

A few words concerning the book:

"Horthyist-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania, September 1940 - October 1944" by Meridiane Press of Bucharest.

"In December of 1986 I got a call from a colleague at The Toronto Sun newspaper telling me about a book he just received from the Romanian Embassy in Ottawa called "Horthyist-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania, September 1940 - October 1944" by Meridiane Press of Bucharest. The title refers to former Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy and to the fact that in 1940 Hungary was given back northern Transylvania from Romania.

"You should come down and take a look at this," he said.

Apparently, most media outlets and all Members of Parliament got a copy as a sort of Christmas present from the embassy.

And what I saw was a book packed full of statistics and eye-witness accounts about Hungarian troops killing and torturing Romanian civilians during those war years. Most of these episodes were totally unknown to me. And I couldn't corroborate them in any western reference work.

That's not to say that there were no Hungarian atrocities committed by Hungarians against Romanians. There were some, but not many. At least, according to most historians outside of Romania.

But what really caught my eye were the photos. They were pictures of Hungarian soldiers and military police hurting - or killing - other people with the caption saying that this was another Hungarian atrocity against a Romanian. Most of the pictures looked totally fake. Anyway, would people really let photos be taken of themselves caught in the act? Maybe - certainly some Nazis had - but I was getting more and more sceptical.

So I went for an expert opinion. I approached Vern Phillips, a renowned forensic photographer in Toronto. I explained the situation.

"Look," said Phillips. "I'm willing to look at this, but I don't want to get drawn into this Hungarian-Romanian conflict."

"Fair enough," I told him. "I just want to know if these photos are genuine."

I then dropped off the book to him.

A week later the phone rang. It was Phillips.

"Just wanted to let you know I've finished examining the photos."

"And?", I asked?

"Probably most, maybe all are fake. The angles are wrong, pictures are enhanced, you can see that things or people have been super-imposed."

"Would you say that at a press conference?", I asked.

"Yes."

So on Tues., Mar. 24, 1987, the HHRF (Hungarian Human Rights Foundation) called a press conference for 2 p.m. at the Hungarian-Canadian Centre on 840 St. Clair Ave. West in Toronto - the same locale we used for our group's meetings. Organizing it was an Anglo-Saxon PR person who did a great job.

Present was one of Canada's biggest TV networks, Global TV, two of Toronto's three dailies: The Toronto Sun and The Globe and Mail, various radio stations and other smaller media outlets.

And then Phillips presented his results: "Page 4 - photo contrived, page 34 - photo copied out of book, page 63 - bandages appear uniformly fresh, and shadows wrong, the same people were being used in various photos for different time frames", etc.

The Romanian Embassy looked like fools. And at the end of the press conference we announced that we asked Ontario's Attorney-General Ian Scott to lay hate-literature charges against the Romanian Ambassador to Canada - Emilian Rodean - and against the Romanian Embassy's Second Secretary and press attaché, Dumitru Barbulescu, for distributing the anti-Hungarian book.

That night on TV and on radio, and the next day in the papers a lot was made of it.

"HUNGARIANS ASK SCOTT TO CHARGE ROMANIANS" was The Globe and Mail headline.

"HUNGARIANS URGE PROBE OF 'HATE LIT'", cried out The Toronto Sun.

The Romanians layed low. The Sun was able to find Rodean at home. His response was:

"They (the books - ed.) simply tell the truth. The book describes what was done by the Horthyist authorities." 6.

6) Toronto Sun (preview), Mon., Mar. 23, 1987 - by Joanne Lovering

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