

Hungary breaks science links with Romania over Transylvania

London

A LETTER from Romanian scientists appealing to Hungarian colleagues not to break off scientific relations was recently read at a closed session of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This emerged at a meeting of the Hungarian government's cultural and foreign affairs committee last month. But the letter came too late. Talks between the two governments on cultural, educational and scientific cooperation seem to have broken down over the issue of Transylvania.

The dispute between the two countries dates back to the settlements after the First World War, when the Treaty of Trianon awarded Transylvania to Romania. But the Hungarian presence in Transylvania goes back more than a thousand years — Magyars were there before occupying what is now Hungary in 895 AD. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Transylvania was for a time the heartland of Hungarian resistance to the Ottoman Empire.

The Romanian policy of de-Magyarization of Transylvania began in 1918. Since the Second World War, despite the establishment of socialist regimes in both Hungary and Romania, Romanian policies in Transylvania have continued, but Hungarians have been reluctant to criticize the Romanians in public.

The Hungarian "Bolyai" University at Cluj-Napoca (formerly Kolozsvár) was closed down (the Rector committed suicide) and, during the 1970s and 1980s, reports of discrimination against Transylvanian Hungarians in education and professional employment became increasingly frequent and alarming.

Since 1987, the Romanian government has been "consolidating" agricultural settlements, which means the destruction of the villages of Transylvania and the resettlement of the inhabitants in high-rise "agro-industrial settlements". Thousands of Transylvanian Hungarians have fled across the border, swamping the Hungarian social services. Private initiatives and action by the churches have, at best, offered only temporary relief. There are 2.3 million Hungarians in Transylvania but only 10.5 million in Hungary itself.

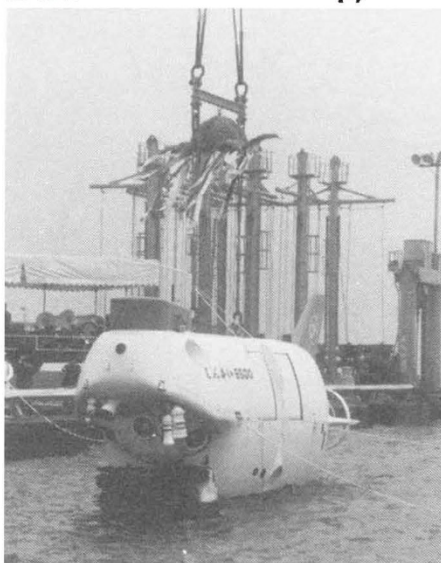
Diplomacy by the Hungarian government has come to naught. The Romanians insist that the destruction of the villages is "rational" and "scientific" and point out that they have sent in "conservation" officers to photograph anything of interest before it is bulldozed.

Increasingly, the Hungarians are calling for an "international" solution. In an unprecedented move for a Socialist country, Hungary has invited a delegation from

the UN High Commission for Refugees, which is due in Hungary next week. There have also been appeals by Hungarian "democratic" and "informal" movements in Hungary for the application of sanctions to Romania.

In Britain, there have been several calls for Madame Elena Ceaucescu to be stripped of the academic honours conferred on her by such bodies as the Royal Society of Chemistry. Although Ceaucescu is not, formally, responsible for the destruction of the villages, she is widely believed to be the real power behind the president. Although she is acclaimed as Romania's greatest scientist, others have questioned the quality and originality of her publications. But the Royal Society of Chemistry says that Ceaucescu was elected as a Fellow to the Royal Institute of Chemistry in the regular manner on the basis of her chemical career and publications, and that the charter of the Royal Society of Chemistry provides for the expulsion or suspension of a fellow only in the case of a criminal conviction, failure to observe the Society's bylaws or "conduct detrimental to the welfare of the society". **Vera Rich**

Sub's first outing



SHINKAI 6500, designed to be the world's deepest diving research submarine, took its first dip at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries shipyard in Kobe, Japan, last week. Its titanium alloy hull and pair of external manipulators will allow it to collect samples from the ocean bottom at depths of 6,500 metres, 500 metres deeper than vessels operated by other countries. After sea trials, the submarine will be delivered to the Japan Marine Science and Technology Center (JAMSTEC) in November. JAMSTEC will use the submarine to investigate the causes of undersea earthquakes, to assess deep ocean-bottom mineral resources and to study deep-sea life.

Alun Anderson

New complaints about US waste in the Antarctic

Sydney

GREENPEACE in Australia has joined environmental groups in the United States in accusing the US government of leaving behind an environmental mess at research facilities in Antarctica. A scientific committee on Antarctic research, made up of scientists from Antarctic Treaty signatory countries, will meet next October to recommend new waste disposal practices for the Antarctic.

The Australian group is focusing on two bases in the Antarctic — Wilkes, a former US and Australian base, and McMurdo, the present US base. Wilkes was established by the United States in 1957 as a temporary base before McMurdo was completed. In 1964, the Australians took over the abandoned base, where they remained until 1969 when they moved to their present base, Casey.

According to a spokesperson for Greenpeace Australia, Lyn Goldsworthy, when Wilkes was abandoned "a lot of rubbish was just left behind". This included 200–300 petrol drums, many still full, old food sacks and derelict buildings.

In 1985, the US government gave Australia permission to clean up Wilkes. Rex Moncur, acting director of the Australian Antarctic Division, says that although the Wilkes buildings are technically US property, Australia accepts responsibility for cleaning up the site, and plans to start work at the end of this year.

Greenpeace in Australia claims that McMurdo is still generating a dangerous amount of waste. Goldsworthy says McMurdo's sewage system discharges directly into the sea, and that some parts of the ocean floor off McMurdo are heavily contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls. She says Greenpeace has evidence that waste items such as batteries have been found at dump sites, contravening the code of conduct of waste disposal of the Antarctic Treaty.

Jack Talmadge, section head for polar coordination and information at the United States National Science Foundation, says the US government has always taken the waste problem seriously, and the recent reports have merely focused outside attention on the issue. Talmadge says the foundation's budget request for 1990 includes initial money for a four-year, \$30-million safety and environmental health initiative that will clean up existing problems and establish new procedures and equipment to forestall new ones. "We're taking the high road in getting the job done", he says.

Tania Ewing