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Title: **Trades that dissapered**

Quote: "Today, there is a huge shortage of professional saddlers and farriers who could help the horses and their owners" – Dr Cristian Molnar

- Foreigners teach us how to shoe the horses
- The professional saddlers and farriers are extremely rare in Romania
- Only those who have horses know the negative consequences of the shortage of these handicraftsmen

In Romania, there is an acute lack of specialists in the fields of horse welfare, as well as a shortage of professional saddlers and farriers. Unfortunately, the old handicraftsmen – who had a solid background acquired in schools for trades – disappeared when the communists decided to transform horses into salami. The collectivization imposed this type of sacrifice, because the peasant left without his horse could not work his land anymore, and, therefore, he had to give up his land to the State. Today, in Romania there is no school for trades. Moreover, farriery and saddlery don't even exist on the list of trades and professions. Those who have some knowledge of these trades have learned farriery and saddlery from the old handicraftsmen who had a solid background built before World War II, after graduating the schools of trades.

Ignorance and preconceptions

It is well known that a well taken care horse is a proof for the lack of poverty. The welfare of the horse also includes the proper horseshoeing. In the case of a poor person, who earns his living with the help of a horse, the operation of horseshoeing is rarely accomplished. Moreover, the owner of the horse has the impression that he knows how to shoe his horse himself. Many horses are taken to the farrier without being taught in advance to raise their legs. Consequently, the horse will get frightened when someone will try to touch its legs. In most of the cases, the owner will hit the animal in order to determine the horse to stay quiet. To shoe a horse is not a simple operation, and only a qualified person understands its importance. Unfortunately, the persons that are accomplishing this task have insufficient skills and experience to perform a proper horseshoeing operation. These persons have made many victims among the horses. The ignorance of the farriers is also shared by the horse owners. Many of them don't take into account the optimum interval (which is, average speaking, six weeks) for a horse to be taken to the farrier.

Quote: "We rediscover the horses, after more than 50 years of their systematic destruction, which was launched by the communists. But there are many things to be done for their welfare. We have to enforce the legislation, and to create professionals in the fields of horse welfare, farriery, and saddlery. " – Dr Cristian Molnar

A Frenchman, the only “genuine” farrier in Bucharest

The owners of thoroughbreds are also affected by the shortage of professional farriers. They cannot afford to lose such a valuable horse. It might seem incredible, but the owners of hundreds of horses from the equine clubs around Bucharest rely on just one professional farrier. Nicolas Babin is one busy Frenchman. He graduated the courses for farriery of the prestigious school in Samur, which licenses specialists in the field of horse breeding. He came for the first time in Romania, soon after 1989. When he saw that in Romania there are no professional farriers, the Frenchman decided to stick around. Nowadays, he has loyal customers. Nicolas Babin works at the client's home. He spends one hour with a horse, and charges 35 euro for his work. Not long ago, Nicolas Babin married a Romanian woman, and decided to settle down in our country.

The professional in action

I've seen Nicolas in action, at Cris Club, an equine club in Otopeni. He shoed Conve, a Lipizzaner black stallion, the most beautiful out of the 20 that are residing here. A boy kept the rein of the animal, but the stallion was very relaxed. Nicolas cleaned each of the animal's hoofs with a chisel and a rasp. Afterwards, he filled the hoofs. While keeping the leg of the animal, Nicolas mould on every move the horse made, no matter the mildness of the move. Like a jockey, he became the same entity with the horse. "Horseshoeing is essentially for the health of the horse", Nicolas says. "When holding the horse's leg, the farrier has to know the entire anatomy of the animal, as in the case of a radiography. The horse and his articulations, musculature, and blood circulation depend entirely on the way the horseshoeing is accomplished", he says.

Harness only from import

It is said that in Romania there is just one harness maker left. His name is Zaharia Hurducaci, and he lives in Reghin. He served his apprenticeship in a workshop owned by the saxon community in Transylvania. Maybe there are more harness makers, but they are definitely hard to find and they are very old people. Actually, saddlery is a trade that is almost extinguished in Romania. Under these circumstances, the owners that are taking care of their horses will buy harness from import. But in order to acquire the harness, they have to pay tens of thousands of euros. Anyway, the owners of thoroughbreds afford to spend these sums. But what about those who cannot afford a harness from import? If there were local saddlers, all the accessories for "equipping" a horse would not be so hard to find. Day by day, the horse becomes more important in our society. Therefore, the saddlery could provide an important income for those who learn how to do it.

“PROJECT ROMANIA”

Starting with 2006, the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH) launched a project for improving horse welfare in Romania. The project will last until 2011. This initiative will revive the professions of farriery and saddlery.

Field research revealed that in Romania the horse breeders are confronted with multiple problems regarding the legs of the animal, infectious diseases, and the lack of a solid training for the farriers, as well as the disappearance of the saddlers. Moreover, the transportation of horses to slaughterhouses from other countries, like Hungary and Italy (countries where horse meat is eaten) is done in inhumane conditions. Hundreds of horses are cramped in trucks and sent on long

trips. Transportation conditions are very traumatic and some of the horses die on the way.

Following a tradition that lasted since 1927 (the year in which the organization was founded in Great Britain), the ILPH has initiated a project meant to improve the life conditions for the working horses. This initiative is called "Project Romania", it started in March 2006 and will last until 2011. The project has a budget of one million pounds, money that is collected from British donors.

Last year, the ILPH launched courses for professional training in farriery and saddlery in Targu Mures. This year, on the 1st of April, the ILPH has launched courses for professional training in farriery and saddlery in Iasi county. The course contains four modules, involving ten farriers and ten saddlers. Moreover, the ILPH will organize courses and seminars for vet students. These activities will contain demonstrations that reveal practical methods using real cases. The demonstrations will be performed by British experts. Debates regarding problems of legislation, horses' diseases, and the new legislation regarding the transportation of horses within EU will be launched in forums for discussions.

Upon completion of the five-year project, the ILPH will leave a sustainable infrastructure, and provide a solution to the working horse welfare problems in Romania. Also, the ILPH will ask the Romanian authorities to include farriery and saddlery on the list of trades and professions.

The modules of the project

"Project Romania" has four areas of focus: to improve veterinary skills and knowledge; to provide training to people within the farming communities across Romania in the areas of saddlery, farriery and management; undertaking a general public awareness campaign within the country to raise the profile of horse welfare; working with Romanian authorities to assist in developing an effective framework of legislation and enforcement to protect the welfare of the horse. The project has the support from the Ministries of the EU Integration, Agriculture, and Education, as well as the National Sanitary Veterinary Authority, the Delegation of the European Commission in Bucharest and the European Commission in Brussels. The project has also support from the British Veterinary Faculties, and from the British Government.

Quotation: "We came to Romania with high expectations, and we were welcomed with warmth and enthusiasm." – Jo White, from the ILPH