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Three-colored scarf carried by Professor Ioachim Crăciun at the National Assembly in Alba Iulia on December 1, 1918, as an official delegate of the Cristian-Sibiu area

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email: secretariat@mnit.ro

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## THE SUPREME PROTEST: SELF-IMMOLATION. IN MEMORY OF THE FORMER STUDENT FROM CLUJ MARTON MOYSES (1941 – 1970), A VICTIM OF THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP

**Abstract:** This study presents the ordeal and the ultimate sacrifice by self-immolation committed by a former student from Cluj-Napoca, Márton Moyses. He was a native of Aita Mare (Covasna County), who in the autumn of 1956, along with millions of Romanian citizens (Romanians, Hungarians, Swabians, Saxons etc.), followed with bated breath the events of the Hungarian Revolution and who, as a high school student, together with three other colleagues, tried to illicitly cross the border between Romania and Hungary, in order to join the Hungarian revolutionaries. This study briefly presents some aspects of the course events took in Central and Eastern Europe after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union; Márton Moyses's arrest and trial, as well as his path from liberation to self-immolation.

**Keywords:** 1956, Hungarian Revolution, Márton Moyses, Transylvania, Military Court of Cluj.

\*

On February 13, 1970, in Braşov, a young man aged only 29, a native of the commune Aita Mare (Covasna County) poured gasoline on his body and set himself on fire, in front of the headquarters of the county organisation of the Romanian Communist Party, in protest against the communist dictatorship in Romania. After having been watched for many years by the Security, the young man died after three months, on 15 May, on his suffering bed from the City Hospital in Baraolt (Covasna County). This young man was a former student of Cluj-Napoca, Márton Moyses, who, through his supreme gesture, emulated the Pole Ryszard Siwiec,<sup>2</sup> the Czech Jan Palach,<sup>3</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> MA student at Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Editor of the cultural journal "Művelődés", Cluj-Napoca.; benkolevente@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Siwiec, Ryszard (1909, Debica–1968, Warsaw) Polish accountant. He was the first man from the former countries of Central and Eastern Europe, dominated by the communists, who expressed thus his protest against the intervention of Soviet troops and, implicitly, of the Warsaw Pact, to suppress the Prague Spring. Ryszard Siwiec set himself on fire on September 8, 1968 in front of 100,000 spectators, including party and state leaders in Poland, who had

Hungarian Sándor Bauer<sup>4</sup> and preceded the Romanian Liviu Cornel Babeş<sup>5</sup>. The ultimate sacrifice of Márton Moyses shocked people in the surroundings of Braşov, but the news of his self-immolation and death was silenced by the authorities and was not broadly disseminated like the shattering news of the gesture committed by his three predecessors. The roots and motivations underlying the tragedy of Márton Moyses are found in the second, decisive intervention of the Soviet troops, on 4 November 1956, when they were sent by the communist power in Moscow to suppress the Hungarian Revolution, whose forces had been victorious only a few days before.

The tragedy of Márton Moyses turned out to be closely connected with that of his predecessors, not only in terms of its content, but also from the perspective of its causality. For example, Ryszard Siwiec set himself on fire in the autumn of 1968, as a protest against Soviet interference in the suppression of the Prague Spring, as well as against Soviet tyranny in the whole of the East-European area, which was under Soviet military occupation and political domination. The same motivation drove the Prague-based student, Jan Palach, who set himself on fire a few months later, protesting thus against the Soviets, who had been stifling the aspirations towards reform and freedom of the Czech people. It was also against the communist dictatorship that a young man of just 17 years, Sándor Bauer, protested in Budapest, on 20 January 1969, when he set himself on fire on the steps of the National Museum in Budapest.

Márton Moyses came from a mixed Saxon-Hungarian family. His father, Friedrich (Frigyes) was a descendant of the families Moyses and Gusbeth, Evangelical-Lutherans from Braşov, and his mother was descended from the unitarian Péterffy family, from the village of Aita Mare (Covasna County). Four children were born from the marriage of the two: Frigyes

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gathered in a stadium in Warsaw, for celebrating the harvest. He died from the burns he incurred on September 12, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Palach, Jan (1948, Prague–1969, Prague) was a Czech student. He was the first Czech who on 16 January 1969 immolated himself in Wenceslas Square in the Czech capital, in protest against the intervention of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops – not so much in Romania – for quelling the Prague spring. Jan Palach died from the burns he suffered on 19 January, his cortege being accompanied by hundreds of thousands of compatriots. After him, in the period January–April 1969, other young Czechs showed their protest by self-immolation: for example, Jan Zajíc, Josef Hlavaty, Evzen Plocek, Jan Gabor, Miroslav Malinka, Emanuel Sopko, Blanka Nacházelova, Jan Beres.

<sup>4</sup> Sándor Bauer (1952, Budapest–1969, Budapest), a car mechanic student in Budapest. He burnt himself as a protest against human rights violations and against the communist dictatorship. He passed away on his hospital bed on 23 January 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Liviu Cornel Babeş (1942, Braşov–1989, Braşov) was an electrician and amateur painter from Braşov. He set himself on fire on the ski slope in Poiana Brasov, on 2 March 1989, protesting against the communist dictatorship in Romania. He died on the same day.

(1931-1987),<sup>6</sup> Piroska (1932), and Márton (April 20, 1941, St. Gheorghe) and Éva (1944). In 1943 the family moved from Sf. Gheorghe, the father's place of work, to the mother's native commune of Aita Mare. The father died in 1945, and the mother in 1955; Márton and Éva, aged only 14 and 11 years, remained in the care of their sister, Piroska. This is the period in which Márton Moyses exhibited the first signs of – obviously childish – “dissent”. It happened, for example, that when Éva was late to school, the teacher “punished” her by demanding that she should write down in her notebook a hundred times: “School starts at 8 am”. In his turn, Márton noted in his sister's notebook: “because of family hardships, my sister cannot come to school in timely fashion. M. M.”<sup>7</sup> At another time, Márton and his colleagues wrote and threw “manifestos” in the streets, such as: “Let it be over with Soviet domination!”, “Why are machines not good if they are not Russian?”, “The Costroma cows may be giving more milk, but here they are starving!”<sup>8</sup>. At another time, Márton Moyses said the following about the leaders of those times: “Do you hear me, Sanyi? These are not Communists! I am a true Communist, because I want to do good to my people!”<sup>9</sup>. All his former friends and schoolmates, all the teachers I have interviewed said in unison: From a very tender age, Márton Moyses, was passionate about literature, read a lot, wrote poetry, but did not really want to stand out, as he was more reserved by nature.

To understand the atmosphere of 1956, we should explain the moment of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. On the last day of the Congress (14-25 February), in a session where foreign journalists and Communist delegations did not have access, the first secretary of the CPSU, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, read his famous report entitled “The Cult of Personality and Its Consequences”, a report by which the successor of I. V. Stalin to power exposed a series of atrocities and crimes, tortures and executions, all in mass, as well as the wrong external policy and agrarian decisions taken by the USSR, all related to the dictator who had passed away three years earlier. This condemnation of the Stalinist legacy shocked the audience, and later, “thanks to” the Poles, the Western press published details of the Khrushchev Report, which had been translated into

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<sup>6</sup> Moyses Frigyes (Frederick Moyses), a statistician and sports journalist, is the author of two remarkable books: *Turneele olimpice de fotbal*, București, Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport, 1968, 278 p., and *Campionatele mondiale de fotbal 1930–1974*, București, Editura Stadion, 1974. 247 p.

<sup>7</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2001, with Éva Moyses, the sister of Márton Moyses. The audio recording is in the author's possession.

<sup>8</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2002, with the musician Lajos Bartha, who was a childhood friend of Márton Moyses. The audio recording is in the author's possession.

<sup>9</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2002, with Sándor Fekete, who was a childhood friend of Márton Moyses. The audio recording is in the author's possession.



English and French and printed in millions of copies<sup>10</sup>. Following this report, notwithstanding the fact that many communist leaders in the entire area of Central and Eastern Europe were downright shocked and remained waiting (as did, for instance, Gheorghiu-Dej), there emerged an obvious and clear trend towards system reform. The most effervescent efforts to that end were made in Poland and Hungary – see the moment of June 1956, in Poznan, and the Hungarian Revolution of October-November that same year. In Romania and Czechoslovakia the desire or discourse for change proved to be more tentative – at least at the level of the intellectual elite, with a few exceptions (the Jar case).<sup>11</sup> However, subsequent historical research proved as clearly as possible, that as far as the population, students and even high school pupils were concerned, the need for change was intense, at least at a discursive level. Moreover, in the - exclusively communist - press of the time, controlled and censored by the unique party, there had started to appear a series of articles, which included criticisms (as far as the system permitted, of course) about the working conditions, the supplies of food and bare necessities to the population, the boring party meetings, the abuses perpetrated by some local party secretaries and presidents of the people's councils, etc., in short, criticisms aimed at the social side of the problem. Still, we cannot ignore those specific aspects of everyday life, affecting directly the Hungarian population and Hungarian culture in Romania. For example, the Hungarian press in Romania published articles on the need for reopening and fully appreciating the museum of the famous Salonta-born poet János Arany<sup>12</sup>, on the commendable initiative of students and teachers from Odorheiul Secuiesc, who cleared the weeds and rehabilitated, through voluntary work, the grave of the famous Szekler traveller Balázs Orbán<sup>13</sup>, close to the city, as well as

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<sup>10</sup> See, for more details: Doina Jela, Vladimir Tismăneanu (eds.): *Ungaria 1956: revolta miștilor și sfârșitul mitului comunist*, București, Curtea Veche, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Alexandru Jar (1911, Iași-1988, Bucharest), a writer. During the post-war years he was a foremost writer, the “first violin” of Stalinist literature. After Stalin’s death he changed his position and became a critic of Stalinism. On May 15, 1956, at a meeting of the PMR members of the Writers’ Union, he was expelled from the party for his “antiparty position”.

<sup>12</sup> Arany János (1817 Salonta-1882 Budapest), a poet, journalist, professor, president of the Kisfaludy (Literary) Society, a member and general secretary of the Hungarian Academy, the author of the famous epic poem trilogy *Toldi*, one of the most famous and prominent authors of Hungarian literature, who translated the works of Shakespeare. A memorial museum bearing his name, including manuscripts, personal belongings, furniture, photographs and paintings, all linked to the life and work of Arany, was set up in the medieval Tower (the donjon of the former fortress, erected in 1636, a building also known as the Truncated Tower) in 1898.

<sup>13</sup> Orbán, Balázs (1829, Polonița-1890, Budapest), a writer, ethnographer, photographer, a member of the Hungarian Academy. Being of Greek origin, on the side of his Greek grandmother, he scoured Constantinople, Egypt, the Holy Land, studying and describing ancient Greek culture. He is the author of the monumental works *Székelyszékelyföld leírása történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi s népismereti szempontból*. I-VI., Pest, 1868–73 (trans.:

articles on the need to relaunch Hungarian language classes at the Agronomic Institute of Cluj, and to establish a directorate for the ethnic minorities in the Ministry of Education. After a decade of Stalinist-Dej dogmatism, such articles published in the summer and autumn of 1956 proved to be literally sensational, as it was the press that oriented public opinion, of course, within the limits mentioned above.

This slowly progressing “thaw” in Romania also included a meeting held in Cluj on 29 and 30 September 1956, to which were convened several writers, poets, literary editors, historians of literature, in other words, the Hungarian literary elite in the Autonomous Hungarian Region and the Cluj Region. The meeting was attended, in addition to PMR leaders from the Cluj Region, by Miron Constantinescu<sup>14</sup>, a member of the Politburo of PMR. The reports and accounts from the time of the Hungarian Revolution reveal that power holders - at the local, regional and central levels - were aware of the mindset of the population, implicitly of the rather tense atmosphere throughout Romania. As such, the central power, that is, the leadership of the PMR felt the need to tone down, or at least to ameliorate or keep the situation under control, detaching János Fazekas, for example, to the Hungarian Autonomous Region and Miron Constantinescu to the Cluj Region. Thus, the Hungarian literary elite of the two regions took advantage of his presence, showing him a series of complaints and disgruntlements regarding Hungarian literature and culture in Romania, the gradual exclusion of Hungarian specialists from various fields, some concerning the abuses of the police and the Security, from the beginnings of forced collectivisation in agriculture, after the Soviet model. All these problems had accumulated without being resolved into the fourth decade since the power takeover by the communists.<sup>15</sup>

It should be noted that at that time the Hungarian population in Romania did not have access to the press in Hungary; only some could afford it. On a large scale, the main sources of information were Radio “Kossuth”, in Budapest, and Radio Free Europe, with its broadcasts in Romanian and Hungarian.

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Description of the Szekler Land from a Historical, Archaeological, Natural History and Ethnographic Point of View, vol. I-VI., Pest, 18 68-73), this work representing the masterpiece of his life.

<sup>14</sup> Miron Constantinescu (1917, Chişinău-1974 Bucharest), a Marxist sociologist, historian, a communist politician, a member of the Romanian Academy (1974), a member of the PMR's PB (1968-1960), a member of the RCP (1945 -1955 and 1968-1974), etc.

<sup>15</sup> See, for more details: Benkő, Levente (ed., introductory study, notes): *Az őszinteség két napja. 1956. szeptember 29-30. Erdélyi magyar értelmiségiek 1956 őszén.* Kolozsvár: Polis Könyvkiadó, 2007. (Trans.: The two days of sincerity. 29-30 September 1956. Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals in the autumn of 1956.)

It is in this context that we must see the movements or rather the manifestations of sympathy for the Hungarian Revolution, including among the Romanian population, and the whole story of Márton Moyses.

Let us briefly reconstruct the film of Márton Moyses's tragedy.

In the days following the outbreak of the revolt in Budapest, on October 23, 1956, the teachers and older students of the high school in Baraolt were summoned to have the "events in Hungary" explained to them. Party activists tried to explain in a totally false and distorted manner that "hooligan elements went on a rampage, smashed windows on the streets of Budapest, but the police, together with the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary, restored peace and public order". In reality, the events went as follows: on the morning of October 23, 1956, hundreds of thousands of students and citizens in Budapest came forward, completely peacefully, declaring their solidarity with the reform attempts in Poland<sup>16</sup>. People manifested openly against the Hungarian party leadership and government, dominated by Stalinists, such as the first secretary of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party, Mátyás Rákosi and his allies, for instance, Ernő Gerő. The protesters wanted to restore to government Imre Nagy, who had been ousted from the Council of Ministers in 1953, precisely by the Rákosi clique. The students and the crowd of demonstrators gathered in front of Radio "Kossuth", insistently demanding the live broadcast of a list of claims, comprising 16 points. After a series of failed talks, in the late evening of 23 October, the Hungarian security forces (ÁVH<sup>17</sup>) opened fire on the demonstrators. Several protesters were shot dead, so the angered crowd grabbed weapons and retaliated. That is how the Hungarian Revolution broke out.

Returning to the meeting with teachers and students in Baraolt: during the speeches, at one point, Márton Moyses stood up and, to everyone's amazement, asked: "Why don't you tell us the truth? Why don't you tell us that there is a revolution in Budapest?"<sup>18</sup>. Árpád Csaba Józsa remembers that they knew of the events in Hungary, having been informed by their boarding teacher, Csaba Diénes. "Already on the evening of October 23, Csaba Diénes told us: Guys, don't go to bed yet, wait until I come. He returned very late but

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<sup>16</sup> On 28-30 June 1956 general workers' a strike broke out in Poznan, demanding better working conditions and the dismissal of the pro-Stalinist government. About 100,000 protesters gathered in the city centre. The Polish People's Army intervened by force, the repression resulting in more than 50 dead individuals, over 300 arrested people and as many wounded. In October 1956, the position of first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party was taken over by Wladislaw Gomulka, at the expense of Stalinist leaders in Poland, including of the Soviet officers present in the Polish Army. The obvious signs of reform and the tense situation in Poland were the reasons why hundreds of thousands of people in Budapest, led by students, took to the streets in solidarity with their Polish friends.

<sup>17</sup> Államvédelmi Hatóság, trans.: State Security Authority.

<sup>18</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2002, György Márton, a former classmate of Moyses Márton, also present at that meeting. The audio recording is in the author's possession.

told us that the news broadcasts on Radio Kossuth and those on Radio Free Europe clearly show that a revolution broke out in Budapest... The news simply shook us, but also invigorated us... “<sup>19</sup>

Upon notification that on the morning of November 4, 1956, Soviet troops had launched a new, shameful attack against the Hungarian Revolution<sup>20</sup>, four high school students from the town of Baraolt (Covasna County), i.e. Benjamin Bíró, Árpád Csaba Józsa, János Kovács and Márton Moyses, all aged between 15 and 17 years, heeded the latter’s initiative and agreed to fraudulently cross the hermetically closed border between Romania and Hungary, so as to join the Hungarian revolutionaries in their heroic and desperate struggle against the Soviet invaders.

The four students travelled by train up to Oradea, from where, also by train, they went up to Curtuişeni (Bihor County). There they split into two group, and on the night of 12 to 13 November, Bíró and Józsa managed to cross the Romanian-Hungarian border. Kovács and Moyses however lost their way, giving up and returning to Baraolt. Bíró and Józsa reached Nyíregyháza, then Debrecen, from where they could no longer continue their journey to the Hungarian capital because of the frequent inspections and raids of the Soviet troops. With the help of a Hungarian policeman, they obtained false names and ID cards, settling in Debrecen, where they were adopted informally by the two local Hungarian families and continued their high school studies in the same city. But just as they were on the verge of official adoption, in the spring of 1957, the Security, together with the secret services of Hungary, identified them and handed them over to the Romanian authorities. The Military Tribunal in Oradea convicted Bíró and sentenced him to three years and a half, while Józsa was sentenced to three years in prison for fraudulently crossing the border<sup>21</sup>.

Moyes and Kovács returned to Baraolt, where they were both expelled because of fleeing from the boarding school and having unmotivated absences. More precisely, they were placed in other schools. Moyses was transferred to Bolyai Farkas High School in Tg. Mures. He took the baccalaureate in that high school in 1959, not submitting his candidacy, for now, to any higher education institution. He found a job as a worker at the Dózsa György Textile Factory in Sf. Gheorghe, continuing to be a great lover of books and literature and to write poems.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2001, with Árpád Józsa Csaba, a former schoolmate of Márton Moyses. The audio recording is in the author’s possession.

<sup>20</sup> Through this operation, named the “Vortex”, Moscow succeeded in crushing the (victorious) Hungarian Revolution, and to remove from power the government of Imre Nagy, bringing János Kádár to power.

<sup>21</sup> Report by Árpád Csaba Józsa, interview conducted by the author in 2001. The audio recording is in the author’s possession.

This is the period when Márton Moyses became a target of the Security. On 14 November 1959, the head of the Rayon Section MAI in Sf. Gheorghe, Security Lieutenant János Bartos, together with his deputy, Security Lieutenant Adalbert Harmati, and with the approval of Head of Service III, Security Captain András Szőcs, submitted to the Regional Directorate of the Hungarian Autonomous Region a draft resolution, marked “top secret”, in which they proposed opening a surveillance file for Márton Moyses, on account that there existed information that said individual “carried out inimical activity of a Hungarian nationalistic nature” and that Moyses, “when he was a student in Baraolt tried to cross the border into Hungary, together with three other students, in order to participate in the counter-revolution”; the head of the Regional Directorate, Security Colonel Mihai Kovacs approved the resolution<sup>22</sup>. On the same day, Security Lieutenant Adalbert Harmati drew up an action plan, endorsed by the Chief of the Sf. Gheorghe Raion District, Security Lieutenant Ioan Bartos, marked “Top Secret”, which, among other things, provided for the surveillance of all the elements in the entourage of Marton Moyses, establishing the place and content where compromising materials were located, conducting some investigations on Moyses, as of 1956, intercepting all of his incoming and outgoing correspondence, and finding a person from his entourage to be recruited as an informant<sup>23</sup>. The Security recruited an older acquaintance, from four years before, whom Moyses had known since his high school years in Baraolt<sup>24</sup>. He was given the codename “Babits Mihai”<sup>25</sup> and furnished regular reports about everything Moyses did. Thus, on December 21, 1959, the source “Babits Mihai” reported that Moyses wrote poems, which, in the informant’s opinion, could be published only 20-30 years later, since these lyrics reflected a position that was not really compatible with Marxism-Leninism. In the opinion of Moyses, if these poems were to be sent to any publishing house, he might go to prison<sup>26</sup>. A few days later, on December 30, 1959, the source informed the Security that, in one of his poems, Moyses said that communism was a better system than capitalism, but that, as a rule, we “take a step forward and two backward” and “our leaders today do not really want peace”<sup>27</sup>. On January 22, 1960, “Babits Mihai” reported: Moyses said

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<sup>22</sup> National Council Archive for Studying the Security Archives (hereinafter: ACNSAS) file I002497 / 1 f. 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> ACNSAS, file I002497 / 1, f. 29-31.

<sup>24</sup> ACNSAS, file I002497 / 1, f. 52, 189.

<sup>25</sup> By choosing this conspiratorial name, the Security officers made no doubt reference to the poetic inclinations of Márton Moyses because the true person, named Mihály Babits (the whole name was Mihály László Ákos Babits, 1883 Szekszárd-1941 Budapest) was one of the most remarkable Hungarian poets of the inter-war period, a former professor in Făgăraș, during the same period. The two people should by no means be confused!

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, f. 50, 191.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*, f. 45, 195.

that he “wants to fight for a social order where those who work have a say, because today there is no progress, today we’re moving backwards”; in such circumstances, an improvement of the situation can “only occur by major force, through a revolution.” According to the informant’s report, Moyses told him that he wanted to awaken the masses, that he would like to take the first step in this direction, and that “in 10-20 years, when in all socialist countries the consciousness level of the working class is at the same level, this change will happen at once in all the socialist countries or worldwide”<sup>28</sup>. On the same day, in another report, “Babits Mihai” reported to the Security the fact that Moyses had allegedly said: “Today writers are not allowed to speak one word of truth”<sup>29</sup>. On February 6, 1960, the same “Babits Mihai” reported to the security officer, Lieutenant Adalbert Harmati: Moyses said that “he suspects that he is supervised by the Security”, and that in the past few years four people had tried to get information from him<sup>30</sup>.

As a result of the information provided by “Babits Mihai”, the Security in the Rayon of Sf. Gheorghe, under the signature of the Head of Rayon Section, Security Lieutenant Ioan Bartos, the deputy of the section chief, Security Lieutenant Adalbert Harmati, with the approval of the Head of Service III, Security Captain Andrei Szöcs, concluded: in 1956 Moyses wrote poems that praised the Hungarian Revolution, tried, with his friends, to cross fraudulently the border between Romania and Hungary and join the “counterrevolution”; writing about 50 lyrics, he continued his counterrevolutionary and anti-Marxist activity, in order to instigate the masses to the outbreak of a new revolution (sic!); moreover, he had an inimical attitude towards the party policy and the government, towards the socialist transformation of agriculture and towards the education system. Consequently, Lieutenant Adalbert Harmati proposed that Márton Moyses should be included on the list of “Hungarian nationalists”, and that an individual surveillance file should be opened for him<sup>31</sup>.

Thanks to this surveillance file, the Security obtained further incriminating information about Márton Moyses, who was already, in the autumn of 1960, a student at the Faculty of Philology at “Babes-Bolyai” University in Cluj. On November 22, 1960, Márton Moyses was arrested. Five poems and a draft essay were found in his possession, all catalogued later, during the hearings, as inimical to the system. Hearings followed, during which, on December 7, 1960, Security Captain Vladimir Feigl ordered the indictment of the detainee, according to art. 209, point 2, letter a. of the

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<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, f. 39, 202.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*, f. 41, 200.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, f. 37, 206.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, f. 9-10.

Criminal Code, for the crime of conspiracy against the social order through incitement<sup>32</sup>.

The Cluj Regional Military Court, in its session from Tg. Mures, dated July 14, 1961, sentenced Márton Moyses to 7 years in prison and 5 years of civic degradation and to the confiscation of his entire personal wealth for the crime of machination against the social order<sup>33</sup>. The next day, through his lawyer Moyses appealed, requiring a debate on the recourse<sup>34</sup>. Among other things, in his appeal Moyses was referring to an older disease of nerves, noting that he had nervous breakdowns when he did not have complete control over his mental faculties<sup>35</sup>. The defence lawyer, Alexandru Avram, argued the appeal, noting that the basic sentence was wrong because his client was suffering from nerves, which put his responsibility into question<sup>36</sup>.

The Cluj Regional Military Court accepted, on August 15, 1961, Moyses's appeal. Maintaining the charge, it ruled for a retrial and the defendant's admission in the prison hospital at Văcărești<sup>37</sup>. Márton Moyses was admitted to the hospital in Văcărești on September 26, 1961, where, after investigations, a medical commission, consisting of Dr. Epaminonda Tomorug, Dr. Ion Quia and Dr. Vasile Sîrbu, concluded: "The defendant Márton Moyses is responsible for the act committed (counterrevolutionary activity). He requires further treatment for his current reactive condition"<sup>38</sup>.

On June 28, 1962, the Cluj Regional Military Court, in its session from Cluj, under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Colonel of Justice Pavel Macskasi, reviewed the case of Moyses, sentencing him to two years in correctional prison and three years of correctional prohibition for committing the crime of machination against the social order, computing the preventive detention from November 22, 1960<sup>39</sup>.

A reckless attempt at fraudulently crossing the border, several - true, unusual - poetic incursions, somewhat incongruous with the dogmatic canons of the time, but grossly distorted, and sincere thoughts about the derailments of the system: these were the elements of a trial by which the rise of a very talented and studious youth, Márton Moyses, was stunted.

What followed was the beginning of the end for Márton Moyses. He had a hard time in prison, the culminating point being September 28, 1962. On the same day, just a few weeks before his release, in unsolved circumstances until now, he resorted to self-mutilation, cutting his tongue with a thread. In

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<sup>32</sup> ACNSAS, file P000923 / 1., f. 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, f. 119.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, f. 123.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, f. 122.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, f. 133-135.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem*, f. 131.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, f. 157.

<sup>39</sup> *Idem*, f. 197.

his medical file from prison are recorded diagnoses such as: gastritis, gastric hyperacidity, situation neurosis, psycho-neurosis. The Cluj prison physician, Dr. Ileana Ionescu, stated in his medical record that “it is necessary to hospitalise the patient M. M., aged 21 years, for three days, because there can appear phenomena of asphyxia, which can cause the decease of the aforesaid”<sup>40</sup>. In connection with the attempt to cut his own tongue, the medical file includes the statements of his colleagues in cell no. 10 of the penitentiary in Cluj. Thus, inmate Ioan Popa said that “on 28 September, at 12:05, we had lunch; after that [Moyses] sat on the bed next to the window, prisoner Todoran Gh. near him finished washing his waistcoat and prisoner Jacob I. sat on the bench. I climbed into bed, with approval (...) because of my heart condition. After prisoner Gh. finished washing his waistcoat, he sat on the bed next to the door and began to eat. Meanwhile prisoner Mozes (sic!) M. climbed on the bed edge, I saw this from my bed, I shouted at prisoners Jakab and Todoran about what crazy Mozes M. was doing. At this point said prisoners jumped at him<sup>41</sup>, but he had already tied the string to his tongue and the bedside”<sup>42</sup>. Similar statements were given by prisoners Gh. Todoran<sup>43</sup> and Pál Jakab<sup>44</sup>.

The commander of the Cluj penitentiary and the doctor of the institution, Dr. Ileana Ionescu, admitted Moyses on the same day of September 28, at the Surgical Clinic I. Cluj. The receipt mentioned “We are sending patient M. M., 21 years old, with the tongue torn by a thread. The thread is in the wound. Please suture wound”<sup>45</sup>. According to the medical records, Márton Moyses remained in hospital from September 29 to October 6, receiving antibiotics (penicillin, streptomycin), analgesics (algosedin), vitamin K and chamomile tea<sup>46</sup>.

Even today it is not clear what Moyses’s motive was when he mutilated his tongue. Obviously, one cannot rule out a nervous breakdown, or the need to avoid making incriminating statements about other colleagues, imprisoned or targeted by the Security. The latter variant is supported by his sister, Eva Moyses, who said: “I asked my brother why he had cut his tongue? He said that he wanted to prevent the Security from constraining him to make incriminating statements about his colleagues”<sup>47</sup>. Whatever the reason for self-mutilation, we can admit that Márton Moyses – despite the fact that he only had a few more weeks of detention – was in a particularly critical situation.

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<sup>40</sup> ACNSAS, file P000923 / 2., f. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Márton Moyses.

<sup>42</sup> ACNSAS, file P000923 / 2., f. 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*, f. 12.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem*, f. 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*, f. 9.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, f. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2001, with Éva Moyses, the sister of Márton Moyses. The audio recording is in the author’s possession.



This may explain a new equally desperate self-mutilation attempt, only a week afterwards. The duty officer of the prison in Cluj, Captain Traian Socaciu recorded in the minutes from the evening of October 13, 1962, the fact that they had to enter cell no. 10 because they had been informed that prisoner Márton Moyses “intends again to commit suicide.” According to the minutes, “to ensure his security during the night”, Moyses was immobilised with handcuffs<sup>48</sup>.

After so much misery and suffering, finally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, U. M. 0123 E Bucharest notified the General Directorate of Prisons and Labour Colonies, on November 13, 1962, that prisoner Márton Moyses was to be released on November 21 - the expiry of detention time<sup>49</sup>.

Márton Moyses served his entire sentence.

The former police chief, at that time, of the post from Aita Mare, sergeant Imre Marosi confirmed the information, according to which, after his release, Moyses, as a former political prisoner, was under the Security’s constant surveillance, directly or indirectly. As police chief he had, from time to time, to submit reports to his superiors, but from the “information obtained from sources in the village, I rarely had the opportunity to learn and report negative elements. Even with evil intentions, I could not say anything negative on account of Moyses, for the simple reason that he took very, very good care of himself”<sup>50</sup>.

After his release, Márton Moyses could not continue his higher education; he was forced to accept a job at the Agricultural Production Cooperative in Aita Mare. All his attempts to get a job in the state system – in order to have a more substantial income and use that to continue his studies – failed, as he was rejected by all the institutions he resorted to. For example, in 1969, Moyses applied for the post of Secretary / Administrator of the Aita Mare General School, but was turned down<sup>51</sup>.

But that does not mean that he was not interested, for example, in mathematical sciences, in inventions and innovations, in certain aspects of physics and even folklore. The reply to one of his letters, addressed to the Atomic Research Institute at Dubna (USSR), was that he should write to the specialised institute in Romania<sup>52</sup>. Having subscribed to the magazine *Mathematical Gazette*, in 1967 he wrote to the Mathematical Society of the Socialist Republic of Romania, which replied, also in writing, that the article he had sent could not be published, and if he wanted to and ever travelled to

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<sup>48</sup> ACNSAS, file P000923 / 2., f. 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*, f. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Interview conducted by the author, in 2001, with adjutant master sergeant Imre Marosi, former head of police in Aita Mare (Covasna County). The audio recording is in the author’s possession.

<sup>51</sup> The collection of family documents kept by Éva Moyses, private property.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

Cluj, he could recover his manuscript, and find out other details on that subject matter<sup>53</sup>.

In Márton Moyses's folk collection I found a short study and a few ballads, sayings, stories and inscriptions on secular tombstones, all gathered in the village of Aita Mare<sup>54</sup>. Even on this track Moyses failed to break the bounds of anonymity! Having sent, in 1969, an article and a few more interesting pieces from his personal collection to the magazine *Korunk* in Cluj, the deputy editor thereof, Edgár Balogh, replied to him in writing two years later, in 1971, when Moyses was already dead<sup>55</sup>...

Besides all these, Márton Moyses was concerned with certain aspects of international politics. In a letter dated October 4, 1969, addressed to the Central Committee of the CPSU, in Moscow, among others, Moyses brought to the attention of the Soviet Communist Party the situation of Transylvania after the Second World War. He noted: "The history of Transylvania is a part of the history of the Hungarian nation and of the Romanian nation; as such, it would be good if history were written jointly by specialised historians in Hungary and Romania; so that the youth of these two countries may be brought up in the spirit of this common history". Moyses added that the "communist leaderships of both countries should do everything in their power to achieve a special friendship, and the boundary between the two countries should become a simple, administrative one". Then he continued: "The fate of the two European peoples, Hungarian and Romanian, is common. Historical events may lead to the achievement of a federation between the two peoples."<sup>56</sup>

Without entering the sphere of international politics, but seeing the reality today, i.e. the adhesion of the two member states to the same European Union and the same military bloc, what Moyses set down on paper in the autumn of 1969 is downright amazing!

In his notes, there is no indication whether Moyses finalised and drafted his letter, or if he sent it to the recipient.

Feeling isolated, with no chance of self-assertion, he tried one more thing: rehabilitation. He hoped that after so many setbacks and disappointments, the justice system would restore his rights and that he would get a state job in Braşov, resuming his higher education through night classes in the town under Tâmpa Mount. As such, he officially addressed himself to Covasna County Court, an institution that, on February 4, 1970, in public session, reinstated him in his rights<sup>57</sup>. The sentence was to come into force 10

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>56</sup> The letter draft is in the collection of family documents kept by Éva Moyses, private property. A digitised copy is in the author's possession.

<sup>57</sup> In the collection of family documents kept by Éva Moyses, private property.

days later, on February 14, but the judicial ruling was written down and typed only on February 25, being sent to him from Sf. Gheorghe, by mail, on 27 February.

But something happened in the meantime... Having no information about the positive ruling of the Court House from Covasna County, on 11 February Moyses went to Braşov, where he tried to find work at the “Răsăritul” Brick Factory. From his actions it appears that he was accepted, there were only a few formalities, the medical visa and other things to solve, but these would take a day or two<sup>58</sup>. However, on 13 February, only one day before the entry into force of the judicial decision that rehabilitated him, he set himself on fire in front of the County Committee of the Communist Party, in the middle of the day, in the very centre of Braşov.

On that fateful day, or the day before – the post office stamp of Braşov is quite illegible, but the date could certainly only have been 12 or February 13, 1970 – Márton Moyses sent a letter to Mrs. Ida (Kun) Leta from Aita Mare. She was a distant relative of the Moyses family, the woman who had helped the two orphaned minors, Marton and Éva and had accompanied to Tg. Mures the little girl aged only 16 years, Éva, to her brother’s trial. The letter, only a few sentences long, is Márton Moyses’s goodbye. Let me reproduce here a fragment that I have received from his family, with permission for publication: “It’s over. I do not want to live another second in a country where the Security people keep committing crimes after crimes, the party leadership being helpless in the face of these abuses. (...) Márton”<sup>59</sup>. Márton Moyses died on May 15, 1970, on a hospital bed in Baraolt. He was buried two days later in his mother’s native village, Aita Mare.

In conclusion: who was Márton Moyses? Was he a hero or simply a naïve man? Was he a dissident, a vehement opponent of communism, or did he really believe in this system, observing and criticising only its derailments? Any of these hypotheses might be plausible, but the opposite can also be true, in the sense that none is true. However, one thing is certain and beyond any doubt: he was the victim of a totalitarian, communist regime.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem.*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Alexandru Madgearu, Ph. D.**

Scientific researcher at Institute for Defence Studies and Military History, 6 Constantin Mille St., București, 010141, Romania,  
e-mail: amadgearu@yahoo.com

**Victor V. Vizauer, Ph. D.**

Scientific researcher at George Bariț Institute of History, the Romanian Academy, 12-14 Kogălniceanu St., Cluj-Napoca, 400084, Romania,  
e-mail: vviki200@yahoo.com

**Mihai Florin Hasan, Ph. D.**

Orthodox Theological Seminary,  
18 Avram Iancu Square, Cluj-Napoca 400117, România,  
e-mail: hasanmihai@gmail.com

**Paula Virag, Ph. D.**

Museum curator at County Museum of Satu Mare,  
21 Vasile Lucaciu St., Satu-Mare 440031, România,  
e-mail: pcvirag@gmail.com

**Róbert Oláh Gál, Ph.D.**

Lecturer at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Faculty of Economics, Socio-Human Sciences and Engineering, Miercurea-Ciuc, 530104, România,  
e-mail: olahgalrobert@uni.sapientia.ro

**Nicolae Teșculă, Ph.D.**

Manager at Sighișoara History Museum, 1 Muzeului Sq., Sighișoara, 545400, Romania,  
e-mail: nicolaetescula@yahoo.com

**Horățiu Bodale, Ph.D.**

Museum curator at National Museum of Transylvanian History,  
2 Constantin Daicoviciu St., Cluj-Napoca 400020, România,  
e-mail: horatiumus@yahoo.com

**Ovidiu Muntean, Ph. D.**

Museum curator at National Museum of Transylvanian History,  
2 Constantin Daicoviciu St., Cluj-Napoca 400020, România,  
e-mail: ovidiu2505@yahoo.com

**Veronica Turcuș, Ph. D.**

Scientific researcher at George Bariț Institute of History, the  
Romanian Academy, 12-14 Kogălniceanu St., Cluj-Napoca, 400084,  
Romania,  
e-mail: vturcus@yahoo.it

**Șerban Turcuș, Ph. D.**

Professor at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeș – Bolyai  
University, 1 Kogălniceanu St., Cluj-Napoca 400084, Romania,  
e-mail: serbanturcus@yahoo.it

**Benko Levente, M.A. student**

Editor of the cultural journal “*Művelődés*”, Cluj-Napoca, 11 Unirii Sq.,  
Cluj-Napoca, 400015, Romania,  
e-mail: benkolevente@gmail.com

**Melinda Mitu, Ph.D.**

Museum curator at National Museum of Transylvanian History,  
2 Constantin Daicoviciu St., Cluj-Napoca 400020, România,  
e-mail: mitu\_meli@yahoo.com

**Claudia M. Bonța, Ph. D.**

Museum curator at National Museum of Transylvanian History,  
2 Constantin Daicoviciu St., Cluj-Napoca 400020, România,  
e-mail: bonta.claudia@mnit.ro

**Iosif Marin Balog, Ph.D.**

Scientific researcher at George Bariț Institute of History, the Romanian Academy, 12-14 Kogălniceanu St., Cluj-Napoca, 400084, Romania,

e-mail: iosif\_balog@yahoo.de