ROMANIA

Heritage at Risk in Roșia Montana

In spite of all protests (see *Heritage at Risk* 2002/2003, pp. 175/176) the cultural heritage in Roșia Montana is still very much at risk.

According to the plans of Roșia Montana Gold Corporation 331 tons of gold and 1600 tons of silver are meant to be exploited in the region of Roșia Montana in the next 17 years. The open-air mining process would destroy the greatest part of the town as well as several cultural monuments. The Roman and medieval mining galleries of several kilometres length are of outstanding value. Only the medieval centre of Roșia Montana (Hungarian name Verespatak) with its three churches and some buildings from the 18th century or earlier would remain on the shore of a 180 m deep artificial lake filled with cyanides, which threaten the valley of the Maros and the Tisza. The new settlement for the people of Roșia Montana would be situated above the Roman mining settlement Alburnus Maior. The archaeological excavations of the previous years could not bring everything to the light. On the contrary, they proved the extraordinary richness of the site, which would perish completely.

ICOMOS issued two resolutions about the case of Roșia Montana at its General Assemblies in Madrid 2002 and Victoria Falls 2003. These emphasised the responsibility of the decision-makers for the dangerous situation. The ICOMOS congress in Pécs (40 Years of the Venice Charter, 22–27 May 2004) reiterated its concerns about this matter and called upon all authorities to take further steps in order to save both the cultural and the natural heritage in Roșia Montana:

ICOMOS rejects the investment of the new gold mine of Roșia Montana (Romania). This dangerous technology threatens the natural heritage of the site and the fauna and flora of the rivers Maros and Tisza, as well as the cultural heritage of the old mines used from Prehistoric through Roman and Middle Ages, endangers equipment of the old mining technology as well as 18th-century architectural heritage of the small mining town. The new residential area offered for the inhabitants of the old town would annihilate the remains of the original Roman settlement, Alburnus Maior.

Despite two resolutions of ICOMOS about this case, preparations for the investment are still going on. ICOMOS demands to stop the investment immediately.

Pécs, 27 May 2004
Roşia Montana, main square

Roşia Montana, historic monument, property of Roşia Montana Gold Corporation

Roşia Montana, old crucifix

Roşia Montana, Roman gallery