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mytripblog



# *Romania is incredible.*

by Chris Murphy

I know that sounds like a sappy, generic statement, but I am honestly struggling to put into words my experience. I have spent the last twenty minutes typing, deleting, and typing again the introduction to this entry, and nothing else seems to summarize my three months spent in Romania.



For the past eight years, Romania has been the number one place I have wanted to go, and there has been no rational reason behind it. But when my heart wants something that doesn't make sense, I go for it! After graduating from business school this past December, I decided that I would go to Romania and volunteer for a few businesses instead of just "seeing the world". After all, if you are just traveling without investing, you are impacting no one but yourself.

People in business here are quite intelligent, but there is plenty of room for growth, especially in marketing, advertising, HR, CR, brand image, etc. For the volunteer looking to teach new concepts and get some hands-on experience implementing business ideas, this project is a fantastic fit (and a great resume builder). Expect to take initiative on projects, as many business owners are very busy. For the first month, my focus was in marketing, brand image, and core values, which I used to develop recommendations for a few businesses.

Over the following two months, I had the opportunity to develop a speaking series called The Power of People and teach businesses & college students on the importance of HEART for businesses in motivation, leadership, employee management, and customers. In addition, I taught high school students how our passions and creativity can be used to solve problems in our communities. (Big thanks to Ali here for scheduling all of my events and putting up with my sarcasm and crazy personality!)

The response to my speaking was more than I could have hoped for, or expected. Students here are BRILLIANT, and hungry to learn new concepts that a traditional education doesn't teach. As a whole, I truly feel that I have learned more from them than they have from me. Also, the businesses individuals I had the opportunity to speak with were eager to learn and also question the concepts I shared; which created open forums that resulted in mutual growth.

I had no idea what to expect in Romania, and was blown away by how incredible the people are in Brasov (not to mention the buildings, mountains, etc). I encourage anyone to get involved here, but especially if you have knowledge in business and enthusiasm for people.

If you come with a desire to work hard and get invested into a business, I guarantee you will have an incredible experience. Don't volunteer with the expectations of only teaching, but also being taught, because the people here have much to give.

On the road less traveled lies the greatest opportunity for impact, and the opportunity for impact in Brasov is tremendous.

INSPIRE.

## Journalism Updates

### *Celebrating 175 years of the Transylvanian Gazette*

By Tom Lynas

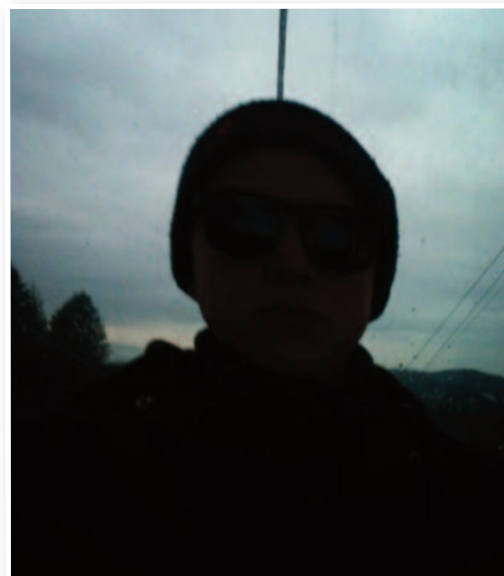
On a sunny spring morning at the start of March, Brasov's Casa Muresenilor hosted a conference to mark 175 years since the first publication of the 'Gazeta Transilvania'. The event was attended by a number of students and enthusiasts of local history, and a number of experts took turns in speaking. The topics ranged widely: from recollections of all the newspaper's 'phases' to the healthy debate surrounding its role as a historical source. A common theme though was the passion with which the lecturers gave their speeches, and the conference ran well over schedule.

Ovidiu Sava, the historian curating the event, opened by introducing the audience to some basic ideas about the paper's foundation. He explained that the launch of the Gazeta Transilvania on 12th March 1838 was a crucial development in Romanian social and cultural life. People from the Brasov area understood the existing German and Hungarian newspapers, he said, but were pleased and proud to be able to read something in their mother tongue.

Mr Sava also stressed the gazette's revolutionary and pioneering nature: its artistic supplement, 'Foaie pentru minte, inima si literatura', allowed Transylvanian writers unprecedented exposure, while its editorial was one of the first to feature letters written to the paper. Indeed, the curator noted, the paper was within twenty years of its foundation less of a resume of national matters, and more of an opinionated publication, allowing increasing scope for debate about local issues.

Another speaker told the audience that by 1880 the Gazeta Transilvania was distributed throughout the provinces of Romania, and that despite competition from newly created journals produced in Iasi, was in sufficient demand by 1888 to be printed five times weekly. Such was its importance, she said, that foreign correspondents regularly sent international reports to the editorial columns. However, despite its significance the gazette continued to advertise local businesses and products. A slideshow of these adverts showed some organizations that still have a presence in Brasov today.

Another topic covered by the experts was the massive changes Gazeta Transilvania underwent between 1945 and 1989. Re-launched under the communist regime as 'Drum Nou' the articles, like all those published in Romania, suffered from massive censorship. Fortunately, related Eduard Huidan, the number of journalists who remained at the paper meant that, at least initially subtle criticisms could be made of the repressive government. He pointed out the supposedly random placement of old 'Gazeta' articles in early issues of Drum Nou.





The section, called 'Punctul Pei I' would draw obvious parallels between the past and present government, and could be easily understood as a protest. At first, the regime's censors were less meticulous than the former editors of the newspaper in checking the content of the writing, but on realizing the subversive intent of these pages slowly phased them out. Still, the rebellious spirit of the writers was not quashed by this, Mr Huidan argued, as 'Drum Nou' had a central role in the successful campaign for the reestablishment of Christmas in 1967-8.

Nevertheless, by the 1980's journalists felt so intimidated that it was increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from fiction in their writing, and the collapse of the Ceaucescu government was celebrated as a tremendous liberation for all forms of the written word. A former editor recalled, quite emotionally, the pride felt when 'Gazeta Transilvania' had begun to print again on December 23rd 1989.

As the conference drew to a close, the audience's attention was drawn to the publication's future. A number of the speakers had been closely involved with the newspaper before it closed in 2000 and made their displeasure known.

They showed little sympathy for the present government's refusal to help fund the 'Gazeta' - a piece of UNESCO-certified heritage, which had run for nearly 6000 issues. It was pointed out that in 2005 France had spent €280,000,000 securing the ownership of prominent broadsheets like Le Monde and Le Figaro against foreign takeovers. Romania's failure to follow suit, claimed the most recent editor, tears welling in his eyes, damaged the integrity of the nation's journalists.

Although the conference was in some ways a sad occasion to behold, it was impossible not to be impressed by the glorious journalistic legacy that has been left to Brasov. 'Gazeta Transilvania' was clearly an important mechanism for protecting the regions customs and culture. Though its ideas are still visible to the world in an online form, its disappearance has clearly left a creative void. Afterwards I understood for the first time the true importance of the work that new magazine's like 'Satul' do; and I felt all the more privileged to be continuing, in a strange way, the work of the Muresianu family, nearly two centuries on.



## Drama Update

### *SPEAK OUT Competition* by Alex Perry

*I* became a Projects Abroad volunteer in Brasov in order to use drama to improve the spoken English of children. During my time in Romania I have been surprised by the high standard of English that the school kids have displayed. For example, it was my privilege to be invited to judge a 'Speak Out' contest.

Speak Out is a national contest that encourages children of all ages to achieve a strong grasp of the English language. I judged a regional heat that was held at the Andrei Saguna School in Brasov. Each child was challenged to produce a five minute monologue discussing their values and the values of their society. What I saw surpassed 'textbook' English. They showed a mastery of English slang and humour and express some very complex ideas. The kids did a lot more than simply speak well. They used drama, costumes, assistants and multi-media techniques to give exceptionally polished presentations.

I have seen teenagers in England (where I am from) perform similar exercises. All of the competitors in Brasov achieved a higher standard than their average English counterpart. In England, French and German are the most commonly taught second languages. I have never encountered a 16 year old English child who could give a monologue in either French or German to the standard that these Romanian children achieved in English.

During my short time (three weeks) in Brasov, I have encountered children who are hungry to learn and teachers who are ambitious about what the kids can achieve. For example, I was pleasantly surprised when a group of 11-12 year olds asked us to increase the number of drama sessions with us. The children, my host family, the Projects Abroad staff, my fellow volunteers and the people of Romania have made a positive impression on me. They have showed good humour, warmth and helpfulness and have helped make Brasov a home from home for me.







## Telephoning in Romania

Having difficulty telephoning in – or to – Romania?

### **THIS GUIDE SHOULD HELP**

When phoning a Brasov number from a Brasov number, use the prefix 0268/0368 followed by the six digit local number.

When phoning a Brasov number from out of county, dial 0268 before the six digit number

When dialling a mobile phone number from within Romania that begins with 07x always include 07x

When dialling Romania from overseas dial up your international connection (usually 00) then 40 (for Romania), followed by the area code without 0 (that's 268 for Brasov, and 7x for mobile phones) and local number.

Callers from overseas are reminded that the time in Romania is GMT + 2 hrs