



CORA

Newsletter

CONGRESS OF ROMANIAN AMERICANS
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FEATURED STORY

Next CORA Annual Meeting and U.S. NGO Meeting Schedule

November 14 – 16, 2003

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Corruption in Romania

Of great concern to the government of the U.S. is the corruption in Romania. The U.S. and European Union have put great pressure on Romania to pass and implement laws in that country to eradicate the problem.



Ambassador Guest and CORA President, Armand Scala, outside the White House on May 8th, where the two discussed the Ambassador's remarks and reactions to them

The U.S. Ambassador to Romania, Michael Guest criticized the situation in the country during the International Anticorruption Donors' Conference "Investing in the Fight Against Corruption" that took place in April 15 of 2003 at the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest.

Both Prime Minister Năstase and President Iliescu reacted negatively to the Ambassador's remarks. CORA applauds both the U.S. position and the Ambassador's remarks.

Thanks for Your Support Letters



Armand Scala with Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mircea Geoană

The support of many Romanian Americans for Romania's entry into NATO was expressed by Mircea Geoană at a reception held at the Romanian Embassy on May 9th. He presented a replica of the Dacian Army standard (flag) to the community through CORA, expressing his appreciation to all of its members.

Mr. Scala, CORA's president, expressed his appreciation to CORA's members, with a special thanks to Manuela Cruga for her efforts and resulting letters to the U.S. Government, supporting Romania's entry.

CORA Meets with NSC and State Department

On Tuesday, May 20 five representatives from CORA met with officials of the National Security Council at the White House. The following day three CORA representatives met with officials from the U.S. State Department SEED Program (Support for East European Democracy) responsible for foreign assistance to Romania.

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U.S. Senate Ratifies Romania's NATO Entry with a Vote of 96-0



All U.S. Senators, present for the vote, voted in favor of Romania's entry into NATO. At a White House ceremony on Thursday, May 8th, President Bush announced the Senate vote and his pleasure in the favorable vote. CORA was invited by the White House, to attend. The Foreign Ministers of the seven new invitees were present. The other six countries are: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The actual membership of these countries likely will be realized in May of 2004, when the last of the existing member nations approves the invitation.

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CORA Meets with NSC and State Department

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The purpose of these meetings was to discuss Romania today regarding:

1. recent U.S.-coalition support and official May 2004 NATO membership;
2. economic reform programs;
3. problematic systemic corruption;
4. lack of viable political opposition parties;
5. 20% reduction in SEED funding from \$35 million/year to \$28 million/year.

First, the United States government recognizes the support it received from Romania, in the face of pressured consternation of certain western European countries. Romania was the first signatory in the ICC Article 98 Agreement and supported the United States as a member of the “coalition of the willing” against Iraq.

Second, Romania must take ownership of economic reform programs. According to the State Department, Romania suffered by not meeting the IMF requirements. Additionally, it is uncertain when Romania will get into the European Union. It is a weak candidate due to lack of economic reform, and the persistence of corruption and poverty. Bulgaria and Croatia were under major review last year, and Romania’s major review is pending. Bulgaria is doing better than Romania on economic reform. Serbia is doing better than Romania on cracking down on crime. According to Ambassador Adams, EU membership is a significant goal to motivate Romania to painful economic reform.

Third, the persistent disease of corruption has obliged the United States to divest rather than invest in Romania. Both meetings mentioned U.S. Ambassador Michael Guest’s scathing speech pleading with Romania (as a friend) to address the corruption epidemic.

Fourth, the lack of viable political

opposition is alarming since the current landscape does not foster political opposition, but rather encourages current politicians to switch membership to the dominant political party. Increased funding and participation in non-governmental organizations and the International Visitors Program (IVP) can nurture democracy reform. Additionally, 500,000 signatures can establish direct representation ballot voting for Romanian parliamentarians, which would encourage politician accountability to a correlating constituency.

Fifth, the State Department clarified SEED funding descriptions: economic sector (50%), health sector (20%), and democracy sector (30%). State also mentioned that 90% of SEED funding goes through USAID. September 2003 Ambassador Carlos Pascual (U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine) will become the new SEED coordinator. Ambassador Adams will remain as his deputy. In the future, when Romania enters the EU, SEED funding will discontinue.

Romanian American Chamber of Commerce Grows

Mark Meyer, Chairman of the Romanian American Chamber of Commerce (RACC), announced the formation of 5 new chapters. They are located in Atlanta, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.. Conference calls are held bi-weekly with the chapters.



Mark Meyer, a CORA Vice-President, is an expert on many subject concerning Romania. His law firm’s publication “Romanian Digest” contains in depth articles on subjects such as restitution of propriety, privatization, corruption, labor law, etc. You can access the Digest by going into CORA’s website and from there to Links and Herzfeld & Rubin.

Next Annual CORA Meeting and U.S. NGO Meeting Scheduled

The most recent CORA sponsored meetings were every bit as successful as prior meetings. CORA’s 2003 Annual Meeting will be held on November 14-16. U.S. NGOs will be invited to participate with CORA, and then move into their own sessions(s). It is hoped this arrangement will carry forward the momentum gained in the March 2003 meeting. It also would provide the Romanian American community with an opportunity to learn what other Americans are doing in Romania to help our people there. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn in Chevy Chase, MD (Washington, D.C.).

The tentative schedule is as follows:

Thursday, Nov. 14	8:00pm Dinner with early arrivals. 9:00 pm NGO Exhibits open
Friday, Nov. 15	9:00am Meetings of CORA and NGOs begin 5:00pm Day’s meetings close 6:30 pm Cocktails and Dinner
Saturday, Nov. 16	9:00am CORA Annual Meeting continues 9:00 am NGO Meeting begins 12:00 pm Lunch – CORA /NGOs together- Networking 1:00 pm NGO/CORA Roundtable 2:30 pm Adjournment

Further information to follow. **Mark your calendars!**

**Remarks by Ambassador
Guest to the International
Anticorruption Donors'
Conference
“Investing in the Fight
Against Corruption”**

April 15, 2003

Palace of Parliament, Bucharest

Minister Stănoiu, I very much join my colleagues in applauding this initiative to match resources to the fight against corruption. I strongly urge that you focus **not on studies** but on **concrete projects and actions** that will result in the most immediate and practical impact on the lives of the Romanian people.

As this is a donors' conference, I had planned to talk this morning about how the U.S. Embassy is trying to help Romania in this area. But after tossing and turning, I've put those plans aside. And rather than address the donors in this audience, I have some things I need to say to every Romanian who is here, and to every Romanian who really cares about this country.

Some of you may recall my speech in Iași, in January 2002, where I addressed Romania's corruption problems. Afterwards, a Romanian told me rather sharply that my remarks had hurt the reputation of his country. I understand that reaction. Americans are also a proud people, and we don't always accept criticism that we should, even when it comes from friends. But **as** a friend, I owe it to you to speak strongly and directly to this problem today. And rather than being upset at my openness, I hope that we can channel our energies to address the underlying problem.

At times I have urged, publicly and privately, that stronger steps be taken against corruption. Almost invariably, someone says to me, “Mr. Ambassador, you don't understand.” Well, my friends, I **do** understand. I **understand too well**.

I understand why businessmen with inside connections – on **either** side of the political aisle, by the way – don't want new, tighter laws to be passed or implemented.

I understand why some privatizations take so long – if they ever occur. I know what “liquidators” are; I know how they're connected; and I know what happens – to their bank accounts and, unfortunately, to **communities** – when they buy a firm. I also know what too often happens – or more pointedly, what **fails** to happen – when insiders beat out those who should have won the deal. You know this too. And it's a shame for this country.

I understand the forces that keep properties from being restituted to their rightful owners. I understand why some **prosecutions** are so slow to move forward. I certainly have my suspicions as to why some court judgments are never reached.

I understand why HIV/AIDS drugs may cost hospitals here **at least 50% more** than they do in the States. I think we all know how the mark-ups occur before the drugs find their way to the hospital; if you **look hard** enough, you can even find out who benefits. I understand how tens – probably even hundreds – of thousands of dollars are spent to order the **wrong** HIV/AIDS drugs – drugs mismatched to the conditions they should target. Is it incompetence? Is it cozy relationships? I can't think of **other** possibilities. But what if the consequence is that there's not enough money to meet this country's health needs – or in some cases to keep people **alive**? What then do you do?

And by the way, I **don't** place the blame for this at Minister Bartoș' door – I've found her to be a woman of great honor, who really is trying to reform the health care system. I know precisely what she's up against.

My friends, I understand all of this. I know what goes on and why. But understanding doesn't make it right.

Now, I want to be **clear** with you that I am **not** laying these problems at the government's door. Indeed, I believe this government has done more to tighten laws and strengthen institutions than any previous government. Madame Minister, you have played a critical role in the changes that have

occurred, and even if more is to be done, I commend you wholeheartedly for those steps.

The truth is that corruption is **not** an issue of the center-left, **nor** is it an issue of the center-right. It's an issue of greed. It's an issue of individuals who care more about themselves, their positions, and their friends than they do about fairness and justice or, in fact, about this country. For them, **politics don't really matter**: they'll use whatever political party suits them, or they'll line up at the door of whomever's in power, or at the door of whomever **outside** of power can advance their interests.

My friends, do not treat corruption as a political game of rumors and allegations. Do not treat it as a battering ram to tear down. And do not say to me, as at least one representative of civil society shamefully said, that the new anti-corruption law is a step backward. It is not a perfect law, but it's a good starting point. Perfect it – improve it – but **use** it to move forward.

The government and the opposition – and yes, the media – owe it to the people of Romania to join hands to fight this problem together. If you don't, corruption will win, and this country risks becoming morally bankrupt. For far too long, insiders in this country have used their positions and connections and influence to keep Romania from reaching its potential, and to keep Romania's people from reaching their dreams. That has **got** to stop.

Now, I apologize if I seem emotional, but this is something in which I **passionately** believe. If the young people of this country can't count on finding jobs based on merit, it's time for them to pursue their careers elsewhere. If well-placed insiders take money that otherwise could be used to pave roads and install water lines, while senior citizens who've lived through the worst of communism and a difficult transition can't afford heat, then those senior citizens are living in

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a country that is foreign to them. And if the judiciary cannot deliver equal, fair and impartial justice – whether for the shepherd or the bricklayer or the politician – that, in fact, is a crime.

Some of you may say that I'm not being diplomatic. Well, my 21 years of experience have taught me that a diplomat who doesn't speak clearly isn't doing his job. I have **always** said to Romania's people that I will be honest with them. I've kept that promise, and I'm keeping it today.

Some of you may say that America should tend to its own problems. Well, I agree. I've often said publicly that we have our own problems with corruption, including, of course, Enron. We have our backrooms, we have our crooked politicians, we have our so-called "accounting errors." But each time corruption turns up in the States, there are plenty of efforts, largely successful, to fine-tune the system. And U.S. prosecutors who tackle corruption cases successfully can make their career. The same needs to happen here.

Perhaps you see mine as a tough message for this country. Well, I say all of this out of deep love for Romania and for Romanians. In my 18 months here, I've met so many wonderful Romanian citizens. People who are honest, and skilled, and hard-working. People who give you their hearts. People who **deserve more** for themselves, and for their children, than they are getting.

Madame Minister, I say all of this with a sense of urgency, because time is slipping away. Again, I do not want to take away from what has been accomplished. There has been clear progress since Iași, progress of which the government and the people of Romania can be proud. But I can't help but wonder what opportunities have been missed. All of the donors here want this country to succeed – in fact, I think some of us believe in this country's future more than many Romanians do. And **that** is a problem.

We are committed to partnering with you – to investing in this fight, as the conference agenda says. Indeed, we're already spending quite a bit of money to help. Most of us are prepared to spend more. But in return we would ask all Romanians in any position of responsibility, whether in the government or in civil society: Invest of yourselves. Take the decisions that we cannot take. Build bridges across political lines to push for positive change. Spend less time studying the problem than taking action on it. Prosecute and punish to the full letter of the law, regardless of chips that may fall. Commit yourselves to **make a difference**.

Do not do this for NATO, or for the EU. Do not do this to satisfy some World Bank loan criteria. Do this for yourselves, and for your children. Do this for your country. Make this conference a starting point for renewal. Make this a conference of urgent action.

In my heart of hearts, I suspect that all of the donors here today really have fallen in love with this country, as I have. But we cannot love it more than Romanians do. We will help you in any way we can. But we cannot set the course and the speed in your stead.

I have faith in Romania, and in Romanians. You can do it, and you must.

Thank you.

Orthodox Presence at Nation's Capital Events

National Prayer Breakfast

"Through the good offices of the Congress of Romanian Americans (CORA), an invitation came from the Honorable Ray LaHood, U.S. House of Representatives, Illinois, Chairman of the 51st National Prayer Breakfast, for Their Eminences, Archbishop Nathaniel of the Orthodox Church in America and Archbishop Nicolae of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in North America. This unique event

was held in the International Ballroom of the Hilton Washington, Thursday, February 6, 2003.

The National Prayer Breakfast was attended by 3,000 people of various faiths as well as by public leaders from more than 154 nations. Speakers included President George W. Bush; Coldoleezza Rice, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Keynote Speaker; Air Force Gen. R. B. Meyers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives; George Tennen, Director, Central Intelligence Agency and others. Present were three heads of government, 21 Cabinet ministers, 111 members of parliament, 51 U.N. Ambassadors, several U.S. Cabinet ministers, 56 U.S. Senators and 141 members of the House of Representatives."

Reprinted from March 2003 issue of "Solia"

National Memorial for Crew of the Columbia Space Shuttle

"Immediately following the National Prayer Breakfast, the hierarchs went to the 'Washington National Cathedral' to attend a Memorial Service for the Crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia. The arrangement was made through the Congress of Romanian Americans (CORA). Archbishops Nathaniel and Nicolae were seated among honored guests to the immediate right of the pulpit. Their invitation to participate was from the Cathedral personnel."

"The service, attended by about 2,000 people, lasted about eighty minutes; and, both before and after, the carillon of the Cathedral sounded in beautiful song in tribute to the seven men and women of the Columbia. Members of the United States Government and of the International diplomatic corps filled most of the pews of the central nave".

Reprinted from March 2003 issue of "Solia"

In the Words of the Participants

I felt that this meeting gave me a lot of the answers to the questions I had.... I felt the speakers were great, especially Denny (Robertson). The high level of speakers and the information they gave us will be invaluable. The meeting was very informative with a great bunch of NGO's. You did a great job in a short time bringing the meeting together and making sure that we came away with valuable information. D.P., Adoption Advocacy International

It is very helpful and gratifying to hear and learn about progress made in Romania. CORA meetings supply a lot of helpful information about both progress and needs to be accomplished. D.F., Opportunity Associates

What an excellent meeting! You were able to get some very high powered speakers that shared important information! I was grateful for the opportunity to meet knowledgeable representatives from State Dept., USAID, the embassy and other organizations. In such an informal (off the record) gathering. I was also fortunate to learn about wonderful efforts being made to help Romanians and to hear about issues and share experiences being addressed by people that care what happens in Romania today. J.K., Habitat for Humanity International

... I always wondered what country desk officers do – now I know thanks to Mr. Rickert. Also, I've had an idea that immigration law was complicated, but now I know it's really complicated. Great sessions, lots of networking, very well done presentations. J.F., Lobbyist

Thank you for putting together this meeting that has helped me tremendously in my efforts to find the information I need. The conference was a huge success, it was very well planned and the speakers that attended were ideal for NGOs. It was very encouraging to see other individuals working in so many different areas of Romania and making a difference throughout the country. The information I obtained was immeasurable, and will assist me as I continue to work. Thank you. J.K., Remember the Children

Take Action, Write Letters

U.S. foreign assistance for Romania is continually being decreased. The U.S. House of Representatives plays a very significant role in this matter. You can have a positive influence for the benefit of the people of Romania by writing to your Representative in the U.S. Congress asking them to support greater assistance for Romania. A sample letter follows.

The Honorable (name)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. (last name):

Please support increased U.S. foreign assistance for the country of Romania. That country's people and government are great supporters of the US and our policies. Foreign assistance has been reduced every year even more than the Administration feels is appropriate. Romania has incurred costs connected with Afghanistan and Iraq that it could not afford but did so without regard for remuneration. It continues to support the U.S. in any way it can.

As Romanian Americans we know how deep the hole Communism placed Romania in Romania started progressing only after 1989 and it has been a difficult road for her. Regardless of the sacrifices she still stands at our side, unlike some others. She is making greater progress and our government recognizes this. We need to also understand and recognize that country's situation and loyalty to us by helping her with more appropriate, higher, levels of assistance.

Your aggressive assistance in this matter is appreciated.

Your supporter,

(your name / your address)

CORA's Calendar of Events

April

- * 07 Meeting to arrange November 2003 CORA Meeting
- * 14 Center for Strategic & International Studies Meeting on Corruption in Romania

May

- * Weekly CEEC Meetings
- * 02 Meeting with Romanian Parliament Staffer - CORA office
- * 08 White House Meeting addressed by President Bush - East Room
- * 08 Reception - Romanian Embassy
- * 09 NATO Appreciation Award Ceremony and Reception - Romanian Emb.
- * 16 Joint Baltic American National Committee - NATO Reception-Latvian Auditorium
- * 19 Romanian Ambassador's Dinner to celebrate Senate vote - Ambassador's Residence
- * 20 National Security Council Meeting on Romania - The White House
- * 21 State Department Meeting on current and future U.S. Foreign Assistance for Romania - State Department

June

- * Weekly CEEC Meetings
- * 03 Meeting with Dan Popescu, Minister of Industries, and delegation on the energy sector in Romania - Ambassador's Residence Award Ceremony and Reception

CORA Hosts Meeting of U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations Helping the People of Romania



On the 21st and 22nd of March, some 23 U.S. NGOs from around the nation registered and attended the CORA sponsored meeting in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide these organizations with important information and contacts, and an opportunity to "network" and learn about and from one another. CORA also wanted a chance to express its gratitude to the NGO community. This is intended to be one of many more meetings the NGOs will hold.

Large NGOs, such as Habitat for Humanity and Rotary International and smaller NGOs, such as Opportunity Associates and Reach To Romania, Inc. (both CORA members), participated in the meeting. Only one Romanian-American NGO, The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, participated along with CORA.

At the luncheon Romanian Ambassador to the U.S., Sorin Ducaru, expressed his gratitude to the participating NGOs and to CORA for putting together the meeting.

At the dinner on Friday night, Former Ambassador to Romania, Jim Rosapepe, spoke and presented Armand Scala with a handsomely framed photograph of Mr. Scala presenting from CORA a painting by a well known contemporary Romanian artist to Ambassador and Mrs. Rosapepe.

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