

ROMANIA

Save Roșia Montană

For many years ICOMOS has protested time and again against the plans of the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) (see *Heritage at Risk 2002/2003*, pp. 175/176, *Heritage at Risk 2004/2005*, pp. 201–203, and *Heritage at Risk*, pp. 128–130). The project, which in spite of worldwide protests has been pushed on, is threatening the Roman and medieval mines and the small mining town in a scenic cultural landscape. A huge artificial lake filled with cyanides would endanger the entire region.

ICOMOS has passed several resolutions regarding Roșia Montană's heritage values and the dangers faced by the site, i.e. Resolution no. 4 adopted by the 16th General Assembly, meeting in Québec, Canada, October 2008; Resolution no. 8 of the 15th General Assembly, meeting in Xi'an, China, October 2005; Resolution no. 15 adopted in Pécs, Hungary, between 22 and 27 May 2004; the resolution adopted by the 14th General Assembly, meeting at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in October 2003; Resolution no. 20 adopted by the 13th General Assembly, meeting in Madrid, Spain, in December 2002, and open letters written by former ICOMOS President, Michael Petzet, in June 2007, and by the current President, Gustavo Araoz, in November 2008, addressed to Romania's highest state authorities: President, Prime Minister, Ministers. Since 2003 the Romanian Academy, founded in 1866, has released several articles and reports and made repeated statements requesting the Romanian authorities not to approve the Roșia Montană mine proposal, and in 2004 Mr. Șerban Cantacuzino, the founder of Pro Patrimonio, first visited Roșia Montană and subsequently organised a seminar on Roșia Montană's cultural heritage values at London's Royal Geographical Society. Pro Patrimonio has since accompanied the 'Save Roșia Montană!' campaign via supporting projects, organising visits and hosting events.

As RMGC continues to try to implement its destructive project by all means and regardless of the devastating consequences for the environment and the cultural heritage, an expert meeting was held in Brussels on 30 November 2010 on the initiative of Pro Romania and under the patronage of Daciana Sârbu, member of the European Parliament. The following declaration sums up the results of this meeting:



Joint Declaration

At the initiative of Pro Patrimonio several experts in the fields of cultural and natural heritage convened in Brussels on November 30th 2010. The event enjoyed the patronage of Daciana Sârbu, MEP. Its purpose was to raise, once more, the issue of the historic mining site of Roșia Montană (the ancient Alburnus Maior), a unique and invaluable part of the universal heritage that is in danger of imminent extinction if a mine proposed by Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) is approved by the Romanian state.

The conference was a continuation of different initiatives taken by ICOMOS, Pro Patrimonio and the Romanian Academy; all of which have over the years expressed deep concern over the above mentioned project and thus asked the Romanian authorities, repre-



Roșia Montana, Roman tombstone (photo: M. Petzet)

sented in this case by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, to protect Roșia Montană's priceless heritage and not to permit the mine proposal.

Presentations made by archaeologist Horia Ciugudean and architects Ștefan Bălici and Virgil Apostol highlighted the exceptional value of the site. They presented the most important components of Roșia Montană's cultural heritage to explain why it can be recommended as a potential site for the World Heritage List: the vestiges of the most complex and extensive system of ancient gold mining currently known throughout the Roman Empire; a unique mining landscape inherited from the Roman, medieval, modern and contemporary epochs (until mid 20th cent.); the mining town – a reflection of the pre-industrial eras and last but not least, the singularity of ancient Alburnus Maior in world culture, due to the well-known Roman wax tablets discovered here in the eighteenth century.

An analysis of the biodiversity and natural habitats presented by botanist Dr. Andrew Jones (Great Britain) illustrated numerous rare plant species that are under strictest protection by means of national and European law. According to Dr. Jones the area's exceptional biodiversity, with habitats established from Daco-Roman times, survives to this day due to traditional farming methods that

are still practised. At the same time, the expert drew attention to the irreversibility of any destructive action.

Facing this rich diversity of values and the threat posed by the intentioned resumption of open pit mining, Prof. Zsolt Visy, delegated representative of ICOMOS to the conference, spoke about the numerous positions this organization made in support of saving Roşia Montană. He reiterated the calls for saving this site and for putting it under effective protection using national and international mechanisms. In addition, Prof. Visy made a timely exposition of the justified and necessary start to classify the Roşia Montană site into the World Heritage List. His arguments were based on the cultural values of the site which he then compared with UNESCO's classification criteria for World Heritage sites. As a result the exceptional qualities of the Roşia Montană site came out strongly.

The tragedy of the inhabitants of Roşia Montană – who have been abandoned by the public authorities (both on a local and national level) and who are faced with enormous pressures (financial and propaganda) and who have been prevented by town planning regulations from ensuring their own existence and who have consequently been reduced to poverty and forced to face lack of development opportunities, was strongly emphasized by various speakers. To contrast to this dramatic situation the economist Francoise Heidebroek (Belgium) and Mrs Maria Berza, a former vice-president of Pro Patrimonio, showed the economic development potential for the town and the whole area. The natural and cultural heritage of the site is the most important resource for regional sustainable development, understood in the terms established at the 1992 UN conference in Rio de Janeiro. Compared to the ideas promoted by the UN, the exclusively mercantile understanding of sustainable development as reflected in the presentations made by RMGC representatives was totally divergent.

The incompatibility of activities characteristic to large scale, short time, open-pit mining with the contemporary concept of sustainable development was also emphasized by Prof. Ionel Haiduc, the president of the Romanian Academy, and by the geo- & hydro-chemist Dr. Robert Moran (USA), author of the report "Review of the Roşia Montană Environmental Impact Assessment Report with a focus on water quality and water-related issues." Dr. Robert Moran drew attention to mystifications that the mining company used in the environmental impact assessment report (EIA Report) submitted to the Romanian authorities. Dr. Moran pointed out that the granting of an environmental permit for the mine would be unacceptable, given that the EIA report submitted by RMGC to the Romanian authorities contains, despite repeated warnings and disclosures, several expert conclusions which were modified without the authors' knowledge and agreement. Unacceptable no less would be the granting of an environmental permit for a mine proposal whose financial details such as details of the environmental bond / insurance and who calculated it; what were the major assumptions for the calculation; royalties, taxes and how they are disseminated; who will be the trustee; bond release terms have not been released for public scrutiny in a transparent manner. These examples highlighted the distorted ways that the mining company uses regarding the issue of liability and benefits promised for Romania.

During the interventions emphasis was also made on the unacceptability of approving such proposal without a transparent evaluation and presentation of the risks and social costs on the population; specifically the risks and social costs that are typically associated with such mine proposals and mono-industrial zones all around the world. And this happens while Romania has been recently and directly confronted with the amplitude of the true cost that such proposal carry; i. e. retraining the mining workforce after

mine closure, occupational diseases, both physical and psychological (which produce an increased number of people needing social assistance), the impact of involuntary resettlement and accelerated depopulation, increased delinquency and crime rates, the blocking and/or discouragement of business alternatives during mine life and tax breaks granted to the operator (failure to receive taxes for long periods of time that are necessary to restore and develop an area destroyed by mono-industrial operations).

The presentations made by RMGC representatives failed to offer credible arguments for the area's healthy and sustainable development. The economic and technical arguments by which they intended to defend the mine proposal did not at all elaborate any real protection for the historic and natural environment and even less so for the community.

The solutions proposed in the project are unacceptable. Replica (scale models) without any historical value are promoted as a compensation for the destruction of a cultural heritage of universal value; a gruesome landscape is intended to surround the few saved fragments of the site that are supposed to survive after a very significant part of the heritage has been wiped off the face of the earth. The idea advanced by the company, of a sustainable development subsequent to the mining project, and based on a landscape consisting of large toxic stockpiles and cyanide contaminated tailings, is lacking any credibility.

It is vital for the public to know that most of the objectives of the mine proposal are located over monuments and sites protected by Romanian law, and are therefore illegal. The very law that governs mining activities prohibits mining in locations where historical monuments or archaeological sites are placed (L. 85-2003, art. 11, par. 1). One concrete example was cited by the archaeologist Horia Ciugudean: the Roman mine galleries of the Orlea massif – a historical monument protected by law – would be totally destroyed by an overlapping quarry. Faced with such fundamental issues, the representatives of the mining company were not able to provide a coherent response.

The ideas put forward on cultural heritage by RMGC representatives and their employed consultant, the British architect Dennis Rodwell, were rejected by the cultural heritage specialists who attended the meeting. The speculative nature and lack of clear scientific arguments on the value of Roşia Montană's heritage as presented by Dennis Rodwell was rapidly dismissed as were also his distorted claims regarding the position of ICOMOS vis-à-vis Roşia Montană's heritage.

Pro Patrimonio, ICOMOS Romania, and the Romanian Academy in full knowledge of the exceptional and undisputed value of Roşia Montană's cultural and natural heritage, and completely disagreeing with the mining proposal, once more call upon the Romanian state authorities responsible for protecting Roşia Montană's national, European and universal heritage, namely the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage:

1. To protect the site according to relevant national legislation. The law is not applied in the case of Roşia Montană. If the laws were applied then open pit mining would since long have been abandoned and forgotten; and Roşia Montană would have benefited from its protected status and corresponding effects.

2. To ensure the strengthening of legal protection for the site of Roşia Montană, by promoting it to the World Heritage List. To this end it is necessary that the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage submits the file for Roşia Montană's inclusion

on Romania's Tentative List to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

3. To initiate a program to rescue and enhance Roșia Montană's heritage. The more the implementation of such program is delayed the more the heritage will be damaged. This reduces the chances of recovery for the Roșia Montană community that is already severely affected. Urgent and ambitious actions are imperative if one wishes to ensure Roșia Montană's existence as a community and a place of culture.

4. To redefine local and regional policies – which are currently exercised to the exclusive economic interests – and redirect them according to the principles of sustainable development; starting from a vision for the future, based on Roșia Montană's exceptional natural and cultural resources.

Roșia Montană has an immense historic, natural, cultural and not at least, human potential to become a model of sustainable development for Romania as a whole. The movement against Roșia Montană's destruction and for its sustainable development enjoys unprecedented support from Romania's civil society (the Romanian Academy, ICOMOS, Romania's Royal family, prestigious organizations and professional bodies, thousands of academics and researchers from Romania and beyond, public figures, representatives of religious denominations and petitions signed by tens of thousands of citizens and supporters). All these stakeholders can assume the responsibility of saving Roșia Montană's true values.

The fruition of this immense potential requires, however, the responsible involvement of Romania's state authorities (both local and national) in respecting and applying all relevant legislation proactively in order to stop the destructive actions that are already taking place and at the same time to initiate a rescue and recovery program.

The signatory organizations, in joining all those who believe in real chances for Roșia Montană, assure the Romanian state authorities of their dedicated support in achieving this goal.

Bucharest, 30 December 2010

Prof. Șerban Cantacuzino
President of Pro Patrimonio

Arch. Șerban Sturdza
Vice-President of Pro Patrimonio

Prof. Sergiu Nistor
President of ICOMOS Romania

Prof. Ionel Haiduc
President of the Romanian Academy

On Wednesday, 26 January 2011 the Romanian National Commission for Historical Monuments decided to recommend Roșia Montană for inscription on the World Heritage Tentative List for Romania. The decision was taken unanimously and forwarded to the Romanian Minister of Culture and National Heritage.



Drașeni (Draas) (photo: C. Machat)

Attempts to Safeguard the Transylvanian Saxons' Architectural Heritage – The Project “Fortresses, Rediscovered Treasures”

A large part of the Transylvanian Saxons' built heritage is particularly endangered due to social factors and processes that have influenced and drastically changed the life of the Saxon communities over the past two decades – not least the massive emigration of the Saxons from Romania in 1990–91. What has contributed to this degradation process – which has affected all types of buildings, from farmsteads in the villages where the population has almost entirely emigrated, to public buildings and fortified churches – is the lack of usage, resulting from the decrease or even disappearance of the Saxon communities, as well as the lack of regular maintenance and repair works, which are necessary to preserve any type of building.

Under these circumstances, many attempts to safeguard this heritage have been made, starting with the exhaustive recording and scientific inventory of all the 247 Saxon settlements, a project of the Cultural Council of the Transylvanian Saxons in Germany. Financed by the German Federal Government, it was implemented between 1991 and 1998 with Romanian specialists within the framework of a cooperation agreement between ICOMOS Germany, ICOMOS Romania and the Romanian National Commission for Historical Monuments. Based on the project results, in 1999 Romania succeeded in convincing the World Heritage Committee to add to the World Heritage site of Biertan (inscribed in 1993) five other villages with fortified churches, thus representing the different historical regions of German settlements in Transylvania. However, besides these six fortified churches in good condition and protected by their UNESCO status, another 150 have survived. 40 of them are in good condition, while most of the others have very different levels of maintenance, their condition varying from mediocre to bad: ten were sold in the meantime to other communities and ten are in a ruinous state. Thus, a large part of these architectural ensembles show various degrees of damage, from minor decay to complete collapse. Even if the church building as part of the ensemble is usually in relatively good condition, the annexes – defence



Moșna (Meschen) (photo: C. Machat)



Toarcla (Tarteln) (photo: C. Machat)



Valea Viilor (Wurmloch) (photo: C. Machat)

Homorod (Hamruden) (photo: C. Machat)



walls and towers, auxiliary structures – are often highly damaged, many of them at risk of disappearing altogether. Acts of vandalism or theft, usually affecting old furnishings such as altars, have also contributed to the destruction of the built environment. In extreme cases it was and still is necessary to transfer the valuable elements to safer locations.

Among other initiatives, an important step to safeguard this heritage was the creation in 2007 of the “Coordination Bureau for Fortified Churches” within the Superior Consistory of the Lutheran Church A. C. in Sibiu. The initiative and help has come from the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ, part of the German Federal Ministry of Development, since 2011 signing under the name GIZ, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), which at the request of the Cultural Council of the Transylvanian Saxons in Germany started in 2000 with consultancy activities for conservation works inside the historic city of Sibiu.

The aim of the Coordination Bureau was to develop an emergency intervention programme to safeguard these churches, including basic maintenance and repair works, similar to the maintenance work performed for centuries by the Saxon communities. The first small projects focussed on preventing further progression of decay, stopping degradation caused by water infiltration, but also on ensuring an adequate use of the historic buildings, opening them up to tourism, and, last but not least, raising funds. The larger project developed in 2008 – Fortresses, Rediscovered Treasures: Sustainable Development of Centre Regions through Valorisation of the Tourist Potential of the Saxon Fortified Churches in Transylvania – has recently been accepted and included in the Regional Operational Programme of Structural Funds from the European Union – Conservation and Sustainable Valorisation of the Cultural Heritage and Creation/Modernisation of Related Infrastructure.

18 objects have been selected and included in the project, all of them historic buildings and ensembles of national importance: the fortified churches of Atel/Hetzeldorf, Apold/Trappold, Archita/Arkedden, Bunesti/Bodendorf, Cincsor/Kleinschenk, Cloasderf/Kloosdorf, Crit/Deutschkreuz, Curciu/Kirtsch, Dealul Frumos/Schönberg, Ighisul Nou/Eibesdorf, Malancrav/Malmkrog, Mesendorf/Meschendorf, Netus/Neithausen, Stejaris/Propstdorf, Valchid/Waldhütten, and also the former Cistercian abbey of Carta/Kerz, the former castle of the Graves in Garbova/Urwegen and the Lutheran church in Sebes/Mühlbach.

Given the fact that all these sites show similar types of decay, similar technical solutions have been proposed, primarily traditional techniques to repair and reconstruct the elements in accordance with the original ones. The proposed works are not meant to be a complex conservation of these ensembles. Instead, they are strictly limited to stopping the degradation and carrying out the maintenance and repair works necessary for the buildings’ long-term preservation. Hence, works are planned for the roof structure, roof covering, water drainage system, masonry, plaster and joinery, interior elements, enceinte layout, protection against dampness of walls, etc. Considering that funds have been provided by a programme involving tourism, measures for a better tourist infrastructure in these ensembles have also been included.

European funding was approved in October 2010, and the works will be carried out over three years, the completion being planned for the end of 2013. Hope is that the successful implementation of this project will inspire future projects that can profit from the experience gathered in the meantime.

Christoph Machat
ICOMOS Germany



Drăușeni (Draas), fortified tower showing lack of maintenance
(photo: C. Machat)



Drăușeni (Draas), church interior in a state of neglect
(photo: C. Machat)