

## A 3,000 kilometers bike-pilgrimage

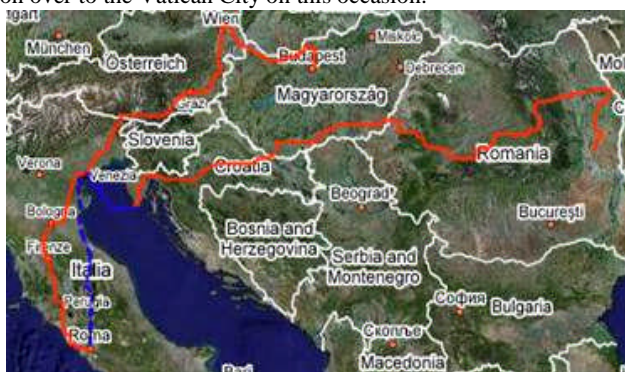
**Constitution of Romania, Article 6/1: The State recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.**

**Three thousand kilometers is the distance that is going to be covered by Zoltán Ferkó on his bicycle in order to let the world know that, in the 21st century, the Csángó-Hungarians of Moldova, Romania, are still denied to practice their religion in their mother tongue.**

The Csángós, a Hungarian ethnic group of Roman Catholic belief, who have always been living outside the Hungarian borders, are only permitted to pray in the Romanian language in their churches. Subsequently, their condition does not correspond either with the doctrines of their church or the human rights standards of modern democracies. The Csángós have been fighting for religious masses in the Hungarian language for a long time, demanding the rights from Petru Ghergel, Bishop of Iași. A Csángó committee visited Vatican City in order to discuss the issue of the Hungarian mass, yet the situation remained unsettled.

The Roman Catholics in Moldova are of Hungarian origin, approximately 250,000 in number and there are roughly 60,000 who still speak the most archaic dialects of Hungarian. Although Romanian historians would not admit, the Csángós are all of Szekler-Hungarian origin. Historic archives indicate that they arrived in Moldova between 1250 and 1800, as a result of Szekler resettlement and migration.

The 3000-kilometer-long bicycle pilgrimage for the Hungarian mass of the Moldova Csángós has come to its midway on 11 May, in Vatican City. A Csángó delegation – which consisted of Tinka Nyisztor, religious accountable for the Committee of the Moldova Hungarian Csángós, Adrián Solomon, president of the Committee and Robert Pogár, Csángó vicar – handed its petition over to the Vatican City on this occasion.



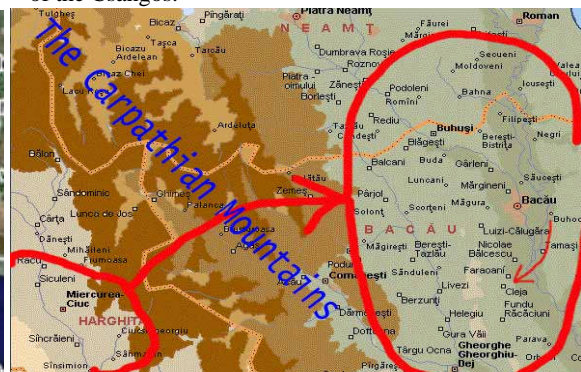
The route of the pilgrimage

Zoltán Ferkó reported that in Vatican City he was met by Pietro Parolin, deputy secretary of state of the Holy See, whom the petition was given. In the Vice-president's communiqué it is revealed that Pietro Parolin was already acquainted with the issue and emphasized that it reflected a local problem. He encouraged the participants of the pilgrimage to attempt to solve the problem on local level, in Moldova, avoiding conflicts. However, he promised to pass the issue on to the Nunciature in Bucharest, as well as the Bishopric of Iași. He added that officials in Vatican City appreciated the information and they are expecting further news about positive changes.

Zoltán Ferkó set out from the Budapest basilica on March 22 in order to do the 3000-kilometer-long bicycle pilgrimage for drawing international attention to the rights for Hungarian-speaking religious masses of the Moldova Hungarian Csángós. Up to mid-May he covered a distance of 1570 kilometers on his bicycle. While he was presenting the details of his bicycle tour, he revealed that momentarily the Hungarian Csángós are allowed to attend religious masses held only in the Romanian language. He declared that "If we are not able to change the language of the church – which is the sacrosanct medium of the Csángó's life and mentality – into Hungarian, the uppermost five Hungarian language classes, which are ensured by an educational program in 16 Csángó villages at the time being, will not hinder the complete change of spoken language that is feared to take place after about three generations."

The route of the bicycle pilgrimage in Hungary touched upon the main North Transdanubian Roman Catholic church centers, then, through Vienna and Venice it came to Vatican City, its final destination. On its way back the bicyclist is going to arrive in the center of the Transylvanian Roman Catholic Church, Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár. The next route in his pilgrimage will lead him through Cluj Napoca/Kolozsvár to Csíksomlyó on Whit Saturday, then, through the Gyimes Pass, according to the plans. On his journey he will visit Iași/Jászváros, the Roman Catholic Church center in Moldova, followed by Bacău/Bakó city, the administrative center of the Csángós in Moldova.

Besides the Vatican City petition, he hands a letter over to church leaders of every region he crosses. In this letter he requests support in obtaining the rights for Hungarian masses of the Csángós.



Csángó-land: the end of the pilgrimage

## Prayer-demonstration for children's right

It is a generally known fact that the perseverant and committed efforts of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District, both on political and legal levels, concerning the unlawful and discriminatory forfeiture of the sports-ground, originally belonging to the Lorántffy Zsuzsanna Reformed High School in Oradea, have so long proved to be abortive trials. Due to the civil disobedience movement dating from the beginning of this year, the Oradea City Council came up with a seemingly favourable resolution for their case in March 2007. As a result, it appeared that the sports-ground debate would be settled for once and for all.

Afterwards, however, it became obvious that they were, once again, deceived. Subsequently, the Reformed children have not had the possibility for physical training and to go in for sports for more than two years.

**Meanwhile, the sports-ground is locked behind bars and is battered with weed and rank grass.**



On 31 May, on the occasion of the International Children's Day, the Reformed Church organized an international prayer-demonstration. The programme of the demonstration on 31 May started at 4 pm with devotions at the Oradea-Olaszi Reformed Church. Before the march of protest the 430 school children were each presented a balloon. The protestors walked to the County Council and the Prefect's Office. The ecumenical and international prayer demonstration ended at the City-Hall, where the children as a sign of protest set their balloons free. The church leadership transmitted a memorandum to the local authorities, in which they asked for the promised settlement in this long delaying abuse against children.



Alongside the Lorántffy school



Marching on the high street of Oradea/Nagyvárad



Many citizens came the protest against abuse



In front of the Prefect's Office

## Statement

It is generally known that after numerous years of postponement, and as a result of wide-ranging protests and demonstrations organized by the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District, as well as several church and civil disobedience movements at the beginning of this year, the Oradea City Council, on its meeting held on February 28, finally arrived at a seemingly favorable decision concerning the restoration of the arbitrarily confiscated sports-ground originally belonging to the Lorántffy Zsuzsanna Reformed High School in Oradea.

Our delight, however, proved to be early and unfounded. More than two months after the resolution brought by the city council, the settlement in the affairs of the sports-ground has not been properly taken care of, yet. Thereafter our children have not had the opportunity to go in for sports for more than two and a half year. In the meantime the proper yard is battered with weeds and is surrounded with iron bars.



Give us the sports ground back

We observed that the authorities kept on postponing the settlement of affairs once unanimously agreed upon in the resolution. Furthermore, the legal trial for regaining possession of the sports-ground is still in action, moreover it arrived at the constitutional court. These had been the reasons why our Church District was compelled to take measures for obtaining concrete results, and these were the following:

- We requested the City Council in writing to enforce its resolution dating 28 February;
- We appealed to the city faction of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania for the very same purpose;
- We appealed to the Prefect's Office for the countenance of the execution of the above mentioned resolution;
- We personally appealed to Rozália Biró, deputy mayor, on several counts for orientation and the execution of the resolution came to a standstill;
- We appealed to Sofronie Drincec, Romanian Orthodox bishop, in writing, in order to obtain his decisive support so that the resolution should come into effect, as well as the students from the Lorántffy Zsuzsanna High School may have the possibility to use the sports-ground until the final solution.

Our recurrent intercessions have not had results up to this day. It is getting more and more obvious that the February resolution of the City Council was part of the tactics, in order to ward our church and civil demonstration off, which was to be held on the 8 March.

For our written appeals there was only one response, from Bishop Sofronie. In his letter the newly inaugurated head of church stated that, according to the church canons, he cannot afford to intervene in affairs of ownership under the authority of the Parish Sfânta Treime (Holy Trinity Parish).

Rozália Biró, deputy mayor, informed us that without the consent of the Orthodox Church the resolution brought by the City Council cannot be put into effect. From a supplement of a warrant issued by assigned director Marcel Boloș, it came to our knowledge that the resolution cannot be realized since the residents' committee from the neighboring block of flats, along with the Romanian Orthodox Church, would not consent to the execution.

It is also noteworthy that in May, 2004 when they alienated the sports-ground from us they would not consider the approval of the Reformed Church to be necessary. This is an example of the discriminative use of double measure against our church and school.

Instead of an effective solution that has continuously been postponed for nearly three years, the local government holds out the prospect of our students having their gymnastics sessions and practice in the city Sport-school. This option is unacceptable for our students taking into account the loss in time and distance this would imply.

Having the aforementioned in sight, our Church is compelled to continue its right and just struggle, both on political and legal levels, against deforcement, deprivation of rights and ethnic and religious discrimination aimed against our church, school and youth. Under such circumstances we appropriate the following:

- In case our previous applications should be disregarded we will put forward a motion in order to put the autonomous resolution dated 28 February 2007 into effect;
- We will appeal to the city, county and national faction of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania with the special request that the Alliance, by taking advantage of their power in the national government, should fight for regaining possession of the sports-ground;
- We will induce the representative body of the Roman Catholic Church in Oradea, as well as the Oradea Greek Catholic Bishoric to support our case regarding the "Holy Trinity Parish";
- We will mobilize the Reformed Congregational Community in Oradea in order to protect our church and the rights of our children;
- We intend to obtain the support and intercession of our European sister churches – in the spirit of and having in mind the forthcoming Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu;
- We will implement various ways of church and civil disobedience.

May 2007

*The Presidium  
of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District*

## Intimidation and abuse against the Bolyai Initiative Committee

The Bolyai Initiative Committee is an informal association of Hungarian university staff members, intellectuals and students aiming to reopen the Bolyai University of Cluj/Kolozsvár and to advance the achievement of a Hungarian-language higher education network in Transylvania.

The Babes-Bolyai University, where 6,000 full-time Hungarian students pursue their studies, is a self-proclaimed “multicultural” university. The University printed a brochure, which stated that there were multilingual inscriptions at the University. Therefore, Hungarian speaking teachers felt encouraged and decided to place the actual Hungarian inscriptions themselves. These inscriptions were removed by University officials on 21 November 2006. Two academics of the Hungarian speaking staff, both members of the Bolyai Initiative Committee – Péter Hantz and Lehel Kovács – were simply fired.

The European Commissioner responsible for Multilingualism Leonard Orban did not wish to comment on the events that took place at the Babes-Bolyai University in relation to the Hungarian inscriptions, stated the answer given by the Commissionaire, who came into office with Romania's EU accession, to the letter signed by liberal members of the European Parliament on this issue.



The facility was built by the city of Marosvásárhely in 1907. The medical faculty of the Hungarian-speaking Bolyai University was moved here from Kolozsvár/Cluj, in 1945. Qualification in the Romanian language started in 1962.

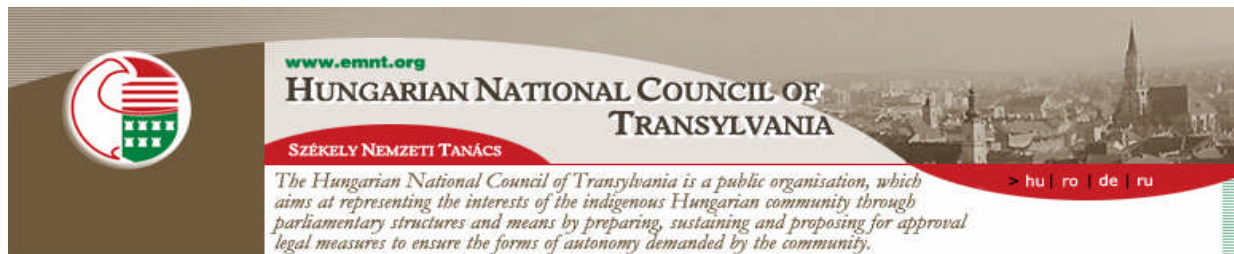
The President of the Targu-Mures/Marosvásárhely branch of the Bolyai Initiative Committee, and chair of department, professor Mária Ajtay Kincses compiled a list of 10 items containing the complaints of the Hungarian teaching staff working at University of Medicine and Pharmacy. One of the complaints concerns the issue of inscriptions. But before she had the chance to present this list to the public, unidentified persons made threats through phone calls, and the professor also received an abusive and menacing anonymous letter.

Until the end of May nearly 700 students of a total of 980 ethnic Hungarian medical and pharmacy students signed the 10-point list of demands.

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