

More on Romanian Cities

Michael Sozan, Slippery Rock State University

Michael Sozan has sent us yet another indignant Letter. Given that the editors are in disagreement with much of its content and, particularly, its hostile and polemic tone, we have thought it best not to subject it to the usual editing procedure. All errors, both in fact and in presentation, are those of the author.

Dear David,

Your attempt to halt the cultural destruction of Transylvania is well intended. It would be counterproductive for me to suggest that such action should have been pursued through already existing channels and organizations (Madrid, Belgrad human rights congresses, Human Rights in Rumania, the UN, and last but not least through lobbying with Congress). Writing to his Excellency Nicolae Ceausescu is wasting 66¢ for the mail. The letter itself is too sophisticated for Ceausescu to understand what you really want. It is too general, and frankly, even I don't know what the Rumanian government is doing wrong at this time. The destruction of Transylvanian cities and the revision of historical monuments and architecture began after 1918, thus, it is not something new. You yourself in the letter acknowledge the government's (you say "Romania's") *legitimacy* of planned change. Well, I don't, and if you do you cannot bitch about architectural changes. Your letter says nothing about the physical deprivation of the Rumanian population, the food shortages and the intolerable standard of life - unheard of in Europe except during the war. Over and above all you failed to make emphatic mention of the unparalleled police terror in the entire nation, but especially in the Hungarian regions of Transylvania. While the world is anxiously and helplessly watching ethnocide in Rumania, you are talking about buildings and monuments. Hell with monuments, and frankly, I am not too concerned with churches and statues, whether they were built by Hungarians, Saxons or Jews, while the Securitate hangs people in parks and makes life not worth living.

What really puzzles me David, is your motivation. Why are you really doing this? Why are you writing letters to Ceausescu, when you know well that it is to absolutely no avail? Don't you remember Solzhenitsyn, Amalrik, Sacharov, Kundera, Konrad, etc, who tried this route in the USSR? Do you write it because of some sort of guilt, or sense of responsibility? Haven't you

been long enough in Rumania to know that private letters don't matter? Especially not from western scientists who have been disallowed from conducting fieldwork in that country. He'll accuse you of crying "sour grapes." So as you can clearly see I object to your *method* of protest, not to your intention, although, as I said above, to me people are more important than monuments.

I know you are a determined person, but I will risk giving you an advise. If you don't want your letter to be filed by Ceausescu under G (for garbage), write it to any (or all) of the following: *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine, the *Washington Post*. Such a move will have some affect on the Western public, and possibly on Congress, thereby making Ceausescu think twice - for a while -. Neither Americans nor W. Europeans have any idea of what Rumania is about (remember the LA Olympics, where they hailed the team?), and furthermore, they don't care. They even care less about their monuments or culture. However, they do care about any possible violation of human or minority wrights, especially if they are at the tune of the present Rumanian type. But even so, you cannot ignore the personality of the very man you are dealing with, Ceausescu. He is a flunky peasant cobbler who has unlimited power, but in a way nothing to lose, because he is further ahead than he ever dreamed he could be.

Any open, public and truly western action supported by social scientists is worthwhile for me and I'll sign and support. But private letters to a dictator are as futile as Chamberlain's letter of protest to Hitler after Munchen, and I am certainly not going to be a party to them. I hope you'll change your mind and come up with a much more viable alternative which I may support.

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