DISCOURSES OF KORUNK IN PUBLIC SPHERE ISSUES BETWEEN 1990 AND 2000

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ABSTRACT: The study attempts to give a picture about the editorial conceptions of the first period in Korunk's third wave – in this context, the research focuses on the articles on public issues (appeared between January 1990 and December 1999) released by this historic periodical. The topics of the study are: the Hungarian press/media in Transylvania; the Church; minorities; coexistence; (Hungarian) university (in Transylvania); Hungarian-conscience in Transylvania. The paper states that there are well observable discourses on these topics in Korunk, it attempts to describe them and to give a picture of that intellectual pathway Korunk tried to follow in the mentioned period.

Keywords: Korunk, editorial conceptions, writings on public issues, period of transition, the press of minority

In his seminal study on the Hungarian press in Romania, Attila Papp Z. writes² that the Hungarian press in Romania between 1990 and 2000 displays what he calls "grey publicity", not only because it is

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² Cf. Papp Z. Attila: A romániai magyar sajtónyilvánosság a kilencvenes években. A működtetők világa – PhD Dissertation, ELTE, Budapest, 2005., http://adatbank.transindex.ro/cedula.php?kod=45 – accessed: 2 June 2012.

monotonous, but also because the most important messages remain unsaid, linger in a kind of obscure space. Minority journalism was characterized at that time by what Papp Z. termed "framism": the journalist plays by the frames he/she sets for him/herself, and these frames are meant to protect the ethnic group he or she represents. The operation of this frame "may get in contradiction with professional principles, conscience, yet it is constantly upheld."³ After the dissolution of censorship, self-censorship prevails, and the primacy of the need to preserve the unity of the minority, to confront the majority in common action "frames" the discourse of the Hungarian press in Romania. The press interiorizes and adopts the subjects considered taboo by the state power, therefore the discourse of the press and of the public sphere in general are marked by conflict avoidance.⁴

Starting from this claim, I analyzed the articles of the third period of *Korunk* dealing with the public sphere, for it is clear, looking at the issues of the first ten years of this period, that the *Korunk* is strongly defined by a constant interest in public issues. The numeric aspects were measured by quantitative content analysis, completed with discourse analysis for establishing and describing the discourses used in *Korunk*. The scientific/scholarly articles published in *Korunk* significantly define the profile of the magazine, but as a cultural magazine the articles written in the traditional genres of journalism, the critiques and reviews have an equally important role. Through the overview of the editorial conceptions of *Korunk* in the 1990–2000 period from the point of view of public issues treated in them, I could open up the investigation to much wider horizons and hopefully offer a more comprehensive and nuanced image of the magazine.

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³ Cf. op. cit., 82-126.

⁴ Cf. ibid.

In order to define the corpus of texts examined, I marked six categories on the basis of the thematic survey of the first ten years' issues:

- 1. Hungarian press/media in Transylvania
- 2. church
- 3. minorities
- 4. cohabitation
- 5. (Hungarian) university (of Transylvania)
- 6. identity of Hungarians in Transylvania

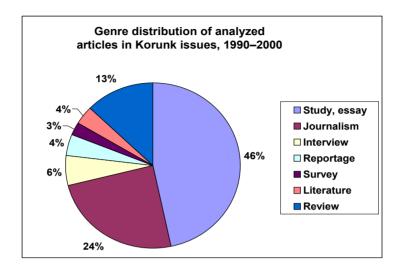
Measurements, results

The table below categorizes the examined articles (417) of the first ten years of *Korunk*.

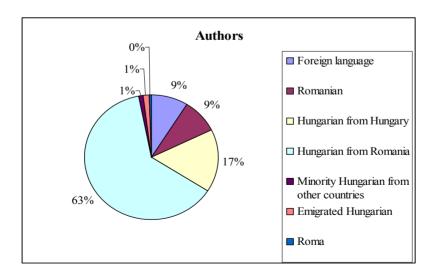
Category	Press	Church	Minority	Cohabita- tion	Univer- sity	Transylva- nianism	Total
1. Genre							
Study, essay	25	34	37	41	25	33	195
Journalism	23	12	15	17	9	26	102
Interview	5		5	9	1	4	24
Reportage	2	3	1		5	6	17
Survey		1	2	5	2	1	11
Literature	3	1	3	8			15
review	4	15	19	5	6	4	53
2. Authors							
Foreign language	10	3		16	5	3	37
Romanian		6	8	18	1	4	37
Hungarian from Hungary	10	4	16	11	7	21	69
Hungarian from Romania	42	53	52	35	33	46	261
Minority Hungarian			3	2			5

Category	Press	Church	Minority	Cohabita- tion	Univer- sity	Transylva- nianism	Total
from other countries							
Emigrated Hungarian			1	3	2		6
Roma			2				2
3. Focus of subject							
Romania as focus	15	12	16	26	2	10	81
Transylvania as focus	20	38	33	16	27	60	194
The world in general	25	13	22	29	19	3	111
Other/none	2	3	11	14		1	31
4. Time reference							
Past	11	19	8	14	10	27	89
Present	40	19	29	25	22	20	155
Future	1		6	3	2		12
Neutral	5	21	26	26	11	15	104
mixed	5	7	13	17	3	12	57
5. Type of article							
Descriptive	43	63	72	76	47	69	370
Polemical	2	1	1			1	5
Dialoguing	7		3	8	1	3	22
Other	10	2	6	1		1	20
Articles, total	62	66	82	85	48	74	417

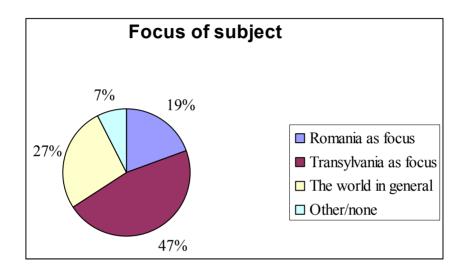
It does not come as a surprise that the subjects analyzed are primarily treated in studies and essays (46%), then journalism (24%). The numbers also reveal that a primary interest of the editors was to inform the readers: reviews were much more significant in the magazine (13%) than traditional genres of journalism. Interviews, reportage and surveys appeared in roughly the same amount (3–6%).

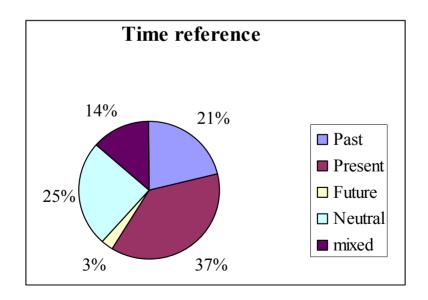


Most articles are written by Hungarian authors from Romania (63%); also, there is a significant presence of Hungarian intellectuals from Hungary (17%), in accordance with the traditions of the magazine. Romanian and foreign authors appear in identical percentage (9 – 9%).

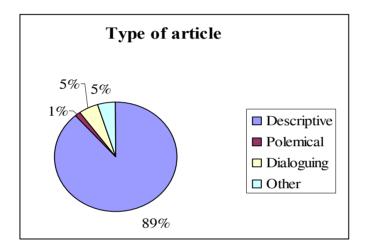


The *Korunk* approaches the subjects primarily in a Transylvanian focus (47%), and interestingly enough, it analyzes these subjects in a wider, global perspective more frequently (27%) than in a national one (19%).





The analysis of the time reference reveals that the subjects are mostly treated in a present time reference (37%), but the need to know one's past, the need for remembering is also significant in addressing urgent matters (21%). Future time reference is not prevalent in these articles, and, since most of these texts are theoretical in their approach, this category does not apply to 25% of the articles.



A very interesting result of the analysis is that only 1 percent of the 417 texts surveyed is polemical, and 89% are descriptive materials.

Description and comparison of the discourses

- 1. The analysis of articles on **media** / **the press** reveals the following discourses used:
 - a) particularities of contemporary Hungarian written press in Romania - writings that outline the characteristics of Hungarian written press in Romania: language use, preferred subjects, ways and methods of writing or structuring of articles, the life of editorial offices, financial and other difficulties, professional competence of journalists;

- b) situation of the press/media in the transition period this discourse contains articles that present the journalistic legacy of the past regime, the press market in the economic situation of the transition period, the influence of the Romanian press, reading habits, and all the problems caused by social, economic and cultural changes in the media;
- c) particularities of Hungarian press publicity in Romania it contains mainly analytical articles, which show the particularities of Hungarian public discourse, the lack of criticism of Hungarian public life and public figures, the poetization of textual media, the intertwining of public life and the press, etc.;
- d) effects of television and the internal functioning of television in Transylvania including articles about the social and cultural effects of television, phenomena connected to it, particularities of Romanian television channels; the Hungarian television in Romania is different from this as presented in the *Korunk*, Hungarian television in Romania is meant to serve the Hungarian public life in Transylvania, and its operation is always hindered by various, primarily financial, difficulties.

2. Discourses on the **church** in the *Korunk* can be described as follows:

- a) anomalies of the internal affairs of the churches collaboration of priests with the Securitate, the need for internal renewal, needs of the congregation, ways to better reach out to the congregation, reform of sermons, description of priests' attitudes to their profession;
- b) internal spiritual life of Hungarians from Romania cohabitation, tolerance of Transylvanian churches, Transylvanian ecumenism, functioning of religious sects, their spreading in Hungary and Romania;

- c) presentation of the past of the churches the creation and life of historical churches in Transylvania in the past, presentation of the values produced by them, presentation of outstanding personalities of the churches;
- d) relationship of church and schooling the role of the church in education, the past, present and future of confessional schools.

3. **Minority discourses** of the *Korunk* can be categorized as follows:

- a) minority history of Hungarians in Romania historical retrospection and debates on the subjects
- b) crisis of the Hungarian community, caused by the community itself articles presenting the inner tensions of Hungarian public life in Transylvania;
- c) crisis of the Hungarian community, caused by independent factors articles on the bad economic conditions of the country, the indifference of the Romanian political elite, intolerance of the majority society, the restricted possibilities of using one's native language, and living one's Hungarian identity;
- d) formation of a multi-layered image of minority in the reader presentation of the life and conditions of Hungarians in Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, and in the West, presentation of other minority groups, the life and culture of the Roma;
- e) greatness of the community presentation of the outstanding personalities and artists, and the spiritual and artistic workshops of the Transylvanian past and present.
- 4. The subject of **cohabitation** is approached in four distinct discourses:

- a) the problem of double identity articles about the problems of fate, belonging, self-definition, about the situation of people living in mixed marriages;
- b) mapping the possibilities of cohabitation in other communities mainly Hungarians in Slovakia and Serbia;
- c) analysis of Romanian-Hungarian cohabitation possibilities;
- d) Romania's economic and political situation and its orientation and options between East and West within the context of cohabitation.

5. The subject of **university** also appears with four discourses:

- a) the university from a scientific, historical-philosophical point of view;
- b) discourses on the independent Hungarian university in the context of the present situation of Transylvania;
- c) the history of Bolyai University, and the past of the Hungarian university in Transylvania;
- d) the university life of the world, mainly Western European countries, with help of Hungarian professors or students active there.

6. **Identity of Hungarians in Transylvania** – this subject is treated in the following discourse types:

- a) presentation of the identity of Hungarians in Transylvania today, the meaning of being Transylvanian today;
- b) the particular issue of being Hungarian in Transylvania today;
- c) spirituality and effects of Transylvanianism, explanation and reinterpretation of the concept;
- d) Transylvanianism in the context of landscape and environment, based on the concept that every society and culture is defined by its environment;

- e) ethno-regional particularities of the Partium, the Banat region, the Sekler region and Inner Transylvania;
- f) the Transylvanian past as a condition of a better understanding of the problems of the past and of ourselves.

Conclusion

The results of the investigation show that the issues of Korunk published between January 1990 and December 1999 treat the subjects presented above, considered public issues, primarily as studies, essays and journalism, due of course to the pre-defined structure of the magazine. (Based on the knowledge of the issues of the entire third period, I also argue that this tendency, regardless of the subject, is also valid for the entire period). The majority of the articles are written by Hungarian authors from Transylvania, while there is also a significant presence of Hungarian intellectuals from Hungary, in accordance with the traditions of the magazine. Romanian and foreign authors are published to the same extent. The primarily Transylvanian focus of subject treatment is natural in my opinion, while it is also due to the nature of the analyzed subjects; however, it is important to note that the national or international perspective is an attribute of almost half of the materials published in the Korunk in the case of the analyzed subjects. This confirms that the magazine cannot be accused of provincialism or narrowness even in the pioneering years of the mentioned period. The results also show, however, that the goals formulated in the programme article introducing the new period, namely that the magazine wishes to tackle the problems of the age in a polemical and dialogical tone, failed to be observed; but let's be honest: is there any magazine on earth that manages to live up to the goals laid down in its programme article? The (social, political, economic and any other kind of) reality often holds

back the chance of multiple voices, dialogue and constructive debates, which is also confirmed by the amount of polemical or dialoguing articles. Such writings are almost completely absent from the *Korunk* (as well) in the analyzed period. As we have seen, this period is what Attila Papp Z. calls the time of pre-professionalism or slow consolidation of the Hungarian press of Transylvania, characterized by a uniform, homogeneous discourse and the avoidance of conflicts. Another practice characteristic for the press of the age is that the timely, often taboo problems of the present are presented via the analysis of similar problems of the past, as if offering the example of the glorious past for the present, understating the current, urgent problem to be solved. The *Korunk* is no exception to this: the statistics show that the focus on the past is prevalent even in case of timely questions.

To conclude, the *Korunk* in the period between 1990 and 2000, if seen from a strictly objective perspective, fits well into the context of the Hungarian press of Transylvania. Also, the *Korunk* is a spiritual landmark in the Hungarian media of Romania as well as the overall Hungarian media, and it stands out as single and incomparable with any other similar press products in the Carpathian basin due to its structure, thematic composition, authors, subject treatment, organizational power, self-definition, renewal capacity, and the acceptance and continuation of its traditions. The *Korunk* of the first ten years of the regime change: a fallible and human, enthusiastic and modern spiritual workshop.

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