

To the Honourable John Whitehead,  
Under Secretary of State,  
United States of America

Dear Mr Under Secretary,

The millions who live behind the Iron Curtain look forward to your visit with expectation, since you personify the engagement of the United States for freedom. These millions hope that some time they will live in freedom, that political terror will end and human rights be honoured.

We, Romanian refugees, are hopeful and happy that you are visiting such Eastern European capitals as Bucharest and Budapest.

The Bucharest family dictatorship and trampling underfoot of human rights have brought Romania into such a dramatic situation that many Romanian citizens have forced to leave their native land and request asylum in such Socialist countries as Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (where 14 sought refuge in July this year). We could add to the refugees those 12 who have sought refuge in the Hungarian embassy in Sofia.

Romania, although it is signatory of the Human Rights Convention, does not honour 28 points out of 30 in that document.

The Hungarian government, at the beginning of this year, stated that it would not send back those Romanian citizens who do not wish to return to their native country. Since then, several thousand Romanian citizens of Romanian, Hungarian and German stock have escaped to Hungary using the following methods:

1. With their own personal passports,
2. With group passports,
3. Illegally,
4. With a border area travel permit.

Hungary has no refugee camp, and does not accord these people refugee status. The refugees receive temporary residence permits of between one week and six months. All foreign citizens receive such a permit who come to Hungary to work, to study or for other long-term purposes. The Romanian refugees are given labour permits; the Hungarian Red Cross provides them with lodging and food for five days and with clothes and financial aid of between 500 and 3,000 forints per person.

Some of the Romanian refugees of Hungarian descent want to settle in Hungary. The others, and those of ethnic Romanian, German, Armenian and other stock, want to travel on to free Western countries, to a United Nations refugee camp. To them, each day is significant from the point of view of arrival in their country of destination.

In Hungary, we must wait a long time for permission to travel on, and permission is given by the authorities only if the applicant pays his plane ticket in hard currency and bears exit visa proving his country of destination will accept him. The authorities are creating further conditions. For example, they require a visa to Austria and Scandinavian countries to which Romanian citizens may travel monthly without a visa. The Western embassies in Budapest issue either very few visas or none at all. Only the West German representation makes exceptions in the case of ethnic Germans.

Because of the long waiting time, the uncertain situation (some refugees was send back in Romania), the approaching winter, the lack of lodging and work, many are getting into a state of stress and try to leave Hungary illegally.

We appeal to you, Mr Under Secretary, that the United States help settle the above situation in the spirit of human rights.

Budapest, October 14th, 1988

On behalf of the independent organization  
of Romanian refugees in Hungary,

Romania Libera:

Marc Palmer  
Elisabeth Barnett

Refugees from Romania who want to settle in Western countries:

No	Country of destination	Nationality	Number of refugees
1.	Unites States of America	romanian	240
		hungarian	108
		another	16
		Total	<u>364</u>
2.	Canada	romanian	186
		hungarian	72
		another	7
		Total	<u>265</u>
3.	Australia	romanian	111
		hungarian	92
		Total	<u>203</u>
4.	France	romanian	45
		hungarian	14
		Total	<u>59</u>
5.	Sweden	romanian	Total 45
6.	England	romanian	27
		hungarian	14
		Total	<u>41</u>
7.	Denemark	romanian	21
		hungarian	9
		Total	<u>30</u>
8.	Austria	romanian	11
		hungarian	10
		Total	<u>21</u>
9.	Italy	romanian	Total 6
Total		romanian	692
		hungarian	319
		another	23
			<u>1034</u>