

Journalists Visit Romania

By Jim Thompson

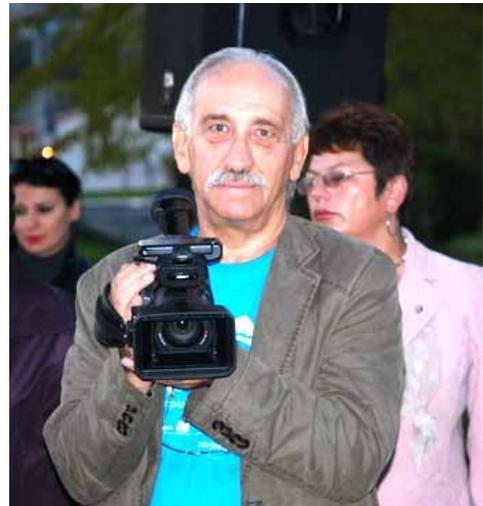
As you know, many members of The Alliance gathered in Romania a few weeks ago. It was a wonderful event and very different from the usual meetings and gatherings involving FIJET.

It was a week free of politics, meetings and intrigue. There was no complaining about schedules, hotel accommodations or meeting times. There were no ceremonies, boring speeches or demands on our time.

Instead, it was a gathering of journalists with time to exchange ideas, get to know about the many wonders of Romania, talk about our profession and discuss ways of cooperating in the future.

Our host, Victor Radulescu, did an excellent job of organizing the event that included a near perfect blending of interesting locations, information for articles and meetings with officials. Aside from a few minor occasions, we managed to stay with the schedule without feeling pushed or pressured and without insulting our hosts by not arriving as promised.

In a testament to his skills as an organizer and manager, Victor managed to show us the very best of Gorj County and southern Romania. He did all of this while juggling a demanding schedule of producing and editing two hour long programs for The Money Channel (Romanian Television). He and Iulia Mladin worked constantly to produce an excellent program on our visit and on the current workings of the Romanian tourism efforts.



A special thanks goes to Victor for his kindness, his efficiency and for all of his efforts!



We began our visit (October 10-16) at the wonderful Phoenicia Grand Hotel in Bucharest. Located in the Baneasa Area and not far from the city center, Phoenicia Grand Hotel is an elegant, welcoming hotel. With 348 rooms and apartments, four restaurants, seven conference rooms, bars, night club, billiard club, spa center, beauty shop, playground, large car park, free internet in all areas of the hotel, it has all of the amenities a business or personal traveler expects while still offering the feeling of being a guest in a private home.

On our first day following arrival, we departed for Gorj County where we were welcomed by the Mayor of Polovragi, Mr. Stefan Fasuiescu, members of APPT Gorj, Group of flute ensemble, „Cheile Oltetului". The traditional offering of bread and salt – along with some excellent wine and local spirits – made us feel like members of the family.

Our first day also included a visit to Polovragi Monastery, where we were treated to a wonderful lunch, a visit to the Oltetului Gorges and The Polovragi Cave (or Cave of the God Zamolxes) – „Charmed Camp" and a stop at Monastery Camaraseasca Tg-Carbutesti in Tg-Jiu.

Accommodations were in the beautiful Anna Hotel.



A former Roman settlement, the city of Targu Jiu lies at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, on the banks of the river Jiu. Inhabited since Paleolithic times, the region of western Oltenia was of strategic importance since the time of the Romans because it provided direct access, through one of the most spectacular passes in the Carpathians, to present-day Transylvania, the heart of the former Dacian Kingdom.

The Jiu River valley was also the scene of heavy fighting during World War I. Here, in a monumental ensemble called “the Hero’s Avenue”, Constantin Brancusi (one of the most influential modern sculptors of the 20th century, who was born near Targu Jiu, in Hobita) created three sculptures as a memorial to the 8,500 Romanian soldiers, women and children (the entire population of Targu-Jiu) who died defending the Jiu Valley from the advancing German army on October 14, 1917

The three sculptures are placed on a mile-long (1.5 km) east-west axis that runs through the heart of the city.



The **Silence Table** or “Masa Tacerii”. Made from limestone, it features twelve chairs surrounding a table.

The **Kiss Gate** or “Poarta Sarutului” is made out of marble, features a kiss motif on the gate pillars. The entire structure is supported on a steel axle, set in a concrete foundation of five square meters.

The **Endless Column** or “Coloana Infinitului”. The column stacks 17

rhomboidal cast iron modules in a 30-meter high column. The modules, completed in 1938 and restored in 1964, were made in the central workshop of Petroșani.



The interpretation of the work is that the hero takes his final meal with his family before the battle at the Table of Silence. He walks along the Alley of Chairs – where the chairs represent people who did not take part in the war – to the Gate of the Kiss where he gives his final

embrace to loved ones. After or during the battle, his soul goes to God from the Holy Apostles Church (which is on the axis). The endless Column represents eternal gratitude for their sacrifice.

In a tribute to the heroes who fell here, and to the artist and citizens of Romania, our group took the long walk from the Table of Silence to the Endless Column. It was a moving, emotional and spiritual experience. To our surprise and delight, we were greeted by local school children and city officials when we arrived at the Endless Column.

Targu Jiu is also the capital of Gorj County, a region of rolling meadows, grassy hills and mountain scenery with plenty of natural and cultural attractions to explore. Tiny towns and villages dot the county, and contain some marvelous traditional architecture. Several spa towns and monasteries high in the mountains make for popular excursions.

Dinner was at the Lexi Star Hotel where we were entertained by a local folk group and a special appearance by panpipe player Stefan Popescu, a participant in a recent edition of the show, "The Romanians have talent".

The next day, we were off to visit the memorial house (birth place) of Constantin Brancusi. It was a special stop where we saw how he lived and were even greeted warmly by one of his relatives.

A special lunch at Villa Ursu Tismana was followed by a visit to the Tismana Monastery and a drive to Sohodolului



Keys - to "Nări" (nostrils) and "Inel" (ring).

During World War II, more than 240 tons of gold were hidden from invading the Nazi army in a cave near the Tismana Monastery. The gold – which was kept secret until 1947 – was guarded by security agents disguised as monks. When it was removed in 1947, it was transported by guards masquerading as peasants in horse carts and covered with wood and grass.

Dinner was again at the Restaurant Lexi Star.

The highlights of the next day were a visit to the Lainici Monastery and the mausoleum of World War I heroine, Ecaterina Teodoroiu.



Ecaterina left her job as a teacher and joined the Romanian army as a nurse in 1916. Inspired by the patriotism of the wounded soldiers and the death of her brother, she decided to become a front-line soldier, something very usual for women of that era. She soon proved her worthiness as a warrior.

She was taken prisoner but managed to escape by killing two, or, perhaps, three German soldiers. In November, she was wounded and hospitalized, but came back to the front where she was soon decorated, advanced in rank to Second Lieutenant and given the command of a 25-man platoon. She died on the battle field on August 22, 1917. For her bravery, she was awarded the Military Virtue Medal, 1st Class.

Following lunch at the monastery, we made the short drive to Curtisoara where we saw the Curtisoara Village Museum with a stop at George Tatarascu House.



Before our return to Bucharest and the hospitality of the Phoenicia Grand hotel, we met with officials of Gorj County and the Major of Targu Jiu at Maura Hall of the County Council.

The final day of the event included a tour of the House of Parliament, Cotroceni Museum, Museum Village and Old Town along with a delightful final dinner at the hotel.

Once again, our thanks goes to Victor for organizing the trip, the the Phoenicia Grand Hotel, Hotel Anna and to the officials and people of Gorj County.

Switched at Birth?



Am I crazy or does the statue of Gheorghe Dinica (located in the Old Town of Bucharest) look like our friend and brother, Victor Radulescu?

Gheorghe Dinică (January 1, 1934 – November 10, 2009) is known as one of the greatest Romania actors of all time.

Dinică showed an early interest in acting, being part of different amateur theater troupes since he was 17. In 1957, he entered The National Institute of Theatre and Cinematography Art in Bucharest. He graduated in 1961, already drawing public attention with the role of Inspector Goole in the graduation play [An Inspector Calls](#). Since then, Gheorghe Dinică performed for some of the most important Romanian theatres:

- 1961-1967 *Comedy Theatre*, Bucharest
- 1968-1969 [Bulandra Theatre](#), Bucharest
- since 1972 [I.L.Caragiale National Theatre](#), Bucharest

His most well-known movies are *Mastodontul* (1975), *Through the Ashes of the Empire* (1976), *Revenge* (1978), *Why Are the Bells Ringing, Mitica?* (1981), *The Contest* (1982), *The Stone Cross* (1993), *The Earth's Most Beloved Son* (1993), *Philanthropy* (2002), *Taxi or Limousine* (2003), *Sweet swan of death* (2003)

Dinică was also a Romanian director and popular film actor, thus acting mostly in Romanian films. Like the French actor [Alain Delon](#), Dinică refused to act in movies produced in the [United States](#).

Since 2002, Dinică was an honorary member of the society of *I.L.Caragiale National Theatre*. He is also an honorary citizen of the city of Bucharest. He was awarded the "*Faithful Service*" Order in the *Grand Officer* class.

(Thanks, Victor, for having a sense of humor!)