

3200
3207

ITEM No. 8020/52

AH
17 June
VII/294

RUMANIA

STANDARD OF LIVING

Socialized Death And Burial

SOURCE TRIESTE: Foreign shoemaker who emigrated from Rumania in March 1952

DATE OF OBSERVATION: March 1952

+ + +

In present day Rumania funerals are handled either privately or by the factory, State enterprise or institution where the deceased had worked. If the factory handles the ceremony the family of the deceased pays nothing; the factory takes care of everything; coffin, transportation to the cemetery, funeral band, etc., but does not provide for religious rites. The coffin is made in the factory of unfinished wood, bearing nothing but the name of the deceased. The coffin is taken to the cemetery in a truck covered with a red cloth and is followed by either the factory or the union band. At the cemetery a fellow worker delivers the funeral oration in which he praises the merits of the deceased as a builder of Socialism.

If, before dying, the deceased expresses his desire to be buried with the blessing of a priest, or if the family prefers a religious funeral, then the family must meet the funeral expenses, inasmuch as, in this case, the factory gives absolutely no aid. A private funeral costs from 800 to 1,000 new Lei (the salary of a common worker is about 300 to 400 Lei a month.) Most families, in order to save money, do not go to private funeral enterprises. Most of these enterprises are still in private hands. For example at PLOESTI there are three such organizations, only one of which is municipal.

However, even if one goes to a private enterprise for the funeral arrangements, the biggest problem is to procure material for the coffin. The municipal popular council issues a coupon for wood which must then be brought to the local office of the "Comlemm" (State enterprise for sale of lumber.) If a person is given wood he then either takes it to the funeral enterprise or to a carpenter who makes the coffin. A normal funeral with an enterprise costs from 700 to 800 Lei, where a de luxe one costs 1,000 Lei. For this reason most people who desire a private funeral have the coffin made by a carpenter and then take the body in it to the cemetery using an ordinary city cab. Almost all funerals are conducted along these lines. In fact, many people, to save money, have coffins made out of their furniture or of some discarded wood, and then cover the coffin with black paper.

AH
17 June
VII/294RUMANIA
(cont'd)

Is is an everyday occurrence to see such spectacles along the streets of Rumania: a coffin in a city cab, a priest next to the driver, on their way to the cemetery. Only the most fanatical Communists profit by the "Red" funeral, and those too poor to spend money for a "cab" funeral, which may cost as much as 400 new Lei.

EVAL. COMMENT: consistent with similar reports. See items 1842/52, 2964/52, 6127/52. See also for reference item 579/52.