

THE JUSTICE OF RUMANIA'S CAUSE

By

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The Justice of Rumania's Cause.

The moral significance of Rumania's intervention in the great war has probably been understood less fully than any other important event which has taken place since August 1914. Even among Rumania's allies, welcome as Rumania's help was to them, and well disposed as they were to give her their help in return, there was lacking adequate knowledge of the vital issues for democracy and freedom at stake in Rumanian lands. Among countries then neutral there was probably even less understanding of the questions at issue. For instance, in one of the foremost papers of the Anglo-Saxon world we find the following passage:—

“ In at least two minor respects they [the terms enunciated in the Allies' Note to President Wilson] are wholly immoral, in that they contemplate the seizure of territory that never belonged to Italy or Roumania in order to pay the bribes that these two eminently sordid Governments exacted as their price for entering the war.”

(*New York World*, Jan. 12.)

“ Wholly immoral ”; “ never belonged to Rumania ”; “ these eminently sordid Governments ”; “ their price for entering the war ”—let us analyse shortly the justice of these remarks in the light of the history of the

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Rumanian race, of Rumania's position to-day and of her future prospects.

THE HISTORICAL RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE RUMANIAN RACE.

What is "Rumania"? Who are the "Rumanians"? So many false and misleading statements have been made by partisan writers about the origins and constitution of the Rumanian race, so often a purely arbitrary and restricted meaning is given to the term "Rumania," that it is worth while to point out clearly the full and proper signification of the two names. Modern "Rumania" is a term of barely 70 years' usage. Formed by the union of the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, in 1859, the kingdom of Rumania includes only a part of the Rumanian race. Over a million Rumans live in the old Moldavian, since 1812 Russian, province of Bessarabia. A quarter of a million inhabit Bukovina, which the Habsburg Empress seized in 1775. Small fragments of the race are to be found in N.E. Serbia, in S.W. Macedonia, and Thessaly. But by far the greater part of "unredeemed" Rumania is still governed by the Hungarian Crown. Hungarian official statistics (1910) give the number of Rumans in Hungary as 2,949,032. This is a minimum estimate. Hungarian census estimates are notoriously "touched up." Rumanian writers show good grounds for the belief that there

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are at least 3,935,120 Rumans in Hungary, and probably considerably more than 4,000,000. Moreover, these Rumans mostly live in a compact mass in contact with the Rumanian kingdom. According to the Hungarian census of 1910 more than five-sixths of the Rumanian population of Hungary lived either in Transilvania—of the 15 Transilvanian counties, eight had a Rumanian majority of 64 to 89 per cent., four a substantial minority of from 35 to 48 per cent., while three (Udvarhely, Csík and Háromszék) were purely Szekler (Magyar)—or in the four adjoining counties of Krassó-Szörény (72·1 per cent.), Szilágy (59·1 per cent.), Arad (57·81 per cent.), and Temes (34 per cent.). Rumania “beyond the Carpathians” is, therefore, a compact country, geographically united with the kingdom.

Unable to deny, while they seek to minimise, the Rumanian majority in Transilvania and the adjoining counties, Hungarian and other anti-Rumanian controversial writers fall back on two main lines of argument:—(1) That the Rumans are intruders of much later date than the Magyars. (2) That there is no “irredentist” problem, and that the non-Magyar nationalities have no reason or wish to be separated from Hungary. The first is a much less important point than the second, and can be more quickly dismissed.

To us modern Europeans and Americans it appears a matter of little import what nation

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has medieval or earlier history on its side in claiming certain territories. But Hungarian writers have laid great stress on the fact that their occupation of Transylvania, the Banat, &c., preceded that of the "Vlach" (or Ruman) population by three or four centuries. There are little or no contemporary records extant, and we are forced to speculate from such evidence as we have. All that is known for certain is that the Magyars did not begin to occupy Transylvania till the 10th century. In the 12th century began the systematic introduction by the Hungarian kings of the Saxon colonists who built up the prosperous communities of Siebenbürgen (Kronstadt, Hermannstadt, Klausenburg, &c.). According to Hungarian contentions, "Vlach shepherds" only began to filter into Transylvania during the Middle Ages (14th and 15th centuries), and are thus "intruders" in Magyar lands. Such a contention, however, does not explain who were the pre-Magyar inhabitants of the province of whose existence, side by side with the invaders, there are plentiful indications. It does not explain the great number of place names of Rumanian origin. Finally, on this theory, it is quite inexplicable how, in spite of oppression and suppression for centuries, the Rumans of Hungary should now be in a great majority in Transylvania and the adjoining counties.

Neither Magyars nor Saxons make nor can make any claim to have been in Transylvania

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before the 10th century. Rightly or wrongly, the Rumans do make this claim very emphatically. Ethnological and linguistic evidence supports the theory that they are in the main a blend of two races—the original Dacian people of Transilvania and Wallachia, whom Trajan conquered at the beginning of the 2nd century, and the Romans and Romanised Thracians and Illyrians who were partly settled there by the Roman emperors as colonists, but to a still larger extent drifted in as traders and settlers. The sole criterion of nationality worth respecting is that of consciousness of a certain origin and tradition. This the Rumans of Hungary possess very strongly. The old Roman names—Traian, Aurelian, Octavian, Titu, Valeriu, Severin, &c.—are frequent amongst them. Almost equal respect is paid to their Dacian ancestry. In his tragedy, "Ovidiu" [the poet Ovid, who was banished to and died at Tomi, near Constantza], the great Rumanian poet, Vasile Alecsandri, insists that Dacia was a worthy foe even for Rome. If history and historical consciousness are appealed to, there is everything to be said for the Rumanian and very little for the Magyar claim.

But let us turn from such academic arguments to contemporary facts. We have seen that in Transilvania and the adjoining counties of Hungary the Rumans form a great majority of the population. During the many centuries of Hungarian rule this majority has been systematically ill-treated and denied its rights. In the princi-

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pality of Transilvania—both in its medieval and its Turkish (1526–1691) period—the Ruman population was denied the civil and religious privileges granted to the dominant Magyar and German population. When in 1691 the Habsburg succeeded the Turk as the suzerain of Transilvania, the Emperor Leopold I granted the principality a diploma guaranteeing the continuance of its distinctive privileges. No proper provision was made, however, to safeguard the Rumanian majority, and the result was growing unrest throughout the 18th century, culminating in the peasant revolt led by Horea in 1784 and the petition called “*Supplex Libellus Valachorum*” laid before the Emperor Leopold II in 1791. Maria Theresa and her sons—Joseph II and Leopold II—were on the whole benevolently disposed to their Rumanian subjects, but they encountered every hindrance to reform in the close corporation of three “nations”—Magyars, Szeklers (racially one with the Magyars), and Germans—who composed the Transilvanian Diet. It was their opposition which prevented Joseph II from raising the Rumanian “nation” to the same status. But there was worse in store. The year 1848 with its universal movement of revolt inspired the Rumans to a great national demonstration at Blaj (Blasendorf). In no sense anti-dynastic, this assembly demanded for the Rumans equal rights with the other “nations” of Transilvania. The Magyars took alarm. The Hungarian Diet had already earlier in the year voted

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at Pressburg the union of Transylvania with Hungary. The Transylvanian Diet was forced by the predominant Magyar element to do likewise, and the Ruman population had no means except by the demonstration just mentioned to record their protest. The Magyar insurrection and its suppression the following year annulled the Act of Union. For a decade, old conditions returned. At last, in 1863, the Transylvanian Diet agreed to the recognition of the Rumans as a "nation." But two years later the same Diet, under extreme pressure from Budapest, overrode the protests of the Saxon and Rumanian representatives and voted union with Hungary. After his defeat by Prussia, Francis Joseph was compelled to agree to this as to other Hungarian demands, and in 1867 the Hungarian Parliament legalised and regulated the union.

The half-century which followed has seen Transylvania under purely Magyar rule. It is true the great Hungarian statesmen, Eötvös and Deák, had favoured a policy of conciliation of the other nationalities, and the Nationalities Law of 1868 provided glowing promises of the fair treatment of the non-Magyar nationalities. Unfortunately most of its promises have been ignored or deliberately broken. Hungarian has not only been made the official language, but is forced on Rumanian schools and churches. The Rumans can secure no teaching of their own language in the State schools, which they are generally obliged to support, and can only keep their language alive

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by maintaining additional Church schools at their own expense. Even these schools the Hungarian Government, especially since Count Apponyi's education laws of 1907, has been engaged in Magyarising. Hardly a voice has been raised among the Magyars in favour of a fairer and saner policy, and in the Hungarian Parliament repeated and unanimous demands have been made for the enforcement of a ruthless policy of Magyarisation in defiance of even the limited privileges accorded the Rumanians by the law of 1868.

Politically, the Rumanians have been almost unrepresented. They have not even enjoyed the restricted franchise accorded to the Magyar population, and the franchise is especially narrow in Transylvania. In Rumanian districts the electoral boundaries are drawn in such a way as to diminish as far as possible the weight of the Rumanian vote. The Rumanian elector finds in many cases that the polls are almost inaccessible to him. Not content with this the Hungarian authorities have resorted to every method of terrorisation and corruption—methods exemplified to the full in the last general elections of 1910,* at which the Hungarian Government pleaded that it “only” employed 194 battalions of infantry and 114 squadrons of cavalry. Cynics may congratulate the Budapest authorities on the decisive victory obtained with these “small”

* Fully described in R. W. Seton-Watson's “Corruption and Reform in Hungary.”

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forces; for only eight representatives of non-Magyar nationality were returned to the House of [413] Representatives, although—according to the Hungarian census of that year there were only 10,050,575 Magyars in Hungary out of a total population [excluding Croatia and Slavonia] of 18,217,918. Exactly *five* members of the Rumanian National Party (and *two* other non-Nationalist Rumanians) were returned, though on a proportional basis there should be at least *sixty-nine* [and as the Hungarian census returns are certainly falsified, nearer *eighty*]. What would the world say if the British Government only allowed *four* Irish Home Rulers instead of eighty-five to sit in the House of Commons? Yet the Rumans form between a sixth and a fifth of the total population of Hungary, whereas the Irish (including Ulster Unionists) are about a tenth of the total population of the British Isles.

The Rumanian National Party has had to face many storms of persecution. Founded in 1881, it from the first pleaded for equal and democratic treatment of all Hungarian subjects, for the execution of existing laws, the use of the Rumanian language in Rumanian districts, the restoration of autonomy to Transylvania, and the introduction if possible of manhood suffrage. Failing to obtain any hearing for their cause, the party in 1892 attempted to petition King Francis Joseph directly. The Hungarian Premier prevented them from obtaining access to the Throne, and the publication of the petition brought down

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Rumanian party under Mangra! *Pesti Hirlap*, of February 14th, coolly informs the Rumans of Hungary that they are not a nationality, but merely Ruman-Magyars, and henceforth must all learn Magyar. So much for the Law of Nationalities of 1868!

RUMANIA AND THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM.

We have seen that there are few better instances of a clear-cut issue between right and wrong, justice and injustice, oligarchic tyranny and democratic aspirations, than between the Magyar rulers and the Ruman oppressed subjects of Eastern Hungary. For decades their liberation has been the dream and hope of their brethren in the Rumanian kingdom. King Charles had hoped to attain their emancipation by friendly agreement with Hungary and Prussia. But his long reign (1866-1914) coincided with the increasing and unabashed persecution of the Rumans of Hungary. The hope of peaceful settlement gradually melted away and every Rumanian was beginning to realise that sooner or later freedom must be won by the sword. The European War offered at last an opportunity which could not be lost. For two years Rumania was forced to wait—not in order, as has been ignorantly stated, to “rush to the succour of the victors”—but for the moment when, her own military arrangements improved, she could shed the blood of

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her sons with *some* hope, though at frightful risk, of delivering her oppressed brethren. Even August 1916 was, as events have proved, too soon. But Rumania has at least played the heroic part of facing great risks and enduring great suffering for an ideal—the union of the Rumanian race and the cause of democratic progress and national freedom.

For the issues at stake were not merely Transylvania, the Banat, Bukovina. With the question of liberating the Rumans of Austria-Hungary and uniting them in a "Great Rumania" was bound up the future of democracy and freedom in Rumania itself. As we have seen, the Rumans of Hungary are socially and politically democrats. They are hard-working, intelligent and keenly alive to and eager for the progress of education and self-governing institutions, for the maintenance of which they have had to pay in money and tears. They are dour because they have had to fight a dominant race, and thrifty because only by thrift could they meet the double charges laid on them by the State and voluntarily undertaken by themselves to maintain their own churches and schools. Their incorporation in the kingdom of Rumania must be—and the fact is universally admitted—a great asset for the cause of progress and democracy.

Political and social conditions in Rumania to-day are by no means perfect, and there are few Rumanians who would not frankly admit the fact. Rumania is politically a very young

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country. The medieval State, in which under Turkish suzerainty the two Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia had remained up till 1830, offered little chance of political education to the bulk of the Rumanian people. The country was ruled, in consultation with two Divans of *boeri* (great landed proprietors), by princes nominated by the Porte for seven years. From 1711-1821 these princes were generally of Constantinopolitan Greek extraction. Many of them were honest and well-intentioned, but the system automatically produced widespread corruption and unjust exploitation of the native inhabitants. Greek ecclesiastical foundations held a great part of the land, and the rest was the property of *boeri*, who held the peasant in a state of villenage, working for them so many days of the year in return for the right to enjoy a small percentage of what was produced. These peasants had no political rights. The revolution of 1848 introduced a new atmosphere of democracy, but the peasants were too uneducated to take advantage of the moment. It was Alexander Cuza, first prince of the United Principalities (1859-1866), who took the first practical steps to alleviate their lot. By arbitrary means he forced on an apathetic legislature laws reforming the land, franchise, and education questions. The Church was largely de-Hellenised and to a large extent expropriated, schools were introduced, and a measure of manhood suffrage was carried. Most important of all, a considerable portion of land

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was given over to the peasants to hold in their own right. To save them from the clutches of usurers and land-grabbers they were forbidden by law to alienate their properties for 50 years. The period was up in 1914, but the European War has temporarily lengthened it.

Out-and-out Liberals have always felt that these reforms were not enough. To begin with, though the suffrage was universal it was not equal. Voters were divided into three colleges on a basis of wealth and education, and illiterate peasants were only allowed to vote through representatives of each village commune. The great peasant population of the country had therefore no adequate means of making its voice heard. Wise and good ruler as the late King Charles was, he inherited from his Prussian blood and upbringing an instinctive dread of democracy, and of the rule of the uneducated masses, and found in the three-college system a parallel to the far more antiquated and less justified three-class system of Prussia. Again the peasants had a legitimate grievance over the land question. As population increased, the land grants of 1864 became more and more strikingly inadequate, and the unrest found expression in the peasants' revolts of 1888 and 1907. It was generally recognised that the situation must be taken in hand before long, but party politics and vested interests postponed a thorough settlement. Only the imminence of intervention in the war prevented a full discussion of the question in the

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parliamentary session of 1916. The war has, however, shown that anomalies that might once be excused can no longer be tolerated. Not only Liberals and Conservative Democrats, but even patriotic Conservatives like the late Nicolae Filipescu assented to the future introduction of equal suffrage, for he knew that with it was bound up the Transylvanian question. On December 22nd last, when the Rumanian Parliament met in Iashi (Jassy), the King emphasised the fact in his speech.

“The peasants should know that they are fighting for national unity in a battle for political and economic freedom. Their valour gives them still stronger rights to the soil they have been defending, and imposes on us more strongly than ever the duty of carrying through when the war is over the agrarian and electoral reforms on the basis of which this representative assembly was elected.” In an address to his troops early in April, the King reaffirmed the promise of “the grant of land and political rights.”

With agrarian and franchise reform is bound up the Jewish question. There are to-day something like 300,000 Jews in Rumania, for the most part in Moldavia. They immigrated there in two big waves—after the Polish partitions (1772–1795) and after the Treaty of Adrianople (1829). Keenly alive to commercial and industrial undertakings, they soon absorbed most of the trade of the principality. Their higher level of education and business talent qualified them to control

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the whole economic life of the country. Add to this that their natural language was German, or Yiddish, and it will be understood that even quite fair-minded Rumanians might well dread and seek to thwart their triumphal progress. The Jews have accordingly been hampered and hindered in their civic life. While they have to serve in the army, they could not obtain commissioned rank in it—an unjustifiable disability to which Jews in the Prussian army are also subjected. They were prevented from entering the legal profession or obtaining any Government post. Heavy restrictions were placed on their residence in the country villages, where formerly they had owned the inns and taverns and acted as middlemen and moneylenders. Above all, in spite of the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin, the Rumanian Government refused to facilitate for Jews the acquisition of citizenship. They could only be naturalised individually by Act of the Rumanian Parliament—a difficult and invidious distinction. Patriotic Rumanian Jews have rightly resented these disabilities. Moderate and thoughtful Rumanian opinion is on their side. There is not the faintest doubt that agrarian and franchise reform will be followed by relief for the Jews. The Iashi correspondent of the *London Morning Post* (April 7) learns “from an authoritative Rumanian source that the Iashi Government proposes to grant full political and civil rights to the Jews.” Rumanian Jews have shed their blood side by side with

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their Christian fellow-countrymen in this war. The Jews of Hungary, whom the Magyars for political reasons have always favoured, must find equal treatment for themselves and their co-racials in the new kingdom of Great Rumania. With the extension of the franchise there will no longer be a danger of the Jewish vote exercising an undue influence, and Rumanian Jews will have a splendid chance of building up the temporarily shattered prosperity of the country. The Rumanian peasant is naturally the most tolerant of men. In Rumania and Rumanian-Hungary Orthodox, Uniat, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Jew, Armenian, Gipsy, Tatar, Turk live contentedly side by side. Moldavia and Dobrogea have served as havens of refuge for the various heretics—Skoptsy and Molokany and other such fanatics—who have in the past found life in the Russian Empire intolerable. Impartial observers—including Jewish observers—have admitted the innate tolerance of the Rumanian peasant. Anti-Jewish legislation in the past has been due pre-eminently to social and political reasons which will no longer obtain in an enlarged and democratised Rumania. The Jew will be admitted to the full privileges of the Rumanian citizen. In return the Rumanian Jews will find it both their privilege and their duty to identify their interests still more fully with those of the country, and rebut for ever natural, if largely unjustified, charges that they are in sympathy

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with Germany rather than with their Rumanian fatherland.

RUMANIA'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION.

The defects in the constitutional and social condition of contemporary Rumania, to which we have alluded, are the defects not of a decadent but of an immature political community. Like Russia, Rumania has not yet fully entered into the European heritage of which barbarian tyranny and lack of connection with the Latin and Anglo-Saxon worlds have so long deprived her. It is a frequent accusation of the press of the Central Powers against Rumania that she is a thoroughly decadent and disunited Power. (It is interesting to remember that down to 1913 German writers were accustomed to point with pride to Rumania as a splendidly organised State on the Prussian model, with its large German community and flourishing German schools.) The Bulgarian press is proud of contrasting the free, democratic Bulgarian nation—the foreign policy of which recent events have shown to be entirely in the hands of its foreign Tsar and his nominees—with the Rumanian, composed as it is of selfish and corrupt boyars and an oppressed and unenlightened peasantry. The Hungarian Socialist organ, *Népszava*, has repeatedly declaimed against the medievalism and feudalism and Byzantinism of Rumanian public life, and encouraged the Magyar and

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non-Magyar masses to forget their own grievances and vent their enthusiasm against absolutism on the public foe. Not very long ago the *Frankfurter Zeitung* wrote a highly-coloured picture of the deplorable conditions in Rumania, and represented the German conquerors as liberators and apostles of freedom. We have seen how much and how little justification there is for charges, which, even if justified, it would ill become Rumania's enemies to make. Rumanian political and social life is ultra-modern if compared with the reactionarism and oligarchism which obtain in Hungary. As for Prussia—in Rumania as in Russia, Prussia's best, if not her only, friends, were to be found among the very boyars and exploiters of the people whom she so self-righteously abuses. It is true that German capital and German science have powerfully helped in the development of modern Rumania—not out of altruism, but as a good commercial speculation. But what sympathy or help has Germany given to the growth of democratic feeling and cultural development there? It is from France and Italy that Rumanians have drawn their political and spiritual inspiration. From Berlin and Vienna they received little but trade wares, political loans, and diplomatic instructions.

In Rumania's fight for freedom the economic side is not unimportant. Just as in Italy, just as in Russia, so in Rumania, German economic expansion, set in motion in the '80's by Bismarck,

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passed gradually into political control of the country. Not only the trade but the finances of Rumania soon became predominantly the sphere of German banks such as the Deutsche Bank and the Disconto Gesellschaft. The Entente Powers apathetically allowed Germany to enmesh Rumania financially, and with German finance goes hand-in-hand German foreign policy. A German victory or a "drawn" war would mean the complete political and economic subjection of Rumania to the Central Powers.

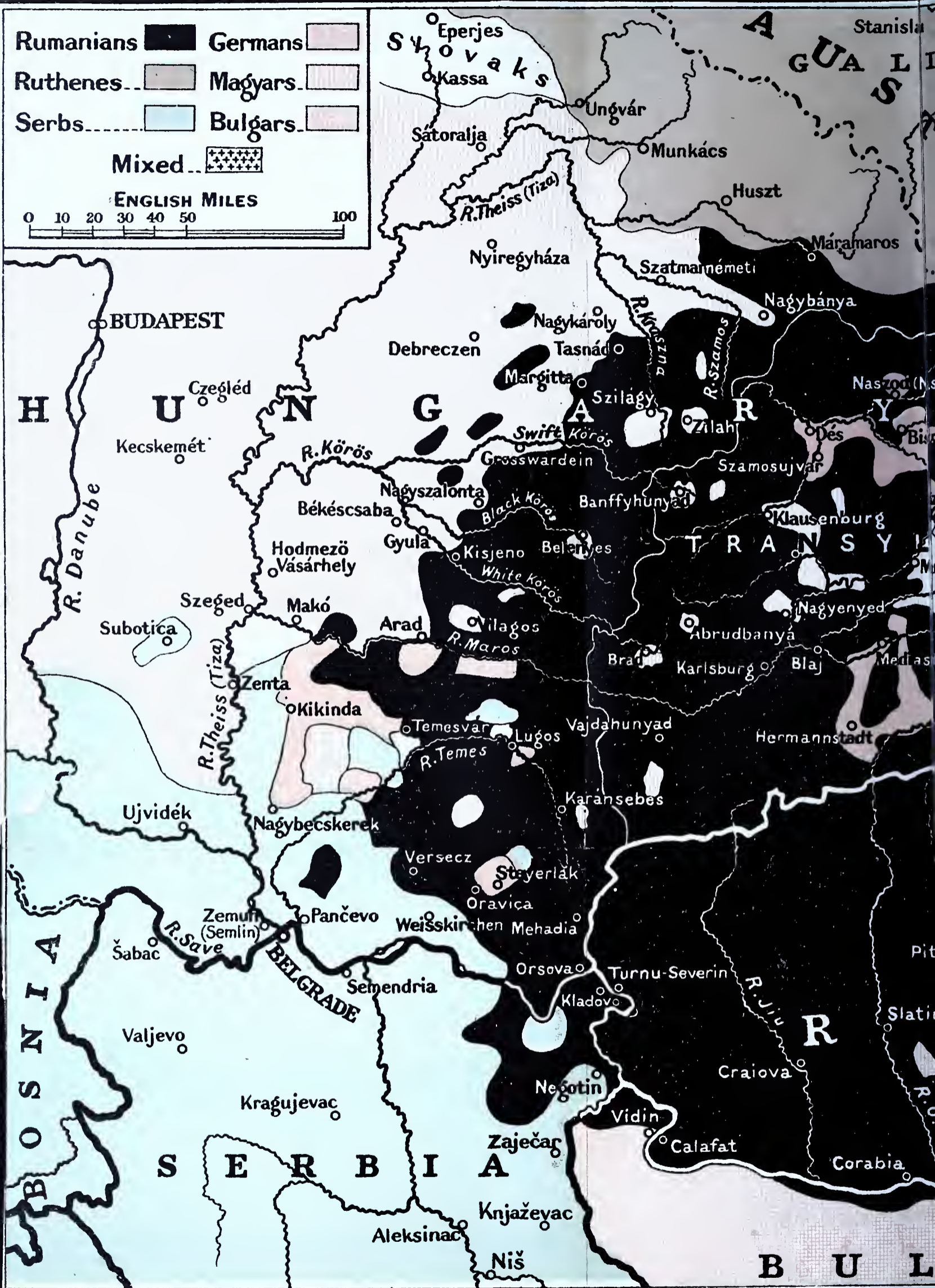
Like Italy, Rumania had no choice but to be the ally or enemy of Austria-Hungary. There were such acute differences between the two neighbouring States—over Transilvania in especial—that they must be settled or postponed by war or alliance. The alliance concluded secretly in 1883 between Rumania and the Germanic Empires was the sole alternative to a disastrous war. As the Rumanian Declaration of War on Austria-Hungary explained, "Rumania," in concluding the Treaty of 1883, "saw in the relations of friendships and alliance which were established between the three Great Powers a precious pledge for her domestic tranquillity, as well as for the improvement of the lot of the Rumanians of Austria-Hungary." In the course of three decades she found, however, that not only had she thrown in her lot with Powers whose policy and political principles ran counter to her own, but had not even by doing so saved the Rumans of Hungary from continued persecution. Like

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Italy, Rumania was not the sinner but the sinned against in the matter of treaties. Just as Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy, aggressive and pan-German, broke the spirit of the alliance with Italy, so was it also with Rumania. If again, the flagrant and continued oppression of the Rumans of Hungary could not be mitigated by friendly representations and political help from the neighbouring kingdom, then it must be settled by the sword. "The bribes that these two eminently sordid Governments exacted as their price for entering the war"—to return to the *New York World's* criticism—were nothing more nor less than the demand that the Powers of the Entente who have proclaimed that they are championing the principle of nationality and the rights of small peoples should apply their general principles to the salient case of the Rumanians of Austria-Hungary. The States now fighting the battle of Civilisation and Christianity should only be proud that included in their program is a demand so clearly justified by history, by equity, and by common-sense. Grievously as she suffered for her ideal, Rumania, through the mouth of her king and foremost men, has proclaimed her belief that it was "worth while," and that she does not regret it. She has risked all for Justice and Freedom, let justice and freedom be her reward.

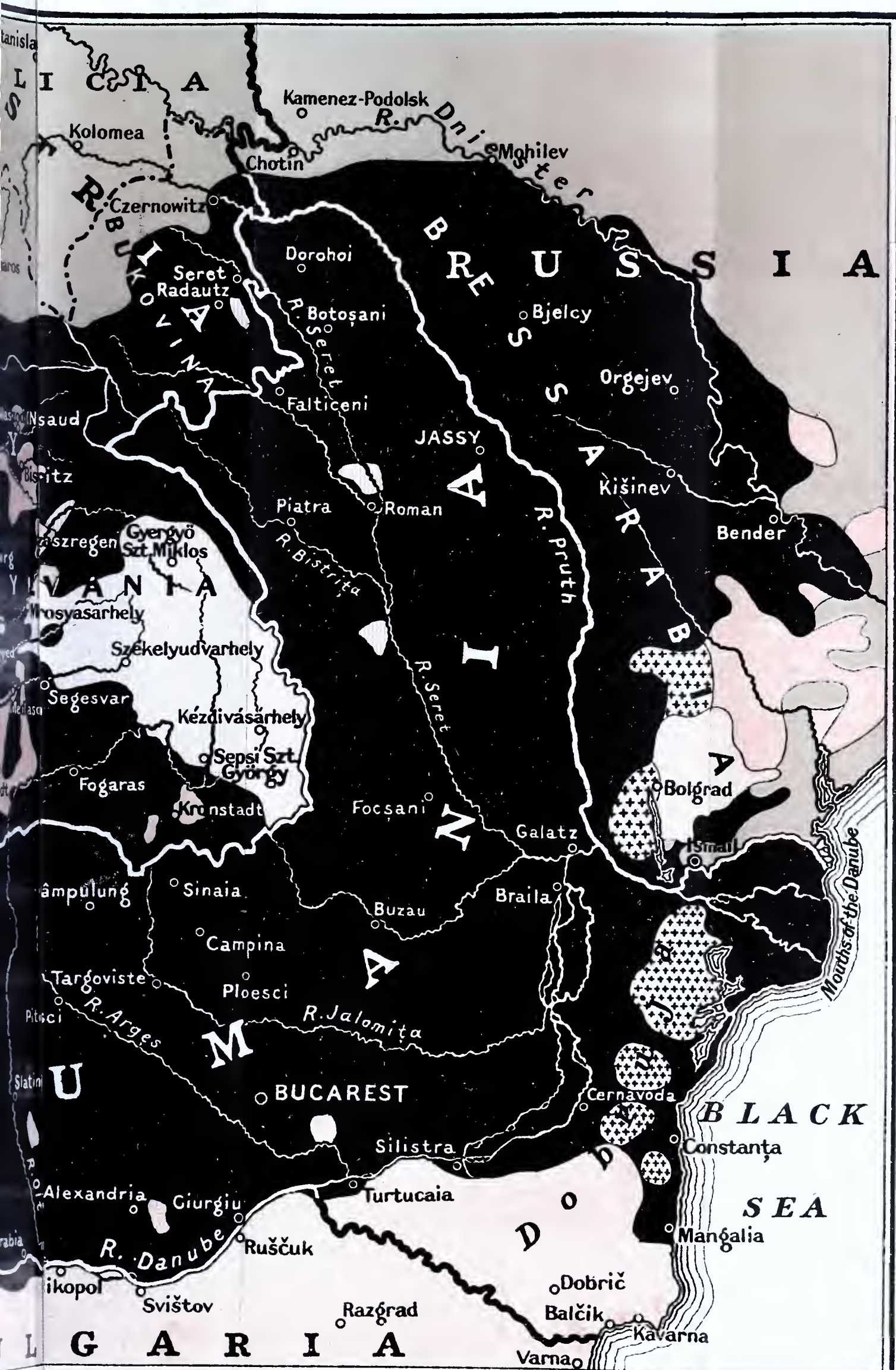


RUMANIA AND ITS UNREDIE



Rumanian equivalents of Hungarian
 Hermannstadt = Sibiu | Klausenburg = Cluj | Segesvár = Sibiu
 Kronstadt = Braşov | Karlsburg = Alba Iulia | Grosswardein = Oradea

THE DANUBIAN TERRITORIES.



and German place-names:
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