

SUFFERINGS OF MAGYARS IN RUMANIAN FRONTIER ZONE

BY

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In the Rumanian frontier zone, the area, that is to say, detached from the ethnic unit of the Great Plain of Hungary by the new boundary demarcated in the Peace Edict of Trianon, over *half a million Magyars live in what is practically a solid block*. Of a population of 508,563 souls living in an area of 5230 square kilometres in the *Szatmár-Bihar-Csanád-Arad* frontier-zone alone, 413.104 (81%) are Magyars. These Magyars are being subjected daily to the greatest repression and oppression by the Rumanian military and civil authorities. As is well known, the so-called „*King Carol II*” line of defence was established there. The Rumanians have concentrated a considerable part of their forces in that region, and the soldiers are ruthlessly requisitioning their last loaves of bread from the Magyar inhabitants, for the military command does not make provision for the commissariat of this mobilized army. Besides this, the unfortunate Magyars are obliged to hand over their houses to the soldiers and take refuge themselves in stables and barns. Illegal treatment of this sort is common enough, but only in enemy territory in war-time; we have never yet heard of a country's own army behaving like this to its own citizens in its own territories in times of peace. Moreover, the population is seriously menaced by legal measures jeopardising their most vital interests. A law issued in December, 1938, declares that all persons whose homes are in the military areas, or who possess real estate there, must apply to the competent departments of the Ministries of National Defence and Air Defence *for permission to reside in those districts*. An Ordinance of 3rd August 1939

established a permanent special commission at whose discretion anyone living in the military zone may be required to leave it. Real estate in the military areas may not be sold or leased without permission from the Ministry of National Defence. Every person over 15 years of age living there must, in terms of this Ordinance, possess a certificate of identity with a photograph attached. In practice this means that only people who have been resident in those areas for 20 years and whose names appear in the list of Rumanian citizens receive certificates of identity from the police authorities. Another grievous measure is that the Magyars of the frontier zone are prevented from crossing over to cultivate their farms.

Over and above all this the Rumanian daily newspapers are constantly inciting their readers to hostility against the Magyar inhabitants of the frontier zone. The "ring-leader" is the "Universul" of Bucharest. This daily is not ashamed to call the very numerous autochthonous Magyar population "a foreign element that has filtered in", demanding their immediate transfer to other districts and the expropriation — be it land or buildings — of their property. In one of the rabid articles appearing from day to day in the "Universul" we read that the public-houses owned by Magyars in the frontier zone are the channels through which rumours spread. The Magyar innkeepers tell their customers what the newspapers in Hungary say and what the Hungarian wireless broadcasts. The "Universul" insists that their licences should immediately be taken from them and given to Rumanians. A Cabinet Council meeting held recently at Kolozsvár discussed the Government's intention to settle shopkeepers and tradesmen from the Regat (Old Rumania) in the frontier zone, in order to Rumanianize commerce and industry there. The Rumanian Press informs us that the work of compulsory settlement has already begun, and gives an account of what took place in Óvár, a village in County Szatmár near the Hungarian frontier, as an example of what is being done. A Rumanian newspaper reports, namely, that the Rumanian

authorities ordered a Hungarian farmer of Övár (Oar), Stephen n. Szabó, whose ancestors had lived in the district for centuries, to sell his little farm and house on the frontier to the Rumanian State, that is to say, to a Rumanian peasant from Galat, who actually put in an appearance shortly afterwards, and on the strength of an official document insisted on the Magyar farmer handing over his property.

It would appear that, thanks to the energetic attitude displayed by the Rumanian Press, the authorities have begun in their own peculiar way to "solve" the so-called ethnographic problem in the frontier regions. In addition to this, Rumania's lack of any desire for peace with Hungary has been demonstrated by the inscription visible from a great distance painted on the walls of the newly erected "King Carol II line" facing Hungary which says: — "Not a furrow!" (*Nici o Brazda!*)!

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