

Anti-Magyar Propaganda in Rumania and the Hungarian Minority in Transylvania

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That relations between Rumania and Hungary have never been good is a tragic fact that need not be elucidated to anyone even slightly familiar with the history of the two nations.¹ Yet after the consolidation of the communist system following World War II, both Rumania and Hungary took scrupulous care, in the name of socialist brotherhood, to censor anything that might be even slightly offensive to the other. This did not entirely apply to Rumanian history books, to be sure, in which the omissions of fact about Transylvania's past were as insulting from a Hungarian viewpoint as the additions of myth (doubly so in the case of compulsory textbooks issued for the use of Hungarian minority schools), but it was true enough of literature and of journalism in general. For three decades, nothing negative could appear in Hungary about Rumania, and nothing bad in Rumania about Hungary—at least not about contemporary Hungary. Criticising the past from a Marxist viewpoint was, of course, not only permitted, but mandatory, and if the exploiters of yesteryear happened to have been Magyars, what of it? The same class was, after all, also a target in books and journals across the border; but so were the “fascists” of the recent past, a term that in time came to mean chiefly the Hungarians. Since Rumania, which had also been fascist until the summer of 1944, had managed to finish the war an anti-fascist victor, while the Hungarians had persisted in waging war against the Soviet liberators (and their eager, fresh Rumanian allies) to the bitter end, the latter retained the distinction of having been the fascists who had been overcome, alone in fact in the entire socialist camp after the East Germans were transubstantiated into a new nation. Here, too, then, Rumanian writing was not very different from that which could be found in Hungary: only what was self-flagellation there, often became, in Rumania, anti-Hungarian bias duly concealed under political labels.

The literary *modus vivendi* that had evolved between the two states be-

gan to deteriorate in the 1970s. The reasons are too complex to treat here, but they have much to do with the methodical development of a new, or renewed official Rumanian nationalism, in which the minorities of Rumania, particularly the Hungarian, came to be seen as a negative and potentially dangerous element. The net effect of the new policies has been a heavy-handed, at times brutal cultural repression of Rumanian-Hungarians, a suppression that has continued to worsen. The campaign to cripple or to eliminate Hungarian schools, churches, theaters, publications, radio and television programming in Rumania, and the tragic fate of many Hungarian intellectuals living in the country has been well-documented in the Western press during the last decade, as have various pronouncements made by members of the Rumanian government, notably Nicolae Ceausescu, declaring Rumania to be a unified nation state in which minorities are at best a temporary irritation.

Whatever the reasons for the resurgence of Rumanian nationalism, a parallel development in Hungary is certainly not among them. In fact, a major criticism of the Kádár regime among Hungarian intellectuals has been precisely that it has been too slow to react to these Rumanian initiatives. Although the new policies generated some internal resistance among the Hungarian minority in Rumania, overt response from Hungary remained negligible for a long time. Not only were the government and the Party silent on the issue: so were Hungarian writers, who were not allowed to speak out against what was happening to their fellow Hungarians next door. The only exception was the late Gyula Illyés, Hungary's most prominent poet, who dared—or was permitted to—raise his voice against the new Rumanian political course in several interviews and articles both in Hungary and abroad, but even his message was meek and late, years after the anti-Hungarian campaign had begun. How gently even he had to tread may be seen from the tenor of the two-part article he published on the matter in *Magyar Nemzet*, a large circulation daily, in which he could not yet even name Rumania, though the reference was obvious enough to his readers:

According to authentic data and verifiable complaints, minority groups numbering several hundred thousand, even a million, have no universities of their own. Nor are there any institutes of higher education in their mother tongue, and soon they will not even have their own secondary schools, as the existing ones are being standardized to give instruction in the [official] language of the state; as a result, the youth of the national minority cannot learn a trade in their mother tongue. Europe's largest national minority is Hungarian; approximately 16 to 18 percent of a total of 20,000,000.²

This much was possible; but when Illyés tried to summarize the broader question in book form, he failed. His volume, *Szellem és erőszak* [Spirit

and Tyranny] had already been produced by Magvető Publishers in Budapest when permission to release it was withdrawn, and the stock was first warehoused, then shredded.³

Illyés was promptly called a fascist in Bucharest, and other writers in Budapest came to his defense,⁴ but there the matter seemed to rest as far as the Hungarian general public was concerned—which paid scant attention to the entire affair at the time. Illyés continued to play the champion of the Hungarian minorities among Hungarian intellectuals at home and abroad until his death in 1983, and did as much as he could to make everyone aware of the problem. Yet his efforts did not lead to an open discussion of the issue in Hungary—the subject remained official taboo.

In Rumania, literary works dealing with the topic of the Hungarian tenure of Northern Transylvania during World War II had started to appear in the early 70s; F. Pacurariu's novel, *Labirintul* [Labyrinth] (1974) deserves special mention among these productions, because it was awarded the grand prize of the Rumanian Writers' Union. But about this time, preparations were being made for the publication of *Arhanghelii Cruzimii*, a volume that represents the opening shot in a literary propaganda campaign, the first in a series of inexpensive, popular works written with the intention of whipping up nationalist sentiment and anti-Hungarian feeling among the Rumanian populace.⁵

That a connection exists between Illyés' articles and the launching of work on *Arhanghelii* is made very probable by the date of an alleged letter—March 10, 1978, a few weeks after the appearance of the second *Magyar Nemzet* installment—from one Radu Alexandru to the editors of the periodical *Vatra*, asking them to launch an investigation “to establish the truth” in the name of the 29 victims of a massacre committed by Hungarian field gendarmes on October 16, 1944 in the village of Moisei, Maramures, in which his father had been shot. What makes the letter less than credible is its style: Alexandru, who claims to be a simple factory worker, clothes his appeal in references to patriotism, a concern for national history, Cosbuc, Caragiale and Slavici, and of course Ceausescu. There are even two very appropriate quotations from “Excelenta sa.” In any case, the resulting volume, from the pens of Dr. Gheorge I. Bodea and Vasile T. Suciu, appeared in Tirgu Mures in 1982, in the appropriately titled series “Documentele Continuitatii” (Documents of Continuity, a reference to the official view of Rumania's uninterrupted past since pre-Dacian times to the present). The delay of four years between the beginning of the project and the final publication could, of course, be explained by the requirements of careful research and investigative reporting, but could also have been caused by a hesitation on the part of the publisher, or of higher authorities, to permit the work's printing and distribution. Its release meant, after all, a radical departure in censorship policy, and there can be no doubt that the

possible benefits and negative consequences of publication were debated at length. If so, the Rumanian hawks won out in the end.

That this line of speculation is not at all far-fetched becomes apparent from an interview that Ion Lancranjan, Rumania's ablest propagandist, granted Mariana Braescu, of *Scinteia Tineretului*.⁶ In it, he outlines the difficulties he experienced in having his works published. Certain writers, whom Lancranjan labels "business intellectuals," did not sympathize with him, and the atmosphere in the Cultural Council reminded him of an inquisition: the aesthetic value of his works was questioned, and he was accused of political irresponsibility. He attributes his "victory" to the fact that there were, nevertheless, a few sober voices in among his colleagues, and adds that the negative manifestations are a result of the "spirit of the past," against which he, and the Party, are struggling.

Arhanghelii Cruzimii is a propaganda work pure and simple, no matter what the truth is about the alleged massacre of Moisei. It is meant to be read with fist clenched. If Rumania had a free press, it would not be worth a comment; but in a country that exercises complete central control over the printed word, its appearance on the bookstands ultimately had to be approved by the highest authority. Therein lies its only significance.

There seems to have been no reaction whatever in Hungary to *Arhanghelii*. That is hardly surprising: the only possible rejoinder would be to publish a similar expose about a massacre in which the butchers were Rumanian and the victims Hungarian. If the Hungarians have not done this, it is not for want of material.

But Lancranjan's *Cuvint despre Transilvania*, which appeared at the same time as *Arhanghelii*, was a horse of another colour.⁷

In spite of the troubles Lancranjan had in publishing this and other works, he is an important and popular writer who has won many a distinction: among others, the State Prize for Literature and the prize of the Rumanian Writers' Union for his novel *Cordovanii* (1963). The style he adopted in *Cuvint*, while perhaps too romantic for the sophisticated reader, is just right for the masses at whom he aimed it. Marketed by the Publishing House for Sport and Tourism, the cheap (8 lei) paperback had a run of over 50,000 copies⁸ and was sold out within a week; its black-market price immediately jumped to 100 lei.⁹

Cuvint is a collection of essays written during the years 1967–82. Lest any miss its aim, it was given its imprimatur on March 15, 1982—Hungary's national holiday. It immediately received wide coverage and positive reviews in the Rumanian press—in *Luceafarul*, the publication of the Rumanian Writers' Union, in *Flacara*, the organ of the United Democratic and Socialist Front, and in *Scinteia Tineretului*, the organ of Communist youth, among others. The reviews, some of which were nothing less than odes to the work and its author, continued throughout the months of April and May.

The book itself consists of four parts: “Rapsodie transilvana” [Transylvanian Rhapsody], “Meleaguri natale” [Native regions], “Patriotismul—o necesitate vitala” [Patriotism—a vital necessity], and the essay that gave the collection its cover title, “Cuvint despre Transylvania.” The first three parts (pp. 5–119) consist of geographic, historical and ethnic sketches of Transylvania, past and present, in which however there is no mention whatever of any of the area’s several minorities—which, in Orwellian style, have become collective unpersons, unpeoples, despite the fact that Transylvania’s history was, for centuries, chiefly their history—of the Germans and Hungarians who built the country’s cities and towns, and created its cultural landscape. Lancranjan’s main purpose in these essays is to whip up patriotic feeling and to underline the dogma of continuity, the 2000-year-old xenophobic struggle against “the foreigner.” His Rumania is a nation state, in which there can be no room for others: “For we are . . . a single people and single country,” indeed, a people whose greatness exceeds the borders of the state, for “if you go toward the West [toward Hungary!] you will meet our people . . . if to the South, as well . . . and to the East, and to the West . . . And here, in Transylvania, too, for we were and we are the original people . . .”¹⁰—and so forth, for 114 pages of preaching about the homeland, patriotism, the one and indivisible Rumanian nation, the one and indivisible Rumanian past and future.

Had Lancranjan stopped here, there would in all likelihood have been no comment from Hungary. But in his main essay, “A Word about Transylvania,” he goes much further in attacking the “foreigner” directly, spouting not only patriotism this time, but also a paranoid fear of, and hatred for, Hungary and Hungarians that remind us of the worst propaganda of the interwar years. Hitler raved like this once, against the Jews.

At first he repeats the dogma again: the Rumanian peasant was “in the beginning a Dacian, then a Roman, and later became a Rumanian in the course of natural continuity, upon which archaeological and linguistic research cast ever new light, without being able to clarify it completely. Not because there is anything mysterious or miraculous about this indubitable continuity, but because it is so real and natural . . . so obvious that it has no need of proof . . .”¹¹ And the minorities had better accept this obvious truth that has no need of proof: “Taking into account that I am living and working in a new, socialist country, in which the national minorities have equal rights—the brotherhood we have sought and are seeking can be realized only if they [the minorities] accept certain vital and real historic facts of ours as self-evident, and not merely pro forma, out of politeness: our constancy and continuity, the permanent majority of Rumanians in Transylvania, and the irreversibility of our great Unification.”¹²

Transylvania has always been Rumanian soil, “where other nationalities immigrated or were brought in as colonists: the Hungarians, the Germans

and the Szekelys.” The colonization was, furthermore, a foreign plot: it was not “limited to Transylvania, but extended to the whole country; its aim was to disperse, to break a more than obvious unity.”¹³ The basic character of the Rumanian people was molded in its long resistance to outside forces. And there are “those who still hope and want Transylvania to fall into foreign hands . . .” Some of the plotters are living among the Rumanians, others just across the borders. “We must not forget that, with regard to Transylvania, there have been and there are revisionist tendencies, that irredentism rears its head from time to time, either nearby or further away, from outside, preaching unity and brotherhood to our faces, while stabbing us in the back.” And while the minorities have been repressed, as they properly should, they are nevertheless ingrates, for “unashamedly they exploit, overtly or covertly, all social and political repression, turning them into banners for their loathsome ends . . .”¹⁴ So much for internal and external appeals for basic human rights for the Transylvanian German and Hungarian minorities.

Though Kádár’s Hungary had been diffident and deferent toward Ceausescu’s Rumania, Lancranjan advances the preposterous claim that the “present situation—in spite of all social and political differences—is reminiscent of the times after World War I and after 1930, when they kept pointing their fingers at Transylvania, without which Hungary could not be ‘great’ . . .”¹⁵ And, without naming him, he twice misquotes János Kádár as having said, in Budapest in 1966, and in Helsinki in 1975, that “The Trianon treaty was an imperialist dictate, which dismembered Hungary and awarded Transylvania to Rumania,” and that “In our century, after the vain sacrifices of World War I, the territory of defeated Hungary was reduced by one-third.”¹⁶ In fact Kádár’s first statement had been aimed largely at Hungary’s former leaders: “The imperialist dictate of Trianon following World War I served as an excuse for the ruling classes to whip up extreme nationalist, chauvinist sentiment, the hatred of neighbouring nations,”¹⁷ while the second reads as follows:

It is our conviction that the primary desire of all European nations is peace. If possible, this is even more true in the case of the Hungarian people, which has lived for centuries at a cross roads of armies, and has spilled immeasurable quantities of its blood in order to survive and to protect its state against the threat of destruction. In our century, after the vain sacrifices of World War I, Hungary, defeated, shrank to one-third of its former territory; in World War II, having bled on the wrong side as a consequence of its rulers’ sins, it lost eight percent of its adult population, and the country became a pile of ruins.¹⁸

Lancranjan’s malice knows no end. He quotes a certain *levente*¹⁹ named Torday from a *brosura*, a pamphlet, of 1940, titled *Without Mercy*: “I won’t

wait for the war to come. I won't wait. I'll wipe out every Vlach [Rumanian] who crosses my path. I'll wipe out every one. There'll be no mercy! By night, I'll put Vlach villages to the torch; I'll put their inhabitants to the sword; I'll poison their wells, and kill even their babies in their cribs."²⁰ What Rumanian can read this and not see red? And Lancranjan implies that this represented an official view, a "part of an integral system of racist propaganda," which still typifies official and unofficial Hungarian sentiments. But while he admits that its author, Dűcsű was a hack writer, Lancranjan does not tell his readers that Torday is a fictitious character in a fourth-rate dime novel written at a time when Hungary was on the brink of war with Rumania,²¹ and knows fully well that they, living in socialist Rumania, cannot even imagine that in Horthy's much maligned Hungary any fool could publish almost anything he pleased.²² Lancranjan attacks, over and over again, Hungarian historiography concerning Transylvania; he insults prominent Transylvanian Hungarian writers, such as Jűzsef Műliusz,²³ for their loyalty to their native land. He refutes the idea, advanced not only by Hungarians in the past, but also by Germans and even Rumanians, that Transylvania could have been the Switzerland of the East, in no uncertain terms: "Transylvania could never become an Eastern Switzerland, because from the most ancient times a single nation has lived, worked, loved and dreamed on both sides of the Carpathians . . . [where] in the natural course of things a definite civilization and a definite nation has come into being: the Daco-Roman, or Dacian, or Rumanian, as it finally came to be known . . ." ²⁴ It was, he suggests, the Rumanians who civilized the Hungarian barbarians who invaded the area, because the Rumanians were Christians long before the Hungarians. According to him, "the minority status of Transylvanian Hungarians did not begin in 1918 . . . but at the time of their coming to Transylvania, where the original population was already in the majority and living a developed, stable social and political life . . ." He refers to alleged anti-Rumanian articles in the contemporary Hungarian press (without naming names or giving titles), articles that have never existed.²⁵ Through and through, Lancranjan twists facts, and heaps insult upon insult—so much so that the work would not be worthy of notice, let alone a reply, were it not for the circumstances of its publication, its reception, and its conclusion, which has found an alarming echo at the highest level of the Rumanian government.

As we have seen, there was opposition to Lancranjan among his colleagues, and perhaps even in certain lower-level political circles. That is, from the standpoint of the minorities, a hopeful sign, for it means that there are—there must be—decent people of good will in some of those positions; it cannot, after all, be imagined that those who opposed the publication were all members of the Hungarian minority, nor that they were really afraid of Hungarian reaction. The sad thing is that the book was published after all,

that those who objected were overruled—and that it was followed by such positive critique in the Rumanian press. Artur Silvestri compares the work with “an ‘icon’ or a ‘bible.’”²⁶ Mihai Ungheanu praises it at length, and goes so far as to label it a rejection of Marxist interpretations of Transylvania’s history; his review is, if anything, even more blatantly anti-Hungarian and abrasive in tone than Lancranjan’s work. He speaks of “aberrations,” “theses of Hungarian revisionism tenaciously preached to this day,” of “danger-signs,” “backward, propagandistic views,” of “a rekindling of a chauvinistic way of thinking.” “Lancranjan proposes that we look upon Transylvania without idealism and prejudices,” he writes. “There are theses that must be rejected fully. Among these is the misleading proposition that Rumania is a multinational state. . . .”²⁷ In an interview, F. Pacurariu, himself a prize winning writer and former Rumanian ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay, and Greece, has this to say about *Cuvint*:

This book is a hymn of gratitude for Transylvania, which is our nation’s hearth and refuge; it is a lyric discovery of our country. It reflects sincere patriotism, an understanding of true Transylvanian reality. This book is a rejection of all those erroneous and tendentious views and opinions which certain people have formed about the Transylvanian situation (past and present).

Some of our friends and non-friends (Blaga would have called them devils and satans), knowing the passion I demonstrate for the past and present problems of which Lancranjan speaks, have told me, without having read the book, that ‘they had heard that there are certain assaults [against some people] to be found in the book.’ I have told them, and I wish to repeat it here, that this is a deeply thought-out work, a book written with a sense of responsibility. It should, therefore, not be judged from hearsay, one needs to meditate properly upon it, because, as all books, this one, too, could be perfected. Had I been asked, I would have suggested that the writer omit certain quotations, and find others, weightier ones, more moving ones, more tragic ones in the interest of fraternal understanding among the peoples living in this region. I say this fully conscious of my responsibility: this is an honest and just book, which is worth reading and discussing openly and honestly . . .²⁸

The essay’s most alarming thesis is that the Hungarian minority in Rumania is somehow responsible for many of the country’s post-war ills. Taking a page from the writings of his spiritual ancestors, the leaders of the Iron Guard, who had viewed modern history in terms of a Jewish plot, Lancranjan blames, *mutatis mutandis*, the Hungarians for the painful upheavals of the transition to the socialist system. Hungarian chauvinists and non-chauvinists (they are all the same) infiltrated and headed the organs of

the Rumanian Party and state, even the *Securitate*. The Rumanians' mistake is to have granted them too much freedom. Thus, they have "more printing (publications and book titles) in their mother tongue than we Rumanians have," he complains, though he admits that this is only "relative to the proportion of the Hungarian population of Rumania." And, he continues hysterically, the more concessions they are given, the more they demand. "What if one day they ask us, in the most democratic manner possible, to pick up our rivers and move from this land, what are we Rumanians going to do then? Will we grant this wish, too, or what are we going to do?"²⁹ It is as if Lancranjan were anticipating the words of his Leader, Nicolae Ceausescu:

We committed a grave error in giving the minorities so much freedom. We have allowed them too much; that is why they have become such nationalists and chauvinists. The minorities endanger our country's independence, sovereignty, and territorial inviolability. We have to change this in the future. I have decided, and I am convinced that you, comrades, will agree with me, that in this regard we must take the most resolute steps against all hostile manifestations, that we must resolutely beat back all their demands.³⁰

There were, to my knowledge, only two responses to *Cuvint* in Hungary: by György Száraz, whom Lancranjan had personally attacked,³¹ and by Pál Köteles. Both essays are lengthy, calm refutations of Lancranjan's most outrageous claims, in which the quotations and summations serve not merely as points to refute, but also—and principally—to familiarize the Hungarian public, which had no access to the original, with the general content and tone of the work. Of the two reviews, that of Száraz is the more detailed; it is polite enough to be almost conciliatory, though it does not lack firmness in its conclusion:

Lancranjan demands unconditional understanding, unconditional respect, and unconditional capitulation of me. I ought not know the names Bethlen and Bocskay, the two Bolyais, Misztótfalusi, or Kőrösi Csoma; I should not know Zágón, the churches with the wooden spires; I should deny that Várad was . . . the city of Ady; I should spell Dózsa: Doja, Erzsébet Szilágyi as Elisabeta Salajan, and refer to Csikszereda as Miercurea Ciuc even when speaking Hungarian . . . This would be the price of his friendship, of his toleration . . . [But] though I call it Maros, the river will still be his Mures, the Aranyos will remain Ariesul to him, and the Szamos Somes. But he is jealous perhaps for my even knowing the names—of villages, of mountains, and of people—he is proud of, and begrudges me the respect I bear for the feelings attached to the names, though he has no use for my

respect. For all that I love the Miorita, the world of the doinas and the ballads, I love the quiet European spirit of his countryman, Lucian Blaga, and the *Mezőség* means to me not only Zsigmond Kemény and András Sütő, but also Dan Pavel, who died so young—and this makes me no less, and no worse a Hungarian.

I'm sorry he cannot understand that.³²

Köteles, in turn—perhaps for having experienced socialist brotherhood first hand in Rumania, which he had succeeded in leaving only recently—is less patient with Lancranjan, calling his work exactly what it is: a collection of propaganda essays.

His fabrications and his labels are an insult to the Hungarian people, and with that [category], to the human dignity of the Hungarians who have shown that they are loyal citizens of Rumania . . . We cannot just dismiss the book. We cannot pretend that we know nothing of it, that we have not heard of it or seen it, that we therefore have nothing to say about the matter. We do!

[Lancranjan] thinks some of us worry unduly about the fate of the Hungarians in Rumania. This book is the very proof that no such worry can be excessive or uncalled-for.³³

Though Száraz, an important member of the Writers' Union and a chief contributor to the influential periodical, *Élet és Irodalom*, was able to have his article published with impunity, Köteles was soon censored for his efforts—not for the Lancranjan review per se, to be sure, rather for publishing some of his essays, the Lancranjan piece among them, abroad, in the Western, emigre press. Upon his return from a lecture tour in the United States and Canada, he was officially silenced, and his contract with a regional journal terminated. He has yet to be published since, in spite of strong domestic and foreign protests in his behalf. For all its liberality, present-day Hungary still does not permit its writers freedom of speech and press in certain questions, and that of the Hungarian minorities has been near the top of the list of taboos for a long time.³⁴ [Editors' note: the situation has changed in Hungary and some of Száraz's writings have appeared in print after this study had been written.]

But no matter how much official Hungary would like to have ignored Rumanian propaganda, it has not been able to do so. In 1986 alone, three more cheap, high-volume anti-Hungarian works left Rumania's presses: a collection of historical documents and two novels, Doru Munteanu's *Black Friday*, and Lancranjan's *Torrid Autumn*.

As could be expected, Lancranjan's 239-page opus is the most vicious of the three. Its plot is a life-and-death struggle between Gyuri, a Hungarian peasant who had fled from the *puszta* to Transylvania and who is an atheist,

a mass murderer and a war criminal, with Ion, a noble, naive, kindly, religious and melancholy Rumanian, whose ancestors, it goes without saying, have tilled that very land from time immemorial. Gyuri's crimes, which Lancranjan renders in naturalistic detail, consist of having repeatedly murdered Rumanians of all kinds: teen-agers, priests, mothers and babies. He had choked them, disemboweled them, machine-gunned them. Although Gyuri had confessed his deeds after the war, he was not brought to justice, because those in charge at the time in Rumania were themselves Hungarians. Now it is up to Ion to take vengeance personally on Gyuri and on his whore of a wife, who sleeps with Rumanians only to mock them later. (Her mother, too, had been a whore, the slut of Hungarian counts.) Gyuri had been trained for his role as mass murderer in Hungary in the 1930s. He could have emigrated to Australia, which is full of Hungarian war criminals, but feels safer in a Rumanian village, because Rumania's laws are lax and its people kind and understanding.

But the primitive framework is merely a vessel for Lancranjan's propaganda. What he had outlined in *Cuvint* he now fleshes out in conversations between the principals and in internal monologues. Among his major ideas: it is not the Hungarian ruling classes alone who are guilty, as the Marxists teach, because *all* Hungarians are potential mass murderers; militarism and a thirst for blood is their nature. There is no way Hungarians can ever wash the blood of innocent Rumanians they have been butchering for centuries from their hands, therefore, there can be no equality between Hungarians and Rumanians, the butchers and the butchered. All Hungarians are perfidious scum, whether they are priests or Communist activists, all their preaching about equality is for the purpose of preventing the Rumanians from taking a just vengeance for the past, now that they could do so. Yet such revenge must be personal, for Rumania is still ruled by foreigners. Neither the Party nor the state can be trusted. The author has Gyuri recall the words of a Comrade Zoltán, an officer of the Rumanian *Securitate*: "We Hungarians can achieve what we could not reach after the First World War. We can use—we must use!—socialism and the rights they have given us to fight for Great and Eternal Hungary, to seize all power here in Transylvania, so that when the opportune moment comes we can unite with the Motherland, for we who live here and those over there are one body and one soul."³⁵

Though Ion decides to be Gyuri's personal prosecutor, judge, jury, and hangman while the two are alone in the mountains,³⁶ he does not carry out his plan. Instead, after nearly two hundred pages of pregnant conversation, Lancranjan's *deus ex machina* intervenes: a storm arises, and Gyuri is struck by lightning. Ion, noble soul that he is after all, saves his life, whereupon another bolt of lightning strikes Ion dead. Gyuri recovers but loses his mind: he imagines he is Árpád, the king of the wild boars.³⁷ In the

end, he is turned over to the police, because people suspect he has murdered Ion. In spite of this clever twist, one has the impression that Lancranjan is really suggesting that it is all right even for private Rumanians to murder Hungarians.

Otherwise, the work seems to reflect the pseudo-religious, mystical-fascistic spirit of the Iron Guard. Lancranjan believes that whatever is Rumanian is holy,³⁸ and that his peasants are still a pristine race that follows the teachings of “ancient kings and popas.”³⁹ Organically one with the soil, the Rumanian peasant should stay on the land, learn the tradition from the village priest and the teacher, who alone may be trusted, and fight against the seductions of the city, of Hungarian clergy, agitators, intellectuals and whores.

It is hard to believe that such a book could be written in the Europe of the 1980s, harder still that it could be issued. Since Ceausescu’s Rumania is not a country in which any fool may publish whatever he pleases, one must conclude that this, and similar works, are indeed “part of an integral system of racist propaganda” sanctioned by the very highest levels of the Rumanian Communist Party.

Hungary, for its part, has not reacted to the new provocations, but the release of a new, three-volume *History of Transylvania*⁴⁰ by the Hungarian Academy of Science in November, 1986, may mark a move toward a tougher stance against the Ceausescu regime. Commissioned in 1976, it is anything but a reply to the propaganda works under discussion: rather, it is a serious scholarly effort not meant for the casual reader, who will hardly want to pay its hefty price of 950 forints. Nor is it an apology aimed at the West: Hungarian in language, it is not immediately accessible to most Western scholars. But its release created quite a stir in Hungary, where Transylvania could hardly be mentioned before; and with the prestige of the Academy, and of Minister of Education Béla Köpeczi as editor-in-chief behind it, it is perceived by many as a long-overdue response to Rumania, whether or not that was original aim of the undertaking.

It is not my task to comment on *History of Transylvania* here, even briefly. The three volumes will stand or fall in the light of competent, objective, scholarly criticism. So far, there has been none of that from the Rumanian side, only vituperative invective. But then what hope can there be for a calm dialogue at present, when Rumania’s leader himself is a true believer in the Daco-Rumanian national-socialist doctrine, which—though it needs no proof, as Lancranjan assures us—not only Hungarian scholarship, but *all* serious scholarship, must question?

In a speech held before a joint meeting of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality of Rumania and of its German equivalent, Nicolae Ceausescu commented on the new history book as follows:

Can anyone change history? Can anyone alter the fact that 2500 years ago Herodotus called the Dacians living in this parts . . . ‘the best and the bravest’ of the Thracians? . . . Can anyone change the fact that Burebista created a unified state, that Decebal improved upon it, and that the Dacians fought the Romans for centuries. . . ? . . . Why deny the existence of another people, [even] though that people has lived here for over 2500 years, and did not retire before the migrating peoples, but fought back, defending its soil and existence?

It is hard to comprehend the reviving of Horthyist, fascist, chauvinist, and among these also racist theses. How could one imagine that a scientific academy would allow the publication of writings and works that are insulting to other peoples? What kind of scholarship is this? Whom does such scholarship serve, if not the most reactionary, imperialist circles?⁴¹

The Hungarians are quite mistaken if they think they can achieve peace, truth, and justice, or even a partial meeting of the minds through rational discussion with the current Rumanian leadership and with the writers and “scholars” that leadership has fostered: for what they are up against is an irrational, pseudo-religious fanaticism. As such, it is anachronistic, and because it is that, it will end soon. It will be ended by the Rumanian people themselves, its most numerous victims, led by those whose love of Rumania is mature enough to blossom without being nourished by the hatred of their neighbours.

Notes

- 1 The uninitiated will find *Transylvania—The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* by John F. Cadzow, Andrew Ludanyi, and Louis J. Elteto, eds. (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1983) an excellent introduction to the overall subject.
- 2 “Válasz Herdernek és Adynak” [An Answer to Herder and Ady], *Magyar Nemzet*, December 22, 1977 and January 1, 1978.
- 3 As might be expected, a few copies were saved and made their way to the West, where the work is available in various pirated editions through Hungarian booksellers, also in English translation.
- 4 Viz. e.g. the article by Mihnea Gheorghiu, President of the Rumanian Academy of Social and Political Sciences, in *Luceafarul*, May 6, 1978, which makes malicious use of the title of a 1946 novel by Illyés, “Hunok Párizsban” [Huns in Paris] for a heading; and the reply by Zsigmond Pál Pach, “A Dunánál, itt élnek kell” [At the Danube you must live] in *Élet és Irodalom*, July 8, 1978. For additional details about this entire “debate,” see Elemér Illyés, *National Minorities in Romania—Change in Transylvania* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1982).
- 5 Dr. Gheorghe I. Bodea and Vasile T. Suciú, *Arhanghelii Cruzimii*. Documentele Continuitatii, (Tirgu Mures: Revista Vatra, Biblioteca de Historie, 1982), p. 5.
- 6 *Scinteia Tineretului*, April 11, 1982, 3.

- 7 Ion Lancranjan, *Cuvint despre Transilvania* (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1982).
- 8 Pál Köteles, "Töprengés egy torzkép előtt," [Meditation upon a Caricature] in *Külön égbolt* [A Firmament Apart] (Calgary: Corvin Publishing, Ltd.), 77–92. Reprinted from *Tiszatáj* (Szeged, Hungary), September, 1982.
- 9 "Nemzetiségi Szemle" [Minority Review] 1982/3, "Egy szó Erdélyről. Ion Lancranjan könyve." [A Word about Transylvania. Ion Lancranjan's book.] Typescript. (Budapest: Állami Gorkij Könyvtár, 1982), p. 1.
- 10 *Cuvint*, p. 80.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 128
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 129
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 17 *Hazafiság és internacionalizmus* [Patriotism and Internationalism] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1968), p. 310. From Kádár's report to the Ninth Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.
- 18 János Kádár's speech at the Helsinki conference, July 31, 1975. *Népszabadság*, August 1, 1975, p. 1.
- 19 Member of a paramilitary youth organization in Hungary, 1928–1944.
- 20 *Cuvint*, p. 133.
- 21 Csaba Dücső, *Nincs kegyelem* (Budapest: Centrum, 1939), 188 pp.
- 22 Titus Popovici accuses a Hungarian emigre organization, the Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Federation, of using a somewhat edited version of Dücső's words in a flyer aimed at inciting anti-Rumanian feeling among Hungarians living in the West. See his article "Módszerek és stílusok a szándékos történelemhamisítás szolgálatában" [Methods and styles in the service of the intentional distortion of history] in the Apr. 2 issue of *A hét* (Bucharest), as translated from *Romania literara* of March 26, 1987. I have not been able to verify that such a document exists, though it may for all that: here, too, any fool can publish almost anything he pleases.
- 23 Méliusz raised a protest against the chauvinism expressed in *Cuvint* with the Rumanian Writers' Union and with the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party. Concurrently, he wrote a review of the work for *Luceafarul*. It was not published; but Lancranjan was allowed to reply to the unpublished critique with a volume, *Vocatia constructiva* (Bucharest, 1983).
- 24 *Cuvint*, p. 136.
- 25 For example, he cites *Magyar Hirlap* of December 25, 1979; there was no such issue. He quotes from *Acta Ethnographica* of April, 1979; there is no such issue either, nor is that journal numbered that way. The passage he quotes is not to be found in the entire 1979 volume. *Cuvint*, p. 163.
- 26 *Flacara*, April 9, 1982, p. 9.
- 27 *Luceafarul*, April 10, 1982, p. 2.
- 28 *Luceafarul*, May 15, 1982, p. 3.
- 29 *Cuvint*, p. 175.
- 30 Speech at the November 9, 1984 conference of the Communist Party of the

Municipality of Bucharest, a preparatory meeting for the 13th Party Congress of November 19–22, 1984. *Hungarian Human Rights Bulletin* (New York) 3 (March, 1985), 11.

- 31 *Cuvint*, p. 182.
- 32 György Száraz, “Egy különös könyvről” [About an odd book], *Valóság* (Budapest) 10, 1982, 105.
- 33 Köteles, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- 34 Stefan Pascu and Stefan Stefanescu, eds. *Jocul periculos al falsificarii istoriei* [The dangerous game of falsifying history] (Bucharest, Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica), 20 lei; Doru Munteanu, *Vinerea neagra* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia), 11.50 lei; and Ion Lancranjan, *Toamna fierbinte* (Bucharest, Editura Militara), 12 lei.
- 35 *Toamna*, p. 50.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 199 *et seq.*
- 37 Árpád is the name of the semi-legendary leader of the Hungarians during their conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 896 a.d.
- 38 *Toamna*, p. 195.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- 40 *Erdély története*, ed. Béla Köpeczi *et al.* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986).
- 41 *Előre* (Bucharest), March 1, 1987.