

INTRODUCTION

This special issue of the *Carpathian Observer* is being published on the curious occasion of the 2050th anniversary of a rather obscure event in the ancient history of Dacia which is celebrated by modern Rumanians as the beginning of their national history in Transylvania. Under such bizarre circumstances our publication on the Transylvanian problem cannot but be controversial. Yet in compiling the historical material on Transylvania, our aim was to scrupulously observe the rules of fairness and honesty in scholarship.

Our publication deals with one of the most complex national conflicts of contemporary Europe. Victims of this conflicts are the Transylvanian Hungarians—over two million of them—living under Rumanian domination. They are known as minority Hungarians, not unlike their fellow Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union.

The total number of these so-called minority Hungarians is close to four million, one fourth of all Hungarians living in the Danube region. They became minority Hungarians as a result of the territorial settlements following two World Wars. Most of them are living in areas where they are, or had been until recently, the majority. Now all of them are minorities in relationship to the total populations of the countries to which they were transferred by the peace treaties which unabashedly favored Hungary's rivals. Their fate is of paramount interest to all Hungarians wherever they may live.

The most burning issue among the Hungarian minority problems is that of the Transylvanian Hungarians under Rumanian rule, partly because they are the largest among the Hungarian minorities, partly because their treatment by the majority is the worst.

The historical background of the problem is concisely summed up in a recently published book, "Witnesses to Cultural Genocide", as follows:

Whereas the territory of Old Rumania, the Regat, has a largely ethnic Rumanian population, Transylvania has, and has had for centuries, an ethnically mixed population. After the Hungarians entered the Danube basin after the Ninth Century and founded the Kingdom of Hungary in 1000, they attached Transylvania to the Kingdom and settled it. From then on, Transylvania remained part of the Kingdom—the Crownlands of St. Stephen—even during the 150 years of Ottoman occupation, when the Kingdom of Hungary was divided into three. Transylvania was at times an autonomous principality, and signed the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War, in that capacity in 1648; nevertheless its princes emphasized the role of the province as guaranteeing the legal continuity of the Hungarian state. When Transylvania became part of Rumania after the First World War in 1918-1920, the annexation of Transylvania represented the fulfillment of a powerful Rumanian nationalist aspiration. It was beyond doubt that Transylvania had a majority Rumanian population but it was also the homeland of substantial Hungarian and German minorities. These groups found that in satisfying Rumanian national aspirations their own suffered. The newly enlarged Rumanian state regarded the Hungarian minority as a potential or actual threat to its security and introduced a variety of discriminatory measures against it. Underlying this move was a fear that just as Rumania had obtained Transylvania on the basis of its Rumanian population, so the Hungarians might do the same on the basis of its Hungarian population. These fears were realized in 1940 when the northern two-fifths of Transylvania was temporarily re-attached to Hungary.

After the war there were hopes that the new communist regime would pursue a more equitable policy toward the Hungarians, but these hopes were soon confounded.

Our aim in preparing this publication is to make widely available several scholarly analyses of the Transylvanian problem. We regret that nationalist propaganda obscures and distorts this problem, so vital as it is to so many people. Our interest in the problem of Hungarians in Rumania is not motivated by Hungarian considerations alone. The Transylvanian problem, apart from being a local conflict, has broader significance as well. Since it engenders jealousy and bitter hostility, it is a major stumbling block to international harmony in that part of Europe in general. We are hopeful that

our effort will promote not merely the understanding of the Transylvanian problem but also advance the cause of reconciliation everywhere in the Danube region.

Peace in the Danube region is being undermined by relentless national conflict and reckless propaganda which distorts both the past and present. Yet it is our conviction that truth can prevail over falsehood, reason over emotions, reality over myth. In that spirit we look forward to the day when Rumanians and Hungarians will join hands and work together for peace for their own good and for the good of all peoples of the Danube region tormented for so long by national hostility.

The Editors