

Help Romanian Cities

David Kideckel

David Kideckel solicits our support in the cause of Romanian cities.

I draw your attention to a letter published by a number of anonymous Romanian intellectuals in the February 14, 1986 issue of the *Radio Free Europe Research Report* on the continuing destruction of Romania's cities. This campaign has become so extreme that it needs to be brought to the attention of a wider number of interested people, professional and lay. As the letter indicates, the wholesale transformations in Romanian urban and now rural communities represents an unprecedented assault on culture and history, let alone daily life. The degree of destruction has also prompted a significant outcry from the Romanian intellectual and academic community. An earlier letter protesting the destruction of Bucharest churches and monasteries was submitted to the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee by a number of highly regarded Romanian historians, archaeologists, and architects. It should also be noted that the plans for "remodeling" Romania's historic Transylvanian cities represents yet another incursion on the unique history and life-ways of Transylvania's German and Magyar-speaking populations.

As anthropologists who have worked and lived in Eastern Europe I feel we have a special responsibility to speak out against this cultural onslaught. With this in mind, I have composed the enclosed letter of concern to the Romanian government and its president, Nicolae Ceausescu, and request that those in the EEAG interested in co-signing it (or those with other opinions to express) get in touch with me within two weeks of receipt of this newsletter. My address is:

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His Excellency,
Nicolae Ceausescu
President, The Socialist Republic of Romania
General Secretary of The Romanian Communist Party

Dear President Ceausescu,

In recent months news of the wholesale transformation of Bucharest and of other Romanian cities and towns has reached the West and we are writing to express our great concern about these developments. In the information from Romania we have heard not only of the very ambitious plans for the development of national urban areas but also of the simultaneous destruction of important national historical monuments in Bucharest and elsewhere and the massive dislocation of people accompanying this development. The scope of these changes and their disastrous implications for Romanian and European culture force us to vigorously protest them and request that you, in the capacities of your offices, reconsider them.

We, the undersigned, are all social scientists who have lived and worked in Romania and throughout Eastern Europe. From our close contact with East European life, we have come to respect Romania's and her sister Socialist nations' rights to national independence and self-determination and to accept the legitimacy of planned social change. This letter is not meant to question these realities. As social scientists, we are particularly committed to the fulfillment of human potential and the improvement of the human condition, both which are ill-served by the massive destruction of the past and the hardships this has inflicted on the present. We are especially saddened and concerned about the actual and potential loss of the unique character of Romania's cities such as the medieval Transylvanian centers of Brasov, Sibiu, Fagaras, and Sighisoara.

As you, yourself, have emphasized repeatedly in the past, the history of the Romanian people and of its coinhabiting nationalities, is a most precious possession to be guarded and enhanced under the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and the state government. However, we feel these current policies of Party and state fail in this respect. The weakening of historical consciousness can only accompany the massive urban transformation and dislocation. The loss of hearth, home, and neighborhood deprives people of their sense of belonging to and

their willingness to participate in society. The removal of ages-old monuments strips people of their respect for their forbearers' achievements, their knowledge of themselves, and their identification with those responsible for this destruction.

Because of all these results we reiterate our opposition to these policies and urge you strongly to curtail them. The world notes with sadness this destruction. We will continue to raise our voices in hopes that it will soon cease.

Sincerely,