anti-Slovak current was created, many of the members of this community being accused by the Romanians of conflicting feelings. On the one hand, some were suspected of having been attracted by Panslav propaganda and were threatening national security. Given that Romania was fighting against the Axis forces to which Slovakia belonged, the Cultural Convention between the two countries was no longer

⁴⁴ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E.), Fond 71 Slovakia, vol. 11, f. 556.

⁴⁵ Central Historical National Archives Service, National Propaganda Ministry Fund. External press, file 1243, f. 10.

⁴⁶ Loc. cit., d. 1271, f. 216.

⁴⁷ Alfons-Eugen Zielonca: *op. cit.*, p. 233.

respected by the Romanian authorities. Under the new conditions, in January 1945 teachers coming from Slovakia were suspended. They have been charged that they were fascists. Bucharest authorities recognized the Czechoslovak government in exile and refused to pay the teachers who had come from Tiso's Slovakia.⁴⁸

The establishment of the communist regime produced other changes. The school in Poiana Micului have no longer courses taught in Slovak. The Slovak community in Romania has not ended its saga together with the end of the Second World War. The Poles managed to temporarily restore their organizations in Poiana Micului, the local branch of the *Polish House* being restored in 1946.⁴⁹ The repatriation of Poles and Slovaks in Romania has been a process that has characterized Central Europe after World War II. The "mom's call" programme profoundly affected the existence of Slovak and Polish communities in Romania. Residents were urged to leave the locality, 65 Slovak families have left for Czechoslovakia in February 1947, and those who remained were again subjected to a policy of "Polish transformation". Other residents have chosen to settle in Poland. More than 500 people have left Poiana Micului between years 1945 – 1947 but did not settle in the same places from where their predecessors came. They were going to Lower Silesia, most of them to the area of Dzierżoniów.⁵⁰

After 1990, under the conditions of restoration of the democratic system in central Europe countries, the community in Bukovina returned to their attention. But after gaining independence of Slovakia, none of the authorities from Bratislava were interested in the fate of the Slovak inhabitants in Bukovina. Instead they have entered into various programs of Warsaw. A branch of the *Polish House* (*Dom Polski*) with a completely new headquarters was re-established and an office for reading and learning the Polish language was opened in Poiana Micului. The community was supported by Warsaw through various projects. Since 1999 "Days of Polish Culture" were organized and in 2000 a scientific symposium on Polish-Romanian relations

⁴⁸ Pavel Huszárík: *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁴⁹ Krzysztof Nowak: *Pojañczy między Bukowiną a Polską*. In: „Closer to each other. Romanian and Polish in Europe. History and present”. Suceava : Union of Poles in Romania, 2006, p. 94. The article was supplemented in 2008 with title *Pojana Mikuli i Bukowińczycy*. In: „The Community peoples and cultures. Polish-Romanian relations in the world”. Suceava : Union of Poles in Romania, 2008, p. 35-38.

⁵⁰ Krzysztof Nowak: *In the land of Czadec and in Bucovina...*, part 3, no. 6 (79), June 2000, p. 5.

and the history of Poles in Bukovina was organized. The expression “at the Slovaks” remained among Romanians from neighbouring villages for residents of Poiana Micului or other villages in Bukovina. If at the last census in Romania in December 2011 about 3,000 persons living in Suceava County declared themselves as Poles, only four families in the same administrative unit declared themselves as being of Slovak origin.

Ethnic coexistence between Slovaks and Poles is a reality not only in some Bukovina villages but also in other areas of Central Europe. Their identity, specific to “Goral” mountaineers, is based on a language with strong Polish influence but on the Slovak customs and traditions. Slovak loans were brought by these people and influenced the existence of the community in Poiana Micului. But this is a feature for the entire Bukovina, where loans from other ethnic groups were a constant. Inflammation of the spirits in Poiana Micului, as well in other villages where they live together, was possible only during the periods of international political crisis. Ethnic manipulation in favour of the Slovaks in the years 1936-1938 and 1940-1944, respectively in favour of the Poles in 1938-1939 and after 1945 and 1989, was due to the politicization of this issue.

Zhrnutie

Obec Poiana Micului v Bukovine a premeny vzťahov Rumunska s Československom a Poľskom

Štúdia analyzuje problémy alternácie etnickej identity poľských a slovenských obyvateľov obcí v rumunskej provincii Bukovina v medzivojnovom a vojnovom období. Polemika o identite týchto skupín bola výsledkom snáh Poľska a Československa chrániť strategické výhody v Strednej Európe, prípadne stať sa hlavným geopolitickým hráčom v tejto oblasti. Takmer počas celého medzivojnového obdobia rumunské lokálne i centrálné úrady považovali za Poliakov všetkých katolíckych obyvateľov, ktorí prišli do Bukoviny z pohraničných oblastí regiónov Kysúc, Oravy a Spiša v 18. storočí. Až po rozdelení Poľska v septembri 1939 a po vzniku Slovenskej republiky v marci 1939 možno zaregistrovať radikálny obrat v postoji rumunských úradov k tejto špecifickej etnickej otázke. Zmena politického režimu v Rumunsku a strata severu Bukoviny v júni 1940 priniesla zblíženie medzi Bukurešťou a Bratislavou. Režim M. Antonesca (1940 – 1944) nespochybnil slovenský charakter obcí v Bukovine a v existujúcej politicko-etnickej kontroverzii ponúkal politické krytie Slovákom. Po druhej svetovej vojne sa slovenský etnický charakter z oblasti Bukoviny vytratil a obyvateľstvo sa polonizovalo.