

# EPISODE IN THE NATIONALITY HISTORY OF TRANSYLVANIA

(LETTERS PATENT ISSUED BY PRINCESS SUSAN LORÁNTFFY IN RE THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST RUMANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL)

by

*Dr. Stephen Kis de Rugonfalva*

Professor of History in the Debrecen "Stephen Tisza" University of Sciences.

In the Middle Ages Hungary played the role of a sanctuary. The first peaceful settlers to take refuge there were venerable priests and apostles of culture, who were followed in the course of centuries by a long succession of refugees who found life in their native lands intolerable. The Royal Court became the refuge of monarchs exiled from their dominions; a welcome was offered to the victims of deadly political feuds or great elemental disasters and to large masses of peoples (Petchenegs, Cumanians, Balkan peoples) fleeing from the pursuit of their enemies. Although they included also representatives of peoples of Asiatic origin, the majority of the settlers were Europeans, — prior to the Mongol invasion (according to a Papal deed) the noblest peoples of Europe, and after that disaster the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, constituting that majority. After the expulsion of the Turks in 1687 the plains that had been deprived of their Hungarian inhabitants were colonised by a mixed population of Western and Balkan peoples (in particular by Serbs and Rumanians). Seeing that during the whole course of history she had contained representatives of every race in Europe, Hungary was called "*Europe en miniature*" as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was owing to the mingling of races resulting from marriages with the most eminent representatives of various peoples that the nobility of Hungary acquired those qualities which travellers belonging to the noblest foreign peoples (Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, Italians) recognised as being akin to the characteristic traits of their own races.

A respect for foreigners has always been a noteworthy feature of Hungarian history. This attitude is based upon the Instructions addressed to his son by St. Stephen, the first King of Hungary. St. Stephen, when enjoining his son to take all foreigners under his care, points out that every people has customs, weapons and a culture of its own. Variety and strength characterises those States which are inhabited by many races; while

that State is weak and sickly which has only one tongue!!

The teachings of St. Stephen were regarded by his successors on the Hungarian throne as an inviolable political testament and a sacred law. That is why they welcomed all strangers, granting them privileges which were calculated to ensure their material welfare and also to guarantee the maintenance of their ancient customs and their mother tongues. We have data to the effect that they actually and expressly commanded the settlers not to forget their native languages.<sup>1</sup> All they expected of them was that they should be loyal, diligent and useful citizens of the State.

The relation between Hungarians and foreigners is best illustrated by the fact that the latter were called *hospites*, — a term showing that they were placed under the protection of the usages of hospitality.

Nevertheless, there was one people which was not designated by the name *hospes*, probably because the persons belonging to that people filtered into the country as shepherds pasturing their flocks who avoided human habitations and made their way to the uninhabited forests of the hilly regions, and partly also because their low standard of culture did not entitle them to receive so dignified a name. It was not until they had increased in numbers as to dare to commit excesses and thereby give signs of life, that any notice was taken of them. We refer to the Rumanian people.

Their only claim to recognition was that their language resembled Italian. Andrew I. (1290—1301), the last king of the House of Arpád, who had been educated in Venice, when he was in Transylvania took pleasure in visiting the Rumanians and provided for their being assembled on one of the royal domains in Transylvania and

<sup>1</sup> Borchgrave: "*Essai historique sur les Colonies Belges qui s'établissent en Hongrie et en Transylvanie*", 1878.

settled there. The Angevin kings of Italian origin and the Italian nobles who were in their train and obtained princely fortunes in Hungary, deliberately settled these people from the Balkans on their estates, for they found it easier to understand their speech. However, the second generation grew tired of them owing to the fact that there was an end to all security of life and property in all parts where they increased in numbers. Louis the Great was of opinion that they should all be exterminated. But our ancestors were not prevented even by their sad experiences from offering a shelter to the Rumanians fleeing from the Turks; and when the Ottoman hordes decimated the Hungarian inhabitants of Transylvania, Rumanians were settled there in even larger numbers.

They became the objects of special care at the time of the Reformation, when the principles of humanism began to assert themselves in public life too. The Reformers of Transylvania were anxious to extend the benefits of enlightenment also to the uneducated Rumanian masses living in the grasp of dark superstitions. It was the endeavours to that end which brought into being the first books printed in Rumanian. Although the historians of the Rumanian people are fond of emphasizing the great cultural significance of these books, their influence was practically nil. After the failure of the efforts of the Reformers the matter was taken in hand by the zealous Protestant princes of Transylvania. As practical politicians they noticed that the illiteracy of the people and of the clergy was not the only obstacle, but that an equally formidable difficulty was due to the fact that the Rumanian used in ecclesiastical life was barely intelligible to the people at large. So they made a special effort to force the Rumanians to employ in their religious worship their own mother tongue and thereby to accelerate the advance of their national culture.

Prince Gabriel Bethlen (1613—29) appealed direct to their spiritual head, Cyril Patriarch of Constantinople. Unfortunately his letter has not been preserved; but we can gather information enough from the answer of the patriarch, which tells us that, apart from the people living the life of animals, their priests are also so illiterate as to be unable to read or understand or interpret the Scriptures (*"nec legere, multo minus sacra evangelia intelligere et docere valent"*). They were so steeped in superstition that they had no proper religion at all (*"kalugeros popasque valachorum nullam plane habere religionem"*).<sup>2</sup>

Bethlen endeavoured to introduce the Rumanian language into the Rumanian Church. He had religious books — catechisms and prayers — printed in Rumanian; and indeed had the Holy Bible translated into Rumanian. His example was followed by his successor, Prince George Rákóczy II. too, who established the first Rumanian printing press and gave strict orders that the Rumanian language should be used in the Rumanian

churches. Under an Edict issued by him the Rumanian priests had to preach in Rumanian four times a week and to pray in Rumanian every morning and every evening. He had supplications and psalms printed in Rumanian and also issued the Bible which Bethlen had given orders to translate. The intensive intellectual work which he insisted that the Rumanian priests should undertake in imitation of the Protestant Churches was not to the taste of the men accustomed to a life of idleness; and they were still less pleased when the Prince forbade them to practice extortion on the people and to abuse their ignorance. His efforts did not lead to any important results because, whereas Bethlen's endeavours had been watched with tacit goodwill by the enlightened Patriarch Cyril and by Bishop Gennadius, who later became Metropolitan. *But Theodosius, Metropolitan of Bucharest, defended Church Rumanian against Rákóczi's Edicts and strictly forbade the use of popular Rumanian in the liturgy.*<sup>3</sup>

Naturally the power of the Metropolitan was not strong enough to entirely frustrate the endeavours of the Prince, which were fully approved of by the more intelligent elements of the Rumanian population of Transylvania; nevertheless, it is of peculiar interest as illustrating conditions that the Hungarian Prince of Transylvania was compelled to fight with the Rumanian Metropolitan for the rights of the Rumanian tongue. This fact explains why the first records of the Rumanian language and of Rumanian culture are those originating from Transylvania and not those originating from Rumania proper.

That these first records are extremely modest in character, need not cause any surprise; for the backwardness and ignorance from which the Transylvanian princes were compelled veritably by force to deliver the Rumanians of Transylvania, is inconceivable. As late as the end of the rule of Rákóczi the first thing the church visitors had to do was to inquire how much the Rumanian priests knew about the Book of God, — *whether they could repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments and the rules of Church discipline?*

It was Susan Lorántffy, the zealous consort of Rákóczi I. (1630—48), who discovered that the only means to develop the culture of the Rumanian people and to train a more cultured middle class, was to establish a secondary school. She has in mind the foundation of a sort of College such as already existed in Hungary and Transylvania in large numbers through the generosity of zealous princes and magnates for the purpose of propagating Hungarian culture — such as that at Sárospatak of which the Princess herself was patroness and benefactor. When the idea was finally put into practice, the prince was dead; but his Consort enjoyed the jointure of the Fogaras domain, the inhabitants of which were mostly Rumanians. The Princess had the Rumanian school built next to the Fogaras Hungarian school.

<sup>2</sup> See *"Török-Magyar államokmánytár"* (Turkish-Hungarian State Documents), Vol. II., p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> See Pokoly, *"Az erdélyi református egyház története"* (History of the Reformed Church in Transylvania), Vol. II., p. 179.

We have still extant the Letters Patent of the Princess dated from her Castle at Fogaras on April 3rd., 1657, which will for all time be a most precious document of Hungarian history and a valuable record of the service rendered by the Hungarian princess to the cause of Rumanian culture and the Rumanian language, that service being far ahead in time and far in excess of those rendered in this field by the Waywodes of Moldavia and Wallachia.

It will be well to call public attention to the Letters Patent; for that will enable unbiassed foreigners to judge of the manner in which the Hungarian nation has fulfilled its cultural mission.

In illustration of the value of the Letters Patent it should be noted that, though she was absolute mistress of the Fogaras domain, the princess nevertheless communicated the terms of the Letters Patent in advance to the Rumanian *intelligentsia* of the district and did not issue the same until they had approved it.

We now proceed to give the most essential part of the Letters Patent — that containing the school statutes: partly by way of evidence and partly to satisfy the curiosity of persons interested in details:

### Bye-Laws and Status of the Rumanian School

#### I. Of the Site, Buildings and Immunity of the School

The Rumanian School shall stand immediately next the Hungarian school, for the useful purpose of making inspection easier, of teaching the Rumanian pupils Hungarian, of making easier the learning and understanding of Hungarian and Latin writing, and on the other hand of enabling such of the Hungarian pupils as shall be so inclined to learn Rumanian speech and writing.

The Rumanians shall have separate lodgings for masters and their assistants, as well as separate classrooms and courtyards, though there shall be connecting doors enabling them to communicate; they shall be in unity and agreement together, otherwise they shall be punished by their masters according to their conduct.

The Rumanian School shall have the same immunity (privileges) as the Hungarian School.

#### 'II. Of the Rumanian Master

1. He shall be able to write and speak Rumanian well, and shall be a man of real scholarship and recruited from the Hungarian Protestant School.

2. His office and board shall be provided by the lord and chief steward of Fogaras, from the Fogaras ministry or consistory. And he shall also be entirely dependent thereon.

3. He shall first teach the pupils of all ages the Rumanian alphabet in accordance with the letters, and to read true Rumanian writing and in particular the New Testament, Psalter and Catechism printed at Fejérvár. He shall then and meanwhile too teach them to say the *capita catechetica* in Rumanian — viz. the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and to take Baptisms and the Lord's Supper and to learn the rules of Church discipline. In addition he shall teach them to sing in Rumanian as in the churches of Karánsebes and Lugos (writing

the same down in Rumanian letters) the catechism and to write in true Rumanian. The *grammatici* and other *succrescentes* kept in the school in the hope of serving in the church shall be taught the manner of preaching also or more tenderly from the Catechism.

4. He shall teach in all lessons at least as efficiently as the Hungarian master.

5. He shall be on good terms with the Hungarian master, they being both men deserving of respect; and both masters shall maintain friendly relation with their pupils, so that the Rumanians shall not be annoyed or harassed by the Hungarians nor the Hungarians by the Rumanians. In the event of the masters failing to observe this rule, in keeping with the gravity of the offence they shall either be punished by the "magistratus" (board) or shall first be censured by the "consistorium".

6. He shall regularly attend the Rumanian church together with the whole school, in particular on Sundays and holidays, and shall go to funerals if so required, and shall insist on singing being done according to the music used in the churches at Karánsebes and Lugos, himself acting as prelector.

7. He shall translate into Rumanian as soon as possible the usual daily supplications (utilising therefore the assistance of those knowing Rumanian) and shall himself recite the same in the Rumanian church or at least until such time as the Rumanian priest officiating there shall have learned and be able to recite the same.

8. No master shall teach in Rumanian villages until he is able to read and write Rumanian easily and until he is able to sing well and knows the catechism; he shall have to give proof of his ability at the time of the ordinary examinations to the satisfaction of visitors and itinerant inspectors, under pain of a reduction of his salary by judgement of the "magistratus" or by resolution of the "consistorium".

#### III. Of the "Grammatici" and Other "Succrescentes"<sup>1</sup>

1. All the "grammatici" within the jurisdiction of Fogaras shall be required to come from all places to learn in the Fogaras Rumanian school, they being otherwise liable to degradation from their character of "grammatici" to the condition of serfs.

2. They shall above train themselves to the fear of God and shall usually pray privately every morning and evening, saying the supplications for pupils at the end of the Catechism in Rumanian.

3. They shall diligently learn and teach when any child is committed to their charge.

4. Without the leave of their master they shall not take any pupils to themselves.

5. Every evening they shall repeat an ordinary supplication in Rumanian in the school, as is the custom in the Hungarian school; those who fail to do so, shall in default of sufficient cause be fined one piece of money.

6. Those who miss lessons without the leave of their master shall each have a loaf taken from them.

7. Those who on Sundays fail to attend divine service shall be deprived of their allowances, which shall be given to others; those who are next on the list shall give one piece of money; those too who fail to be present at funerals.

8. At funerals the same fees shall be paid to the master and the "grammatici" as to the Hungarian master.

<sup>1</sup> ("Grammatici" = pupils generally; "succrescentes" = pupils preparing to take orders).

9. Any "grammaticus" preparing to take orders — as well as any other pupil — who does not learn in the Fogaras Rumanian school, or does not finish his schooling there, shall not be entitled to be a priest in Fogaras. Any vicar or villages receiving such shall be punished by the "magistratus". Any priest from outside shall also be made a serf; but if he comes immediately to the school to learn, he shall finish his studies there.

10. No priest or master from outside shall be allowed to come in so long as persons qualified for the work are to be found in the Fogaras Rumanian School. Should there be none such there, they shall take someone from the area of Fogaras to prevent any agitator from outside getting among the pupils. Should they act otherwise, the "magistratus" shall expel them and shall in other respects too punish them all — both vicars and villages.

11. The "grammatici" — who shall be well instructed while living in the school — shall be allowed (particularly on Sundays and holidays, though at other times too) to preach in the Fogaras Rumanian church and in the villages, for the sake of practica, though only by leave and agreement of the ordinary priest.

12. Those "grammatici" and other "succrescentes" who have rich parents shall not avail themselves of the benefits provided by the school, unless those parents should out of hatred for enlightenment and the training therein absolutely refuse to feed them, — though only if the pupils in question are of very good behaviour.

#### IV. Of the School Visitors

1. The School Visitors shall be primarily, the Fogaras ministers and 2—3 inspectors from the "consistorium" who know Latin and speak Rumanian well, together with two boyars of good sholarship and two Rumanian preachers.

2. It shall be the duty of these visitors to visit the school conscientiously at least once a month to see that all orders — masters and others — do their duty properly as also how the pupils are being educated in knowledge and how the law is being observed.

3. The said visitors shall also be required to institute two public examinations every year — in the spring two weeks before Easter and in autumn prior to the vintage, invitations to attend these examinations being sent by authority of the chief officers to the educated boyars and Rumanian priests and to other persons deserving of such invitation, that they may see the good education being carried on in the school.

4. Should any of the children or the "succrescentes" for the sake of improving their knowledge desire to be promoted to the Latin school, after having finished their studies in the Rumanian school, by leave and desire of the said visitors and by their decision such as are worthy shall be promoted.

#### V. Of the School-Master's Salary, and of the Sustenance of the "Succrescentes".

The school-master shall receive from us,	
Forty Florins in money	F1 40
Sixteen Cubic Fathoms of Wheat	Cub 16
Twenty-five Gallons of Wine	25
Eighty Gallons of Beer	80
Two Calves	Nro 2
Or in place thereof Four Florins	F1 4
Two Cheeses	Nro 2
Twenty-five Cartloads of Wood	Nro 25
Payment in Money given by Boyars	F1 50

One hen every year. Seeing that each boyar is to pay 50 pieces of money every year, the rest of the money and one hen each shall be allotted to "succrescentes" and poor children not having allowances.

School fees shall be paid by the children of the Rumanians and Greeks of Fogaras and by boyars from outside and of rich peasants, just as in the Hungarian school. No double fees shall be required either of persons outside or of others. The sons of poor people and the "succrescentes" living in the school shall not pay fees.

#### VI. Of the Sustenance of "Alumni"

1. Eight of the best-behaved of the poor "grammatici" living in the school shall annually receive each four loaves a day from our castle without deduction; and the same shall have a prior claim to office as masters and predicators (preachers) respectively.

2. The Rumanian priests shall also give for their sustenance twenty-five pieces of money each and one hen each while the villages in the area of Fogaras shall also give twenty-five pieces of money each.

3. These contributions collected from the boyars, Rumanian priests and villages the manorial justices shall be required to have faithfully administered twice a year — on the occasion of the public examinations referred to above *sub poena totidem summae ab eorundem salario defalcandae*, the chief officer being entitled to confiscate the said salary. In respect of any additional contributions required to make additions to or improvements in the existing buildings or to make changes we reserve to ourselves and to our successors and indeed to all future lords of the Fogaras domain belonging to the legitimate Reformed Church the right to decide.<sup>1</sup>



I here present a single document dating from the days when Transylvania was a Hungarian principality. All we have so far known of the intellectual history of Transylvania was that this province was the first of the States of Europe to incorporate in law the principle of liberty of conscience — a principle which it always observed. In the eighteenth century, during the bitter religious wars which devastated Europe, there were many villages here in Transylvania with inhabitants of various denominations which possessed only one church; and in that one church the clergymen belonging to the various denominations held services in succession according to a pre-arranged plan. From the document printed above we can see that in the principality of Transylvania there cannot have been any bitter racial antagonism either; the princes of that province showed the greatest benevolence in furthering the culture and the spiritual welfare also of the Rumanian newcomers.

And later on in history the goodwill of the Hungarians made it possible for thousands of Rumanian elementary schools and numerous Rumanian secondary schools in Transylvania to develop the racial culture of the Rumanian people, so that the Rumanians of Transylvania

<sup>1</sup> See "Magyar Protestáns Egyháztörténeti Adattár" (Records of History of Hungarian Protestant Church), Vol. VII, pp. 112—16.

were never justified in their complaints of oppression.

All unbiassed Rumanian historians admit that the Rumanian people owe the first beginnings of their national culture to the Hungarians; it is to the Hungarians that the Rumanian language owes its first monuments — the first books printed in Rumanian —, as also the liberation from Slav influences which must eventually have led to their utter slavisation; it is to the Hungarians that they owe both the first products of their vernacular literature and the preservation of their national existence.

In Transylvania today the Rumanian régime — after abolishing the Hungarian university in Kolozsvár and closing in succession a whole series of Hungarian secondary schools with a storied past — has reduced those schools which are still

in existence to a condition of utter incapacity owing to their being deprived of the endowments serving to support them. For the purpose of rumanising the Hungarian children the Rumanian State establishes Rumanian schools in villages inhabited only by Hungarians.

Yet the Hungarians were not under any special obligations; whereas Rumania was allotted Transylvania *on certain well-defined conditions*, such as the obligation to respect the rights of the minorities and to grant *Széklerland autonomy*.

We may safely say that during their rule of a thousand years the Hungarians did not subject the nationalities living under their control to anything like the sufferings and outrages which the Hungarian minority living in Rumania has had to suffer during the last fifteen years.

## P O L I T I C A L M O S A I C

### CONCERNING THE DANUBE VALLEY PROBLEM

The Governments of certain States are taking advantage of Italy being at present occupied with the Abyssinian campaign, to suggest a new solution of the Danube Valley problem without her co-operation, and to attempt to force Austria and Hungary into a political system which would best serve the interests of the Little Entente States. These endeavours were stated undisguisedly during the conversations begun in London after King George's funeral and continued, later on, in Paris.

In the course of these conversations M. Titulescu, Rumania's Foreign Minister, suggested that the much-discussed treaty which is to ensure Austria's independence should be guaranteed by Soviet Russia instead of Italy. This idea of the present controller of Rumania's foreign affairs is in a line with the pro-Soviet policy of which he has recently been an enthusiastic advocate, concerning the usefulness of which however an important section of Rumanian public opinion has its doubts. Were Rumania to become a thoroughfare for the Soviet and a gate for the Soviet's invasion of Europe, the danger of the red flood of Bolshevism overwhelming the whole social system of the country would be great. It is not without good reason that M. Bratianu and his *confrères* so strenuously oppose the conclusion of a treaty between Rumania and Soviet Russia, and that, as is said, King Carol's Russian policy is not in accord with that of his Foreign Minister.

Czecho-Slovakia supports M. Titulescu. Her Premier, M. Hodža, — whose excursions into foreign politics have not met with the approval of those Socialist Parties in the Prague Parliament which were formerly Dr. Beneš's vanguard — is said by unanimous press reports to have emphatically declared on the occasion of his recent visit to Paris, that Soviet Russia would have a great rôle to play in supporting the edifice of Central Europe.

Today, it is no secret that since concluding a treaty with the Soviet in the spring of last year, the Czechs, true to their old traditions, have thrown themselves again into the arms of Russia and of Pan Slavism.

They do not seem to mind that the new banner of Pan Slavism does not bear the double-eagle of the Czars, but the five-pointed star of the Soviet. As may be seen from the memorandum submitted to the League of Nations by the Slovak National Council, a report of the contents of which will be found in another column of this issue, Czecho-Slovakia takes the Soviet's military support so seriously that every preparation is being made to be ready to receive the Russian military planes.

It would be superfluous to explain what a dangerous game Rumania and Czecho-Slovakia are playing when they ally themselves with the Soviet, and think even of giving Russia a rôle in Central Europe as a suggested guarantor of Austria's independence. It is a dangerous game, not only because it may expose their peoples to the horrors of Bolshevism, but also, and to an even greater extent, because it would open the road for the Red Army to Warsaw, Berlin, Budapest, and Vienna. We must not forget that Vienna is only a few kilometres from Dévény — at present in Czech hands —, and if the Soviet aeroplanes and mounted troops reach that place, who is to assure Austria, Switzerland, Italy and even France, that the Russians will not wish to continue their march westwards?

In contrast to her two Little Entente allies Yugoslavia instinctively realizes the danger threatening European civilization from Russia. In the course of the Paris conversations Prince Paul, Regent of Yugoslavia, made a point of drawing the attention of the French statesmen to the risks entailed in Russia's guaranteeing Austria's independence. As the leading Orthodox Slav State now in Europe, Yugoslavia in many respects plays the same rôle in fostering Pravoslav traditions as did the Russia of the Czars, and apart from any reasons of foreign policy, she cannot be expected to move along the same lines as atheistic Moscow, the greatest enemy of the Pravoslav faith. It is not likely that M. Hodža will be able to bring the responsible factors in Yugoslavia to change their attitude in this delicate question.