

Press release

*Awaken thee, Romanian, shake off the deadly slumber
The scourge of inauspicious barbarian tyrannies
And now or never to a bright horizon clamber
(Excerpt from the new Romanian national anthem)*

Almost 15 years of democracy have passed since the death of notorious dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Throughout this time, Romanians have struggled to clamber through the wreckage left behind by communist dogma.

To the outside world, Romania presents itself as modern and advanced, making every effort to be accepted into the EU. Behind the scenes, internal problems cannot be solved by the meagre financial resources available, revealing gaping holes in the country's social structure. The images of Romania beamed around the world after the revolution painted a very different picture. This was a people reborn, emerging from the dark shadows of Ceausescu's propaganda machine. Pictures of bedraggled children in ramshackle, overcrowded homes resulted in a flood of sympathy, emptying our cupboards of unwanted clothes.

But the generous donations soon dried up. Before long, the world's eyes turned to the Gulf War. Tanks and burning oil fields were much more important to us than orphaned children.

The initial euphoria of the Romanian people, manifested in the new national anthem, was slowly crushed by an oppressive reality. Faith in the government to rebuild the country dissipated. Too many of the new leaders were old faces from the time of the "barbarian tyrannies". Ceausescu had had too long to force his will on the Romanian people.

The Bánffy Castle documentary film project focuses on a psychiatric clinic in Transylvania, casting a light on the terrible conditions and offering glimpses of the castle's bizarre and frightening secrets. As the film unfolds, viewers are drawn into this disturbing world and challenged to come to terms with it.