



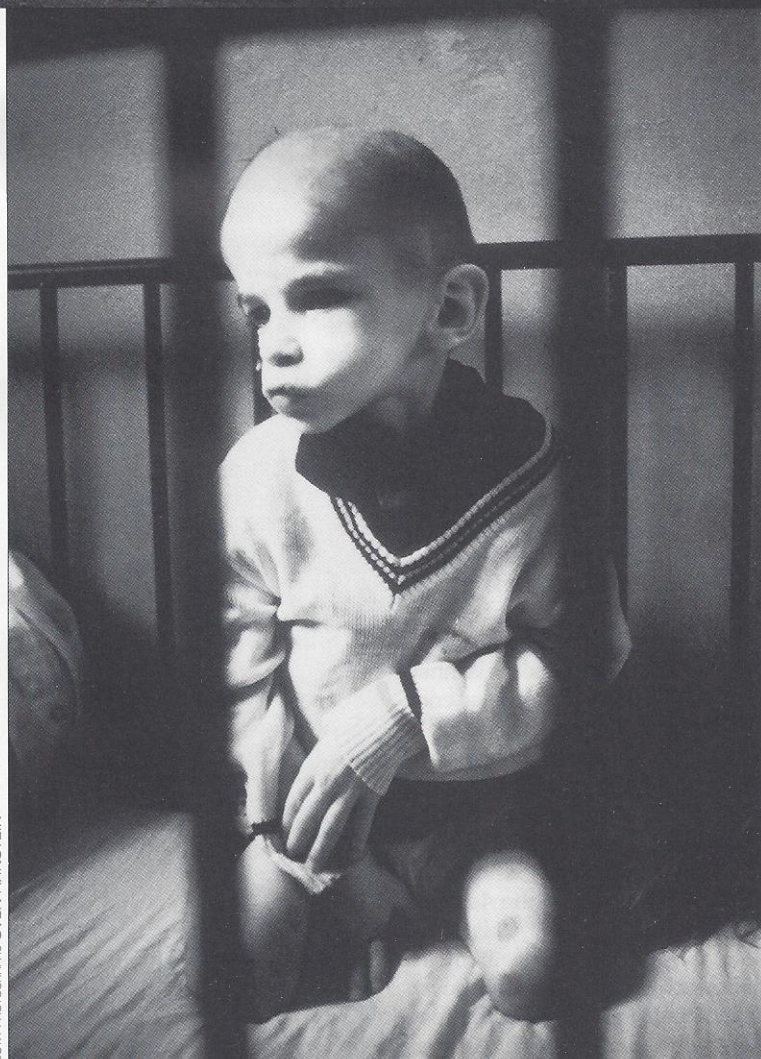
RENDEZVOUS IN ROMANIA

Last November, Martin Hawkins and John Walker set off separately to eventually meet up at a planned destination in Siret, a small village in Romania near the border with Russia. The following article chronicles their progress on a journey, which they both agree they will never forget. Martin Hawkins (who was nominated for a BAFTA award for his work) begins the story.

The series we were working on was *Challenge Anneka* and, in this particular programme, the challenge was to restore and rebuild a dilapidated orphanage and also to hold a Christmas party for the children who lived there. The shooting started on the *Wogan* show on Wednesday 7th November, when Annie received the challenge from Geraldine and Monica, two volunteers from the Birmingham Catholic Partnership, who had been out to Romania but had found the building in such a state that they could do very little on their own, and needed the help of the programme.

The subject had obviously touched the hearts of every viewer, within seconds of the programme coming off the air, the special telephone room at the Telecom Tower, which had been set up just for the occasion, was jammed with calls offering help and equipment. We left the Tower at about 11.00 pm and dashed to Euston station to catch the last train to Birmingham. Thursday was spent at the collecting depot,

BOTH PHOTOGRAPHS SVEN ARNSTEIN



where all the goods that had been donated were to be delivered and loaded for the long drive to Romania. The trucks had to be away before 3.00pm, if they were to catch the ferry that night. By lunch time it was looking very doubtful, there was so much to take and every item loaded had to be noted down on a list for the customs men. Somehow they got away only half an hour late, to a very emotional farewell.

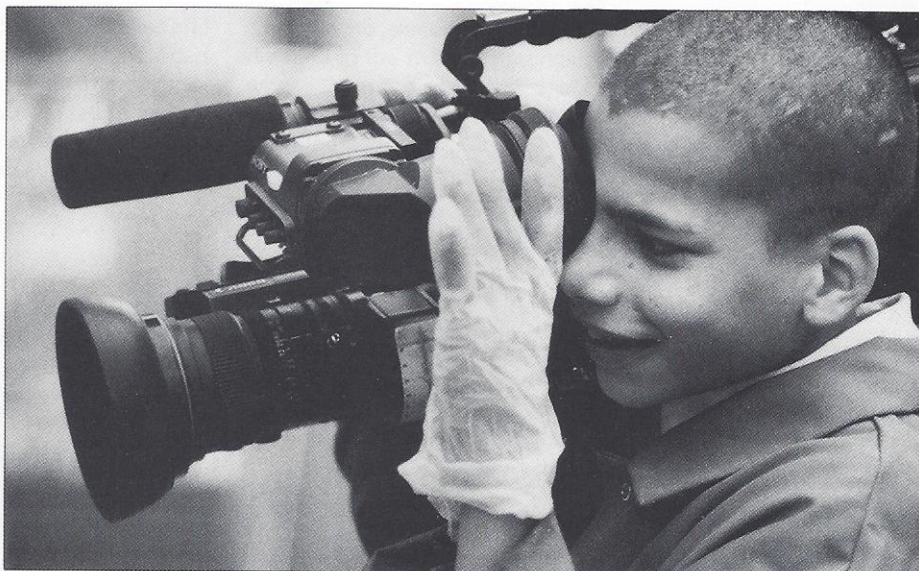
Tim Jones was the third cameraman on the series, and was to shoot the convoy on its way to Dover where John was to take over. I headed back to London to record some more sequences with Annie at the Romanian Embassy, and also at the London collecting depot.

After a whole series where we were working so closely with each other, it seemed very strange to be all so far apart. I telephoned John on the mobile phone to ask him something, and also to wish him good luck for the journey. I don't now remember very much about the call, only that I ended it by saying "see you in Romania". I would not see John for another five days and nights, it was not going to be an easy trip and I did not envy him and the rest of the crew one bit.

John Walker with the convoy continues the story:-

We met at Dover that night with a fleet of freight trucks. Our destination Siret, North Eastern Romania, right up on the Russian border. The camera crew for the convoy were, Martin Head (director), Chris Blake (sound), John Webster (camera assistant), Clare Barton (P.A.), Laurie Barnett (production manager) and myself, travelling with Laurie Barnett's wallet, which was to see us through to Siret, and a VW tracking vehicle (a "Sheffield plate" bolted to the back of a VW pick up). We met the convoy at Dover, which consisted of six articulated trucks, two *British Gas* vans, two *Severn Trent Water* vans and a Winnebago for survival. The first problem we encountered was that one of the artic had broken down on the M2. Because of this, we missed the midnight ferry. Instead we spent time sorting out the customs paperwork in advance (imagine your average ATA carnet and multiple it by a large factor) and got two hours sleep before boarding the 4.30am ferry to Zeebrugge.

The plan had been to start out at dawn each morning, making the most of the limited daylight. However, by the time we were out of Zeebrugge it was 10am - time



PHOTOGRAPH JOHN WALKER

Fascinated looking through the camera.

.... tachographs - why can't they be fitted to cameras!

had been lost which we could never make up due to a combination of customs bureaucracy and truck tachographs.

Driving out of Zeebrugge was the first test of what I had anticipated would be a major problem: the convoy was over a quarter of a mile long when moving, so even the most basic manoeuvre, like turning out of a junction took a long time and the last thing we wanted was someone getting lost. Thanks to the radio talkback we seemed to keep on the move, and we knew that once we were on the motorway we would be staying on it all the way to Budapest.

Shooting all these trucks was quite amusing, since the one thing the director could not do was stop them for our benefit. This called for the VW to duck from the outside lane onto the hard shoulder as rapidly as possible, brake hard and let them pass, accelerate and pass them flat out, (freeze in the 95mph wind on the back of the VW pick-up), get far enough ahead to rig the 600mm Canon for the up and past, derig, catch up again, clamber up banks and onto bridges, get questioned by the Polizei about parking on the hard shoulder, and then wonder why we've been waiting for them for twenty minutes (who's lost, us or them? - it was us), find them, stop the Winnebago and clamber in for some sustenance.

The planned journey was to reach a hotel booked in Nurmberg by Friday night, Vienna Saturday night, somewhere in Romania Sunday night (crew sleeping in the Winnebago, drivers in their trucks) and to

meet Anneka and the rest of the team in Siret on Monday. Trucks are forbidden to drive in Austria on Sundays, but unfortunately a special dispensation was obtained, ruling out our day off in Vienna. By night fall, the dusk shots out of the way, it was obvious that we wouldn't reach Nurmberg, so Laurie booked a hotel in Frankfurt. 7pm, across the German border it was definitely cocktail hour in the

Winnebago, and the duty frees put a warm glow on the evening, which I sensed had to be made the most of with the orphanage getting ever closer.

Saturday morning was a latish start thanks to the tachographs - why can't they be fitted to cameras! Another day hacking down the autobahn, a break for lunch and refuelling (a long job) we were at the Austrian border by 6pm. Getting through the customs here took forever, eleven carnets being shunted from office to office, maybe it was because we were leaving the EEC, but there never seems to be any reason with these bureaucrats. The stopover was changed to Linz and it being Saturday night, after two and a half days of travel and culture-free hotels, we were forced into a restaurant in Linz old main square. Here an incredibly tolerant (and well tipped) waitress witnessed John Webster attempting to inflate a condom over his head. Many trips to the vending machine later and he succeeded, one of the funniest sights I have ever seen.

Sunday morning we by-passed Vienna on deserted roads, the weather increasingly cold and damp but surprisingly the landscape had changed little since Zeebrugge, just more autobahn. We reached the Hungarian border at dusk. Somehow John and Laurie with the camera equipment in the VW had taken a minor detour via Czechoslovakia, which was a bit of a worry considering the limited number of transit forms in the carnet, but they met us on the Hungarian border and two hours later, relieved of a few packs of Marlboro by the border officials, we were all on our way to Budapest.

We stayed in a new, completely westernised hotel in Budapest and I was frustrated at being too tired to see the city - we may as well have been staying at the Holiday Inn Milton Keynes! At least we could call home though, knowing that it would be for the last time before entering Romania, where it was going to be impossible to get an international line.

Monday morning we were stuck in the Budapest rush hour. A lot of time is spent waiting to clear traffic lights together, but apart from a minor collision with a local car (the insurance details were swopped, I wonder if that ever got sorted out?) we were soon out into the countryside without any more mishaps. Long straight narrow roads, through a flat agricultural landscape, constantly getting held up, having to overtake slow traffic, talkback was again invaluable.

Martin Hawkins now takes up his part of the story:-

07.00 hours. A cold wet and dark Monday morning at Manchester Airport. The 124 volunteers started to gather at check-in desk 62. Among the crowd were painters, plasterers, electricians, roofers, doctors, careworkers and teams from *British Gas*, *Dina-Rod* and a commando group of industrial cleaners. You could tell at once that these weren't your usual package tour holidaymakers. Replacing the suitcases were rucksacks, sleeping bags and camp beds, tool-boxes and a couple of home video cameras. It was not unlike an army about to go into battle. What we were all about to experience was something that nothing could prepare us for. I was really quite nervous.

On arrival at the airport, I started filming shots of bags being loaded and tickets handed out as I'd done several times before, except this time there was this feeling of uncertainty as to what lay ahead all the time in the back of my mind.

Prior to starting this challenge, John and I had had long conversations with the Birmingham Catholic Partnership about what conditions to expect out there; to Janine the producer, who had been out on an earlier visit to decide whether the challenge was feasible and to directors, Martin Head and Tom Gutteridge about the look of the programme. I particularly wanted this show to "look" different as it was not the normal *Challenge* with lots of fast cutting, etc and this one was not to have a time limit flashing all over the screen. John and I had decided to use 9dB of gain throughout the time in Romania, even if it was required or not, to give the pictures a grainy look as we felt that apart from the extra stop being useful, it would reflect the atmosphere to some degree.

With Dave Chapman, my sound recordist, and Lyn Mitchel, my camera assistant I set off to Customs to clear our carnet. There was the usual wait and red tape but we kept joking at the thought of John who would have

by then gone through six situations like this in as little as four days.

We took off with a big cheer as I think everyone was glad we were finally under way. British Midland had donated a 757 and crew which were all ours, so there soon developed a party atmosphere on board. This was the first time that everyone had really had the chance to meet one another and discuss just how each group should approach not only the work, but how to handle the children, as most of them were handicapped in some way. Annie wanted to take this opportunity to get to know the volunteers too; to get to know their feelings and worries. The flight was to take four hours, so there was plenty of time to "vox-pop" them all.

British Midland were apprehensive about landing at Succava as the runway was not really long enough. The main airport in Romania is Bucharest, but if we landed there it would involve an extra seven hour train journey for us before we could get to the orphanage. As a special compensation an extra fire engine was drafted into service at Succava! We landed to an immense cheer but on entering the bleak and sparse terminal building, voices were silenced and

thoughts turned once more to the task ahead.

Coaches had been supplied to transport everyone to the town of Siret, where the orphanage was situated. Annie, Dave and myself had the luxury of travelling with the Mayor in his personal Renault. With all the confusion that greets you at a strange airport in unfamiliar surroundings, I had forgotten to ask how long the drive would take. We hardly spoke on the journey, the Mayor and his chauffeur spoke no English and the three of us spoke no Romanian.

The plan was for Annie to go straight to the orphanage so I could shoot her initial reaction whilst the workers were going to a gymnasium in another part of Siret where they would eat and sleep. The light was starting to fade and as I had been told there were only four light bulbs working in the entire building, my thoughts turned to how I could overcome this problem. Tom was against me going in ahead of Annie to see how bad the conditions really were, as he wanted me to experience it with her. We had to keep the number of crew and personnel to a minimum, so I felt the only answer would be to clamp my small "sun-gun" on the top of the camera and bounce some light off the ceiling where I could. This solution would not have usually been my choice but in this situation it did seem to be the only answer.

The journey took forever. I knew that Annie would break down when she saw the babies in their cots and the conditions the orphans were living in, especially as she has two young children of her own. I've always felt that it's a bit cold when the camera is just an on-looker. There is something far more moving when you see a third party showing their feelings. The thought that I had only one chance to capture this on tape was on my mind more than anything else.

On the outskirts of Siret the Mayor pointed to a large four storey building standing high above the town and I guessed this was our destination. Annie and I gave each other a nervous smile whilst Dave was astonished at how menacing it looked. As we entered the long driveway the bells at the local church were ringing four o'clock. Dave thought it would be nice to record them without the car engine running, but I assured him there would be plenty of chances over the next five days. We had been warned of the smell inside the building, built up from years of poor sanitation, dirty children and babies. It had been suggested that Dave and I wear face masks to cope with the unbearable



PHOTOGRAPH JOHN WALKER

able stench, as we had to keep going even if Annie couldn't, but as the kids had not experienced a camera and bright lights before, we both felt that it was not on. What we did do though was to pour half a bottle of after-shave onto our jackets, so we could have a quick sniff if things got too bad.

Geraldine and Monica led the three of us into the building. I'd planned to leave the light off for as long as possible, but as soon as I went through the main door and into the hall-way it was just like a black hole. The corridors had no windows and I could not see a thing. We were taken first down to the basement where all of the babies were kept. They were not wrong about the smell, Geraldine started retching, I kept my nose buried in my jacket collar and one eye in the viewfinder. The stink was indescribable. The corridors and stairs were very busy. It seemed that this was the only area the children had to play in. Actually, play is probably the wrong word as they had nothing to play with, they just ran up and down making a lot of noise.

We entered our first room. Monica led the way followed by Annie, then me. It was a smallish room, about 10ft x 20ft with cots down each wall, leaving a central corridor of about 4ft where we all stood. Although the room was full of babies it all seemed very quiet. My eyes were attracted to a cot on my left which contained a naked baby who was lying on a wet, dirty mattress. Although I had a job to do I had to keep telling myself not to get emotionally involved, but I could not believe what I was filming. It seemed that everywhere I turned there were faces, children staring at you, calling you, and some not even moving. I looked around and saw Annie with her head buried in her hands and guessed that she was finding it difficult to cope with. I knew these pictures would have a big impact and felt even more pressure to keep turning over. These first images will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Most of the cots contained two babies, some sitting, some standing, but all wanting to be held. There was one Romanian woman employed to look after about 25 children and obviously could not give them the attention they needed. Most of the babies were quite healthy, but they all needed love and affection. I looked around again and this time caught Dave's eye. He shook his head as if to say he could not believe what he was seeing, but then nothing could have prepared us for what we were experiencing.

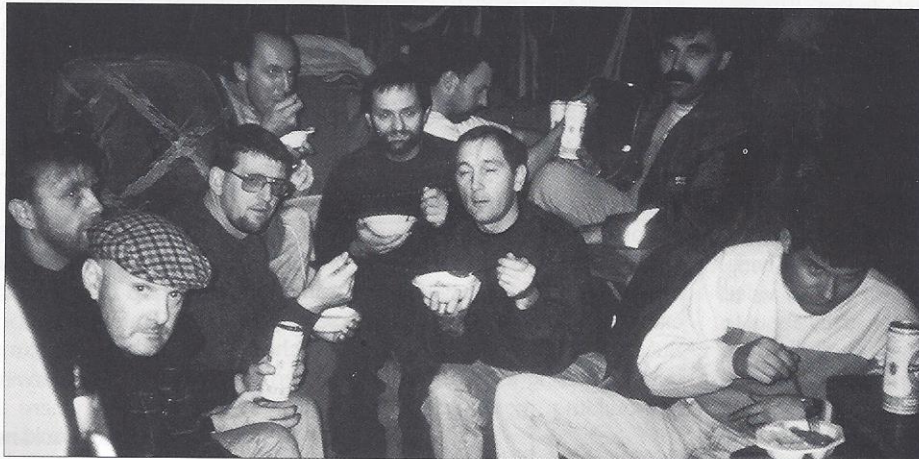
With my head still buried in my collar

we moved to the first floor to see some older children. They were all hyperactive and immediately started to hug us. Annie with her bright orange jacket attracted most children and the moment reminded me of the scene in *Close Encounters* when Richard Dreyfuss was mobbed by the aliens before being taken into the spaceship. We had been told that these children were aged between 18-20 but they looked no more than 13 or 14. Spending so much of their early life in cots seemed to be showing in their size and actions. One action, rocking

turn was the same as the middle floor, more cots, more children and more dreadful conditions. We paused and talked about how best to show that there were really no lights working and decided on a goodnight piece to camera from Annie where I would turn the lamp off halfway through to show just what it was like for the kids when the sun went down.

By the time we left the building it was late. We were all physically and mentally exhausted, tired and dirty. I remember lying on my back on the grass looking up at the

stars. Siret is a very small town and the night was very still and quiet. It was good to smell some fresh air. I tried to remember what the hell I had just done. Although I had filled up four, half hour Betacam tapes, my mind had gone blank. In the weeks leading up to this one, I suspected that this could be the most emotional and rewarding shoot of my career and it was



25 of us crammed into the Winnebago!

backwards and forwards, was something I had also noticed when I was with the younger children. I spotted it during the following days also, when the older boys would sit on the window ledge to look through the bars to the world outside. Later that evening I asked one of our doctors why this happened. He said it was because they had not been held and rocked as babies, so they would rock themselves.

The tour continued with a visit to the toilets and showers. They were both the same place as everything got washed down one hole in the corner of the room. It was too bad to show in the finished programme. We found a normal toilet, but even it had no seat. The smell was even worse, my collar was working overtime.

During the course of our journey around the building we had gained a few hangers on. They were some of the older kids that seemed interested in our equipment and clothes. Through a translator Annie asked one boy if he knew why we had come and he replied in a soft Romanian voice. "Oh", said the translator and bowed her head, "He said that every child in our country will know what you are doing". He turned away so not to show us his tears. Annie gave him a big hug, and joined him in shedding a few more. My eyes started to water and I could no longer see the viewfinder clearly.

No one spoke very much as we made our way up to the top floor. It had become dark outside and we needed the aid of my sun-gun just to see our way around. The top floor was just like the ground floor, which in

not letting me down. We boarded the minibus and headed for our beds. The forty minute drive was along the bumpiest roads I've come across or it could have been that our vehicle had lost its suspension. Dave broke open his bottle of duty-free whisky and we all had a laugh as we each tried to take a mouthful.

Although we were all glad to have left the orphanage for the evening and the journey was quite fun, my thoughts were still with the children, who were not so fortunate as us to have the freedom to come and go. We could do very little without the trucks and as I went to bed all I could think about were those children and wonder where John and the convoy were.

John Walker with the convoy, still in Hungary but approaching the Romanian borders, again takes up the story:-

We had the hardest 500 miles ahead of us and it was obvious that we were going to be at least a day late in reaching Siret. There was no way we could contact Anneka, Martin or the rest of the team and I was beginning to wonder about the sanity of the whole trip, not to mention my apprehension about the days ahead in the orphanage itself. By the afternoon we were getting sick of being shaken about by the deteriorating roads and I was thinking about what Martin was going through, as I knew if he was on schedule that he would be shooting the orphanage with Anneka for the first time.

The Romanian border emerged late afternoon, a tiny outpost in the middle of nowhere. I was nervous but an English

speaking official hastened our progress through the paperwork, it was actually a lot less hassle than either Austria or Hungary. An English truck driver who was familiar with the route from Budapest, had warned us not to travel after dusk due to the danger from bandits, but with only eight hours of daylight a day we couldn't take his advice. So we set off into the Romanian darkness and in Romania it was somehow darker than anywhere I had been before - no light anywhere until we reached the first town and even then the few street lights were very dim. We stopped and immediately there was a crowd of kids around the vehicles, staring at us as if we were from another planet.

The first large town on the map into Romania is Cluj, about three hours drive from the border. There were a few hotels listed in a guidebook we had, so it was decided that John and Laurie would speed ahead in the VW to try and sort some accommodation out. The temperature was well below freezing and an hotel of any sort seemed preferable to a night in the vehicles. John and Laurie having gone ahead, the rest of us followed as best we could in the pitch black pot-holed roads and the occasional dark village, regularly coming to a standstill behind unilluminated horse and carts, whole families aboard. It was strange - three hours driving without seeing anything resembling a cafe, bar or any sort of hospitality whatsoever. I was glad that there were plenty of us travelling together and was just getting concerned about John and Laurie, when Laurie crackled into talkback range telling us that he had found an hotel in Cluj, warm with hot water and safe parking - amazing!

They were waiting for us on the outskirts of Cluj, which consists of about a mile of identical housing blocks, no people, shops or facilities in sight. With them was a local taxi driver who, for a few dollars, became indispensable as a local Mr Fix-it. We followed them through the town and parked up in the Hotel Transylvania car park. Entering the large modern hotel foyer we could have been in any of the other Eurohotels we had been staying in, except for a few giveaways: only about one in ten of the light fittings had a bulb in it, each so dim that you wouldn't even put it in a bedside lamp - very gloomy. The foyer was also deserted apart from a few guys extremely keen on buying any western currency we may

have. One of them spoke good English so I sold him \$10 for double the official rate and enquired how he could afford to offer me such a rate. He explained that he wanted to travel abroad, that it was impossible to buy foreign currency in the banks and that Romanian Lei are worthless outside Romania. Until that moment I had not understood the workings of the currency black market in eastern Europe, and it had a profound effect on me. Here was a guy with similar aspirations to you or me, no opportunities in his home country, having to hang around in hotel lobbies in order to be able to pay to get out. Romanians may be able to get a passport since the revolution but the economic barrier to them is huge.

It came as no surprise that the Hotel Transylvania had no food or drink, so all 25 of us crammed into the Winnebago for beers and TV dinners.

We woke up the next morning to a covering of snow, and spent half an hour getting one of the vehicles started. With that done it was then left to Mr Fix-it to sort out some fuel for us. Despite having paid off some local military to watch the trucks overnight, one of the trucks was 30 gallons light in the morning. Refuelling took ages, some of the trucks hold over 100 gallons, but at least we all had enough to get us to Siret - hopefully it would be the same day, only 24 hours late. Travelling in daylight proved much more interesting. Narrow roads which though flat, seemed like being in an almost medieval agricultural country, the illusion only contradicted by the occasional dirty, smokey industrial plant. More horses and carts than cars, and even more peasants walking along the road. All the children in the villages waved as did many adults, the whole experience was fascinating. The impression of the people I got was rose tinted - peasants living off the land, content with a

rural life unaffected by materialism, but this illusion was corrected later by talking to people in Siret.

Mid-morning we got held up by a car accident in the middle of nowhere, there was nothing to do but wait for it to be cleared. A man passed with some loaves of bread which we were eager to buy, ten dollar bills meant nothing to him but his eyes bulged at the sight of 20 Marlboro, deal done!

By lunchtime we were climbing through the Carpathian mountains - very beautiful when visible through a break in the fog. Descending the other side in the afternoon, we had to stop whilst I cleared an old man out of the way who had collapsed in the middle of the road unable to untangle himself from his push-bike. Completely pissed, he didn't seem to know where he was, evidently the peasants' poverty doesn't prohibit life's essentials!

Night was falling as we left the mountain range behind, when we were stopped by a police car. Fearing that we might have to part with more Marlboro, we were delighted to find that he was out looking for us in order to escort us to Siret. Apparently there were lots of rumours in Siret as to our whereabouts and the authorities had a number of police cars out looking for us. Three hours later, at 8.30pm we drove into Siret to an overwhelming welcome from Anneka, Martin, the crew and 150 volunteers who had been able to do very little all day without the tools and the materials we were carrying. We were all very glad to see each other.

Eating in the marquee that evening, lots of things to say and ask, not least about how bad things were in the orphanage. It was an unpleasant feeling that having completed the journey we had to embark on an even harder shoot - but that was for the next day. Meantime, the duty frees took another severe bashing and I slept very well.

Wednesday morning, after our first fry up for five days (courtesy of the Territorial Army mobile canteen), we walked the 400 yards through the village to the orphanage. Siret is a pretty village, church on a hill, small slightly run down houses, a little park with seats but no sign of any shops or a cafe. The village children pestered us for "bob-bon", the men for cigarettes.

We had plenty of time to wander around and get the feel of the orphanage. My first



The catering: OURS!!



The catering: THEIRS!!

impression was the sight of children staring through the bars of many of the windows. Entering the four storey Victorian building and looking down a ground floor corridor, a shaven headed boy beckoned us into a room and we followed. Immediately we were mobbed by kids, clinging to us for attention. It's hard to describe my reaction, partly charmed by their affection, partly revolted by the scalp infections discoloured by some potion, partly very sad that they obviously don't get any attention in their normal routine. The room consisted of twenty five beds crammed together and that was it - that is where they spend their lives, one Romanian helper (not a trained nurse) to look after 25 of them. There aren't enough helpers to give them any affection or love, they just ensure that the kids don't get out of hand. The rest of the dormitories followed the same pattern, some worse with the more handicapped kids, which in Romanian terms encompasses anything from severe mental or physical disability to a hare-lip. The smell was pretty unbearable despite disinfection the day before - the toilets indescribable.

The shooting to be done was actually fairly relaxed, keeping on top of any interest-

ing developments and set-backs, very much fly on the wall, just letting it happen in front of the camera. Martin and I discussed the style fairly thoroughly with the production team beforehand as this programme could not be "light entertainment" like the rest of the series. We decided to use 13 x 9 lenses for the orphanage, avoiding the whacky wide angles, though it makes hand-held harder work, the minimum focus being the main problem, and as Martin mentioned earlier, also used gain throughout. We endeavoured to use an altogether more formal style than that usually associated with *Challenge*.

Wherever you looked there was something worth shooting, things like the children's lunch being served out of the rusty bins of the type used for litter here; the kids faces, some of the older ones helping with the work, or carrying our tripods; the Romanian helpers, at first very suspicious of us, but slowly becoming more relaxed, even smiling, not to mention the operation of restoring the building itself.

I think that our arrival and all the activity was the most exciting thing that the children had ever witnessed, and the older ones smiled most of the time which, despite the depressing conditions, made it a pleasure to work here. My reservation was the thought of what would happen to them after we left?

When we weren't shooting, the crews generally got involved unloading trucks and, later on, helping out painting in pictures on the walls. Some of the kids were eager to help out colouring in pictures which an artist had previously outlined - it was obvious that they had never drawn a picture in their life, their co-ordination was so poor that just painting to a line already drawn stretched their competence to its limit. Helping them out was rewarding but desperately sad, realising what little stimulation or encouragement they get, and as long as the orphanage remains so understaffed things cannot

change.

It was difficult not to get attached to the children even in the short time we were there. Some of them were astonishingly bright, picking up English expressions, very quick and keen to learn, mixing cement, painting, carrying things, generally assisting us and fascinated looking through the camera. Some were not so bright and constantly pestered us for possessions, torches being in big demand. One boy, Florine aged 17 looking nearer 13, pestered me for two days demanding "light, light". Leaving the orphanage in the VW on the Thursday night he pleaded with me to take him away with me - heavy stuff, he was hanging onto the window as I reversed, so I decided it was time to part with the torch in my camera bag. He seemed to forget about getting out of the orphanage and I left. All I heard from him for the rest of the time was the plea "battery, battery".

Each day was fairly similar, though towards the end of the week we were spending more time helping with the work than shooting. There was also time to speak to the kids and locals through translators, and one thing that became apparent was that Romanians spend a lot of time finding enough to eat. It is no wonder the kids are not well cared for when the helpers monthly wage (about £20) will only buy them a pair of shoes and they consequently find it a real struggle to look after their own families. Apparently the food the children eat is nourishing. Scarce commodities like butter are mixed into the food before it is delivered, otherwise the cooks would steal it to feed their own families. We broke up the old cots and furniture, which seemed a waste, but had we done otherwise we suspected that they would be put back and the new ones sold off. This might sound like harsh criticism of the Romanians but they are so impoverished that their attitude seems inevitable.

We were supposed to finish the job by Friday afternoon, with a party for the children in the early evening, but due to the convoy's delay and despite working nights, this schedule couldn't be achieved, so everyone decided to stay on an extra day.

Friday night, with only the party to shoot the next day, the Major of Siret put on some food and vodka for all of us. I felt a little uncomfortable about us being fed having witnessed the hardship outside, and please don't ask me about the politics of where the food came from, but everyone was relieved to be going home the next day - it was a great night.

The next morning saw some clearing up at the orphanage and the party. This was an emotional experience with our departure imminent and seeing the children tear open what must have been the first presents they had ever received in their lives. As we were packing up to leave, the Territorial Army had some packs of bread rolls left over, which one of the volunteers took into

the street to give away. It was pitiful to see him being mobbed by 30 villagers desperate to get hold of a pack of four bread rolls, I'm not exaggerating.

The journey home was another story in itself, which I won't go into except to say that everyone flew back except the drivers, who had another five day drive ahead of them. Choosing my breakfast at Manchester Airport was wonderful, the choice was amazing. After witnessing the drabness and impoverishment in Siret, I was very glad to be home.

A lot of people were saying on the

way home that the trip to Romania was the best experience of their lives, and in some ways I would agree. I still think about the kids and what they are going through during this hard winter with none of the excitement that we certainly brought to them for a few fleeting days. The project undeniably improved their standard of living, but it will be a long time before there are sufficient human resources to give them the kind of love and education they really need.

This is probably a good opportunity to thank the rest of the *Challenge* team for making working on the show so much fun,

despite the outrageously hard conditions, and also to *Positive Film and Television* for providing the Sony cameras which performed flawlessly, despite taking unreasonable punishment.

I returned to Siret to shoot material showing conditions three months on. I was relieved to find, contrary to a number of newspaper reports, that the materials we took out are still there and, more important, the children looked healthier. There were a number of English volunteers helping with the children, but there has been no increase in the number of Romanian helpers. ●

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GUILD MERCHANDISE ORDER FOR NON-MEMBERS

(A photocopy is acceptable)

GUILD MERCHANDISE IS NOW AVAILABLE WITH THE GUILD LOGO ON ALL ITEMS. OVERSEAS MEMBERS
PLEASE ADD SUFFICIENT MONEY TO THE COST PER ITEM TO ALLOW FOR POSTAGE AND PACKING.

DESCRIPTION	QTY	COLOUR	SIZE	COST PER ITEM £	UK POSTAGE PACKING £	SUB TOTAL £
SWEATSHIRTS Grey or Dark Blue 40" 42" 44" chest With embroidered Guild logo				12.50	1.00 per item	
POLO SHIRTS Sky Blue only 40" 42" 44" chest With embroidered Guild logo				12.50	0.85 per item	
Lapel Badges				1.25	0.25 any number	
Windscreen Stickers				0.25	0.25 any number	
Bag Stickers				0.25	0.25 any number	
Pens				1.30	0.25 per item	

I enclose a Cheque/International Money Order made payable to
The Guild of TV Cameramen for a TOTAL OF _____

FULL PAYMENT WITH THIS ORDER PLEASE

(Please PRINT)

Name _____ Telephone No: _____

Address _____

GUILD MERCHANDISE

THE MANOR HOUSE, 144 TONBRIDGE ROAD,
MAIDSTONE, KENT ME16 8SP, ENGLAND