



BRÎNDUȘA ARMANCA · ÁRPÁD GAZDA
(Coordinators)



Storytelling in
Dalnic Village

Reporters in Szeklerland

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RUXANDRA HUREZEAN

Born to Be Free in Doja's Village. Dalnic Proclamation

History seems to never stop experimenting in Dalnic¹. The village remembers New Stone Age and the Dacians as clearly as the large grassy courtyard of the child called Doja, who was to upturn an empire. Dalnic engendered one poet, one Byzanthologist academician, one famous painter, one Prime Minister of Hungary and one army commander thereof. Dalnic used to yield potatoes and land; after the '90's, however, Dalnic reversed the yielding into taking back, so it may grow whole and free, again; which was the starting point of one more experiment in history.

In Dalnic, tourists of all ages get off buses in front of the hero's statue: Gheorghe Doja towers the place on top of a basalt pedestal: Hollywood-like lofty, nothing like the gauntly farmer tortured on the hot iron stone in all of our history books. But why so? Further on, the courtyard of the house he was born in: stud with memorial plaques installed at various times, mute witnesses thereof,



Dalnic, the village where the rebel Gheorghe Doja was born.

and of the distant past. The four monuments dedicated to Gheorghe Doja indicate how proud of its son this place is, commander of the uprising against the Hungarian nobility, for the peasants' rights and liberties. Two more generals are to be also mentioned, whose family trees can be traced back to Dalnic, i.e. Dálnoki Béla Miklós and Dálnoki Lajos Veress. The former, commander general of the Hungarian First Army and appointed Prime Minister of Hungary's Government, in gratitude for having ordered his troops to stop fighting the USSR and turn against Germany in 1944. The latter, commander of the Hungarian Second Army during WWI and later a deputy for Horthy, if needed; arrested by the Germans when caught rising against them and a fugitive out of Sopronkőhida camp; first indicted with anti-State plotting, by the newly set in Communist authorities and

sentenced to death in 1947 and then getting life in prison in the appeal court – actually till 1956, when free to leave to England, where he stayed to the end of his days.

Ask the Szeklers here about themselves: resolute, they will say, morally upright, caring for what is theirs to keep, unafraid of a good fight, adamant on their word. Ask them about Szekely György Dózsa and they will oddly start speaking about their own life, land, toil, to include the hero unawares, thus bringing him back home, here, in Dalnic: actually, Doja “freed” them once more, not long ago, on April 19, 2004, which I will tell you about further on.

Survival

Some 1000 inhabitants today, but yesteryear even more than those of Sfântu Gheorghe, which is a town. Dalnic used to lodge a dendrological park at the very heart of the place, belonging to the Lázár-Beczássy Mansion. The Czech landscapist, called for from Prague for this purpose, brought along all sorts of rarities from all over the world. Though neglected today, the park still showcases majestic trees, alien to anything vernacular there: *Ginkgo biloba* trees, Arizona spruce trees, Nippon magnolia trees, Indian walnut trees and rare maple trees.

Whereas the mansions... to each its own destiny: some were turned into silos after the owners were deported under Communism, others became kindergartens; some were upgraded to cooperative headquarters, and others were left in ruins. Nevertheless, such buildings are still patrimonial, itemized on a survivals list, in some file stored somewhere: Lázár Mansion (1753), Gaál-Borbáth

Mansion (1844), Veress House and Darkó Curia (18th century), Bartha House (19th century), Hadnagy Curia (early 20th century).

Dezső bácsi would forget all about the past, yet Tánja néni would not. Dezső bácsi sold off his mansion and the greater part of his land to a cultural foundation, Tánja néni sold off to a church. They may seem to keep walking alike, yet the former is at peace with the past, but the latter is not, yet. Tánja néni picks up a nut lost in the grass, peels off its soft skin and lifts it up, all black, to the sun. 'Behold! Heart-shaped! You don't eat that, it's different from ours!' and hurries on guiding us through her home garden, that had been seized by the Communists. She got it back in the 90's, 'badly snipped' she complains – no hope for reconciliation between Tánja néni and Communism.

'One night, on Shrovetide, the Communist militia in the village came and told us to leave, taking nothing along. I was still a child. They put us into a truck and drove us to the middle of nowhere, where we stayed for one year. There were about 70 of us, by the day they crammed us all into freight carriages, in Braşov. With no food and no water, we ran across the country, can still hear the clatter the train made, as we crossed the Danube River on Cernavodă Bridge. Had no idea where we were deported to. We were unloaded like cattle, close to the Danube's rice fields, where we stayed for 13 years, living in a few long barracks... and toiling on those rice fields.'

When back home, in Dalnic, the deportees lived as best they could, each bitter on his own, uttering no reproval, even though personal things of theirs were now

found in every house; full of bitter memories. One stone gate post has letters carved deep, like tattooed in flesh, for the visiting readers, rather than in the memory of the gate owner. 'This gate was set up by Szász János and wife, in 1922, when one lentils mázsa [100 kg] sold for 2.000 Lei.'

'Lentils, explained Tánja néni, what a marvelous money maker!' We still ignore how her great grandfather brought it into the village. 'He brought home, from Budapest, two sackfuls of lentil seeds originating in Canada. He put the seeds into the ground and they grew up, which happened nowhere else in Europe. So, it was quite a godsend, that the whole village partook of. People would sell it just fine through Albina Bank. Lentils grow out of so little' – and Tánja néni made her fingers indicate a tiny pellet – 'to so big' – and she stretched her arms wide – 'plus cuts any hunger and fills up the soldiers' bellies. After the revolution, Father tried his luck with lentils again; but there was no one to sell it to, then, as neither hospitals, nor the army, wanted it anymore, nor no one else. We used to be the kings of lentils, then potato kings, then no kings at all.'

In a drawling tone of voice, Dezső bácsi evokes local history: Dalnic's generals and painter Miklós Barabás, who spent his childhood there, brought along by his mother (a Gál descendent) and lived on the place where the mansion now called *Miklós Barabás House stands*, after being restored by *Fundația pentru Comunitate*. Dezső bácsi also tells about his family, deported to Cocoș village, Dobruja Province; about how tough it was for them to grow roots there, where he would still go visit now and then. He depicts the mansion – the way it used to be



The pillar of a house door in the village, build in the good times, when the lentil was precious and people lived well.

before, the way it looked when they got back home. No reproval uttered. They were only let live in two of the mansion's rooms. When his father was summoned to join the cooperative, he replied 'not even for another six years in Dobruja!' He'd spoken up those words only 'to his horse', confesses Dezső bácsi shortly.

Autumn and an amber mellow light over the fields and woods, as Dezső bácsi tells on more stories: about the bear coming as close as the edge of the forest ; about the rabbits and the nosy foxes in Dalnic fields; about mushrooms and black cherries jam, about the older times spa pools, where miracle healing bathing happened, to old people and to bent-back sickly, who walked away on their own feet. He speaks about what no one could ever take away from them.



‘It’s autumn and a amber mellow light falls
over the fields and woods.’

War of Secession

‘We had our own maternity and general hospitals and a public school; but the folks in Moacşa took them away – furniture and all, chairs and tables, in ‘68, when Moacşa was registered a commune and Dalnic just a village in it, 7 km away. We owned 5.300 hectares of farming land, while the commune and all its other villages had the rest to 8.000. We paid our duties and taxes, they ate them up. For a long time we had no roads, not even a bus. So we said enough is enough, we want separation, we need our independence, for things to be as they were before ‘68, with a mayor of our own and our own businesses to attend to. What belongs to Dalnic, let it be its own!’ is venting in one breath, Rozalia, a 38 year old woman from Dalnic.

We ransacked the place for clues; we knocked on gates to see ruined mansions and marvelous parks towered by centuries old *Gingko biloba* trees; we haunted the graveyard uphill; we partook in the Reformed Church Service and also of woodpecker's diligence, as it was pecking nude the steeple eaves; we ate potato bread, red onions and smoked lard, also savoring sweet nutty vanilla *kürtös* which beat all else their kind, by any standards; we took snap shots and videos of the Doja massive statues; we visited the local museums and the fabled mofettes; we enjoyed meeting carnival Hussars and peasants displaying baskets full of potatoes, onions and pumpkins, on local Thanksgiving Day fair [...]. The nights spent in Gál Mansion are as true as life, nothing left to invention: we did sit under the four-trunk walnut tree, sprawled on the sofas in the aristocratic halls, and dreamt in front of the fireplace, thereby fanning the fertile dialogues of this book born out of journalistic prying and childish joy at stories alive.

We actually urge you to go see for yourselves!

BRÎNDUȘA ARMANCA



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