



WORD
PICTURES
FROM
MY
ROMANIA

The most unforgettable experiences of my life took place in the summers of 1985 and 1987. Then it was that I visited the beautiful Romanian brothers, as they suffered under Ceaucescu's brand of Communism. I wrote this report when I got back from the 1987 trip, for those who had supported the work. It's still a part of my heart, and so I share it with you now.

Before I begin

I spent one of the hottest of Chicago's 1996 summer days packing boxes on a 40-foot container on its way to a still-impooverished Romania, and loving every minute of it. That's the kind of thing Romania will do to you. In fact, I remember another hot summer night, while preaching in my "other" country, 1987, when it seemed that the Spirit of God came upon me and I found myself vowing to this congregation and all Romania the very words of Jewish exiles regarding Jerusalem (Psalm 137:5,6), "If I forget you..." It would seem that God has taken that vow seriously and that I must never be too far from lending a helping hand to brothers and sisters in Christ over there.

Now, things have changed, as you well know. The Romanians rose up and took power from Ceaucescu in 1989, put him on trial, and shot him. Liberty after 40 years! Dancing in the streets, and in the churches and in the homes, and...What a joyful moment.

However, much has remained the same. There is more liberty, but not a lot more food. That's why the Romanian Mission of Chicago, for whom I was working on that sultry afternoon, still sends its love with packages, not just wishes. So as you read, you can mentally weed out the part about the "party", but understand that's it's still no "party" over there. Your prayers for some of God's choicest saints, purified by the fire, would be in order. And if your heart does to you what it still does to me (essentially rips it out at the very thought of suffering brothers) you can send those extra clothes and appliances and foods and cash I'm Bob Faulkner, and you can contact me at

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Now, word pictures from "my" Romania.

[note: as you read through this text, please remember that all italicized words in brackets, such as these, have been added for clarification or updating by the author, 9 years after original]

Why “Word Pictures?”

My camera didn't go with me this year. Cameras cost money, take up space, and sometimes scare people. Besides that, they brand me as an American tourist and make me the center of attention at times when I really don't want to be.

So all summer I was taking “word” pictures. I've re-organized them, polished them a little, put them in readable form, taken some names and places out. But it's all here. It is my prayer that the images created by these words stay with you a long time.

From a friend of Romania
September, 1987

Just Who Are The Romanians?

They can be defined a lot of ways; let me try three...

MORALLY sound, “religious” people. The inroads of historic “Christianity” have had their effect on Romania. I was privileged to accompany my university class to the theater, to view a play that is considered one of the all time “greats” of the Romanian stage. In it a woman leaves her husband, but returns, and is greeted by total forgiveness. *Hollywood could take some lessons from this Communist country.*

ROMANTICALLY exuberant. No doubt about it, the Romanians are “romantics”! They have romance in their language, their culture, their very name. The Romanians are musicians par excellence, poets. And when Christ enhances their gifts for beauty and song, you have one lovely person!

HISTORICALLY proud. Give them a moment and they will tell you of the TRUE boundaries of Romania, the historic background that is theirs, and of the Roman conquerors from whom they are descended. Surrounded by a sea of Slavs and Hungars, they are true Latins.

They are a people impossible not to love. And God so loved them He had Jesus come to die for them, so that they could have more than religion: a beauty purified by love. And more than a history: a future!

Romanian Hospitality

Every nation has its special characteristics. Romania is hospitable. To enter a Romanian home is to be cared for. Certainly some of the “caring” is as automatic and perfunctory as an American handshake. But at least it exists.

And Romanian hospitality, touched by the Spirit of God in a true believer’s life, is a thing of beauty, a tool of the Holy Spirit to show His love for humanity.

“Given to hospitality” is a phrase that jumped out of Scripture after I had been to Romania. The potential of family and home is much more clear to me now, and has given me a desire to work more in these areas.

The combination of good food, smiling service, and beautiful music (things we expect now only in restaurants) is so delightful in Romania as to inspire one to give all he has to whomever crosses his threshold.

I pray I will never forget the lessons I learned.

Beauty Under Pressure

She is as beautiful a young lady as one could ever hope to meet. Her beauty is of the genuine type that springs from inner purity and a basic simplicity. At eighteen, she lives for the coming again of Christ, the fellowship of saints, the work of souls.

Constantly she is under surveillance, harrassment, and the pressure of caring for a home, as most of the domestic responsibilities in her family fall upon her and her aging grandmother. Father lives in another town. Other close family members are in America.

She is...beauty under pressure. She is to me symbolic of a nation. What a beautiful people are the Romanians! Handsome, polite, emotion-filled. But what a pressured people are they also! Some say this pressure has caused one in every three Romanians to, in some way, work for the secret police. I seriously doubt this estimate, but most live as though it were true. Trust level is amazingly low at times. Everyone suspects everyone. It’s the kind of tension certain governments feel are necessary to maintain control...

for the people's sake, of course.

Beauty...under pressure. That's one picture of Romania, especially the Romanian church. Not far from what ought to be the norm of all of Christ's people.

Poverty

Poverty is relative and means a lot of things to a lot of people. But speaking in terms of monetary values, Romania is at about the bottom of the European list.

At least the great majority of Romanians are poor. As a western student in a Romanian university, I must say I fared pretty well. Contacts we made for Christ "in the party" uncovered some prosperity, too.

But the average Romanian, which includes virtually all the villagers, have a standard of living Americans would have trouble believing. I have seen gas lines, bread lines, milk lines. I have seen store after store selling essentially the same few products, with an over-supply of things like jellies and noodles and crackers that guarantees each item will be weeks or months old.

Very few cars, few TV's. Few TV programs on the few TV's, and they come from Russia, and so are ignored by many.

Occasionally a visiting dignitary will evoke a sudden display of meat or fresh vegetables in the market place, but before noon it will all be gone, as swarms of Romanians snatch it up.

Romanians are extremely poor. But Romania is extremely bountiful. Romanian crops are being sold to neighboring countries, though, so that dictator Ceaucescu can pay off his considerable indebtedness. It's called austerity...and other things, by the people.

Of course, he says, it is only *temporary* austerity. The Romanians know it to be temporary *insanity* as they slowly starve themselves into sickness and death.

Satan thus has a grip on Romania with one of his favorite vices. Romania needs a change. God is able to pull Ceaucescu's strings any time He needs to. Pray that it will be soon. *[It was a little more than two years after this*

writing that the “Revolution” took place, and Romania entered the “free” world.]

Romanian Weddings

To be married in Romania, all that is necessary is the proper application forms, approval in writing from the government, and a five-minute ceremony.

The church, however, adds that it is necessary for the body of Christ to sanction the uniting of a man and a woman. So Christian couples there have *two* weddings! And both can be marvelous opportunities for fellowship.

During my seven-week stay, a young Christian couple was married. I was asked to come to the celebration following the civil wedding. I spoke and sang. The next weekend, wedding number two occurred. A visiting pastor officiated, I spoke awhile, others sang. Afterwards, we all travelled on foot to a nearby restaurant, “owned” by a member of the church. ALL DAY we ate and fellowshiped! Again I was asked to share, which I did by song and spoken word. Others did the same.

Then back to evening church, the whole group. It was a long walk which everyone relished by this time.

From 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. we Christians had been together. A rare treat in a Communist country!

Walking, Water, and Music

I learned to walk, drink water, and appreciate good music in Romania. We have all of the above in America, with a host of other simple things, but I never appreciated them until I was forced into it by having no car, few soft drinks, and little junk music.

I suppose the automobile, soft drinks, and the contemporary sound all have their place, but I learned to love their absence. I wonder if our speed, high intensity sounds, and sugar have made us a better people or only faster.

For the answer, I may have to spend another summer in Romania.

Romanians Leaving Romania

With all of its simple joys, Romania is still an undesirable place for many because of its constant oppression, its widespread poverty. But Christians, especially leaders, who desire new beginnings in the West, are incurring criticism from their brothers who are “left behind.”

And, sad to say, many who do make it to the West are sorely disappointed by our sugar diet, our loose morality, and the coolness of much of the Church. In escaping the dangers of home they had not reckoned with the dangers of the “new” world.

When you come to what many call “the world’s last hope,” and find darkness, *how great is that darkness.*

Ordinary People

They’re everywhere. The green uniforms. There are so many soldiers on the streets of Romania that they become almost common, and the people treat them as such.

After awhile, I, even as a tourist, began to realize that these uniformed servants, most of them very young, many of them female, were just ordinary people doing what they had to do. They became daily less of a threat to me.

I shouldn’t really have been alarmed that uniformed persons showed up in church one night, or that I had to pass by a barracks full of them almost daily, or that they were even involved in serving me dinners at the University .

After all, under the green uniforms flowed blood as red as mine, and lived a soul as eternal as mine, and hungered a heart as needy as mine. They were just ordinary people.

The “Secret” Police

I don’t want to be light or flippant about a serious matter, but the secret police of Romania were sometimes anything but secret! I remember one man who was so obvious that while he was following my friends, I decided to follow him!

Part of his job, I’m sure, was to “psyche” us. I must confess he did a good job of that. But it was amazing to see

him being so open with his psyche-ing.

One man was a little more subtle. I had been preaching the day before and had used the names “Gheorge” and “Ioan” (George and John), two common names there, as examples of small boys. It was a simple sermon illustration. On this particular Monday, a gentleman from the University was showing me around, being a little too “hospitable.” Then he began to share with me about Romanian Holy Days. He divulged the information that every Romanian had his own special saint day. “*For example,*” he said, “*St. Gheorge...and St. Ioan...*”

I got the message. He and his friends knew everything I was doing and wanted me to know that whatever horrible plot I had in mind for the dear people of Romania, I wouldn’t get away with it!

At the end of the summer I met one more secret policeman. Together we invited the Holy Spirit into his home and heart. Now he has another secret.

The Party

Isn’t it interesting how the same words paint such varied pictures? Take “party” for example. In Romania, the party does not mean cake and ice cream and celebration and joy.

I will not dwell on the politics of Communism. So many are so much more qualified to debate its supposed merits and defects. What captured me is the number of people carrying cards that say they are Communist, but who in their heart are not.

I met a few by that description. Not traitors. Men who will never defect to the West. They’re just not sold on Communism. They realize its faults, but don’t want to let go, for several reasons, ranging from lack of initiative to desire for security.

Capitalism, and yes, the Christian Church has such members. In fact, the “hard core” of Christianity has always been a dedicated, determined *minority*.

Think of it. One dedicated man is now responsible for the external enslavement of nearly half the world’s people. And Lenin has been dead for half a century. What

would happen if *one man* truly sold out to God? The world still awaits that man.

The party. No formal invitations to this party. But the Holy Spirit has always had His own work going on in the hearts of Communists, from the every-day card-carrier to party secretaries and beyond. God doesn't recognize closed doors. Not even at a party.

PACE! (Pronounced "potch-ay")

I had just entered a place I visited often. As I walked down the main pathway of this gargantuan park, a voice from a side-path caught my ear. "*Pace,*" she said. As I looked her way, she was waving - cautiously - and smiling. I had preached in her church the day before. She knew *I* was a believer, and wanted me to know *she* was.

It happened again in the halls. I had gone to the administrative offices to ask a question, was walking down a hall, when a timid soul crept up behind me, tugged my arm, smiled, and said, "*Pace.*"

And on the streets. And on the tram. And in stores.
Pace! Peace! Pace Domnul-lui! the Peace of the Lord!

It is the Romanian way of drawing a fish in the sand. The Romanian way of claiming me as one of them. And for most, a prayer spoken from the heart: *May the PEACE of the LORD be with you!*

PACE!

Extremes of Faith

"Are you a believer?" I asked her.

"Yes , of course! I go to church two times a year."

She is Romanian Orthodox, the Eastern Sister of Roman Catholicism. Hers is an outward religion. But she is not far in her thinking from many Americans who consider themselves believers on similar grounds. But contrast her to this picture of commitment:

The Baptist youth were expecting some slides exposing evolution , which didn't show. So, my interpreter and I held a two-hour dialogue on the subject for the youth meeting on Saturday night. There were 75-100 youths there

that night. Nothing fancy. A few songs, and a long discussion. And they were into every minute of it!

The next day the slides showed up. Word got around. (I never could figure out how!) And that night, after a 2-hour church service, the youth stayed for two hours *more* to hear and see slides on the same subject we had covered the night before!

No one has told the Romanian Christians that you must appeal to the flesh to keep people faithful to Christ. How I pray that no one does.

The United Church

By comparison to the American Babylon of religions, there are few denominations in Romania, and the groups there work in harmony. *[not in the ecumenical sense of our nation, but in the accepting of one another's right to be]*

Take for example one Romanian city. Quite a few Orthodox churches. One Adventist, one Catholic, one Baptist, one Brethren, one Pentecostal. City population: 300,000.

Now take an American city, Florence, Kentucky as an example. *[Florence is a Cincinnati suburb where I lived for several years]* On *one street corner* in Florence are three Protestant churches and a Catholic church! The list of other Florence churches would fill this page. Florence population: 17,000.

The phenomenon of the more unified church is encouraged unwittingly by Communist persecutors who raze church buildings, consolidate congregations, and make more "efficient" use of church property. In this way they are in line with Christ, who wants His church together. *[my regular readers must understand that even as late as 1987 I did not understand the issues that were at stake in "church unity." I was seeing the "other" side of things, then, especially the joy of seeing **true** believers in various denominations accepting and loving one another. That sort of ecumenicity, the fellowship of the born again, I continue to uphold! Just leave the false teachings in the garbage bin where they belong]*

If the Communists knew they were furthering the

Christian cause, perhaps they would stop. On the other hand, if we knew we were furthering Satan's cause by our constant bickering and division, maybe we would stop?

[And of course we must remember that most of the bickering is not doctrinal at all, but personal. Little "kingdoms" are built, and the little "kings" have trouble stepping down. May God smash our regal plans!]

The "Underground" Church

Throughout history true believers have been forced to hide their program from the tyrannical beasts that would strive to extinguish it. Though this is part of the truth in Romania, it is definitely not *all* of the truth. This comes as a shock, even a disappointment, to some who have imagined that Communism, and not Satan, is the real enemy of the Church.

Let me stop here long enough to assure my readers that Communism, as a philosophy, is opposed on every level to the philosophy of Jesus Christ, especially the salvation message. But there are other ways they have found to hurt the church than slaughter *[as one would have experienced in the even more cruel days of Pagan and Papal Rome]*.

The mere mention of the name of Jesus, or the appearance in church of a believer, is not cause for immediate death, or even a jail sentence, or termination of all government assistance *[as perhaps in more extreme Muslim countries of our day]*.

But the *continued* interest, and especially the subsequent *success*, evangelistically, of a particular believer or church will begin a slow and sure process of harrassment. In extreme cases (that is, in the cases of extremely successful soul winners) jail and beatings, always for other charges, will follow.

And so the term "underground church" is a bit inadequate for Romania. Now, there *are* many underground-hidden - activities of the "over-ground" church. I have been in several "secret" meetings. The fact that I as an American was there is what made some of them "secret". But these same believers met openly at the scheduled church meetings...and this same American preached to them. There

were informers present, but not once in twenty meetings was there an attempt made to curtail my activities or compromise my message.

I do not wish to take away the intensity of your prayers for Romanians. There *is* persecution, some of it very direct and cruel, but much more of it indirect and subtle. [*Had it been any more direct or more cruel, Ceaucescu would have been toppled long before. People only take so much.*] There are believers in jail, but some of them are there for unwise political connections as much as for their faith.

Sadly it is my duty to inform you, to *warn* you, that not everything you hear about the church in Eastern Europe is true. For reasons that are beyond my comprehension, even this ministry to the suffering church has been infiltrated by unscrupulous, ungodly men. Holy Spirit discernment is the only way to know the truth about such persons.

Places In The Heart

I learned about preaching from need in Romania. Not *preaching need*, but preaching from answers that come when the heart is crying for them. There was an anointing on me to ask, to be answered, and to communicate the answer to fello humans who have the same questions.

I brought no sermons into Romania, but I brought several out. "*Places in the Heart*" (my apologies to Sally Field and her movie of the same title) was my personal favorite during this period of strange unction on my life. It was an answer to the problem of the dual demand God makes on our life to love Him with *ALL* our heart, **and** to love our neighbor. Does God somehow resent our love of wife and children? Certainly not, I preached, as long as the heart is first given over to Jesus.

The message ended with an imaginary love letter written from Christ to His beloved Bride, showing the special love Christ Jesus has for us, even though He loves the Father with *ALL* His heart.

[*I claimed, in the original writing "inspiration from the Holy Ghost." I know now that this is a serious term, and can be horribly misinterpreted. All I know for sure is that I was in prayer and meditation for this message, and my heart*

was broken with the love of Christ for Romanian Christians. As callous as I have been in my life, if I could feel this deep burning love for a suffering people, I knew Christ was loving them more. I imagined what it would be like to receive a love-note from Jesus]

Here is that “love letter” that I shared with the precious Bride of Christ in Romania:

To My Love:

In My heart I have been watching you;
 I guess you know that.
 I have seen you turn around embarrassed
 Thinking someone is staring.
 Do not let my observations stop you-
 It gives me a special pride to know that you are
 doing some of the things you do just for me to see.
 Lady, I love you and honor you as any man honors
 the woman he has chosen for his own;
 Remember: You did not choose Me, I chose you.
 And as long as you want me to, I will keep choosing
 you.
 I am so happy with the work you do for Me;
 I am especially pleased with the hidden things that
 only you and I know about.
 In My mind's eye I saw you bearing that burden you
 thought you could not bear.
 I did not tell you this before, but in spirit I sneaked
 up behind you,
 And helped you carry it awhile.
 I heard you speaking to Father about all those
 friends of yours.
 I watched as you labored long into the night to care
 for that sick one.
 I heard your sighs when the morning came and all
 that faced you was another long, tedious, routine
 day.

I am so sorry that you feel alone now, and that we have had to be apart physically for so long.
 You know I will come back as soon as I can, and what a great time we will have!
 For now, please do not grow weary.
 Please remember to read my other love letters in the Book I sent you.
 Think of Me every day.
 Know that I am as excited about our love as the first day we met.
 I have such wonderful things planned for us;
 In fact, all the time I have been away I have been working on our new home.
 Wait till you see the place I have prepared for you!
 Oh My dear Lady, how I love you.
 How I want to hold you and tell you face to face how beautiful you are to Me.
 Oh let nothing come between us while we are apart.
 Save all of your love for Me.
 Spend every minute doing things and loving things that I will be able to praise you for when I return-
 Even as I spend all My time planning for you.
 If there are days when you do not miss Me, please know that I never have such days.
 I cannot imagine My future without you.
 My love, My dear one, I have given My very life for you.
 I ask your love in return. Until We meet soon,
 Your Lord, Jesus

[I spoke all this through an interpreter and through tears, but they got the message, and requested copies. In one sense this was the easiest work I ever performed in my life. Oh, the windows were shut (to keep stray comments from the wrong ears), and this was the middle of summer, and the heat was stifling. No air-conditioning. I was soaked. And when I got

finished they'd whisk me out the door to another church. My body was in questionable shape! But I speak of the "easy" of Matthew 11:28. I had contacted Christ, and knew exactly what the Message was to be, and in His power gave it. No Seminary can prepare a man for such sublime tasks. I long for those precious times of refreshing again.]

Greetings

I had preached about twenty times in Romania when the "red" carpet finally began to be yanked away. Pressures were starting to mount. At one point the earthly powers that be called the leaders of one city's three Protestant churches *[I had preached at all three]* together and simply said, "No more American preaching!"

Not to be shaken quite so quickly, one of the men suggested that perhaps it would be acceptable to have "greetings" from the West. Of course, he was told, *but not from behind the pulpit.*

So the stage was set for my last presentation in the church that had adopted me for the summer. The congregation was slightly amused as I stopped short of my regular preaching place and stood on the open platform directly *in front of* the pulpit.

Then I began almost an hour's worth of "greetings", covering my salvation experience, a challenge to *men* to take their God-given place of leadership in evangelizing their city, and the painful farewell which included my parting gift for them. God blessed every minute of it. But I didn't *preach* at all!

That's my Romania! No place on earth like it.

[And may my vow be repeated here in print: By God's grace, "If I forget you, O(Romania), let my right hand forget her skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth!" First vowed (by me) August of 1987. Renewed August of 1996. Copied from Psalm 135:5,6, minus the word "Jerusalem."]