

## Attitude to Hungary: a new fault line on the Romanian political scene?

The celebration of the anniversary of the Spring of Nations was organised by the Hungarian minority in Romania on 15 March. The way it was held provided a pretext for a very sharp attack by the Romanian left-wing and liberal opposition parties on the centre-right government of Emil Boc, who were accused of making too many concessions to Hungary and the Hungarian minority. The opposition's actions are aimed primarily at setting the coalition members at variance, but they may result also in including ethnic issues in the mainstream political debate, which has been avoided so far.

The main source of the controversy was the over-interpretation of a fragment of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech, which was read in the Romanian town of *Târgu Mureș*. Its translation included a phrase mentioning Hungary's desire to 'regain' Transylvania, which was not present in the original version of the address. Romania's Foreign Ministry on 17 March as part of a protest invited the Hungarian ambassador for consultations. Key Romanian opposition parties, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL), reacted especially sharply. They appealed for the passing of a special resolution to condemn the Hungarian prime minister's address. The leaders of the two parties are intensifying their criticism of the president's and the government's activity, reproaching them for overly friendly contacts with Viktor Orbán and submission to Hungary. Historical disputes in Romanian-Hungarian relations and the issue of the Hungarian minority's status have not been emphasised by the key political forces in their political rivalry for years. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) has joined coalitions with both left and right-wing political parties and has had its ministers in almost all cabinets since 1996 (with the exception of 2008–2009). Subsequent unsuccessful attempts of dismissing Emil Boc's government (the parliament voted on a motion of no confidence for the fifth time on 16 March) make the opposition try to cause a conflict inside the coalition, hoping that tension will increase between the government coalition parties in connection with the preparations for voting on the new law regulating the status of national minorities. The issue of the Hungarian minority may seriously divide the Romanian political scene and complicate the burgeoning co-operation between Romania and Hungary. <dab>