

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In your January/February issue, you published an article ("Hungarian minority in Romania") by Paul Pilisi on which I must, as a Romanian of Transylvania, cast some light. This article is superposable on one in the *Express* of October 28, 1978, by Edouard Bailby, except for certain passages that apparently did not find favour with Mr Pilisi. The following excerpt from one such passage, notably absent from the Pilisi article, says a great deal about the "restrictions and ethno-cultural genocide" that Pilisi evokes:

For 500 km inside the Romanian border [Mr. Bailey was coming from Hungary to Romania], the traveller seems effectively still to be living in Magyar country. In the streets people speak Hungarian. In the shops, labels are written in Hungarian as well as Romanian. On news-stands, newspapers in Hungarian; in libraries, whole sections of Magyar literature. In Ghiogheni, in Mercuea Ciuc, in Sfântu Gheorge, one feels nothing that conveys a sense of discrimination or the least tension.

The Romanian names of the villages and of the Orthodox churches are the only things that seem to proclaim the influence and hold of Bucharest. On Romanian territory "these are the self-same things that are unacceptable to the national Hungarian poet, Gyula Illyes".

This picture of that part of Transylvania, with all the cities he mentions and for which he fears genocide, should normally reassure Pilisi. Instead it exasperates him, and he uses this so-called genocide as a pretext for reopening an ancient historical debate to try to convince us that Transylvania belongs to the Hungarians. I admit that generations of Hungarians were cradled there; but it was not their cradle, it was mine.

There are 1,700,000 (not 1,900,000) Hungarians in Romania, for the most part established in Transylvania and representing 7.8 per cent of the population of Romania. They account for 23 per cent of the population of Transylvania, compared to the 4,000,000 Romanians who account for some 60 per cent of the Transylvanian population. These statistics are close to those of 1910, when the area was still under Hungarian domination. At that time, the Romanians formed 50 per cent and the Hungarians 25 per cent of the population.

It was on December 1, 1918, that Transylvania, acting in accordance with the principle of auto-determination demanded by President Wilson at Versailles, linked itself to Romania of its own free will, as expressed by the quasi-totality of the Romanian majority in Transylvania. The quotation from Illyes ("The population of Cluj, the capital of Transylvania, was totally Magyar when I visited there in 1930") is doubtful to me. But, if it is true, he simply admits and confirms the policy of tolerance practised by Romania between the two World Wars.

In any case, Mr Pilisi knows very well that, under Hungarian domination, the Romanians of Transylvania did not have the right to inhabit the towns and cities; today the Hungarians account for 40 per cent of the population of Cluj. As to the other cities, already mentioned, with heavy Hungarian populations, I remember the half of Transylvania given to Hungary by the Dictate of Vienne of 1940 as repayment for joining the entourage of the Berlin-Rome axis as early as 1936. During the 1940-44 occupation, the Romanians (especially those in the towns) were once again terrorized and massacred and driven back to their mother country. Now it seems that Janos Kadar, fawning on the new Russian masters, wishes to reissue the Dictate.

This part of Transylvania was reintegrated into Romania in 1945. However, because of the complicity of numerous Hungarian Communists, the then government in Bucharest accorded them an autonomous zone, in the very heart of Transylvania, that lasted until 1967, when Mr Ceausescu put an end to it.

If today the Hungarians of Transylvania can travel to Hungary every two years, they should consider themselves lucky. For a Romanian it can take a lifetime to get an exit visa. Men and documents, collectivities or individuals, Hungarians or Romanians, all are at the mercy of the *Arbitrar*. They are victims of the restrictions that are part of the very nature of the ruling regime, and not of a policy of ethno-cultural genocide for the Hungarian minority of Romania.