



Solidarité Enfants Roumains Abandonnés

20, rue de la Baume - 75008 Paris
Tél. 45 62 32 32

CD
for reply
please

SECRETARIAT
Sir Leon BRITTAN

23-06-1993 N° 174.8

Sir Leon Brittan
Vice-President
Commission of the European Communities
Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

22nd June 1993

Dear Sir Leon,

Rumania is knocking at the door of the United States and the EEC.

To the United States, Rumania has asked to be allowed to take advantage of the Most Favoured Nation clause.

To the EEC, Rumania has asked to be associated to the Community.

The United States Congress has decided to stall its answer until the Rumanian Government has changed its policy concerning abandoned children (see attached article).

Could the EEC exact the same conditions?

Although three and a half years have elapsed since the "Revolution", the condition of Rumania's abandoned children is still dramatic.

As you know, Rumania is the country in the world with the greatest number of abandoned children.

This situation originated with a Ceaucescu law enforcing reproduction on the population, and has resulted in a monster network of about 500 "Homes" for abandoned children criss-crossing the country.

Ceaucescu's demise has not, alas, ended this drama and today, despite the EEC field involvement, the situation continues to be alarming for the following reasons:

- The number of children being "institutionalised" has increased;
- Ceaucescu's law, dating from 1970, is still applicable. In line with its totalitarian policy, this "fundamental" law gives State supremacy over Family, thus encouraging the "institutionalisation" of the children;
- Given its structure, the network of these "Homes" remains intact. Its existence alone encourages the abandonment of children;

- No other alternative to "institutionalising" children has been found: no placing in foster homes, adoption by Rumanians is almost inexistant, and international adoption is, de facto, forbidden by a 1991 law. This terrible lack is all the more shocking considering that, in 1990, Rumania ratified the United Nations convention for the basic rights of children, stating that every child has the fundamental right to live in a family;
- About 15% of the "Homes" are in the same deplorable state as they were when Ceaucescu was alive, i.e. that they are child hospices. While the existence of these "Homes" is known and indexed, no one has yet done anything to end the misery of the thousands of children living in these "Homes".

The locking up of Rumania's abandoned children constitutes a real crime against humanity.

Only very strong international pressure could convince the Rumanian Government to end this scandal.

Having recently met with President Iliescu, I know how shaken he is by the American position, but that he will only decide to do something about the future of these children if Europe follows along the same lines.

This is the reason why I am turning to you.

At your instigation, would it be possible for the EEC to make known its voice in the same vein as the U. S. Congress and thus condition the evolution of the relationship between the EEC and Rumania to a new policy towards abandoned children?

The foundations of this new policy would be:

- on the one hand, to organise these children's "dis-institutionalization", i.e. to restore the supremacy of Family over State. The first step would be to put the children up for adoption or place them in foster homes, rather than shutting them up in these "Homes";
- on the other hand, to entirely close down the "mouroirs": there are still about 50 to 100 "Homes" where children are treated like animals.

With your influence, Sir Leon, I am certain that your personal prestige could put an end to this drama.

With my anticipated thanks for anything you might achieve in this eminently worthy struggle.

Best regards,



François de Combret

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR LEON BRITTAN, QC
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

RUE DE LA LOI, 200
1049 BRUSSELS - TEL. 295 25 14
295 26 10

29-07-1993

Mr F de Combret
SERA
20 Rue de la Baume
F-75008 PARIS

F de Combret

Thank you very much for your letter dated 23 June 1993 concerning the situation of children in Romanian orphanages.

I know from your previous letters to the Commission that you have already been informed about the Community's action in favour of Romanian children. Unfortunately, as you are aware, we cannot share either your analysis of the situation nor the solutions and strategies you propose to resolve it. Your proposal would entail breaking up the whole institutional network and resorting to massive national and international adoption, which is not considered desirable by the Commission or many other authorities in this area. Although believing that the Romanian authorities still have to make further sustained efforts in order to improve the situation of children in orphanages and to find alternative solutions, we consider that significant progress has been achieved over the past three years. Therefore I cannot share your view of these orphanages as "mouroirs" as you indicate in your reports, information letters and other written documents.

The new 12 million ECU programme approved by the Commission in 1992 and drawn up in close collaboration with the Romanian Government is a continuation of our efforts in improving the children's situation. It is aimed at creating a national childcare policy over three years and commits the Romanian Government to implement it with the help of the Commission.

The Romanian Government is committed to completing numerous economic, political and social reforms with the assistance of different partners. Several conditions related to these reforms had to be fulfilled before the Government was granted access to trade concessions and assistance programmes. It is not therefore the Commission's intention to impose additional conditions on the Romanian Government in the Europe Agreement which has now been signed and is in the process of ratification.

Romania still has a long way to go to complete reforms and fulfil the conditions for membership of the European Community. It is our duty, by means of the various instruments in our possession and notably the PHARE programme, to help the Government in this process and to reinforce its commitment towards reform. This is an objective of major concern in implementing this new childcare programme.

2. *Summary*

