

# HOW MINORITIES LIVE

## RUMANIA

### A WAVE OF LAWSUITS

*Leaders of Magyar Minority Before Military Court.* — Count Mihály Toldalaghy, president of the local branch of the Magyar Ethnic Community in the County of Maros-Torda, together with four land-owners living in the same county, was summoned before the military court under the charge of activity hostile to the State. On February 4th, 1939, the Count addressed a farmers' meeting in the village of Backamadaras and in his speech he referred — among other things — to the tasks facing the Magyar people. His statements were considered hostile to the State, and he was therefore ordered to appear before the military court. He was, however, acquitted of the charge, it being found that the "informer" had selected only certain passages from the Count's speech, and that the whole speech did not convey the impression of having been directed against the interests of the State.

*Hungarian Editor's Appeal Rejected.* — A few years ago M. Zsigmond Gyulai, a Hungarian editor, was sentenced to six months imprisonment for publishing in his paper (in Marosvásárhely) an article of the "Manchester Guardian" dealing with the situation of the Danubian States. The editor actually spent 37 days in prison, after which he was temporarily released, owing to illness; in the meantime his punishment was by royal amnesty reduced to four months imprisonment, but the editor appealed for pardon. His petition was, however, rejected, whereupon he has now returned to the prison for the rest of his confinement. (Estilap, December 13.)

*Hungarian Editor Charged With Treason.* — M. László Baradlai, editor of the daily "Sajtó" (The Press), appearing in Szatmár (Satu Mare), was arrested by the local police and ordered to appear before the military court of Kolozsvár (Cluj) charged with having received mysterious sums of money from abroad. After an inquiry lasting for six weeks the editor was released, as it was proved that the false accusation was supported by forged receipts and was, as a matter of fact, invested by his enemies. (Brassói Lapok, December 17, 1939.) —

*Hungarian Parish Clerk Punished for Writing Local History.* — A few months ago the Rumanian Ministry of the Interior instructed all parish clerks to compile monographs of their vilages, or to collect particulars of local history. In describing the past and the social conditions of the village of

Pusztaszentmárton, the district clerk of Aranyosronk referred to a historical work written by a Transylvanian historian, Baron Balázs Orbán. In this work the village is described as an ancient Magyar settlement Rumanianized in the course of centuries. On the other hand, the parish clerk also referred to the theory put forward by Prof. Nicholas Iorga, who maintains that the Szekler villages of Transylvania were originally Rumanian settlements successively assimilated by the Magyar elements of the population. The Hungarian parish clerk was therefore ordered to appear before the military court at Kolozsvár (Cluj), charged with having preferred the theory of the Hungarian historian to Prof. Iorga's, whereby he had committed an offence against the dignity of Rumania's national history and institutions. After 28 years of absolutely unimpeachable public service, the Hungarian parish clerk was fined 3.000 lei and costs.

*Punished for a Telephone Report.* — Charged with committing an offence against the honour of the Rumanian nation, M. László Sebestyén, a journalist resident in Marosvásárhely (Targu-Mures), was ordered to appear before the military court at Kolozsvár (Cluj) on account of a telephone report which he was alleged to have sent abroad. The counsel for the prosecution asked the judge to sentence the journalist to three years' imprisonment, whereupon the counsel for the defence proved to the court that the journalist had been stopped by the censor while telephoning his report, so that it would be absurd to punish him for something he could not possibly have done. The journalist was fined 2000 lei and costs.

*Punished for Coffee-House Conversation.* — The military court at Temesvár (Timisoara) has sentenced M. József Fazekas, a manufacturer of Orsova, to the payment of a fine of 4000 lei on the charge of irredentist statements which he is alleged to have made during a coffee-house discussion. The fact is that he, as a Hungarian member of the company, was asked to give his opinion on a political question; his answer was as follows: "The time will come when the Rumanian and Hungarian nations will walk hand in hand; it will be necessary, however, to make further concessions to the Hungarians first."

*Chief Rabbi Charged with Hostility to the State.* — M. Géza Seidner, religion teacher and Chief Rabbi of Karánsebes, was charged with hostile intentions against the State, in connection with a religious festival held three years ago, the programme of which — it was said — had displayed the Rabbi's ill feelings towards the State. No trustworthy evidence having been produced against him, the Rabbi was acquitted by the military court. (Népujság, December 17, 1939.) —

*House-Owner Accused of Insult.* — The military court of Kolozsvár (Cluj) has sentenced to the payment of a fine of 10.000 lei Mrs. Lederer, a house owner, who had been denounced

by a former tenant for insulting the honour of the Rumanian nation. (Ellenzék, December 8, 1939.) —

*Further Military Court Sentences.* — The military court at Brassó (Brasov) has sentenced M. Antal Balázs, County of Csik, to three months imprisonment for sensation mongering and insulting the honour of the Rumanian nation. — The military court at Nagyszeben (Sibiu) has sentenced M. György Páll, one-time secretary of the late Hungarian Party, to three months imprisonment. — The military court at Kolozsvár (Cluj) has passed the following sentences for crossing the frontier without permission: János Zsikány, ten years' penal servitude, Sándor Jenei, László and Juliska Balogh, András Farkas Balogh, János Bogdán and Ferenc Tóth, two years' imprisonment each. All are residents in the County of Bihar. The following persons had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment each for holding meetings without permission: Viktor Katona, Karolin Fülöp, Julia Trombitás, Zsuzsa Popas and a friend. They all live in the County of Maros-Torda.

*Magyar Law-Student Sent to Prison For a Year on the Charge of Agitation Dangerous to the State.* — The Kolozsvár military court has sentenced John Tőkés, a Marosvásárhely law-student aged 20, to one year's imprisonment on the charge of agitation dangerous to the State. According to the prosecution, Tőkés sent a letter to a relation living in Hungary in which he used expressions equivalent to subversive agitation and abuse of the Rumanian nation. The letter fell into the hands of the authorities by way of the *Cabinet Noir*, and proceedings were instituted against him. The young law-student was arrested immediately after sentence had been passed.

#### LAND BELONGING TO TRANSYLVANIAN REFORMED CHURCH PARISH EXPROPRIATED AND MADE OVER TO STATE

Forty acres of land have been expropriated in the prefecture of Kőrösbánya. Of this area twenty-one acres belonged to the Reformed Church parish of Kőrösbánya. The greater part of the expropriated land will be made over to State institutions and the State Church.

#### NO SETTLEMENT YET OF QUESTION OF STATE GRANTS (CONGRUA) TO PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN IN TRANSYLVANIA

We have several times referred to the striking inequality that exists in respect of State grants between the treatment meted out to minority and to majority clergymen respectively.

Not long ago a delegation headed by the Reformed Church Bishop of Transylvania appeared before the Rumanian Minister of Religion and Education and again urged the settlement of the question of State grants to Protestant clergymen. The delegation begged the Minister to settle this question in terms of the agreement arrived at between the leaders of the Magyar minority and the Government, and to do so at latest by January.

### MINORITY SCHOOLS IN ARAD RECEIVE ALMS INSTEAD OF REASONABLE SUPPORT

The municipality of Arad appropriated 2.000.000 lei for educational purposes. Of this sum the denominational schools received only 35.000, while the Arad State schools were given the remaining 1.965.000 lei. In other words 99% of the grant went to the State schools, which are in any case in a safe position, while the denominational schools struggling hard to maintain their very existence had to be content with 1%. The 35.000 lei were distributed as follows: 5000 each to the Arad Roman Catholic boys' and girls' schools, the Lutheran German elementary school, the Jewish and the Serb elementary schools, the remaining 10.000 being given to the Serb elementary school at Aradgaj. The committee of the Magyar minority in Arad has lodged a protest against the disproportionately small sums allotted to the denominational schools and has stated that this unequal treatment has given rise to general feelings of dissatisfaction among the minority inhabitants. ("Magyar Ujság," Dec. 18.)

### MAGYAR MINORITY DEMANDS NOT ONLY A MINORITY LAW, BUT ALSO ITS ENFORCEMENT

The *Rumanian Administration* — as we have repeatedly reported — settled the question of minority rights by means of the so-called Minority Statute. This Minority Statute consists of a Royal Edict and a resolution passed by the Cabinet Council, but the rights guaranteed therein, with one two exceptions, have not been granted. The provisions of the Minority Statute are being as little observed as were the stipulations of the so-called Minority Treaty — concluded in Paris on 9th December 1919 between Rumania and the Allied and Associated Powers — by the successive Rumanian Governments. Quite recently the new Rumanian Premier, M. George Tatarescu, received the Chairman of the Magyar Parliamentary Group, with whom he discussed the situation of the Magyar racial minority. The communiqué issued by the Presidential Board of the Magyar Ethnic Community states that Premier Tatarescu announced his intention of drafting a minority law. In connection with this plan the wish of the Magyar minority is that the leaders of

the Magyars should be allowed to assist in preparing the draft of that law, in order to guarantee its efficacy and ensure that in scope and scale it shall be satisfactory. The *Chairman of the Magyar Parliamentary Group* expressed to the Press the hope that the promises received would not prove empty words, that the Government would not consider it sufficient to frame a law, but would see that it was enforced in every field alike. This was what the Magyars would demand, for unless they were enforced, all laws and decrees were merely so many scraps of paper. ("Magyar Lapok", December 20.)

### SITUATION OF DISCHARGED MAGYAR OFFICIALS STILL UNCERTAIN

An oath of allegiance was demanded by the Rumanian Government from the State, municipal and village officials in the Hungarian areas attached to Rumania at the time of occupation — that is to say, long before the ratification of the Peace Treaties. Those officials, standing on their rights in terms of international law, refused to take this oath. Thereupon the Rumanian Government discharged thousands of them without paying them any compensation or pensions, which meant that they were plunged into the greatest destitution. It was only 10 years later that some of the civil servants who had refused to take the oath received a pittance in lieu of pension, but not as from the date of their dismissal. (The members of the Hungarian gendarmerie, for instance, are still suing for their pensions in the civil courts.) Later on fresh batches of minority officials were discharged after language tests on the pretext that they had an inadequate knowledge of the official language of the State. This meant that again thousands of minority public servants were reduced to beggary by the Rumanian Government, for naturally they were dismissed without compensation or pensions. A report from Bucharest states that the Magyar Parliamentary Group has now submitted another memorandum to the Government, requesting a general and equitable settlement of the question of the discharged Magyar public employees. (Magyar Lapok, December 20.)

### ONLY NOW, AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF WAITING AND LITIGATION, ARE THE DISCHARGED MAGYAR RAILWAY EMPLOYEES TO GET THEIR PENSIONS

The personnel of the *Royal Hungarian Railways* (M. A. V.) in the Hungarian areas attached to Rumania were discharged without compensation or pensions by the Rumanian Government. After twenty years of litigation, they are at last in

possession of a juridical decision in re their pensions. The supreme Rumanian court of law, the Court of Appeal, has pronounced that the Rumanian State is the legal successor of the Hungarian State in those areas and has therefore inherited not only these assets, but also the liabilities and obligations, of the latter. The Court of Appeal has therefore instructed the Minister of Finance as representing the Rumanian Government to pay the plaintiff railway employees their dues. This finding is a defeat for the Rumanian Government and a reflection on its behaviour, particularly in view of the fact that the men whose right to pensions the successive Governments have denied for twenty years were minor employees, platelayers, pointsmen, etc. These humble persons were plunged into the greatest social and economic distress only because they happened to be minority citizens. This juridical sentence does not however apply to the *Magyar railway officials* dismissed from their posts in recent years owing to their failure to pass the language tests. No arrangement concerning them has yet been made ("Népujság", December, 16.)

#### SZÉKLER JOINT TENANTS (COMPOSSESSORATI) MAY NOT SELL THEIR OWN WOOD

The joint tenants of *Gyergyószentmiklós* decided to fell and divide among themselves 10.000 cubic metres of wood. This they announced to the proper authorities, and received permission to fell the trees, but only on condition that they did the work and used the wood themselves. In a word they cannot sell it to other people. The farmers concerned, who are most seriously affected by this prohibition, have appealed to the leaders of the Magyar minority for help to obtain a redress of this wrong.

#### SUPPRESSION OF GERMAN MINORITY PAPER

The Censor has prohibited the appearance for ten days of the German daily paper "*Extrapost*". The paper is alleged to have been guilty of disrespectful conduct and various offences against official ordinances. (Magyar Lapok, November 23, 1939.)

### SLOVAKIA

#### 27 MAGYARS PUNISHED FOR WISHING TO BELONG TO HUNGARY

The following case is reported from *Besztercebánya*: Thirty inhabitants of the village of *Felsőpokorágy* were tried by the local district court on December 15th; they were reported to have left their village on the beginning of April, 1939, to look

after their land in the village of *Alsópokorágy*, which had been recently restored to Hungary. From there they went to the town of Rimaszombat, to ask the prefect of the county for the restoration of their own village (*Felsőpokorágy*). They were tried by the district court under § 2 of the State Defence Act, charged with activity hostile to the integrity of the State. The court passed the following sentences: Pál Ocsvay Kipták and Sámuel Bereczky, the two leaders of the deputation, to six months' imprisonment, *Kriskó*, Pál *Házás*, Péter *Bornay*, Pál *Ocsvay*, András *Petrusz*, Pál *Laczkó* and Pál *Asztalos Visny*, to 4 months each, and 13 other defendants to 3 months each. One defendant was sentenced to three months' imprisonment and four others to two months each, being released on bail. Four defendants were acquitted. (*Uj Hírek*, December 17, 1939; Pozsony-Bratislava). —

### PERSECUTION OF MAGYARS IN SLOVAKIA

It is reported from Slovakia that Baron *Baratta*, a landowner and manufacturer, has been arrested at Polta and taken to the prison at Illava. No explanation of his arrest was offered, but it is believed to have taken place on account of his political activity as a member of the United Hungarian Party of Slovakia. His arrest has created a very unfavourable impression among the Magyars in Slovakia, as it is one of a series of arrests recently effected in the counties of Nyitra, Szepes and Abauj-Torna. Thus, for instance, Mr. Gusztáv *Wlaszlovics*, a manufacturer of Stósz, was taken from the prison of Illava direct to the military court at Lőcse, charged with the absurd accusation that he had been responsible for the desertion of those pro-Hungarian German citizens of Stósz and Mecenzéf who had escaped to Hungary at the time of the mobilization in Slovakia in September, because they did not wish to enter the Slovak army.

### "YOU DAMNED MAGYAR!" — AND TWO SLAPS IN THE FACE — IN POZSONY

Arthur *Sinko*, a "bus conductor in *Pozsony (Bratislava)* — on November 30th — called a Magyar passenger a "damned Hungarian", because the latter had told him not to let the 'bus start before all the passengers had got in. The conductor then told the passenger to mind his own business and not to interfere with his work, wherupon the latter pointed out that he had a right to interfere as "it was the conductor's duty to see that everybody should get a chance to leave the 'bus or get in, because it was the conductor's business to serve the public and not vice-versa." Though the passenger spoke in an amicable manner, the conductor advised him to stop arguing, or else he

would "slap his face"; accordingly, he attacked the Hungarian passenger and — amid a volley of oaths — hit him twice in the face.

## YUGOSLAVIA

### NO ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION SINCE YEARS IN ZOMBOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Roman Catholic inhabitants of Zombor, the old capital of County Bács-Bodrog, are Bunyevatz, Magyar and German by nationality, and together form about two-thirds of the total population. For years they have been complaining that owing to the lack of a Roman Catholic teacher of religion, the children of that faith attending the State secondary school were not receiving proper religious instruction. Their petitions, submitted more than once a year, have so far remained un-answered but now that in consequence of the Serbo-Croatian agreement concluded on 26th August the Croatian Catholics have been given an important rôle in the administration of the affairs of the State, the situation has suddenly changed. On the intervention of Senator Pajo Vuyevitch (a Bunyevatz of Zombor), which was strongly supported by the five Croatian Ministers, M. Bozho Maximovitch, Minister of Education, *has at last appointed a Roman Catholic priest to teach religion in the Zombor secondary school.* Another grievance of the Bunyevatz people typical of conditions in Yugoslavia is that *there is not one teacher of that nationality among all the 58 State school teachers in Zombor.* Encouraged by their initial success, they are now demanding a redress of that grievance too.,

### IMPORTANT JURIDICAL PRECEDENT

The nationalization of schools under Ordinance No. 31.230 of 27th October 1920 and other subsequent decrees was in practice carried out as follows. The buildings and equipment of schools belonging to denominations, communities, societies and private persons were expropriated without any compensation being paid for them, especially in the areas wrested from Hungary. Besides this, all movable assets and real estate that went to their maintenance were also confiscated by the State. As the great majority of the schools in those parts belonged to the above-mentioned categories, the denominations, communities, societies and private individuals maintaining them suffered enormous losses when the school property was confiscated. After 1931 several parishes sued the State, demanding both the return of the school-buildings and rent for the entire period that had elapsed since they were arbitrarily confiscated. In





many cases judgements were pronounced by the courts, on the basis of which agreements concerning the restoration of the confiscated buildings were arrived at between the ecclesiastical authorities and the political communities acting on instructions received from higher authorities.

Recently, the Ujvidék Court of Appeal pronounced a judgement of great theoretical importance in the lawsuit brought by the ecclesiastical parish of *Bereg (Backi Breg)* against the School Board of the political community. The judgement pronounced was that *the school-buildings confiscated by Ordinance have not ceased to be the property of the denomination; that they must be restored and rent paid for their use since the date of confiscation. The Church had absolute control over all denominational property, which could neither be expropriated nor confiscated.* It would seem that the question of the confiscated school-buildings is likely to be settled satisfactorily; but what about the rest of the educational assets, especially the land expropriated by the Land Reform and allotted to War volunteers and other Southern Slav claimants?

### COMPLAINT OF MAGYARS IN BARANYA

In the so-called "Baranya triangle", but especially in the prefecture of *Kőszeg (Batina)*, the authorities have almost entirely paralyzed the activity of the Magyar cultural societies. The performance of Hungarian plays in particular is seldom or never permitted. Now that the electioneering campaign has started all over the country, the Magyars of Baranya hope that this grievance will be redressed — at least for the time being.

### YUGOSLAV MINISTER OF WAR'S INTERESTING ORDINANCE

The official army gazette of 9th Decmeber contains an ordinance issued by General Neditch, Yugoslav Minister of War, in terms of which "those reserve officers of the former Austro-Hungarian army who for any reason did not receive the rank of reserve officers in the Yugoslav army, *but have been obliged to serve in the ranks and consequently were often given very hard manual work to perform*, may not in future be employed on any work during manoeuvres except such as is best suited to their mental and physical capacities."

This interesting ordinance, which it is to be hoped will put an end to a state of matters that for 20 years had been very hard on the former reserve officers of the Austro-Hungarian army, especially on those of Magyar nationality, was issued by the Minister of War "for the purpose of rationalizing the work done by non-Slavs in connection with the erection of fortifications".