

ROMANIA: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

ISSUE:

- . The Ceausescu régime's violations of basic human rights are a persistent irritant in relations with all Western powers and Hungary.

BACKGROUND:

- . Romanians are not free to express political opinions critical of the Ceausescu régime, to organize or to demonstrate. Manifestations are ruthlessly suppressed with leaders often losing their jobs and being forcibly relocated.
- . Religious groups not registered with the Romanian state are subject to harassment and seizure of Bibles and other literature.
- . Romanians are not free to emigrate and it is not easy to travel abroad. Contact with foreigners visiting Romania is discouraged or reported to the secret police.
- . The situation is not helped by the economic privations consequent upon economic mismanagement and the régime's drive to repay the entire foreign debt. There are serious shortages of energy and food.
- . Protests about the general conditions in Romania as well as about specific cases of human rights violations are widespread. Hungarian groups in the West are particularly active in this regard.
- . Romania has large Hungarian (ca. 2 million) and German (ca. 200,000) minorities. Both groups complain of increasing attempts at cultural and ethnic assimilation by the Romanian authorities in recent years. Methods include reductions in the availability of schooling and post-secondary education in the minority languages, harassment of religious observances particular to the minorities, and the effects of the rural systematization programme. Hungarians talk of "cultural genocide".
- . The rural systematization programme, intended to reduce the number of villages in the Romanian countryside by about 6-7,000 by the year 2000, is not new, but received increased emphasis from the Romanian authorities in 1988. Although this project is moving more slowly than expected, many rural villages have already been destroyed and their inhabitants moved to other locations.