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WNET NEW YORK

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## press information

AS PLANS FOR EUROPE'S LARGEST GOLD MINE THREATEN TO DESTROY A TRANSYLVANIAN TOWN, *WIDE ANGLE* REPORTS ON A COMMUNITY DIVIDED BY THE ALLURE OF WEALTH AND THE FEAR OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

*Gold Futures* Premieres Tuesday, August 21 At 9 P.M. As *WIDE ANGLE* Continues Its Sixth Season On PBS

“It’s been six years since they began terrorizing us into moving,” says a resident of Rosia Montana, a 2000-year-old village in the mountains of Romania. “They wanted to buy everyone and everything. But we didn’t go and we won’t go.”

Tucked away in the Transylvanian mountains, a David-and-Goliath story is unfolding in the picturesque village of Rosia Montana. At stake is Europe’s largest deposit of gold ore – and a mining town that has existed since the ancient Romans found rich veins of gold and silver in the mountainside.

In *Gold Futures*, *WIDE ANGLE* profiles rural farmers and townspeople confronting a choice, as a Canadian company prepares to excavate a massive open-pit gold mine where their village still stands. Hungarian film-maker Tibor Kocsis is cinematographer, director and editor of *Gold Futures*, and has been following the story of Rosia Montana for more than five years.

*Gold Futures* premieres August 21 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).

The investor, Gabriel Resources, a Canadian mining company whose subsidiary, Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC), was granted a 17-year lease on the mining field estimated to contain 300 tons of gold and 1600 tons of silver. While the company awaits a final decision from the Romanian government on whether its environmental impact assessment meets stringent EU



standards, it has launched an advertising campaign highlighting its high-tech, environmentally cautious approach to mining and promising up to 1200 jobs – welcome news to a village where the average wage is only about \$3 a day.

“What we are planning to do is to redevelop the area with modern mining practice, modern environmental management,” says John Aston, Vice President of RMGC.

But villagers like 53-year-old Eugen Cornea are challenging the multinational gold corporation’s ambitious plans with a “they can’t buy us with their money” campaign. The retired topographer, who worked for 30 years in the local state-run mine in Romania’s communist days, is now vice president of Alburnus Maior, an NGO opposing the new development.

“May God put them in my situation, and let them bury their only child ,” says Margit Buran, a protestor who stands her ground beside her family’s tombstones, fearful that her only son – who died at age 18 – may have to be exhumed when the local cemetery is displaced.

Those who oppose the mine also fear the environmental risks that come with mineral excavation. The new, privately owned mine will operate on a vastly larger scale than the former state-run operations; and a cyanide-leaching process will be introduced to the site for the first time.

RMGC’s planned use of cyanide raises flags for some wary villagers who fear an environmental disaster like the one that occurred in 2000, when a ruptured dam at a nearby mine unleashed toxic cyanide sludge into the river system, contaminating the drinking water of millions of people and killing more than 1200 tons of fish downriver in Hungary.

In addition to the threat of pollution, the project will mean the displacement of the entire village and all its residents. Excavation of the new one-mile-wide mine can’t begin until hundreds of houses and nearby shops, churches and even graveyards are demolished. Close to half of the villagers have accepted the company’s buy-out offers, some saying they consider Rosia Montana Gold Corporation as the only hope left for the area. “Gold is the only source of income here,” commented one villager. “You can’t live off rosehips, elderberries and sunflower seeds.”

Against the stunning backdrop of misty forests and quiet village streets, **WIDE ANGLE** captures the conflict between the impoverished residents who welcome the company's buy-out offers and their neighbors who remain fiercely defensive of their way of life and anxious to maintain the pristine landscape of their homeland.

For additional information and photography, visit **thirteen.org/pressroom/wideangle** or **pbs.org/pressroom**.

Major funding for **WIDE ANGLE** is provided by PBS, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bernard and Irene Schwartz, Mutual of America Life Insurance Company, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation, The Jacob Burns Foundation, Ford Foundation, Josh and Judy Weston, Rosalind P. Walter, and The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation.

**WIDE ANGLE** is a production of Thirteen/WNET New York for PBS. Stephen Segaller is executive producer. Pamela Hogan is series producer. Andy Halper is senior producer.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning - as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

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