

1984

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Kideckel, David A. and Sampson, Steven L., "Field Work in Romania: Political, Practical and Ethical Aspects" (1984). *Research Report 24: Economy, Society and Culture in Contemporary Romania*. 30.
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FIELD WORK IN ROMANIA: POLITICAL, PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

by

David A. Kideckel and Steven L. Sampson

Introduction

In 1973, two graduate students and a professor from the University of Massachusetts began field work in the Socialist Republic of Romania. Currently our six-member team, the Romanian Research Group has logged over twelve person-years of field research, largely in Brasov and Sibiu counties, located in the southern part of the historical province of Transylvania (see Cole, 1976, for a more thorough description of the research project).

Despite our diverse research interests, and the different circles in which we travel, our discussions with colleagues or interested lay-people were invariably interrupted with questions concerning how we were able to get into Romania in the first place, and, once in, how were we able to carry out our research.

Thinking about these questions and how to answer them we came to understand that they were based on distorted or mistaken assumptions about the nature of Eastern European socialist society. In addition, we ourselves were forced to reflect on what the proper role of American anthropologists in a socialist society should be. For example, is our task to serve as informed critics of Romanian society? Or should it be to help explain Romania (and other similarly organized systems) to people in the West? And what are the particular consequences of adopting either of these stances? This paper attempts to discuss the implicit assumptions made by individuals about Eastern Europe, to examine the role of anthropologists doing field work in a socialist society, and to address the inevitable problems generated by the role.

Questions like these clearly indicate that field work in the East European socialist states has its own special peculiarities. However, to understand the specifics of our research in Eastern Europe they must first be seen in the context of anthropological field research in general. Like so many other field workers (e.g., Freilich, 1970; Pelto and Pelto, 1973; Powdermaker, 1966) we too are faced with problems of entry into our communities, building rapport with citizens, steering clear of exploitative relationships and factional quarrels, gathering data in systematic fashion, and maintaining our physical health and emotional stability.

As June Nash (1975) has pointed out, however, there is more to fieldwork than the field worker. The nature of the problems one encounters in the field is invariably shaped by the specific time-space location of the research; the personal and practical problems which we, like other

field workers, faced, intertwined with political and ethical issues spawned by the Eastern European research setting. These issues were manifest even before we came to Romania and they have continued to affect us long after we have left the field. This paper uses the cumulative experience of the members of our group to explore some of these political and ethical questions as well as some of the practical ones. We intentionally de-emphasize the diversity of our field experiences (personal backgrounds, village locations, living situations, and field methods) so that we may concentrate on the common problems which arise in conducting research in Romania and, by implication, the rest of Eastern Europe.

The Context of Research in Eastern Europe

We can cite three general features of the Romanian research environment which had major influence in structuring our field experiences. First, we were American citizens doing independent field research in a socialist society. Second, this particular socialist country has a long tradition and an active policy of national independence. Third, we were doing research in a European country, which automatically entailed the extensive use of archival and historical materials. Like other European nations, Romania has an indigenous scholarly tradition, a literate population, an articulate intelligentsia, and long-standing contact with Western social science.

This last point is of crucial significance for it was the invaluable help of the Romanian scholarly community--folklorists, ethnographers, and sociologists--that made our research possible in the first place. In our dealings with Romanian academics we were buoyed by their constant enthusiasm for our project. We found it particularly gratifying that our research was never considered by them as other than an attempt at serious scholarship and none of these individuals ever encouraged us to adopt particular intellectual or political postures.

Despite the assistance of Romanian scholars, our being Americans engendered certain difficulties and demanded certain knowledge so that we might adequately carry out our research. American anthropological research on Eastern Europe began during World War II with Columbia University's studies of "Culture at a Distance" (Benedict, 1946, 1953). However, no field work was actually done until the mid-1970's when such possibilities opened up. With the exception of Yugoslavia (Halpern, 1958; Hammel, 1968; Lockwood, 1970; Winner, 1971), the thirty years of East-West political tensions had effectively prevented American anthropologists from conducting field work in Eastern Europe.

The "Cold War" had a pernicious effect on American research relationships with Eastern Europe, most obviously in the restriction of scholarly contact that resulted (Byrnes, 1976). It also encouraged suspicion whenever such contacts did occur and thus created a priori barriers to mutual understanding between citizens of the two regions. In

our own case, for example, certain individuals automatically assumed us to be agents of the United States government. In light of the thirty years of East-West tensions and how they were manifested in the field, Nash's remarks about the "anthropologist as spy" are hardly metaphorical (1975:225-6).

Another effect of the Cold War experience on this side of the Atlantic was the need to re-think the popularized images of Eastern Europe with which we grew up. Such images grew naturally from the "Six O'Clock News," school history lessons (cf. Fitzgerald, 1979), and the whole range of international crises which punctuated the 1950's and 60's. This resulted in what we call "politico-centrism," a belief in the superiority of our own political system and an automatic suspicion of our "adversaries." As our interests in Romania developed we found ourselves grappling with these images and values. In many cases, we found them to be the product of imperfect, misinformed, and outdated observations.

Naturally, every anthropologist has preconceptions about the country and people where she/he is to do field work. It is our belief, however, that the preconceptions about socialist Eastern Europe are much more ingrained in the typical American world-view than the hazy images we might have of, say, New Guinea, East Africa, or the Amazon. To complicate matters, Eastern Europe lies clearly within the sphere of Euro-American culture and the ostensible cultural similarities made our analyses even more problematic. While anthropological research in most Third World situations is basically a matter of acquiring knowledge about these peoples, research in Eastern Europe requires a systematic purging of prior misconceptions and received wisdom before one can begin the acquisition of knowledge. This mixture of unlearning and learning creates difficulties which are, at once, intellectual, ethical, and political.

Even before beginning actual field work we were faced with understanding the political implications of our role, especially in the context of Romanian-American diplomatic relations. Romania has sought to achieve political autonomy and economic independence within the Warsaw Pact/COMECON framework. We now see the generosity of various public and private American granting agencies as part and parcel of U.S. support for this independence and an attempt to strengthen the bonds between our two countries. When we ourselves lost sight of our political significance we could be shocked into recognition by passionate statements from Romanian officials or citizens, by newspaper columns detailing the fragility of U.S.-East European relations, by comments from U.S. Embassy personnel in Bucharest, and by the extraordinary kindness and interest in our project exhibited by the former U.S. Ambassador who took it upon himself to visit three of us in our villages.

In pursuing its policy of socialist, independent, and multilateral development, Romania is extremely sensitive to criticism from outside and its possible effects on domestic political stability. Our research topics--domestic economy, mountain peasants, urban planning, agricultural collectivization, and ethnic minorities--were unmistakably linked to

contemporary Romanian realities and policies. Thus, we were anxious about the political acceptability of our topics to our Romanian hosts. However, it turned out that the "sensitive" nature of our interests gave us certain advantages over other researchers who pursued more esoteric topics. This was because our topics were of more than scholarly interest to Romanian academicians and officials; they were directly relevant to Romanian policy concerns and contributed to the continuous discussions on the policies and problems of national development.

Our efforts to describe "socialism as it actually exists" (Bahro, 1978), also generated methodological and procedural problems. These problems included our legal status in our villages of residence, methods of data collection, dealings with the Romanian bureaucracy, and our relationship with informants. With each of these, we had to balance our own research needs with the political sensibilities of the Romanian state and its people. For example, certain laws regulate the kinds of contacts Romanian citizens and officials can have with foreigners. In our case, exemptions were made to allow us to carry out our field work. These "special dispensations" give strong evidence of the good will of our Romanian hosts and well illustrate their views about the nature of our project.

Within Romania we were particularly challenged with demystifying an unfamiliar society and its mode of operation. This unfamiliarity manifested itself in our dealings with officials at the level of the national bureaucracy and in the villages as well. Both Romanian officialdom and we ourselves were placed in the unenviable position of having to create and maintain effective relationships without prior knowledge of proper codes of behavior, the "rules of the game." Since we were the first group of Western social scientists to carry out long-term field work in Romania (we were preceded by four other individuals), these rules had to be created ad hoc, and they were continuously revised during our research stay.

Due to the special nature of our presence in Romania and the particularities of East European socialist political-economy, we continuously interacted with Romania's ubiquitous bureaucracy. As we pursued our various requests to travel, settle into our villages, consult archives, copy statistics, interview officials and attend meetings, we quickly (and at times painfully) realized that the bureaucracy was not designed to serve us. Bureaucracies are charged with administering laws and implementing policies, not with catering to visiting scholars. We were thus faced with the task of phrasing our requests in a manner which made them both legitimate and intelligible in bureaucratic terms. While at times we achieved this desired end, at other times officials quite legitimately saw our requests as too numerous, varied, changeable, and often vague and outlandish.

The questions that arose will be familiar to anthropologists who have sought to work with archival materials in the field: "Why did we need to

copy the names?" "Why was it so necessary to know how much land and how many animals each household possessed?" "Why couldn't we be content with aggregate statistics?" And, especially for a socialist country, "Why all our interest in religious life and church records?"

The structure of the bureaucracy also had implications for the conduct of our research. The Romanian bureaucracy is highly centralized; while some decision making occurs at regional and local levels, most decisions are made at the national level and then disseminated. Consequently, many of the local officials with whom we dealt had neither the necessary information nor legal authority to resolve our requests. Those officials who could open doors for us were sometimes off-limits or simply too busy. Moreover, the sheer size and complexity of the Romanian bureaucracy and its frequent reorganizations meant that our requests were sometimes wrongly routed or caught up in internal bureaucratic politics. Needless to say, we often became confused as to proper procedure.

Our hassles with officialdom were quite normal for anthropologists entering a new area and encountering a social structure whose rules of operation were unfamiliar. We stress this because others have attributed their research difficulties in Eastern Europe to some kind of conscious conspiracy to inhibit the execution of research (Sozan, 1979b). We found no evidence for such a conspiracy. Had the Romanian government wanted to prevent our field work, a simple decree would have sufficed. Had they wanted to obstruct our research, they could have supervised us more directly. Neither we nor any other anthropologist that we know of encountered this kind of decree or supervision.

The Community Context of the Research

Both the particularities of Romania's national autonomy and the cautious "opening up" of an East European socialist state played themselves out as we entered our respective villages. Unlike the situation of British or French anthropologists returning to their former colonies (as researchers or members of development projects), the Romanians were under no traditional obligation to accept us. Our presence in the villages was contingent upon the good graces of a strong, stable, and self-confident national government. Once we received permission at the national level for village residence, local officials were virtually required to accept us, which they did with the usual mixture of caution, curiosity, and enthusiasm. That our presence was totally contingent on national policies meant that no amount of good will between ourselves and our villages could prevent our forced removal had the government wanted it. In the absence of established channels for placing American anthropologists into Romanian villages, there was a host of small problems to be resolved. There were inevitable delays before we could officially settle into the localities we had chosen. Tensions resulted from our anxieties about losing valuable field time. These were exacerbated by our ignorance of bureaucratic procedure and a range of simple cultural and linguistic misunderstandings.

For example, one of us waited six weeks for permission to settle in one community only to find that he had been approved for the wrong village. The entire process had to be reinstated.

Our relative ease of entry did not prevent, and at times even encouraged, the development of erroneous stereotypes about who we were and why we were there. On a few occasions there were rumors or direct references to our being agents of the United States. Actually, the stereotypes more often proved to be rather more mundane: we were Romanian-Americans returning to the homeland to rediscover our roots (or, more insidiously, to lay claim to expropriated lands); we were eccentric tourists; we were language students, agronomists, engineers, diplomats, and even in one case--a priest. Though we all constantly attempted to explain our presence, people were often incredulous. They couldn't imagine why "wealthy" Americans would want to live under what they assumed we would regard as their mean circumstances. In particular, Romanian academics do not normally subject themselves to extended periods of village life and they especially were amazed by our long-term residence in rural communities.

As Westerners in Eastern Europe we were especially faced with understanding and resolving problems which grew out of our being viewed more as resource than researcher. Possessing Western currencies (illegal for Romanian citizens) and having foreign and embassy contacts put us in the position of being able to procure certain consumer goods which were highly desired but largely unavailable to Romanians. We experienced the classic dilemma of other anthropologists (Briggs, 1970:227; Chagnon, 1974:164-166; Pospisil, 1963:19-20) where instrumental needs sometimes overshadowed our efforts to build effective relations with our host families, other villagers, and even certain government officials. The fewest requests, as a rule, came from our closest friends and informants, while peripheral acquaintances pestered us for blue jeans, tape recorders, auto parts, "Swiss Army Knives," and American liquors, among other things.

The specifically Romanian aspect of this problem was that many kinds of financial dealings between foreigners and Romanians are strictly prohibited. Our giving bona fide gifts to close friends or to our host families could serve as evidence of wrong-doing or speculation by either party to the exchange. Thus, while we balanced our own financial circumstances and potentials with the requests of friends, informants, and other citizens, we also had to be sure of staying within the limits of Romanian law.

Building rapport at the local level also entailed certain problems which derived from the basic circumstances of Americans doing research in socialist communities. In our relationships at the local level we naturally tried to treat all in an equal manner so as to retain good relations with local leaders, factions, and citizens. But our presence put those with whom we came in contact into ambiguous circumstances. Sometimes this contact enhanced their social position (e.g., our presence at a

wedding), while on other occasions it could be discomforting (e.g., during work activities on the cooperative farm). Moreover, relations with some individuals always remained at the formal level. For example, while local level officials were often cordial, our interactions with them rarely developed to the point of mutual visitation or commiseration over a glass of brandy at the bar.

In a few cases, vestiges of the adversary relationship between our two countries produced suspicion of us and our motives. These suspicions were shared by officials and citizens alike. We could only react by trying to strictly define ourselves to these people and to our communities at large, specifying who we were, what we were trying to do, why we were trying to do it, and how we were going about it.

Often such suspicions concerning us manifested themselves during our attendance at public meetings. Meetings serve as forums for decision making, arenas of public controversy, and reflections of the social and political workings of the communities we studied. Permission to attend most meetings was left to the discretion of local officials, but due to legal restrictions and political considerations, some meetings were declared off-limits to us (e.g., meetings of Communist Party cells are normally open only to Party members). On some occasions our presence at a meeting would cause anxiety for certain officials and/or participants. For instance, a visiting county official might be shocked to notice the American anthropologist taking notes during his speech, whereupon the local officials would have to give a full explanation for the American's presence, and the American would have to produce his/her batch of officially stamped permission letters. In many cases, though, these interchanges led to interesting conversations with these officials and yet another helping hand in understanding the maze of the Romanian bureaucracy.

At times we felt the ambiguity, tension, and embarrassment of certain social situations even more keenly than citizens and officials of the communities in which we worked. Contrary to what we expected to find in the Romanian villages, many people were neither circumspect nor taciturn in their interactions with us. The intensity of their feelings about certain current state policies, or their difficulties in the factory or on the collective farm, was expressed publicly, loudly, often with ourselves present, or even in direct response to an innocuous query on our part. Needless to say, our being used as public sounding-boards provoked anxiety and uncertainty for our own positions of social neutrality within the communities and made the field work situation even more problematic.

Such intense statements expressing the frustrations of everyday life also taxed our own inclinations to scientific objectivity. We sometimes found ourselves falling into the trap of politico-centrism and interpreting what were often essentially short-term, idiosyncratic problems in an explicitly political manner, attributing them to the inadequacies of Romania's socio-political structure or socialism's "inherent" contradictions. (We are reminded of the ten-year-old anecdote about the

American tourist visiting the Soviet Union on a special guided tour. While visiting the famous Moscow subway, the American casually remarks that the train appears to be running a few minutes late. His Soviet escort becomes visibly upset and gruffly retorts, "But what about Angela Davis?") To maintain any semblance of scientific objectivity thus demanded near constant introspection and frequent group discussion.

Collecting local archival materials also posed certain problems in the East European context in general and in each of our communities. Documentary and archival evidence is indispensable for any European community study. Before we went to Romania, we had come to expect that we would not be allowed access to archives, documents, and statistics beyond those made available in Romanian publications. Ultimately, however, this aspect of the research proved less troublesome than we had expected. Access to some documents was restricted (e.g., many pre-World War II land tenure records, current village tax records), but by balancing our need for certain materials with Romania's legitimate political and legal concerns we were able to gain access to most of the written sources we requested, plus some that we never knew existed. Those cases where we were denied access to archives which, we felt, had no possible strategic significance were more than offset by the occasions when documents were easily provided, together with office space, consultants, and translators.

To fully appreciate the degree to which our presence was suffered in our communities and the extent of Romanian cooperation with our research endeavors, one need only imagine the circumstances which six East European researchers would face in small-town America. One might imagine how such researchers, even with official government sponsorship, would be received as they walked around casually, stopping on occasion to avidly take notes, when they appeared at local doorsteps to ask often highly personal questions, when they asked town officials for local censuses, registers of names, agricultural production records, and minutes of town meetings. On second thought, we cannot imagine it!

Research in Romania: A Summary

We have tried to give a picture of some of the problematic aspects for Americans engaging in research in an East European socialist nation and its constituent communities. In summing up our field experiences in Romania, we feel that we carried out our research as planned and within the time allotted us. While the active assistance of Romanians was a key reason for our degree of success, we can cite other factors as well.

One fortuitous advantage in doing research in European (East or West) communities is the relative ease with which most Americans can "pass" for a native in certain brief encounters. Wearing normal clothing, keeping our cameras and other foreign paraphernalia out of sight, and speaking a basic Romanian, we could walk the streets, sit in public places, or go to cafes with Romanian friends; strangers wouldn't be exactly sure of how to place

us. This was not a situation where we had "gone native" voluntarily, but instead one where some natives put us in their own categories...at least until more weighty conversation began. The ability of Europeanist researchers to partially "pass" meant that we were not always on constant display as other Western anthropologists might be in Third World communities. Using Cole's (1977) words, we were indeed "part-way home."

Even more of an aid in conducting the research was the organization of the project itself. Like most Romanian research endeavors, we too were working collectively and had both institutional and official backing. Our project also was a long-standing one. Begun in 1973, the intervening years have allowed Romanian officials, scholars, and citizens to personally familiarize themselves with us and our research.

The group nature of the project should be seen in light of the usual American anthropological research style where individuals work alone, for relatively short periods of time, and with little or no intent to maintain contact, much less some kind of active reciprocity, with the host nation or community after the research period expires. Such occurrences (cited by Romanians in exasperated conversations with us) have produced understandable reluctance to aid incoming Western scholars who may appear similar to the practitioners of what has been termed "slash-and-burn anthropology" (Hofer, 1968:313; Wallace, 1966).

In this same vein, we found that providing our hosts (both nationally and in the villages) with as much information about ourselves and our purposes as we could only made our individual and collective researches that much more possible. A simple "cover story" to keep the natives at bay and finesse our way through the socialist bureaucracy and research establishment was just not sensible. Besides, such cover stories have a tendency to backfire. Yet, while honesty appears eminently wise and ethical, in the East European context it has become somewhat controversial. We have heard reputable Western social scientists insist that the only way to accomplish any meaningful research in Eastern Europe is to lie about what you are doing! Such a patronizing, cynical, and politico-centric attitude creates and prolongs the mistrust between our two societies, exacerbates potential difficulties for the researcher, tarnishes the reputation of social science, and impugns the motives of bonafide researchers. In addition, it cannot help but affect the methodological, theoretical, and epistemological bases of the research, thereby distorting its results.

Working as a group also yielded certain practical benefits. There was the almost exponential increase of information about life in Romania, and how best to understand it as well as adapt to it. Our division of labor, both planned and ad hoc, reduced duplication of effort and its accompanying frustrations. When one of us found the proper channel by which we could obtain a given document (or good restaurant), the others could easily follow suit. In our dealings with officialdom, when one of us received permission this would generally set a precedent, thus clearing the way for

the others. Needless to say, having several ethnographers, each with his/her "own village" helped us to broaden and refine our intellectual generalizations and cope with the emotional traumas of field work.

Our research efforts were also aided by regular consultations with Romanian scholars and officials. They encouraged us to discuss our work in a free and open manner and reciprocated accordingly. We have written articles for both Romanian and American journals and have discussed them with Romanian scholars and citizens before submitting them for final publication. In no case, it might be added, have any of these works been censored even when we were critical of various policies and programs of the Romanian state.

The Romanians have taken our work seriously enough to have published two interviews with one of us, one in a local newspaper and the other in their major social science journal (Gheorghe, 1977). We were also invited to present our preliminary conclusions at the University of Bucharest (Romanian Research Group, 1977), and two of us addressed village meetings. One of us was invited as guest speaker for a symposium on the history of one of the local communities and another talked about anthropology to a meeting of a village youth club. In addition, the Romanians themselves have published critiques of our work (Cobianu-Bacanu, 1977; Iordăchel, 1979) and several Romanian colleagues have visited us at our Center at the University of Massachusetts, of which the 1979 "Conference on Social Science in Romania" is the most recent example.

From the onset of our research, we have tried to accept the limitations placed on us by the host country. This was an unfamiliar situation for all parties to the research. These limitations, we feel, have not constricted or colored our results, and in some cases they even worked to our advantage. Just as we tried to strictly define our role for the Romanians, they in turn took all our requests under serious consideration, even though some were ultimately denied. With these limitations also came genuine efforts by host country personnel to aid us in our research, and the establishment of solid relationships at official, academic, and personal levels.

Leaving the Field

Our continued interest in Eastern Europe and our desire to depict socialist society "as it actually exists" have meant that our relationship with Romania has hardly abated since leaving the field.

Public interest in Eastern Europe fluctuates with current events, but passions about socialism run high at any moment. Virtually any work on Eastern Europe will generate not just scholarly, but also political criticism ranging from the extreme right to the doctrinaire left. As anthropologists who are largely sympathetic to many of Romania's development goals these "passions" about socialism place us in a sensitive

position. Those of us who work in the Eastern European socialist states are continuously expected to furnish a final verdict about the societies we are studying, or even about socialism itself--is it progressing or degenerating, good or bad, creating equality or inequality? In contrast, field workers who study tribal societies, Third World peasantries, or West European communities, though called upon to explain these peoples to others, will usually not be pressed to give an overall evaluation of them. Such verdicts about East European socialism, provocative though they may be, do little more than confirm the preconceptions of the questioner and force the anthropologist to place his/her research into artificially contrived categories.

This constant pressure to "take sides" has created new demands on the anthropologist and other social scientists involved in East European research. We are forced to reply to superficial journalistic accounts which prejudge an entire social order by the number of its privately owned automobiles or the speed of its restaurant service. We are also faced with dilemmas about whom we should talk to and how we might phrase our discussions.

To express gratitude to officials, scholars, and citizens of the East European host nation for our being allowed to enter and conduct research in the country opens one up to charges of intellectual prostitution and outright careerism (see, for example, Sozan, 1977 and his critique of the Romanian Research Group, 1979). Discussing the contradictions of socialist development encourages such things as the unsolicited invitations to two of the group from Radio Free Europe to broadcast the "truth" of our results back to Romania. (These invitations were declined simply on the grounds that most of our research results have already been circulated in Romania...in Romanian publications.) To be sure, the unsavory uses of anthropology have not ended with Project Camelot and counter-insurgency programs. The Eastern European context forces anthropologists to be especially attentive, politically conscious, and painstakingly reflective.

Conclusions

Romania's characteristics as socialist, European, and independent have recast the conditions of anthropological field work, the obligations of the anthropologist, and the possible implications of anthropological field research. Yet, as in other anthropological research, the foremost obligation of anthropologists working in Eastern Europe is to the people and to the communities in which they live. Research results should first be made available to them, and secondly to the nation where work was carried out. We have tried to fulfill this obligation and we will continue to do so in the future.

However, the overwhelming politico-centrism embodied in Western views of Eastern Europe creates other obligations. We see these as threefold:

(1) to bridge what continues to be a significant gap in understanding and knowledge within the United States, about Romania in particular and Eastern Europe in general; (2) to honestly examine the nature of socialist society and socialist development "as it actually exists;" and (3) to develop an informed critique about the nature of socialist society and culture. In other words, the proper role of anthropology in Eastern Europe must go beyond mere content analysis and strive to be both theoretical and applied in the most general sense of each.

In providing a bridge for understanding, our research can be used as a mirror for our own society's prejudices and misconceptions of reality. It can counteract the simplistic verdicts and political indictments which serve no purpose but to create and perpetuate mistrust. In addressing the politics of mystification, we must counter with what C. Wright Mills has called the "politics of truth" (1959:178). We can use our knowledge not only to enlighten our own countrymen about "how we really did get in there," but about the concrete reality of Eastern Europe as well; its achievements, its problems, and most importantly, the relationship between the two.

The "politics of truth" demands a recognition and explication of the problematic nature of socialist society. We do not hold with the position that any criticism of socialism and socialist society only provides ammunition for the forces of reaction. Rather, in seeking a more just social order, we recognize the need to expose contradictions and analytically accentuate them so that they can ultimately be eliminated. In our Romanian research, we have consistently attempted such an approach. We chose politically and economically relevant topics, but also attempted to view Romanian political economy and culture from Romanian perspectives.

In attempting an analysis of an "actually existing" socialist society we have, at times, lauded as well as criticized contemporary Romanian realities. Above all, we examined our own backgrounds and motives and attempted to avoid what we have defined as "politico-centrism." We continue to advocate such an approach today. This is why the political, practical, and ethical problems we encountered while pursuing research in Eastern Europe persist long after leaving the field.

We look forward to future research and continuing relations with Romania. We recognize that this will not only generate momentary frustrations and eventual rewards, but also that it will shed light on those larger political, practical and ethical issues confronting fieldworkers in Eastern Europe in particular and ultimately, all anthropologists.

Notes

1. The members of the Romanian Research Group (and their major research interests) are: Sam Beck (marginal peasant communities, regional political economy); John W. Cole (village socio-economic organization, domestic economy); David A. Kideckel (agricultural collectivization, peasant-workers); Marilyn McArthur (inter-ethnic relations); Steven Randall (domestic economy, mountain communities); Steven Sampson (urbanization, regional planning).

2. Other American anthropologists who have recently carried out field research in Romania include: Theresa Adams (prehistoric archaeology); Andreas Argyres (peasant economics); Joanne Bock (popular art); Regina Coussens (ritual and general expressive behavior); Diane Freedman (dance); Gail Kligman (ritual and symbolism); Joel Marrant (history and folk tradition); Erica McClure (social linguistics); Mitchell Ratner (education); Zdenek Salzmann (Czech-speaking minority); and Katherine Verdery (regional political economy).

3. Our research over the years has been supported by a variety of granting agencies including: the American Council of Learned Societies; the Ford Foundation; the University of Massachusetts' Department of Anthropology European Field Studies Program; the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Office of Education) Fulbright-Hays Program; the Institute for International Education (Department of State) Fulbright Program; and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

4. These are summarized in the following bibliographic section under the names of each individual author and under the collective heading of the Romanian Research Group.

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