

OTHER NATIONS

time our nation has gone a-whoring after Rome," Paisley says, "its greatness has decayed."

MacIver notes that Paisley refuses to admit that the meaning of English constitutional documents changes over time. To him, the intent of the Bill of Rights (1689) and the Act of Settlement (1701) has not changed over three centuries. Paisley's fundamentalism, she concludes, ensures that he will continue "to generate controversy" for years to come.

Romania's Dynasty

"Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism" by Vlad Georgescu, in *Eastern European Politics and Societies* (Winter 1988), Univ. of Calif. Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

Four years ago, Vice President George Bush praised Romania's President Nicolae Ceaușescu as one of Eastern Europe's "good communists" striving for independence in foreign policy and economic reform. Today most outsiders consider his regime a black comedy: Romania produces cars but limits driving, restricts television programming to two hours per day, and pulps old Bibles to produce toilet paper.

Why did Romania fail so badly? The blame, according to Georgescu, a Radio Free Europe executive, lies mainly with Ceaușescu, who became president in 1974. Displaying a "touch of royalty," Ceaușescu family members claim grandiose academic titles; the president himself is exalted in the government-run press as a "saint" and "a miracle" whose native village has become a national shrine.

Living in a "fantasy world," Ceaușescu has created the most rigid command economy in Eastern Europe. During the 1970s, his regime, with the help of Western credit and technology, devoted roughly one-third of the gross national product to classic Stalinist policies of investment in steel, machine-building, and chemicals, but found few markets abroad for the low-quality goods produced by the new plants. Romania, which once conducted much of its foreign trade with the West Europeans, now finds its best customers among Third World nations who often pay in barter goods.

Potentially one of the richest countries in Eastern Europe, Romania is now one of the poorest. The economy is plagued by high inflation and rising foreign debt. Wildly optimistic five-year plans repeatedly succumb to what Bucharest tersely calls "serious shortcomings." Spending for housing fell by 37 percent between 1980 and 1985. Despite huge investment in the oil industry, private electricity use has been cut by 80 percent between 1973 and 1985. Food rationing, abolished in 1954, was reintroduced in 1981; staples rationed include bread, meat, and eggs. Further savings occur as the Ceaușescu regime pursues a policy of "demodernization"—which favors horse-drawn carts over tractors and tricycles over trucks, and discourages the use of refrigerators and washing machines.

With few friends in the West, Romania, which proclaimed an "autonomous" foreign policy in 1964, recently returned to the Soviet orbit. But even the Kremlin has become increasingly critical of Ceaușescu's erratic policies. Ironically, the Soviet Union could, by easing Ceaușescu out, provide the impetus for needed domestic reform.