

Cluj Napoca 13 ian. 1990

A group of brethren from Romania - Europe

“To those who, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ - and through the pen of Laodicean servant - have been given a faith as precious as ours. May grace and peace be yours in full measure through your knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord” 2 Pet. 1:1,2; Matt. 24:45.

As one can see, we are of those who search the Holy Scriptures in the light of the presence of the Lord as it is shown by the faithful and wise servant along the six books of Studies in the Scriptures.

We are here in Romania several thousands of brethren who, in difficult conditions, kept the oneness of faith. We are sorry that we didn't get in touch with you so far. There are many reasons for that. Now, when our country, through the mercy of the Lord, has gotten off the communist bondage and stepped the way of freedom and democracy, we have the marvelous opportunity to try to meet together and build in the most holy faith.

In this connection, we'd like you to come here and share your long and nice experience in the service of the Lord. We'd be glad to have you here in spring.

We tell you of the books we have with the special request to bring or send us what we miss. They are: The six books of Studies, two versions of Vol. 7, Manna, Tabernacle, Foto Drama, What say the Scriptures about hell and four of seven volumes of Towers, namely: 2, 5, 6 and 7. We need the whole set of Towers and, if you have some others, too. Here in Romania there wasn't issued any literature (for us since 1947).

Many are the problems we want to discuss with you so we hope we'll do it soon, if the Lord's will is.

For further information you can ring up at 951-77398 after 9 o'clock PM- romanian time.

If you want to write, the address is this:

PRECUP ELISABETA  
CALEA FLORESTI 60  
SC. IV Ap. 114  
3400 CLUJ-NAPOCA  
ROMANIA

Thank you in advance and greet you with:

Jude 3; Manna 27, 30 Apr. and 1, 2 May

God be with you!

Bluj Napoca 13 Jan. 1990

JAN 25 1990

PK9 all our books  
sermons  
2/6/90

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# *West Meets East in Romania*



*"For wheresoever the carcass is,  
there will the eagles be gathered together."  
Matthew 24:28*

August 1990



Reception by waiting brethren in Cluj.

Travel group of thirteen brethren who visited Poland and Romania: Brs. Carl Hagensick, Dan Larson, Abel (pronounced Avel) Lupsor, and Allen Springer; Srs. Marge Hagensick, Linda Larson, Cristina Lupsor, Herlinda Lupsor, Tiffany Nguyen, Margie Parkinson, Tammy Thomassen, April Zandler, and Gloria Zandler.

# West Meets East in Romania



*The following are excerpts from a compilation of notes taken by several brethren. They were among the group of thirteen who travelled together to Poland and Romania.*

Since learning of the existence of the brethren in Romania, we have prayed for and planned for this visit. Each one has different questions but most of us wonder: What will the brethren here be like after so many years of isolation from brethren in the rest of the world? Will they still have Present Truth as we know it, or will various influences, internal or external, have altered their understanding? What experiences have they had during these past four decades and what are their circumstances now? Are the reports we have heard of as many as two thousand brethren possibly true?

We left Poland only yesterday and have since travelled through a beautiful, mountainous region of Czechoslovakia, and virtually rolled down into Hungary. This part of the trip is not as scenic—endless kilometers of flat land. Finally, we can see some hills on the horizon. We make our final turn Eastward, and suddenly:

The border entrance to Romania there's Romania!

We are through the border and the first thing that greets us is pollution: smokestacks regurgitating orange poison. The air is thick enough that you can feel its effect on your lungs. In contrast to Hungary, Romania has the least stable and poorest economy of the former Communist countries.

Pollution is not the only thing that greets us, however. Wherever we go the children come out onto the roads and wave eagerly at us, sometimes the adults join them. Their new freedom is still somewhat of a novelty, and visitors from the West seem to symbolize that freedom.

Stopping for a late Lunch at a "Mom & Pop" type restaurant, we are immediately accosted by Gypsy ragamuffins begging for shampoo and pencils. From the van Sr. Marge Hagensick observes one of the boys climb up the side of a high open truck parked in front of us—he takes something, passes it to another boy and they run away.

The group is seated under the canopy in the little courtyard that adjoins the restaurant. There is no menu to select from. Several attempts are made to order based on what we see others eating. The waitress disappears into the kitchen, only to reappear a few moments later to inform us they do not have enough of what we ordered to feed our entire group. After several such attempts we are able to place our order: steak and potatoes. The food is good, but the



A touching expression of gratitude

fat content is high and the variety limited. If this is true at a restaurant what are the conditions elsewhere? Everywhere we look the poverty is extreme. The adults we see, whether in this restaurant, or those on the street, all seem to be care-worn and weary.



Sr. Elisabeta Precup (Sr. Beti) - Translator

Back in the vans we continue our journey toward Cluj. Every little village is reminiscent of Anatevka in "Fiddler on the Roof": people of all ages going about their work with hand-hewn wooden rakes and pitch forks over their shoulders. We weave in and out around trucks; ox-carts and horse-carts; people and children (including babies); and flocks of geese in the road.

### City of Cluj

It is Friday, August 3rd, about 6:30 in the evening. We can see the now familiar apartment complexes looming in the distance (dehumanizing "storage boxes" typical of all former Communist countries). Our directions are to stop near the first complex and wait for the brethren to see us. We pull off the road and wait for contact, but there is none, so we go a little farther down the street. Now we see several brethren on the other side of this rather broad thoroughfare waving frantically at us. We don't know

how long they have been waiting for us, probably several hours. We tried to phone ahead, but our calls never got through. A group of brethren quickly assemble in the street around our two vans and greet us with love and obvious excitement.

We are attracting a lot of attention from the people passing by. One woman (not a sister) stops and asks if we are from the West. She invites us to come to her home. Finally Sr. Elisabeta Precup appears and we are ushered across the street and up to her third floor apartment. As we enter the door, we know we are home: on one wall is pinned a copy of the Divine Architect tract from Columbus, Indiana, along with other Truth literature. Elsewhere there are Volumes, Reprints, a Diaglott, and pictures of Br. Russell. We are in a very different place—a third of the way around the world—but the **Truth** is the same Truth as in America.

A wonderful meal is waiting for us. We are served fish egg salad (really, it is very good!), egg plant salad, cucumbers and tomatoes, seasoned cheese, bread and smoked trout. Just as some of the brethren are finishing up, we find out that this is not the main course. Now come the plates of chicken, beef and potatoes. As we are eating, brethren continue to arrive just to see and greet us. As we eat, they sing hymns to us. After the meal we have the privilege of meeting them—one after another—about 40 of us in a room about 12' x 12'.

It is now 9 o'clock and we begin to disperse to various homes depending on what languages we speak. Two will have the special privilege of staying with Sr. Elisabeta (henceforth to be referred to by her nickname, Sr. Beti). She, as it turns out, speaks nearly perfect English and will be

our principal translator for the balance of our stay.

With a pocket tape recorder at the ready, a detailed account of the brethren's experiences and her own life begins. She is unmarried, one of seven children. Most of her life, although her mother had the Truth she didn't accept it, but after her mother's death she realized that nothing else could satisfy. She con-



Close, warm fellowship at Cluj.

secrated in 1984. She has suffered some persecution in the form of mocking, but only rejoices in such opportunities.

During Ceaucescu's regime those designated "leaders" among the brethren were the targets of special persecution. Because of this, the brothers in the ecclesias have taken turns leading the studies and conducting ecclesia affairs. Since the brethren's visit in April, the ecclesias have initiated a study of the Organization of the New Creation chapter in Volume Six and plan to implement those guidelines in the near future. The brethren here are anxious to know and do the Lord's will and are interested in how the brethren in the rest of the world fare and function.

This conversation has lasted nearly two hours, and it is time to prepare for the night's rest. Hot running water is a precious commodity in most of Eastern Europe it seems. Any bathing here has to take place within certain set hours. The little bit of hot water that is available in most apartment buildings is turned off in the evening and not turned on again until

sometime the next day. It has been a very long, but a very wonderful first day in Romania.

### Rough Road to Picnic

It is now Saturday, August 4th, and we are going to the mountains for a picnic. Of nearly 100 brethren in the Cluj ecclesia there are only five vehicles. We squeeze as many as possible into the vans and cars and start our 15 km trek up the mountain near the River Someșu Cald. Several stops are made along the way to gather with some of the brethren from the outlying ecclesias near Cluj. We make one more stop before heading down a dusty, twisting dirt road that rims a small creek. There is a very narrow dirt path that leads off to one side of the road. As the lead car disappears into the opening there is some question as to whether the vans will even fit. They do—barely. A little farther down the path we pull off and park the vehicles.

There is much searching for a suitable site, but finally we hike up the road, down over large boulders, across a creek on moss-covered stones, and up a steep, slippery incline to a grassy slope. The trip is well worth the effort. We are now in a large open field surrounded on every side by beautiful tree-covered mountains that form a natural cathedral.

An abundant variety of food seems to appear out of nowhere. Each family has brought its contribution to the picnic. What we thought were book bags are actually filled with an assortment of breads, fish, vegetables, pates, spreads, pork, chicken, roasted fat (that's right—roasted fat), fruit and cake.

Some of the younger brethren start to sing hymns. The Romanians love to sing. They seem to know most of the hymns "by heart". Now some of the older ones join in. This is truly making melody before the Lord.

All the brethren, who have been sitting on blankets on the ground, stand up for the opening prayer.

Here they stand during all prayers, including grace at meals, feeling that to sit is to please the body. They also hold their hands up near their chins, because they believe this to be Scriptural.

### First Question Meeting

It has been decided that we will have a question meeting. Sr. Beti translates the questions and Br. Carl calls on different members of our group to give an answer. With each question they ask we gain a deeper insight into their knowledge of the Truth and their love for the Lord. It is hard to describe how thrilling this is. All the questions in our minds at the start of this trip (about their understanding of Present Truth) are quickly being resolved. We cannot understand the language, but we can see the expressions on their faces, we can see their reactions to our answers, and we can hear the tone of their voices as they discuss among themselves our comments. Some of their exchanges are very lively at times! The translation from Sr. Beti confirms what our ears and eyes are telling us: these brethren know the Truth, they have studied the Volumes, and



Proofreading Romanian Truth writings that were translated during oppression.

they have much to share with us.

The first question has to do with the parable of the dragnet. The discussion brings out many aspects of the chronology and the Harvest. It seems the Romanian brethren are probing to see if we understand Present Truth. This is exciting, because in the process they have demonstrated to us most clearly that they do.

The second question concerns Jesus cleansing the temple of the money-changers. The brother wants to know the significance of this act and if there is any parallel at this end of the age. Our answers are somewhat general in nature, but the Romanian brother relates a specific application that identifies each of the three cords. He cites Vol. 3, chapter 6 (page 189) as his source. None of us remember read-



ing this. The Romanians seem surprised that we are not familiar with the reference. A quick check of Volume Three verifies the accuracy of the citation.

"Is the time for witnessing to the Truth now due?" This question is a very pertinent one for the Romanians. There is considerable discussion and several more related questions. One thing is clear: the Romanians did their best to witness to the Truth even during difficult times, they will continue to witness now.

The Romanian brethren are prepared to continue indefinitely. Well over an hour and a half has passed, but now a halt must be called to the meeting so we can prepare for our return trip. All 58 of us squeeze back into our vehicles and start our journey back to Cluj.



Group of brethren at picnic – Avel standing

We make an unscheduled stop by the dam. One of the sisters is feeling ill with motion-sickness.

Back in the van, we're ready to go, when a soldier with a rifle slung over his shoulder walks up to us and smiles through the window. We smile back. He asks us if we have any cigarettes. We offer him some peanuts. This sort of thing seems to happen every time we stop—people cluster around us to see if we have anything to sell. It seems that foreigners frequently come into Romania with items for sale on the black market. Our West German license plates are a sort of signal. At first we thought the people were begging, until one young man showed us a fistful of

coins. He was pleading with us to sell him a pencil. How we wish we had known some of the conditions here in advance. We all packed light to make room for books and literature for the Romanian brethren, so we have very few extra things to give away.

This sort of experience, in a very small way, at least, brings to mind

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*"...in prison...he memorized the Third Volume."*

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how Jesus must have felt as he walked the streets of Jerusalem and Judea. If we did not have the Kingdom hope, viewing the plight of our fellow man would be an unbearable experience.

We are back in Cluj and tomorrow we will assemble at the normal meeting place—a local movie theatre. It has been little more than 24 hours since we arrived, but we are beginning to get better acquainted with our hosts and their way of life in this land. Those of us who are in homes where a common language is spoken are able to have some truly precious moments of fellowship. The Lord has overruled the composition of our group as the languages represented among us permit several levels of translation between us and the Romanians. We are surprised at how many here are trying to learn English. Several in Cluj can communicate in our language sufficiently to make conversation. One sister tells us why. She says: "I want to learn English so I can read everything Br. Russell wrote."

Sr. Beti's sister, Jana, who isn't in the Truth, is helping her serve us because Sr. Beti is recovering from a break in her wrist. Sr. Beti is very grateful for her broken wrist, because it has allowed her to be with us instead of at work.

It is Sunday morning and the sisters have remembered to take off their earrings for the meeting. The brothers and sisters here wear no jewelry, not even wedding bands.

Early in the morning, at Sr. Beti's, a sister from one of the villages, Sr. Anuta, arrives before the brethren are even awake. She is, according to Sr. Beti, an excellent student. She brings a Third Volume to us, caressing its pages and pointing out her favorite passages. We don't have to understand Romanian to know how much she loves this book, and that the Pyramid is her favorite chapter. Her husband spent 6 years in prison for the Truth's sake and while there he memorized the Third Volume. She looks like a typical Romanian peasant—careworn. She is dressed in a royal blue polyester dress, a thick green sweater, buttoned, a heavy brown fleece vest, knit leggings, sturdy shoes and a scarf tied around her head (and it is hot today). Her face is leathery and lined and her stained and scarred hands look weary. But her eyes! They just shine as she asks questions about the Scriptures or examines the books Sr. Beti was given, like a child with a new toy.

The revolution is not over yet, so our vans have to be safely hidden during the night. One is kept in the driveway of Br. Vasilae and Sr. Maria Intea's home, on the outer edge of the city. Another is kept at the home of Br. and Sr. Chiorean. Most of the homes have a sort of courtyard surrounding them. Inside a large, heavy, front gate is a long driveway, usually running alongside the house. In the back there is always a barn or outbuilding of some sort, and there is invariably a large vegetable garden and many animals in the backyard. In a country where technology is almost a hundred years behind the West, and where food is scarce, a lawn as we know it in America would be unthinkable. Besides, there are no lawn mowers in Romania.



Hall too small - capacity 450

### Hall for 450 Too Small

As the morning progresses, one of the vans is used to collect brethren from around the city to transport them to the meeting. The normal Sunday meeting attendance would be around one hundred. The theater has seating capacity for about 450, but Sr. Beti has warned us that it might be a little crowded today.

As we enter the hall the scene almost defies belief. Brethren from all over Romania have come to see us. Many of them have travelled great distances, mostly without cars. And Sr. Beti says the trains are very, very slow. Some of them must have travelled all night. We slowly make our way through the crowded aisle to the stage. Hundreds of brethren fill the room. Every seat is taken, and every square foot of space is packed beyond safe limits. Some of these brethren have been waiting long, but doing so patiently, in a crowded, hot, auditorium. Outside, more of our group, and more Romanians, arrive. Inside and outside there seems to be some confusion. One of the brothers takes the microphone and makes an announcement. Suddenly, all of the brethren stand up and start to leave the building. We are ushered outside and told we are going to the Cultural Arts Center, about two miles away. Outside hundreds of brethren walk rapidly down the street to the new location. Imagine obtaining another facility on the spur of the moment, and then moving such a large group *en masse!* Such a thing

would be impossible back home.

### A Throng Assembled

It is less than an hour since we left the theatre. We are now in a hall that seats 1000 and it is nearly full. There are 700 brethren and 220 public: friends, relatives, co-workers and even people who joined the throng running the

two miles to get here—curious to see what was going on. All the brothers from our group have been seated on the stage, and the sisters have been given seats in the front row.

The brethren here have a different sense of order than we are used to—bringing food to consume during the meeting. They also dress warmer than we. It is quite hot out, but many have on coats, sweaters, shawls, and long sleeves. The babies are extremely overdressed in blankets and woolen hats. One group of sisters is attired in village costume: black embossed satin skirts, white peasant blouses, purple aprons, and, of course, the inevitable babushkas. Sr. Beti says that the village women in Romania find it unthinkable not to cover their hair all the time.

“In this, we are not much different from Asia.”

As each brother gives his discourse, Sr. Beti translates. Between talks, our group is asked to sing for the brethren. There is no intermission, but no one is getting up to leave their seats. Br. Lupsor starts to speak in Romanian. We don't know what he is saying, but whatever it is, it has moved most of the audience to tears.

Br. Carl is the third speaker, still without an intermission. We have been here several hours. He delivers all the love we wanted to have conveyed. Then he tells the brethren about the extent of activity in the rest of the world. Apparently his goal is to encourage the brethren to take advantage of their greater freedom to witness to the Truth as rapidly as possible while there is at least a window of opportunity. With the terribly oppressive conditions that existed here for decades, some of the brethren wondered if perhaps they were in “the dark night”, and with good cause, but now they are re-thinking their positions.

Br. Cornel Brie gives the closing remarks. From what we can decipher, he is giving an impromptu public talk for the 220 unexpected guests! As the meeting ends, the



Hundreds enroute to larger hall.



The new site of meeting - 1000 seats

hall slowly starts to empty. We mentally make comparisons to the days of Br. Russell when meetings must have been very similar to this. As we leave the large auditorium, brethren flock around each of us to touch us, to shake our hands, to stroke our cheeks, to tell us their names and who their family members are. The English language is insufficient to describe our feelings. We realize, humbly, to them we represent all the brethren in the outside world, brethren whom they did not know existed only a few short months ago.

#### Keys Locked in Van

As we prepare to leave, we are faced with another new experience. The keys to the orange van are lying on the front seat, safely behind locked doors. This is no small problem! If there are locksmiths, this is Sunday, and they are not to be found. There is no such thing as the "Yellow Pages," and when a suggestion is made that perhaps the police might help, the brethren look at us incredulously. The brethren are far too zealous in their desire to help. They try to

take the hinges off the doors, remove the windows and gaskets, or pry the doors open with anything available. Our deepening concern is that they may do damage to the rented vehicles (we have no insurance).

Brs. Carl, Dan and Sr. Beti go for help and return with two men. We are told they are "professionals" who just happened to be nearby. This is the fourth vehicle they have "broken into" today. Their technique is very interesting. After several minutes a round of applause goes up. We climb into the vans and head out for our next destination.

#### Sunday Evening Question Meeting

Now we are at the Intea's home, sitting under a grape arbor that is normally a driveway. It will serve as our meeting hall. A very large garden is on one side of us and to the rear, the house is on the other side, and about 80 brethren are sandwiched in between on large wooden planks that serve as benches. It brings to mind the early Church. We think of the Apostle Paul when he travelled throughout parts of Europe.

We are given front row seats and another question meeting is about to begin. This time Br. Carl starts by asking **them** some questions. Many more questions from the



After the public meeting.

Romanian brethren follow. We are amazed as one familiar topic after another comes up. The meeting must finally come to an end because of darkness, not because the brethren are ready to stop.

We have brought many gifts with us, but none is more appreciated than the books and spiritual gifts. The brethren have had no new literature since 1947 and to fill the void have gone to extraordinary means. Many have hand-copied sets of Volumes, hymn books and Mannas. What a labor of love!

In the background are the sounds of pigs and chickens—in the midst of one of the largest cities of Romania.

The next item on the agenda is a meal especially prepared for “the American brethren”. While we are eating, our many hosts express their wishes to buy us gas and fill the vans for us, but because we use unleaded which can only be purchased with government-issued coupons, they are unable to do so. Someone knows of a station that is open for another hour yet this evening where we might be able to purchase gas.

The lines are incredibly long for such a late hour. Sr. Beti goes in to talk to the manager. By a stroke of providence, she happens to know the man. There is no unleaded gas at his station, but he knows of another where we might try—it is only a short distance from Sr. Beti’s apartment. Because unleaded is dispensed from a different set of pumps, we are able to drive right up and fill our tanks without having to wait in line. We feel sorry for all the Romanians who are waiting. Some of them will be here for several hours yet to get gas.

We will be leaving in the morning for Baia Mare, so we take the vans to a well-lit side street where they will be left for the night. As an added measure of protection, a brother who lives nearby will sleep inside one of the vans. Reluctantly, we lock him in for the night and say our good-byes.

It is morning again and Sr. Beti has gone to the police station to

pick up her I.D. The people have something like passports that have to be taken with them even when they leave their own cities. A Hungarian brother has gone all the way to Budapest to secure Austrian transit visas for the brethren who are going with us to Germany.

We have an appointment at the photographer’s at ten to take entry visa photos for Hungary. It’s a good thing that Sr. Beti is leading us. We would never be able to find this little shop in crowded downtown Cluj. There are hordes of people in the streets all day long. We are taken in, one at a time, to the back half which serves as a studio. One of the brethren smiles for the camera and the woman frowns and shakes her head. We are told that it is considered unfair to smile for official photographs—it gives an unfair advantage when the authorities look at them.

#### Baia Mare

Finally we are on our way to Baia Mare. The time passes rapidly and soon we are approaching the city. This area appears to be much more prosperous than Cluj. The name “Baia Mare” means “great mine”. There is much mining of iron, coal, and various mineral de-

posits. We arrive at our first stop and are fed the usual feast at the apartment of Br. Josif and Sr. Elena Dejan. Sr. Elena’s mother and sister live in Los Angeles.

After the refreshments, we are led by car out of the city to the home of one of the brethren. We park our vehicles on the side of the road and follow a path which leads us over a rickety wooden foot bridge to a farm, through the barn, to a grand “meeting hall” between a vineyard and 10’ tall haystacks and beneath plum trees. There are nearly 150 brethren waiting for us, seated on benches made of long wooden planks. We don’t know how long they have been sitting here.

We are told that the meeting will consist of three discourses followed by a question meeting. Br. Carl speaks first. His subject is on prophecy as it applies to Eastern European events. Br. Avel speaks in Romanian again, and once more the tears start to flow. Br. Allen is the final speaker. His subject is “Our Lord’s Second Presence”. There is no intermission and we go straight into the question meeting. At every discourse, and with each question, the brethren have been intensely attentive. As they realize that we believe the same precious



Meeting at Baia Mare



Brethren in village costumes at Sighet meeting.

Truths that mean so much to them, their faces glow; they sit on the edge of their seats; and some are moved to tears. These question meetings have been the highlight of the trip so far.

The Larsons are entertained in the home of a beautiful older sister with a porcelain-like face. Her name is Sr. Rozalia Hurduban. The home must represent true old Romanian style. It's an older apartment building, but unique. There are grape vines growing all around the balcony and it is used as a summer kitchen. The gas stove is out there. In the kitchen is a wood cook stove for winter use. The bathrooms in Romania have old-fashioned pull chains and this one is archaic. The decor is richly cultural. There is no translation here, but sign language communicates the basic needs.

At the apartment of Br. Julian and Sr. Rodica Dragos the brethren



L.toR. Sr. Florica Cap & son, Aurel Cap (husband), Benjamin Chiorean (Florica's brother) and Gheorghii.

receive a special treat: Pepsi Cola! The Lupsors are able to converse with Br. and Sr. Dragos in Romanian. Their son Ciprian, age 13, is learning English in school and he and Br. Allen are trying to communicate. Ciprian is delighted to try out his English on a real American. The laptop computer we brought

with us quickly becomes the center of attention. Wherever we have gone the brethren have been interested in it, not just as a novelty, but because it contains the Bible and the *Studies in the Scriptures*. In this instance the computer serves



Br. Nicolae Zoicas and family - Mechanic who fixed van.

as a means of communication.

We have learned to communicate with the brethren in scriptures. This is helpful when no other means is available. Br. Ioan Neagomir from Cluj slept in the van to protect it again last night. He's done this every night that it had to stay on the street. A young Br. Marcel is here. Our hostess' lovely granddaughter, Dana, is here helping her grandmother with the duties of hospitality. She's 20, looks 15, with a sweet, shy demeanor. Most of the adult brethren look ten to twenty years

older than we would have guessed.

We are delighted to learn that the red van, whose muffler had broken, was repaired early this morning by Br. Nicolae Zoicas, an auto mechanic in whose home the Hagensicks and Sr. Parkinson stayed. When Br. Carl offered him money for the expenses incurred, he declined, but said that Br. Carl could pay his helper. When asked how much, the brother replied "You will have to ask Him" and pointed heavenward.

### Sighet

In our drive over the mountains we take pictures of the houses in the villages. Each is unique with much hand carving, ornate gates, and exquisite tile work. The men here, who are reputed to be quite fierce, wear strange little straw hats.

We stop for an hour or two on a mountain top for a picnic and fellowship. This means in-depth questions. Sr. Viorica Rosca, a computer programmer, serves us and Sr. Florica Cap picks flowers to give us. Sr. Beti takes Br. Dan aside at this point and asks him to suggest to the sisters that they remove their jewelry the whole time we are in the northern part of the

country as the brethren in this section are very conservative. The sisters aren't even permitted to read aloud from the Scriptures in the meetings.

As we come down from the cooler mountain peaks, the heat of the city is more noticeable. We are directed through the streets of Sighet to the home of the Stans. We turn into a gateway and park the vans. Then we are ushered into the backyard which seems more like a farm. Another meal is served us at a long table, while the 170 waiting brethren sing to us. Then another series of discourses and a question meeting begin. The brethren are again seated on long boards and again, there's no intermission, so anxious are they to hear the word of the Lord.



Br. Ioan Huzan and Br. Dan Larson at Russian border.

Sr. Beti is wearying from the extreme concentration put into translating, and the brothers, too, are showing fatigue from serving the spiritual food.

As we sit here, we watch the eyes of the brethren. These are the eagles the Lord spoke of in Matthew 24. Br. Aurel Cap, from Cluj, has been to all of the meetings since our arrival and the fatigue on his face is visible, but he is still leaning forward, eagerly, on the bench, constantly ready with another question, with eyes glowing as he listens to the answers. All of the Romanian brethren are like this. The meeting was to go "no later than 8:00," but it is well past 8:30 before it unofficially breaks up.

Several brethren will stay in the home of Br. Ioan and Sr. Iodora Stan. In 1940, Sighet had about 10 brethren. Now there are about 35 consecrated—45 in all—in this very active class. Br. Stan's mother died when he was 13, the oldest of three children. Then his father left him to work and raise the others.

### Border Guards Confront Brethren

It is now morning and we are having a rather dreadful adventure. Earlier Br. Ioan Huzan came to take Br. Dan, Sr. Gloria and Sr. Linda to the river that edges the

Russian border, only one km away. We Americans wanted to get a few pictures of the bridge blown up by the Germans in 1944 as they retreated and of the smidgen of Russia we could see. Br. Dan is about to take one last shot of the mountains when Sr. Gloria says, "Dan, don't take that picture." He lowers the camera and two young Romanian soldiers, fully armed with sub-machine guns, appear from the direction the camera was pointing. Apparently, we've broken some sort of rule, because they demand that Br. Dan give them his camera. Any thought he had of resisting is banished as one of the soldiers begins to raise his club. What we've done wrong, we can only guess, but wielding their guns, the soldiers are not about to discuss it. Sr. Linda tries to tell the soldiers that we are tourists from America. She is brushed aside and they briskly walk down the river road. Br. Ioan says, "Let them go, don't worry." He checks his wallet for his own documents, and follows after them.

His father leads the three brethren from America back to the Stans', frequently sighing and saying, "Oy, yoy, yoy, yoy." Not only did they feel shocked at being essentially mugged by government employees, but were beginning to be shaken with fear for Br. Ioan. By now they had heard enough stories of political prisoners to be totally distrustful of the whole situation.

Time passes. Finally, Br. Ioan phones. He has

gone directly to the commandant who says the soldiers had no right to confiscate our camera, only the film. But they are nowhere to be found. Two hours later, Br. Ioan arrives. When he is asked about the camera, he replies: "Tomorrow." Oh, well. Tomorrow is too late. We are leaving today. Then he laughs with a twinkle in his eye, "Is joke!" and produces the camera, minus film, from his bag.

### Baia Sprie

Back we go over the mountains—30 km. of extreme hairpin turns, at as rapid a rate as possible, to make up for the morning's delays over the camera. Many are suffering from vertigo by the time we arrive in Baia Sprie for another feast.

Our conversation here includes details of how the secret police arrested many local brethren and sentenced them to 17 - 25 years at



Br. Ioan Neagomir (who slept in van on street) washing brethren's hands.

hard labor, trying to exterminate them. Some had to work in the forests removing venom from poisonous serpents. This was going on as recently as five years ago.

The law forbade meetings without government permission. Almost every Sunday, police were present and took brethren and forced them to pay fines, especially the leaders. Not all the police were bad, though. One told the brethren, "Why do you compromise me by having meetings without lowering your curtains? Lower them so I can tell my superiors that I didn't see you." The brethren were especially nice to neighbors and co-workers so they wouldn't turn them in.

There was a Br. Onisim Filipoi who learned German during WWI. This enabled him to translate and publish a periodical

for the brethren consisting of chapters from Vols. 5 and 6, Reprint articles, articles from the German Herald and other articles written by the Romanian brethren. This was all done at great risk and danger and continued until about 1938.

During WWII, under Hitler's occupation, Br. Vasilae Intea printed a booklet, "What is Truth" for public distribution, and the Manna, with the help of a friend who owned a printing press.

#### Brethren Relate Prison Experiences

On our way back to Cluj, the prison at Gherla, one of the hardest in Romania, is pointed out to us. Ironically, it is painted pink. Brs. Ioan Galis, Cornel Negrea, Augustin Pop, Petre Bote, Lazar

Fodor, Iancu Petrita and Alexandru Mogojan were all imprisoned here. While in prison, Br. Mogojan met a Witness, who was also imprisoned for religious reasons. Br. Mogojan was used by the Lord to bring him into the Truth.

Br. Galis's "crime" had been holding a convention in his home. Br. Cornel Negrea had attended it, and Br. Augustin Pop was a speaker. About 150 brethren were present.



Prison where brethren served, one of the worst in Romania.

When they were nearly finished, a neighbor came to warn them that the police were coming. Just after the meeting was over, four plainclothes "security police" and one uniformed policeman barged in and asked to see their permit to meet. Br. Ioan answered, "We have permission from the Word of God." "I am God here!" was the policeman's retort.

None of the brethren moved. While the authorities were in another room, Br. Ioan told the brethren to quickly hide their books wherever they could, especially in the chimney. A girl was passing the window and they threw some books out to her. She called her mother who took them, but the police saw and arrested them.

The names of all the brethren

present were recorded and they were sent home. The policemen searched the house and found literature thrown under beds, tables and chairs, but not those in the chimney, nor a 1st, 3rd and 5th volume under the only table left standing (where the police had laid their things).

The next day, before Br. Ioan went to work, he took the undiscovered books to a neighbor's home for safe-keeping. It's a good thing he did, since the police came back that day and searched his house once again.

The "case" was under investigation until July. The brethren were asked what were their hopes and they told of Christ's Kingdom. The authorities asked if that included Socialist Romania. Br. Ioan said, "I said nothing about your order; I said only about Christ's

reign." Ultimately, he was required to sign a paper that stated that Romania, too, would come under Christ's control. For this, he, Br. Cornel Negrea and another brother who has since died, were sentenced to 8, 6 and 5 years respectively. They served 4 years and 3 months.

In spite of all they had in common, often the Witnesses would persecute the "Millennialists". Sometimes they would all share pages of the Bible that friends had smuggled inside loaves of bread, and pass them around as "sandwich fillers". Thus, much of the Bible was memorized. But when the brethren's witness efforts had some effect among the J.W.'s, they reminded one another of their great fear of Armageddon, and began to ostracize the Bible Students,

refusing to eat with them or to speak to them. Sometimes, the brethren, when separated from one another, had no one to talk to, and their memorization kept them from losing their minds.

Several of the brethren, among whom were Andre Monenciu, Iancu Petrita, Lazar Fodor and his father, and Petre Bote were forced to harvest reeds in a marshy place in the Danube Delta in 1958. They were there 6 years. Br. Petrita told Sr. Beti that he was sentenced for 20 years for being "against the Communist order" because he was a Bible Student. He was part of a mass arrest made in the night. A Sister Irina was imprisoned for 3 years. Many others were taken, beaten and jailed for shorter periods of time. One sister who was jailed for a month was given no food nor warm clothing and was beaten daily. Her relatives had to come 25 km. daily to bring her clothes and food. She remained in poor health until she died in June of this year.

### *Harassed by Priests*

Around 1938 or so, according to one sister's childhood memory, two or three gendarmes showed up at the funeral of one of the brethren, and began shoving around the coffin which was in the yard. They hit and kicked the brethren. They went into the house and threatened to kill everyone there. Many ran and hid, including the sister who told us this. She hid in the field.

There were many such cases at the instigation of the Greek Orthodox Church in Transylvania, which was under Hungarian rule at that time. Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches both persecuted brethren. About five or six years ago, Br. Vasilae Intea was at a funeral service. Br. Cornel Brie's father was speaking. The priest came and said, "Who authorized you to make such services here?" Br. Vasilae stepped in front of Br. Brie and said to the priest, "Look here! If you want to keep your priest's robe, be quiet, or I'll call

the police." Then the host of the house said, "Please, sir, we shall finish very soon." The service was continued, and nothing happened. The host was not a Bible Student, but the dead person had been.

Many times priests entered meetings and asked: "What are you doing?" The brethren said, "We are studying the Bible." In one such instance, the priest shouted, "This is a book of the devil!" The Orthodox priest's wife came and said, "Dear, why do you say such things? Let them alone and come home." So he left.

What held the brethren together through all the years of persecution was their close adherence to the Volumes.



L.toR.: Brs. R. Cornel Negrea, Ioan Galis, Cornel Brie of Cluj.

### *Brethren's Rights Restored*

Ceausescu came into power in 1965. After the Revolution, only one or two months ago, the brethren's full rights were officially restored to them, and they were given papers saying that they had not committed the crimes for which they were imprisoned. The government of Romania has granted some of them meager monthly financial compensation.

Ceausescu confiscated all typewriters, including Br. Intea's.

After the death of Ceausescu, he learned that all the typewriters had been stored in one place. He went there and was told he could have his back, but would have to search for it, which he did for some time. When he couldn't find his own, they told him to take whichever one he wanted. He took the best one he could find and went right back to work for the Lord.

There has been no persecution since Ceausescu's death. Many have since come to Sr. Beti asking, "What is your faith?" Much has been disclosed about Orthodox and Roman Catholics and Protestants who were informers, paid agents of the government.

### *Back to Germany*

The painful good-byes reach another peak as we arrive back in Cluj. Stopping at the Intea home we find that the brethren have prepared yet another banquet for us. While we are eating, the brethren serenade us with "God Be With You" in Romanian. After many tears and a shared hymn, we again return to our various host homes for a quick night of sleep before two gruelling days of driving to Germany.

The vans were parked near Sr. Viorica's apartment overnight, occupied once again by one of the Romanian brethren. Packing this morning is especially important as we have another five passengers to take with us. Br. Carl goes for gas coupons, but is only able to get 20 liters' worth for each van. We hope we can make it to the Hungarian border. Our Romanian passengers are Br. Ioan Galis, Br. Cornel Negrea, Br. Cornel and Sr. Maria Brie, and, of course, Sr. Beti.

On our way to the border we stopped in a village and Br. Cornel went into the home of some brethren to pick up food that had been packed for the trip. A man living nearby saw us and brought out his wares to sell. It is a common sight to see fine handiwork for sale all along the roadside. At the same time, a sister from the village ran to get her pieces. She "sold"

them to Sr. Herlinda and then promptly gave the money to the Romanian brethren travelling with us so they would have spending money on the trip.

The farther west we go, the more prosperous and "normal" everything seems. Our first stop in Austria is a very nice rest area with a terrace overlooking farmland. All is so comfortable to us and so dazzling to the Romanians. Sr. Maria's emotions run the gamut from delight at all the merchandise in the gift shop to anger at the fact that the Romanians have been working so hard for so little for so long.

It is now five in the morning and we have finally arrived at the hotel in Willingen. There is much confusion as the desk clerk tries to figure out what to do with us. The Romanians are like lost lambs—exhausted, bewildered by the Western environment and the isolation of the language barrier. We collapse for a few hours of sleep before coming downstairs to officially register for the week-long convention.

### *Interview with Romanian Brethren*

The second night of the convention, a special meeting is held with the Romanian brethren. About forty of the English-speaking brethren are present to hear the Romanians describe conditions in their country.

There are about 2000 consecrated in Romania, of all ages. Most come from a family background in the Truth, but quite a few are as a result of witnessing. Less than ten believe the door is closed. The J.W.'s have no influence among the brethren.

There are six classes of Hungarians with a total of 120 brethren that study in the Hungarian language, and they sorely need Volumes. They have only one half of the 4th Volume in Hungarian and, among them, they possess only one 6th Volume.

The brethren are concentrated in the northwest one third of the country. The other two thirds "are in darkness". The new political situation should permit more public witnessing which the brethren consider not only a duty, but a privilege.

The meetings consist of prayer meetings, Volume studies and discourses. Until now, they have not had testimony meetings but they see the value of them and they will be under consideration.

Their plans for the future are to "work as long as it is day." They will translate the discourses for the brethren at home and discuss them in a special meeting. Specifically, they plan to: 1) Organize their meetings along the lines of Volume six. 2) Witness.

In Romanian, they now have the Volumes, the Photodrama, "What Say the Scriptures Concerning Hell?," and *Tabernacle Shadows*. Their greatest needs are in reference to witnessing—advice and the means to print.

\* \* \*

Our group of thirteen is back in America now. Soon the Lupsors will return to Argentina. None of us is the same as when we left for this trip. We are all grateful for the privilege of going. Whether we return to Romania again or not, this experience will have left its deep impression upon our lives.

The following graphic demonstrates the extent of Harvest Truth Bible study aids that are available to our brethren in Romania. Not only they, but the Hungarian brethren as well, have great need of these and other Truth literature available to brethren in the United States.

Of the Romanian translations indicated, only a few copies of these works exist among the 2000 consecrated brethren.

	<i>English</i>	<i>Romanian</i>	<i>Hungarian</i>
<i>Studies in the Scriptures</i>			
1	Yes	Yes	No
2	Yes	Yes	No
3	Yes	Yes	No
4	Yes	Yes	One half of a book
5	Yes	Yes	No
6	Yes	Yes	Yes - one copy
<i>Tabernacle Shadows</i>	Yes	Yes	No
"What Say ... Concerning Hell?"	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Photodrama of Creation</i>	Yes	Yes	No

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