

magnates on the walls of the breakfast room surveyed us with their hands serenely crossed on the hilts of their scimitars. We looked at them in turn and admired the many tiers of emblazoned bindings. Heralded by fumes, a very old retainer in a baize apron brought coffee and croissants from a distant part of the house and talked to us as we spread and dipped and sipped; and his tidings from the night before unloosed a long moment of gloom: Dollfuss had been assassinated by the Nazis. But, as with the June purge a month earlier, our mood was such that the gloom didn't last much longer than breakfast: it all seemed such a long way to the west. But it was only five months since I had seen the small Chancellor leading that dismal procession in Vienna, after the February troubles. I hadn't even heard of Cluj or Klausenburg or Kolozsvár then. But Transylvania had been a familiar name as long as I could remember. It was the very essence and symbol of remote, leafy, half-mythical strangeness; and, on the spot, it seemed remoter still, and more fraught with charms. Under their sway, we were impervious to omens, and the spell of comedy, adventure and delight that surrounded our journey would have needed something still more drastic and closer at hand to break it.

Our euphoria was complete. It followed us all day along dark canyons and tilted woods and steep grazings and down into a valley where the serpentine haze of willows and poplars marked the windings of the Maros once again; and soon a subtle change came over the towns and villages, not in the landscape—that was changing all the time—but in the inhabitants.

There had been plenty of Hungarian spoken in the few Transylvanian towns I had seen, and, among the Swabians of Arad, German too; but in the villages and the country, Rumanian had been almost universal. Now all at once the drovers watering their horses at the wooden troughs, the peasants in the fields, the shepherds nursing their crooks under the trees and the fishermen flinging their nets over the river were all speaking Magyar. We were among Szeklers, the Hungarians of Transylvania, half a million and more, who inhabit a great enclave of the eastern and southern Carpathians. It was this geographical position, isolated in a sea of Rumanians, which placed the ethnological problem beyond solution.