

SUPPRESSION OF THE HUNGARIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA

*A Documentary compiled by
The Transylvanian World Federation*

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THE TRANSYLVANIAN WORLD FEDERATION
and
THE DANUBIAN RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE

Hungarian Education and Culture in Transylvania in the Light of History and Tradition

Under the influence of contemporary Rumanian propaganda, many Americans, otherwise keenly aware of minority problems and ardently vocal against political and cultural oppression, seem to regard the assault of the Roumanian government against the Hungarian schools in Transylvania as just an unimportant annoyance. The reason for this lies in the misunderstanding of the Transylvanian situation, which can in no way be brought in parallel with the educational principles of the United States.

Since the very beginning of its existence, the language of the United States was, and is English. Immigrants, who entered the country, had to learn the language in order to survive. It was the language of cultural institutions; the language of the business enterprises and job opportunities. In other words: the United States of America was, and is, a one language country, with the freedom granted to all immigrants to cultivate their own tongue if they so desired, through their own church-related institutions.

In Transylvania, since the eleventh century A.D., the language of the people who moved into the empty land, and established themselves there, was the MAGYAR, or Hungarian. Therefore, the official language of the new country became the same: the Hungarian language. It became the language of the schools maintained first by the priests, and later taken over by the state, and from the 15th century on, when the first "Collegium of Higher Education" was established in Transylvania's cultural center, the city of Kolozsvár, it was the language of all the colleges and universities throughout the country. Shortly before World War I, there were 1896 grade schools, 26 middle and high schools, and three college-level educational institutions in Transylvania, educating Hungarians in the Hungarian language.

When the Rumanian immigrants — political refugees and migrant workers — began to move into the country with the permission of the Hungarian government, they had the same right to make their own decision whether to take advantage of the country's educational institutions or not, as the immigrants entering America had.

Those Rumanians, who settled near established educational institutions, did send their children into the schools, and their descendants soon assimilated, and melted into the Hungarian-speaking population, as can easily be recognized by the presence of Rumanian names in Hungarian history. Those, however, who settled with their sheep herds on the uninhabited mountain pastures, did not have the opportunity to assimilate, and their descendants later formed the "Transylvanian Rumanian nation", giving the Rumanian Kingdom across the mountains an excuse after World War I to occupy militarily and then to annex politically the entire Transylvania. From then on, the Calvary of the native Hungarian population began.

Together with the already established and state-maintained Rumanian schools, the Royal Rumanian government took over the Hungarian schools, too, rapidly diminishing their numbers, but still allowing some to operate under government control in the Hungarian populated areas. Church-maintained schools, however, were allowed to function, with certain subjects taught in the Rumanian language, but the rest in Hungarian.

After World War II, and especially after Mr. Ceausescu took control of the Rumanian Communist Party, the complete abolishment of the Hungarian language education began with the "nationalization" of the Universities and all Church-maintained educational institutions. This went parallel with the confiscation and annihilation of all Hungarian libraries, archives, and museums. It turned into an all-out war against Transylvanian Hungarian culture itself, which for long centuries had been the established and world wide recognized culture of the entire Carpathian Basin.

Should we search for a parallel in order to make born Americans understand the situation better, we would have to assume the fictitious possibility that one day Cuba might take over Florida, or Mexico occupies California, and the American culture would be outlawed in those parts of the country from one day to the next. All schools, down to kindergarten, would be forced to use the Spanish language only, whether the children attending those schools were from native Anglo-American parentage or not.

The Facts Behind the Black Sea — Danube Canal

While some naive journalists in the West are paying homage to President Ceausescu and the "heroic labor" of the Rumanian people for the completion of the 60 Km. long Black Sea — Danube Canal — which cuts through the treacherous Dobruja swamps, it seems imperative that the truth concerning this project be known world-wide: **THE WORK WAS DONE BY SLAVE LABOR AND IT COST MORE THAN A HALF MILLION HUMAN LIVES!**

"The project became a great financial burden, requiring a huge work force, preferably free labor. President Ceausescu has devised an ingenious plan in order to maintain the necessary quotas for the labor camps in the Danube Delta and at the same time rid the country from the undesirable minorities. According to the Transylvanian writer, Gizella Hervay, during the 1950s about 80 percent of the Hungarian population of the county Szilagy was deported into the Dobruja labor camps to work on the canal.

"During the last 30 years about a half million people were used as free slave laborers on the project, most of them Hungarians from Transylvania and Moldova. Amnesty International reported that in order to ensure a constant supply of free labor, new laws were passed ordering those who publicly criticized the political or economic situation in Romania or the treatment of the minorities, be sentenced to forced labor. Decree 153/1970 was often used by the Rumanian authorities to prosecute and sentence to forced labor, members of the Neo-Protestant community who participated in unauthorized prayer services. There are thousands of cases on record where Hungarian factory workers were arrested for speaking in their mother tongue during their lunch breaks and sent to the death camps without any trial.

"Transportation to these camps was by freight trains, with 100 to 150 prisoners crowded into each of the railroad cars, chained to the benches, with no sanitation at all during the three or four days journey to the Danube Delta. Amnesty International reported several times during those years that conditions of the labor camps along the Danube — Black Sea Canal — were worse than deplorable and those confined in the camps were subjected daily to degrading treatments.

Conditions were similar in all the camps, including Cemavada, Periprava, Medgidia, Galaci, Incida Mare, Braeli, Gradina, Salcra, Stoenesti, Ghiha, Tataru, Tichdesti and Valea Neagra. The inmates had to work 12 hours daily, seven days a week. The work they performed was heavy manual labor — digging ditches, carting soil by wheelbarrow, loading trucks. The scene was similar to the Egyptian or Roman Empires of the past, when slaves were used to build pyramids or roads.

"Amnesty International reported also that visits by relatives were not allowed. When foreign delegations were shown around the construction sites, the prisoners were removed and hidden behind reeds. On a few occasions even the watch towers were knocked down before foreign visitors were led through the area and the entrances to the forced labor camps were barricaded with sacks of wheat and the camps were described to the visitors as agricultural cooperatives. On such occasions the guards did not wear uniforms, so foreign visitors and journalists would not realize that what they saw was a forced labor camp.

"Most of the forced labor camps in the Danube Delta did not have the basic sanitary facilities and no medical care whatsoever. The food was poor, epidemics were common, taking a heavy toll. The camps were shockingly overcrowded. Those expressing dissatisfaction were accused of treason against the state and punished with beatings.

"Amnesty International reported in August 1977 that when the Jiu Valley miners were going on strike due to the deteriorating economic situation, several thousand of them, mostly Hungarians, were taken into these labor camps and put to work on the canal without pay.

"Finally the Grand Canal is completed. The Ethnic Minorities of Rumania have paid for it with their blood, with the lives of their children, with their broken bodies and shattered souls. Several hundred thousand have found their final resting place in the Danube Delta, buried in mass graves along the sides of this glorious Rumanian project, the Great Dream of President Ceausescu.

"What will happen now to those Hungarians, Jews, Germans, Gypsies and other "unwanted" elements who somehow still survived the barbaric purge of Rumania's Great Master? Will they be allowed to exist in some hidden corner in their ancient homeland as second class citizens?

Confiscation of Church Archives

February, 1975
Neue Züricher Zeitung

The Swiss daily, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, reported this outrage under the title: "BUREAUCRATIC CHICANERY AGAINST THE CHURCHES IN RUMANIA" (Feb. 1 and Feb. 2, 1975):

"The intent behind the nationalization of the ecclesiastical archives is to sever the religious communities from their historic roots. A church without a past and without tradition has no future, especially one which represents a religious and national minority. The first victim of these warlike designs against the religious and cultural minorities by the Rumanian regime was the Hungarian Reformed (Presbyterian) Church in the northern districts of Oradea, Satumare, Baia-Mare and Zalau. Here, in the mother country of the Reformation in Transylvania, government agents seized the archives of more than two hundred church communities, loaded them onto trucks without receipt and carted them away."

"The multinational region of Transylvania has a long heritage of religious freedom. It was here that freedom of religion was written into the law for the first time in history in 1568. It is indeed a shame that 400 years later the very country and the very nation which achieved the first victory over medieval bigotry is being thrown back into the dark ages by the despotic Balkan mentality of a recently created Rumania."

Job Discrimination and Discrimination on the Job

January, 1981

Wherever new industrial plants are established by the Rumanian government, Hungarians are hired only when there are not enough Rumanian applicants. Those who are allowed to work are constantly harassed by their Rumanian superiors. Hungarians are called "bozgore" meaning "homeless stranger" or "vagabond", and are forbidden to use their mother tongue. Hungarian children, though native to the land, are exposed to the same humiliation and persecution in the schools.

Amnesty International Reports from Paris, France

January, 1980
Amnesty International, Paris, France

In spite of the internationally ratified minority rights the Rumanian government still practices extensive cultural, political and economical discrimination against the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and Moldavia. Those who dare to protest against these blatant discriminations are imprisoned or locked up into institutions for the insane where they are being used for experimental purposes in the field of new drugs. In the still existing forced labor camps along the swamps of the Danube Delta still thousands of political prisoners are languishing under the most inhumane conditions. The treatment of the political prisoners is beyond description. Sadistic tortures and beatings are every day occurrences and those accused of "crimes against the state" are denied any kind of legal counsel or defense.

"My Crime: I Spoke Hungarian!"

October, 1982
The Transylvanian Quarterly

Under this title a striking postal card appeared this year in France, published by the Groupement pour les Droits des Minorités, rue Honoré Chevalier 12, Paris. The picture on the card shows a lonely little boy, head bent, facing a bare, dismal brick wall with a large sign on his back which reads:

"I spoke Hungarian!"

The picture was published in several newspapers telling the free world the unbelievably sad story that there are more than 600,000 Hungarian school children today, forced into the newly established ultra-nationalistic Rumanian school system in Transylvania, who are strictly forbidden the use of their native tongue, even on the playground, during recess. Any youngster caught uttering just a few whispered words in Hungarian to one of his friends or relatives is severely punished. The punishment for such seditious behavior varies from standing in the corner for hours with a sign on the back, sometimes holding heavy cement blocks in their hands, to twenty-five strokes with a heavy stick which draws blood and leaves serious bruises.

The Bible as Romanian Toilet Paper

June 14, 1985
The Wall Street Journal

by Peter K. Keresztes

"In all of the diabolical manifestations of Adolf Hitler's hatred for God and all religions — keeping in mind that he burned Torahs — I don't think even he conceived of anything so ugly."

So fumed California Rep. Bob Dornan at a GOP-organized press conference last week on

rights abuses in Romania. He was describing samples of toilet paper with Biblical words such as "Esau," "Israel," "Jeremias," "Satan" and "Isten" (Hungarian for God) imbedded in the tissue. The sample panels are "incontrovertible evidence," Rep. Dornan said, that 20,000 bibles donated in the 1970s by the World Reformed Alliance of the Transylvanian Magyar Reformed Church with the permission of Bucharest were diverted to a mill in Braila, as labels on the rolls indicate, for recycling into toilet paper. The high-quality Western paper and ink, however, resisted the smashing, and the Biblical words are clearly legible in the creases.

Hungarians of Transylvania: Not Ethnic Minority but MINORITY NATION!

The definition of "ethnic minority" identifies a group of people who migrated into the country of another nation in search of food, shelter or religious freedom and for one reason or another failed to assimilate. Therefore the Vlachs, later called Rumanians, who entered the Hungarian Kingdom during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries as migrant workers and shepherders, and failed to assimilate, lived and prospered as an ethnic minority within the Hungarian borders.

On the other hand, the term "minority nation" refers to a group of people who lived in their own country for a long period of time as part of the majority nation, without ever changing location, but were torn off geographically from the rest of their homeland through a major political tragedy, usually as a result of war, and occupied by another neighboring nation.

When Transylvania was torn from the Hungarian motherland as a result of World War I and World War II, the Hungarians who were established on that land for ten centuries became

a minority nation within Rumania. Politically they had to yield to the majority rule of the Rumanians. Nevertheless, the peace treaties guaranteed them the right to the unrestricted use of their own language, to the free development of their own culture through their own established cultural institutions, and their right to self-administration within their cities, towns, and villages.

Today, the National-Communist Government of Rumania not only refuses to recognize these rights, but is embarked on a course of TOTAL ANNIHILATION of the almost three-million strong Hungarian MINORITY Nation within its borders, by the use of terror and extreme brutality.

We ask the nations of this world to express their solidarity with the Hungarians in Transylvania by boycotting and "picketing" the Socialist Republic of Rumania until this problem is solved according to the rules of civilized societies.