

INTRODUCTION

In this work an attempt has been made for the first time to analyze thoroughly the political, ethnical, cultural, socioeconomic, and historical situation, particularly between 1944 and 1980, of the national minorities in Romania. The author's main objective is to give a factual account of the existing conditions among the nationalities, also considering, however, the period between the two world wars.

This is a topic of considerable complexity. In order to give an objective picture of the situation it was necessary to use almost all the more detailed scientific works and studies published in the West, as well as other written material. This included an analysis of official Romanian data; declarations and reports in the press that were not always free of political and ideological doctrine; information provided by sources that were not published but were considered reliable; and, finally, the personal experience of the author in the country as well as his analysis of the limited available material from Romania concerning the immediate postwar years.

Transylvania and its fateful historical development are the center of interest. A short summary of its history, indispensable for a better understanding, follows.

The two largest and most significant national minorities, the Hungarians and the Germans, played a dominant role in the historical development of the country and the evolution of its culture. The situation of other nationalities is also analyzed, particularly that of the Jewish minority which today is numerically insignificant but which once played an important role in the development of the country's

culture. It must be pointed out here that the Romanian people, as the national majority, have always had very different social, economic, and cultural traditions than the national minorities in present-day Romania; and significant differences still prevail. These may be explained primarily by peculiarities in historical development. It must also be taken into account that the relation of the Romanian majority to the national minorities is still determined to a great extent by great power interests and contradictory ideas and opinions. It is very difficult for an outsider to obtain reliable and sufficiently detailed information about the result of all this. Consequently, the public is poorly informed about the situation of those more than three million people who are members of national minorities in Romania today and about the changes in their culture and society during the last quarter of a century.

The notion Transylvania will be explained in the chapter "Territory and Population." Suffice to say, here, that the old Hungarian name of that territory is "Erdély" or "Erdöelve", (since the ninth or tenth centuries) from which the Romanian designation "Ardeal" derives. Like the original Hungarian name, the Latin translation "Transilvania" means "the country beyond the forest," coming from the west, *i.e.*, from Hungary. This name is used by Romanian authors and others to designate the entire territory, which belonged to Hungary before 1919. The German name "Siebenbürgen" refers to the historical territory of the independent Transylvanian Principality. This name originates, according to one of several hypotheses, from "Cibinburg" in the region of Hermannstadt. Divided from the territory of Old Romania by the Carpathian mountains, about 20 to 35 miles wide and in some places more than 6,500 feet high, Transylvania is not only a geographic unity but differs greatly from the other areas of present-day Romania, also in its western-oriented cultural history, its historical development, and its religious traditions.

This work deals with the peoples that have been part of the history of Transylvania ever since the Hungarian conquest in 896 AD. Soon after that conquest, the Hungarian kings were forced by frequent incursions from the east to develop defenses in Transylvania. Besides such peoples as Cumanians, Uzes, Petchenegues, and Yaziges, German settlers (*hospites*), the so-called Transylvanian Saxons, were called in during the 12th century. In the territory of Transylvania, Romanians (Vlachs) first were mentioned in historical records from the 13th century.

The basis of the development of the feudal system, which started in the 13th-15th centuries was the alliance of the three nations: the Hungarian nobles in the counties, the Széklers, and the free peasants and tradesmen of the autonomous Saxon territories. The federative alliance of the three "nations" (*Unio trium nationum Transsylvaniae*), concluded in 1437, was aimed mainly at the revolting peasants. In the following year, 1438, the alliance was confirmed; and at that time, as a consequence of the weakening of the Habsburgs' power, its character as a defensive pact against the Turkish incursions was emphasized. This pact was renewed in 1542 and remained the basis of the state administration for more than four centuries. It was not conceived in a democratic spirit; the Hungarian and Saxon bondsmen (free peasants and serfs) as well as the Romanian peasants were not included among those permitted to exercise political rights. The changes in the situation of the bondsmen occurred parallel to the development of the feudal system.

As a result of the penetration of Ottoman Turkish power into Central Europe, the medieval Hungarian kingdom disintegrated into three parts (1541). Transylvania as a principality was relatively independent between 1542 and 1688, without giving up its ties with Hungary.

Under the leadership of Hungarian dukes the Transylvanian Principality had a certain degree of sovereignty, a viable state organization, an independent army and financial system, and diplomatic connections as a vassal state in loose feudal dependence on the Turkish Empire. It paid tribute but was free from Turkish occupation and strived to preserve its internal independence between the Turkish and the Habsburg Empires by a policy of balance. It resisted successfully all Turkish attempts at invasion for one-and-a-half centuries.

In this epoch, Transylvania was in close contact with the western spiritual movements and became the most developed cultural center of the Danubian territory, a country of religious tolerance and of peaceful coexistence between the different nationalities.

At the turn of the 16th century (1591-1606) the unity of Transylvania was destroyed by civil wars between rival dukes, and the country finally was forced to give up its independence owing to the power politics of the Turks and the Habsburgs. A couple of years later, an outstanding personality, Duke Gabriel Bethlen (1613-1629) renewed stability and order in Transylvania.

After the defeat of the Turks, the Habsburgs made Transylvania into an Austrian crown colony (1687), ruled according to special statutes

as Grand Principality (1688–1867). The legal basis of the Austrian administration (*Gubernium*) with its seat in Hermannstadt was established by an agreement between Transylvania and the Habsburgs, the Leopoldine Diploma (1691), and was confirmed in the peace treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. Although the Leopoldine Diploma secured the autonomous constitution of Transylvania, the domination of Austria resulted in the decrease in significance of the autonomous nations; important decisions were made by Vienna.

The Habsburg rule contributed beyond doubt to the stability and development of western culture in Transylvania. It should not pass without mention, however, that misuse of power by the government and the use of forceful methods such as punitive expeditions against the nationalities, particularly the Hungarians, occurred and, the privileges of the Transylvanian Saxons were considerably restricted. The causes of this included internal disagreements, the desire for centralization in Vienna, and finally the restriction of traditional religious tolerance by the Counter Reformation. The curtailment of the national rights of the Hungarians led finally, under the leadership of Duke Ferenc Rákóczi II (1703–1711), to the revolt of the *Kuruces* striving for national independence.

A century of political activity, lively in every respect, followed in which the Transylvanian nationalities' aspirations to emancipation and demands for social reform were of increasing significance. The Romanians based their demands on the ideas of the "Transylvanian School" [*Școala Ardeleană*] which was founded by Greek Catholic (Orthodox turned Roman Catholic) intellectuals and was of extreme importance in the development of national consciousness. In their petition *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* they demanded national autonomous rights and more social liberalization. Emperor Joseph II's attempt to introduce the German language into the administration later contributed to the development of Hungarian nationalism.

Finally, in the revolution of 1848–1849, earlier tensions exploded into armed conflict. This revolution, with its sharpening of antagonism among the nationalities of Transylvania, heralded a new epoch in the history of the country. Wanting to defend their rights, the Saxons, together with the Romanians who aspired to national recognition, supported the Habsburgs against the Hungarian revolutionaries, who fought for national independence. In 1849 the Hungarian revolutionary government seceded from Austria, and the Transylvanian Diet declared the unification of Transylvania with Hungary. This revolu-

tion was defeated by the Habsburg army with the help of Russian army units. The personalities who led this revolutionary movement, included among the Saxons, Stephan Ludwig Roth, who fought for the liberation of the serfs; among the Hungarians, Lajos Kossuth and the freedom poet Alexander Petőfi; and, among the Romanians, Nicolae Bălcescu who, from beyond the Carpathians and Avram Iancu, organized the revolutionary Romanians in Transylvania.

With respect to the significance of 1848–1849, each of the three Transylvanian nationalities had its own view. It is nevertheless certain that, apart from the abolition of serfdom, none of the nations was content with the events of the revolution. An era followed (1849–1860), a period called Neo-absolutism, in which Vienna suppressed all initiative shown by the nationalities. After the reintroduction of the autonomous Transylvanian constitution, by the Diploma of October 1860, the Austrian government, under the influence of the dominant European ideas of the epoch, was liberalized to a certain extent. At the Diet of Hermannstadt in 1863–1864, the Romanians were represented by their own deputies for the first time. This was the first attempt to bring about an autonomous Transylvania in a democratic spirit and to create the basis for peaceful coexistence among its nationalities. The resolutions of the Diet were, however, never fulfilled.

The unsuccessful wars led by the Habsburgs against Prussia in 1859–1860 and 1866, as well as the desire to reunite Transylvania with Hungary, eventually led to the historical compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 and the creation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy which was a real union under one monarch. The union of Transylvania with Hungary was confirmed. Neither the Transylvanian Saxons nor the Romanians considered this compromise satisfactory—the Saxons, because they were afraid that their traditional rights would be restricted in a Hungarian national state; and the Romanians because of their struggle for an independent state. Article 44 of the Hungarian nationality law of 1868, which controlled the rights of the nationalities in the Hungarian half of the monarchy, guaranteed equal rights to all nationalities. The liberal provisions of this law were not, however, respected by the entire political leadership. Parliamentary freedom, in any case, existed at that time (although restricted by the so-called class election system), and the national minorities were in the position to develop their economy and culture freely. The Transylvanian Romanians had made demands that none of the Hungarian governments were able to fulfill. Towards

the end of the First World War, attempts at Hungarian-Romanian rapprochement were unsuccessful.

After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the end of the First World War, the Romanian National Assembly proclaimed in the declaration of Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár on December 1, 1918, joining Transylvania to Romania in spite of Hungarian protests. This was confirmed by the Allied and Associated Great Powers in the peace treaty of Trianon (June 4, 1920). It must be pointed out here that the annexation of Transylvania, the eastern territories of Hungary, and the eastern part of the Banat by Romania had been agreed upon secretly between Romania and the Allied powers from August 4, 1916, as a reward to Romania for changing sides in the First World War.

Because the resolutions of Alba Iulia secured the cultural autonomy of the nationalities, the Transylvanian Saxons, although not unanimously, joined the Romanians in the Declaration of Union of Mediasch on January 8, 1919. The German population of the Banat (Swabians) were initially against the division of their territory and its partial unification with Romania. After the Romanian army had occupied the eastern part of the Banat and the peace treaty of Trianon was ratified, these Banat Swabians joined the Saxons and the Romanians.

In the peace treaty of Trianon, Romania received not only historical Transylvania but also large areas of eastern Hungary: Máramaros/Maramureş, Szatmár/Satu Mare, Körösvidék/Crişana, and the eastern part of the Banat. The decision was based on the numerical superiority of Romanians, although their absolute majority of 53.8% was not very significant. In this way a multinational and multiconfessional Greater Romania was created that has had to deal with the problem of the national minorities ever since.

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The appendix contains a subject index, an index of names, and a list of place names in three languages. The place names given here are those used officially today in Romania; the Hungarian names are applied according to the historical forms on the basis of the statistics established in 1910; and the German place names are given in their generally used historical forms.

Data and material available up to January 1981 have been used in this work. In conclusion, I wish to express my greatest thanks to my

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Schliersee, January 1981.

Elemér Illyés

A faint, large-scale map of Transylvania and surrounding regions, showing major cities like Sibiu, Cluj, and Gyulafehérvár, and geographical features like the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube River. The map is overlaid with a grid and serves as a background for the text.

The history of Transylvania and its nationalities is a specific phenomenon in the development of Europe. Transylvania's ethnic composition is very different from that of the rest of present-day Romania—geographically, historically, ethnically, linguistically, and economically. Even though the ways the national groups have lived and the problems they pursued have been different, the peoples of Transylvania are nonetheless bound by a number of shared features and a common history. But at least as much as any other European area, power politics has determined much of Transylvania's history and prevented true integration of the various nationalities.

Transylvania is applied to all the territory transferred from Hungary to Romania by the Treaty of Trianon (June 4, 1920), an area of about 193,000 square kilometers. Before 1920, Transylvania consisted of several parts of the Trianon grant—the Banat, the Great Hungarian Plain, and the Great Hungarian Plain—Hungary's eastern border was 36,882 to 61,623 square kilometers, which was the Partium for "Partium" (Hungarian: "Partium")—the name applied to those parts of Hungary that came under the authority of the Princess of Transylvania, but did not become part of the country. The Partium's territory varied from period to period, including territories of northern Hungary, the counties Bihar,