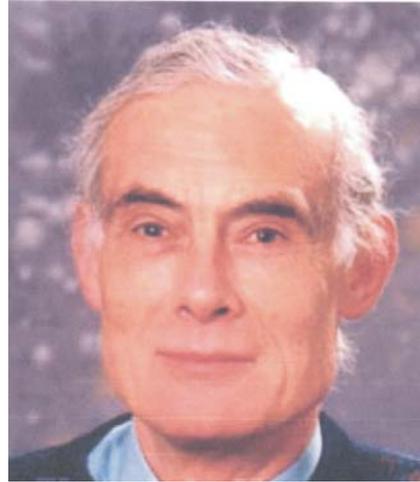


MEMORIAL DAVID TURNOCK



On September 15, 2012, the family of the late British geographer David Turnock, alongside his colleagues from the University of Leicester, Department of Geography, held a commemoration of the man who had spent forty years of his life with this institution. Since 1967, when David Turnock paid his first visit to Romania, he strived to get an insight into this country, its land and people, the result being reported in a number of 40 volumes and over 300 articles. For me, he was the most competent British geographer on Romania, and the titles of *Doctor Honoris Causa* granted by the Universities of Timișoara (2000) and “Al. I. Cuza” of Iași (2009) do but little award the abnegation of he who was so deeply attached to Romania.

In memoriam Prof. David Turnock, who left us in a tragic car accident, the Editorial Board of *Revue Roumaine de Géographie/Romanian Journal of Geography*, whose member he was for a period of 20 years, is publishing the text of David Turnock’s *Address* to the “Al. I. Cuza” University Senate in Iași (March 21, 2009), in response to a meritorious *Laudatio*, as well as the speech on *David Turnock in Romania* given at the Memorial by Șerban Dragomirescu, member of the Romanian National Committee of Geography.

ADDRESS TO THE “ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY SENATE

(Iași, March 26, 2009)

I am grateful to the University for its award and especially to Professor Alexandru Ungureanu for his *laudation* which shows a remarkable preoccupation with my activity in Romania which I could never have remembered myself. In this brief response I would like to situate my activity in the wider framework of U.K. geography that has always maintained a substantial interest in Europe despite its prime concerns with areas of British settlement around the world. In particular, I would refer to a period of some fifty years when regional specialisation in Human Geography was an important aspect of our discipline: from the 1930s, when Human Geography became emancipated from physical determinism to the 1980s, when computing and the Internet provided instant access to regional data

and illustration. East-Central Europe certainly beckoned in the 1930s when the Le Play Society (inspired by the famous French sociologist) began to study the rural-urban transition in several places, including the Romanian Carpathian districts of Argeş and Harghita. The results – published just before the Second World War – were certainly an inspiration when I was starting to develop my own research activity in the 1960s. In fact these researches were probably the most notable original works produced by British geographers on Romania at this time, although there were some other studies that “reported” on the Balkan region in general, at the time the Ottoman Empire was experiencing its terminal decline and new independent nations were emerging.

The political situation is also significant as a context to my own activity from the 1960s because our perceptions of Europe at the time were dominated by the Iron Curtain and the “Cold War” between rival military and economic organisations. We had simplistic impressions of a monolithic Soviet bloc where Human Geography was bound up primarily with Five Year Plans and production achievements measured against the 1938 level. Lecturing on Europe in my first university job, I needed a broader documentation, but I also wanted photographic material at a time when colour slides were essential for illustration. There was little expertise to draw on for Romania because most specialists had been drawn to Hungary and Poland by bilateral geographical collaboration (developing only later with Romania); though some British geographers came here including Tom McGlynn – who did some original research on the colonisation of the Bărăgan – and Richard Osborne from the Nottingham University. Recently there has been some research carried out in Britain about post-war geographical activity in East Central Europe; highlighting the rather exceptional nature of travel in the Soviet sphere given the “closed” mentality of the time that inspired a feeling of imaginary “risk” of almost lunar proportions. In fact, visas were easy enough to obtain while internal travel and subsistence was facilitated by affordable accommodation and public transport, along with the “autoservire” syndrome and mass catering.

I visited East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia on a brief Easter holiday in 1964. And then I had the chance of visiting Yugoslavia with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (as a tour leader) in 1965 and acquired a good stock of material there – though I had to be careful when photographing steam trains. Romania now attracted me because of its Carpathian terrain (which I had already sampled in the Zakopane area of Poland) but also its geopolitical position – linked with the Danube, the Carpathians and the Black Sea) – and its history as a nation developing from a deeply-rooted past extending back way beyond the Slavonic migrations. There was also a natural affinity between two countries at the opposite extremes of the Roman Empire. It was a very warm summer when we set off in July 1967 and we were told in Vienna that it would be “hot” in Budapest and “hotter” in Bucharest! But we arrived without mishap in Oradea and proceeded to Cluj before going farther east to Moldavia. The stopping train to Vatra Dornei brought us into contact with the “Pioneers” from Botoşani returning home from their “tabără” in Transylvania (with “Simon Templar” evidently a cult figure at the time); while an epic bus journey on the then unmodernized road through the Bistriţa gorge from Vatra Dornei to Piatra Neamţ produced an unscheduled “pauză” – to change a wheel – during which a young man introduced himself as a party activist from Iaşi. He insisted on entertaining us in Piatra Neamţ and wanted us to go with him to Iaşi: an invitation we reluctantly had to decline owing to alternative plans to see Bucharest and Braşov before returning home.

However, the visit was highly successful and we were impressed by a country that was approaching a century of industrialisation (since independence) with striking evidence of rapid urbanisation as well as rural tradition. Communist stereotypes were not as pervasive as we had anticipated and the friendly communal spirit on the bus journey from Vatra Dornei made us feel very much at home. And a few years later – after I had decided to start researching on Romania – I was able to make my first visit to this historic city. I had now made contact with the geographical establishment and was encouraged by Professor Vintilă Mihăilescu in Bucharest to come here to meet Professor Ioan Şandru who, I am delighted to hear, is still in residence at the tender age of 96! At this time I was also

in touch with younger geographers of my own age, especially Șerban Dragomirescu in Bucharest and – here in Iași – Alexandru Ungureanu: I am delighted that they are both here today.

And so my activity has continued with several subsequent visits to Iași – perhaps most notably as one of Professor Șandru’s guests in connection with a regular “summer school” programme. But this is only one part of a diverse range of experiences arising from travel opportunities facilitated by research grants (especially from the British Academy and the Economic & Social Research Council) and the cultural programme of the British and Romanian Academies; not to mention my leadership of some holiday tours and field courses. And now – five years into retirement – the “romance” with Romania is as strong as ever and, while this is due to the successful beginnings in the 1960s, there are three other considerations which maintained the momentum. First, there has been good cooperation with Romanian colleagues despite the obvious constraints of the earlier years. Apart from the contacts already mentioned I was fortunate to enjoy the friendship of a soil scientist turned geomorphologist – Nicolae Muică – who sadly passed away in Bucharest in 2008. We travelled extensively in the Carpathians and made contact with geographers across the country, including Nicolae Hillinger in Reșița and Gheorghe Ploaie in Râmnicu Vâlcea, while among the younger geographers I would refer to Remus Crețan in Timișoara with whom a close collaboration has developed in recent years. Second, Romania has furnished a succession of absorbing research themes providing ample scope for presenting the geography to a Western audience in a constructive manner (when our media is often overloaded with trivial and inaccurate material that rather misrepresents the situation in transition states). I have researched some historical topics (such as the evolution of the railway network and the spatial industrialisation process) and others with contemporary interest, including economic restructuring post-1989 (which has generated several volumes to-date) and rural studies in various Carpathian areas where the importance of agriculture has been reasserted by deindustrialisation. These latter preoccupations would obviously not have been possible without the sudden changes at the end of 1989 which has eventually resulted in Romania and UK finding themselves once more in a grand European organisation. But thirdly, and most crucially, I have enjoyed the support of my wife Marion who is here today just as she was with me on the first tour nearly 42 years ago. She has found her own interests in Romanian culture and gastronomy; not to mention social assistance projects especially in the Subcarpathian district of Pătârlagele. And so, our Romanian project continues with the encouragement that this generous award amply provides. We may now be working towards a conclusion but, if we follow the example of Professor Șandru, we may still be at the beginning.

David Turnock

DAVID TURNOCK AND ROMANIA

(Leicester, September 15, 2012)

In 1967, David Turnock, then a young lecturer at Aberdeen University, made an informal visit to Romania after having toured the other Central and East-European countries, viewing things with the eye of a professional geographer. Ever since those early beginnings he felt a special and profound attachment to Romania and its people.

What justifies my assertion is his *Address to Laudatio*, occasioned by the *Doctor honoris causa* Award received from the Senate of the “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași in March 2009. I shall further quote from his acceptance reply: “Romania attracted me because of its Carpathian terrain (which I had already sampled in the Zakopane area of Poland), but also its geopolitical position – linked with the Danube, the Carpathians and the Black Sea, and its history, as a nation developing from a deeply-rooted past extending back way beyond the Slavonic migration. There was a natural affinity between two countries of the opposite extremes of the Roman Empire.”

I wish to add that in the years of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, there was a short spell in Romania when life was not that unbearable, despite the oppressive totalitarian regime.

As a matter of fact, David Turnock's endeavours to get an insight into the contrastive reality of this country were in line with the growing interest shown also by other British geographers of the time, each of them, either individually or as leaders of student groups, for instance, Lord L.P. Kirwan, President of the Royal Geographical Society (London), Professors R.H. Osborne (Nottingham), J.F.E. Hamilton of London School of Economics, Th.H. Elkins (Brighton), F.W. Carter (London) and others, came to Romania for documentation purposes and for establishing contacts.

After 40 years, in a comparative attempt, David made a social-geographical monographic study of two representative Carpathian villages, the same as those surveyed by the British Le Play Society in the 1930s. The study of the Romanian rural communities remained over the years a permanent research theme in his prodigious activity.

From the early beginnings of David's activity in Romania I recall the moment of his first arrival in Bucharest when I, being absent from town to fieldwork, my parents kindly agreed to meet him at the railway station. Since they were familiar with the late 19th-century English novel, and the movies presenting its plots, they expected to see an English gentleman resembling somehow the film image, that is to say, having at least an umbrella about him. But David, dressed like a conventional European traveller, passed them by unnoticed and left the station arriving in front of our house before my parents did. Subsequently, the traditional English five o'clock tea and cakes became customary with us whenever he, sometimes accompanied by Marion, would pay us a visit while in Bucharest.

His staunchness, doubled by an exceptional memory, working capacity and stubbornness to always discover new facts, characterised David's entire activity, he being a keen observer of the ever-changing geographical reality. Any of his studies, as single author or co-author, are noteworthy for the wealth of references.

Obviously, his scientific and sentimental interest for Romania, as well as his almost yearly visits under co-operation agreements, did not escape the vigilance of the so-called *Securitate* forces. Any fieldtrip was carefully watched from a distance by the "boys". I remember, for instance, our trip in the Retezat Mountains (part of the so-called Transylvanian Alps) in the mid-1980s. The route led us onto an isolated forestry road at about 2,000 m altitude. Our Romanian Land Rover (ARO) was followed by a more powerful car, a treatment, which at the time, was reserved to all Western foreigners...

From the wide range of topics David used to tackle (and I assure you that nearly all human geography topics of historical, social and economic relevance were covered), I wish to recall his interest in making known the outstanding Romanian geographers oppressed by the totalitarian regime. It was the case of the late Professor Vintilă Mihăilescu, the tutor of many generations of Romanian geographers, myself included, and a notable adviser of foreign geographers, among whom our distinguished late friend. The Professor initiated the publication of bio-bibliographical references of leading Romanian geographers in the annual journal *Geographers – Bio-bibliographical Studies* of the IGU Commission for the History of Geographical Thought, presided over by Prof. T.W. Freeman, from Manchester University. It was David's merit to have continued publishing V. Mihăilescu's work after his death in 1978.

David Turnock's endeavours opened the way for many young Romanian geographers to be admitted to foreign programmes, such as the Erasmus Programme, and later to publish in foreign specialist journals. He was also the initiator of the first three Romanian-British bilateral geographical colloquia. On his initiative, in the 1990s, a special issue of *GeoJournal* was devoted to *The Geography in New Romania*.

Worth-recalling is David's generous assistance to the elaboration of the *National Atlas of Romania* in the 1970s, he having supervised *de bono* the English version of its texts and legends (basically 76 sheets with over 450 maps and charts), thus warranting language accuracy to this work.

The same generosity was shown by the Turnock couple when at fieldwork in the tectonic curvature area of the Carpathians and the adjacent Subcarpathian Hills. The population of this area (one of the poorest country-sides in Romania), exposed to major earthquakes, floodings and landslides, had been experiencing the effects of natural disasters. So, it was here, at Pătârlagele Town and in its surroundings that, after 1989, the couple distributed supplies (medicine for the local hospital, toys, school items, clothes for the disabled a.o.). As a matter of fact, in recent years, the locality of Pătârlagele has become a key-word for the geographical British-Romanian co-operation relations. The book on this area (*Settlement of the Pătârlagele Depression*) Romanian Subcarpathians, Lap Lambert Publishing AG, Saarbrücken, 2010), thoroughly investigated with the late Nicolae Muică, his old fieldwork companion, covers numerous topics of historical geography, toponymy, demography, social-geography, as well as ethno-geographical aspects.

Several awards have sanctioned David's authority, yet sadly enough, not acknowledged as much as he would have deserved, nor by the Romanian professional bodies either. I had the privilege to be present at the universities of Timișoara and Iași, where David was awarded the *doctor honoris causa* title in 2000 and 2009, respectively. I also remember one of the several Romanian–British history seminars (this one held in Iași) which David used to attend, and the interest aroused by David's paper on Sir Charles Hartley, who in the second half of the 19th century designed the Sulina Arm, the main transport route across the Danube Delta. Some leading Romanian historians and geographers, members of the Romanian Academy (Cornelia Bodea, Paul Cernovodeanu, Dinu C. Giurescu, Alexandru Zub, and Alexandru Ungureanu), recognized David's merits as a perfect interpreter of history, as well.

Noteworthy, he was also a remarkable collector of Romanian stamps.

To conclude, I wish to underline that Professor David Turnock's entire scientific activity relating to Romania reflects seriousness, insight, extreme correctness, and above all sincere and disinterested attachment to the Romanian people and geographers alike.

He has made an outstanding contribution to the history of Romanian geography in the last 50 years.

Șerban Dragomirescu

