

The Merchants of Human Beings The Securitate's Role in the Emigration of Romania's Germans (1978–1989)

COSMIN BUDEANCĂ

*“Bucharest Wants Money.
Bonn Wants Emigrants.”*

THE REPRESSION effected by the authorities of communist Romania, together with the country's manifold socio-economic problems, prompted many citizens to try to leave Romania legally or illegally during the 1945–1989 period. Only some of them were successful. In this context, the ethnic Germans and Jews were helped in their efforts to emigrate out of Romania by the governments of some non-communist countries. This study is centered on the post–1978 emigration of the ethnic Germans from Romania and the role of the notorious political police, the Securitate, in controlling emigration flows. Although party members could not emigrate without

Cosmin Budeancă

Postdoctoral researcher at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, editor of the vols. **Experiențe carcerale în România comunistă** (Prison experiences in communist Romania), vol. 6 (2012) and **Destine individuale și colective în comunism** (Individual and collective destinies in communism) (2013).

This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Program for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, within the project POSDRU 89/1.5/S/60189 with the title “Postdoctoral Programs for Sustainable Development in a Knowledge Based Society.”

the consent of the hegemonic Romanian Communist Party and the party-controlled Miliția played an important role in the emigration of party and non-party members, the Securitate had the decisive input in the process,¹ as it approved all legal emigration requests and was involved in tracking down and persecuting both those who successfully left the country illegally and those who tried, but failed to do so, as well as their families. A development with major implications for communist Romania's social, economic and cultural development, the emigration of the German minority after World War II has remained an insufficiently studied topic, the studies available on this subject being rather few.²

Historical Perspectives on German Emigration

RESearch on the emigration of Romania's ethnic Germans has been carried out both before and after 1989. Communist-era analyses on emigration were severely restricted in their data collection and data analysis techniques. Such studies could be carried out only outside Romania (primarily in West Germany), because the Romanian authorities did not permit such analyses, and the topic presented interest mostly for journalists. Historians gave no attention to this theme both because of the limited access to information available at the time and because emigration was still ongoing. After the collapse of the communist regime research on emigration benefited from access to newly opened archives and the possibility to consult studies published abroad and to conduct interviews, surveys and focus groups with the emigrants. Several studies have been published as a result, in West Germany, Romania and other countries, but the limited access to the archives of the Securitate, the Romanian Communist Party, and the Miliția has placed serious limitations on research. As such, very few books and studies have mentioned the crucial role of the Securitate in controlling the emigration flow.³

A notable exception is represented by the introductory study to the volume of documents edited by Florica Dobre et al. The book itself is also important, because it includes letters, address, information notes, official reports relevant for the way in which the political police was involved in the emigration of ethnic Germans. The volume covers the January 1962–5 December 1989 period and includes 468 original Securitate documents.

Then come the remarkable efforts to document the history of the Germans of Romania undertaken by associations from various German towns and research institutes such as the Institut für Deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas, Munich, Das Südost-Institut, Regensburg, or Siebenbürgen Institute in

Gundelsheim, associated to the University of Heidelberg. Over the years, they have published books and studies, organized conferences, symposiums, debates and educational programs, collected documents on the history of the Germans living abroad and oral history interviews, or set up museums.

Historical Sources and Methodology

THIS STUDY is focused on the role of the secret political police in the legal emigration of ethnic Germans from Romania after 1978, the year when Romania and West Germany signed an emigration agreement following the visit to Bucharest of Helmut Schmidt, the West German Chancellor, and his discussions with the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who at the time was president of the republic and secretary general of the Communist Party. This analysis relies on secret Securitate documents, Romanian government reports, as well as on personal interviews with Germans who left communist Romania (4), Germans who decided to stay in the country after 1978 (5), and Romanians, neutral witnesses to this emigration (7).

Respondents were selected through the snowball sampling technique⁴ with an eye to their age, gender, educational background, profession, and knowledge of emigration. The interviews were conducted during the 2002–2012 period, in Bucharest as well as in towns and villages of Transylvania. The interviews lasted between 30 and 180 minutes. Copies of the interview transcripts are available on request from the Institute for Oral History of Cluj-Napoca, the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives and in the personal archive of the author. The 13 men and five women interviewed had ages ranging from 34 to 85.

The secret documents consulted included 27 files of over 5,000 pages produced by the foreign branch of the Securitate, and five files (of 53 volumes of over 18,500 pages) that belonged to the Securitate document collection.

This analysis draws on both oral history and the study of archival documents, which are seen as complementing one other. This complementarity of oral history and archival documents has been convincingly advocated by Paul Ricoeur, who considered that oral testimonials were as valid as any written historical document.⁵

The Emigration of Germans during Communist Times

THE DRAMATIC decrease of the German minority in Romania under the communist regime represented a continuation of a demographic trend which started at the end of the 19th century and increased after World War II and the consolidation of the communist regime during the late 1940s and the 1950s.⁶ According to the 1930 census, the German minority represented 4.12 percent of Romania's total population of 18,057,028 (that is, 745,421 people), by 1948 their numbers were 343,913 (of 15,872,624), and in 1992 they represented only 119,462 (of 22,810,035).⁷ The demographic decrease was a consequence of numerous factors, of which emigration was the most significant. In turn, emigration had varying intensities, being influenced by national and international factors, such as the repression campaigns directed against the German population immediately after World War II, the communist policies targeting ethnic minorities, the economic difficulties of late communism, the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967, and these countries' subsequent political and economic interests.⁸

Rudolf Poledna distinguished three important waves of German outmigration from Romania, but the research available to date does not allow us to estimate how large these waves were.⁹ The first wave (1939–1950) included Romanian Germans who left the country during and immediately after World War II because they had voluntarily enlisted in the armed forces of Nazi Germany or became prisoners of war and refused to return to Romania after the war or their liberation; some had served in the Romanian army and, after the country turned against Nazi Germany on 23 August 1944, were imprisoned by the German army; others were evacuated from Northern Transylvania and Banat after 23 August 1944, or fled those provinces in fear of the invading Soviet troops; others deserted in Germany or Austria from the German or Romanian armies; and still others had been deported to the Soviet Union but, because of health reasons, were sent to Germany to recover. The second wave included the Germans who emigrated in 1950–1989 as a consequence of the consolidation of the Romanian communist regime and the 1967 bilateral agreement with West Germany, through which Romania became the only communist country other than the Soviet Union to have direct relations with West Germany. The third wave consisted of those who left Romania after the December 1989 revolution and before 1993.¹⁰

During the 1950s, the Securitate played an important role in monitoring and suppressing the ethnic Germans. The Nazi sympathies of some ethnic Germans constituted a sufficiently strong reason to consider that the entire minority represented a potential threat to the Romanian communist regime. For this reason,

many ethnic Germans were arrested and convicted in political show-trials, being given long prison terms.¹¹

On 7 March 1955, the war between Romania and Germania formally came to an end, and during the 1960s the communist regime started to encourage the emigration of ethnic Germans. There are two reasons for this policy change. On the one hand, the Romanian authorities found rather appealing the amount of money paid for the emigration of each ethnic German. That amount could reach 5,000 to 6,000 DM per head (which represented 1,250–1,500 US dollars).¹² On the other hand, they considered emigration an important step towards the ethnic homogenization of Romania, which included sizeable ethnic minorities.¹³ This outlook resulted from the national-communist ideology promoted by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej until 1965 and afterwards by his successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who increasingly stressed Romania's national character¹⁴ instead of the international communism promoted by Moscow.

The process of strengthening diplomatic relations with West Germany continued after 1965. Two years later, Bonn chose Romania as the first country among the Soviet satellite states with which West Germany launched negotiations in view of opening diplomatic relations. Romania was preferred to Czechoslovakia and Poland, with which West Germany had border disputes. On 31 January 1967, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established with the opening of embassies in Bonn and Bucharest. Both East Germany and the Soviet Union objected, but the representatives of Romania and West Germany continued to meet officially, and relations between the two countries were not affected.¹⁵ This diplomatic success created the premises for Germans to be legally allowed to leave Romania for West Germany. Also, during the 1960s and the 1970s diplomatic relations between the two countries stressed the importance of “reuniting the families of the Germans from Romania who had been separated during or at the end of the [World] war [II].”¹⁶

Unfortunately, the number of those who emigrated during the 1960s and the 1970s is unknown because of the inconsistency between the data published in Romania and West Germany, where most Romanian Germans emigrated. The Romanian authorities did not want to admit that many of their citizens preferred to emigrate than to stay in the country. There are no grounds to suspect that the West German figures are incorrect. According to Romanian sources, in 1945–1977 the number of ethnic German residing in the country decreased by 24,000, while West Germany registered 43,000 persons coming from Romania. In 1977–1992, Romania registered 239,000 emigrants, while Germany reported 327,000 immigrants from Romania.¹⁷ According to Ernst Wagner, in 1950–1993, 407,605 Romanian German emigrants were officially registered in West Germany and, if to this figure one adds the people who emigrated to East

Germany, the total reaches 420,000, half of them being Germans from Transylvania.¹⁸ Andrei Roth argued that in 1977 the German population who lived in Romania reached 322,296, while at the end of 1989 it stood only at 179,592.¹⁹ The data suggest massive emigration of the ethnic Germans of Romania.

Poledna suggests that in 1961–1968 some 1,561 Romanian Germans left the country per year, while in 1969–1976 the number reached 5,000.²⁰ According to Wagner, in 1959–1969 around 1,629 persons left Romania every year, while in 1970–1979 around 7,141 persons did so.²¹ Aside from these numbers, during 1945–1977 the German minority decreased dramatically, a conclusion confirmed by the 1977 census, which registered only 359,109 Romanian citizens of German origin (representing 1.66 percent of the total population).²² According to Wagner, 1977 was the first year when emigration levels reached 10,000 per year, showing that communist Romania pursued a clear emigration policy with respect to its minorities.²³ This number is slightly higher than the one mentioned in the Securitate documents, which note 9,500 emigrants in 1977.²⁴

The Securitate documents reveal that the communist political police had an important role in the Romanian Germans' emigration, as certified by a series of agreements between the Romanian communist and West German democratic authorities. According to Banu and Dobre, the Securitate's involvement in the issuing of visas permitting Romanian citizens to leave the country started in January 1962.²⁵ The Securitate and the Romanian communist leaders became more interested in this matter, once they understood that they could obtain important financial dividends as a result.²⁶ The proceedings were used to acquire Western technology and machinery necessary for Romanian industrial plants. In time, communist Romania's need for foreign currency grew, determining important changes in emigration patterns.

In 1969, the Romanian authorities found convenient non-financial solutions for compensating the Germans leaving the country, when they decided to sign with West Germany some economic agreements advantageous for Romania. As a result, besides money, Romania could receive technology, machinery for the steel industry, and five sedans free of charge (two Mercedes 230, two Ford Taurus, and one BMW 2000).²⁷ A May 1973 confidential agreement obliged the Romanian authorities to permit the emigration of 40,000 Germans between July 1973 and July 1978, in groups of up to 8,000 persons per year.²⁸ The arrangements through which, from 1970 to 1973, the Securitate received payments for allowing the emigration of ethnic Germans and bought Western goods were superseded by those it concluded after 1978. As secret operations, they had code names like "Pilgrims," "Forest" and "Harvest."²⁹ Given the ties between the Securitate and the Communist Party, it is evident that all negotiations pertaining

to emigration unfolded under the vigilant eye and with the consent of the top party officials.

The Post–1978 Emigration

DURING THE late 1970s, the Romanian communist state was in dire need of hard currency to pay back its foreign debt to communist countries, Western governments and international organizations, which had accumulated during 1976–1981. The debt to Western countries increased from 2.81 billion US dollars in 1976 to 10.16 billion US dollars in 1981. The percentage of short-term loans in the total debt raised from 4 percent in 1979 to 22 percent in 1980. The long—and medium—term loans accounted for the remainder of the debt. In 1980–1981, Romania was faced with the need to pay back the first instalment of these debts. Given the large amounts in Western currency that Romanian authorities had to pay to creditors, at a time when Romanian exports provided insufficient cash, Bucharest had to delay the payment of some 1,143 million US dollars. As if the debt was not a serious enough problem, Romania faced major difficulties in paying for its oil imports, whose price increased as a result of the 1979 oil crisis. All these developments fuelled the “foreign debt crisis,” started by Poland in 1980, when it defaulted on its debt re-payments. As a result, Western banks adopted a cautious attitude toward communist countries, and refused to grant them new loans.³⁰ Some of these new loans were sought to repay the foreign debt.

In this unfavorable international context, Ceaușescu asked for the drafting of a new repayment schedule. At the suggestion of the International Monetary Fund, Romania decreased its imports and increased its exports, but the fact that it was obliged to accept these conditions represented a bitter pill to swallow for the excessively proud Romanian dictator. He isolated the country politically to make it less dependent on the Western governments who pressured him to respect fundamental human rights. In December 1982, Ceaușescu pledged to repay the foreign debt in full by 1990. To do so, he introduced a series of austerity measures unparalleled in other communist countries.³¹ This context explains the desperate need for hard currency of the Romanian state. The emigration of the Romanian Germans and Jews became an opportunity to obtain hard currency.

The visit to Bucharest of the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt on 6–7 June 1978 represented a landmark for the emigration of the Romanian ethnic Germans. This important historical moment has been widely discussed by researchers and reflected in the collective memory. The details of the visit and of

the discussions between the two leaders remain unknown, but apparently their conversations touched on the reunification of German families and the possibility to streamline the visa granting procedures on the Romanian side and renew the 1973 agreement.³² On this occasion it was decided that, in exchange of its support for the reunification of German families, the West German government would grant Romania a credit of 700 million DM for eight years to finance West German imports and 160 million DM, paid in biannual tranches, to partly finance the interest on that loan. In turn, Romania pledged to solve several “humanitarian” cases and grant permission to leave to those who needed medical treatment or interventions not available in the country.³³ During negotiations, the German side unsuccessfully asked the Romanians to accept the emigration of 12,000 persons per year, while the Romanians asked the Germans to increase the amount paid per person from 3,000 to 4,000 DM.³⁴ The Securitate recorded the selling of ethnic Germans with the code name “Recuperarea” (Recovery).³⁵

During the visit of Chancellor Schmidt discussions on emigration were carried out by Vasile Pungan, head of Ceaușescu’s advisory group, and Günther Van Well, deputy minister of foreign affairs.³⁶ After the agreement was signed, on 23 January 1978 the Securitate General Gheorghe Marcu and Edgar von Wietersheim, counsellor in the German Interior Ministry, agreed on the technical details of the agreement agreed upon by Schmidt and Ceaușescu. Thus, they agreed to prolong the arrangement on family reunification until 30 June 1983, and to raise the number of departures to the 1977 level (9,500 persons). For each person leaving Romania, the German side paid 4,000 DM in instalments delivered periodically, every two months.³⁷

Schmidt’s visit was official, but emigration negotiations had to remain secret. However, the German media published several articles on the topic and thus citizens found out that their chances to emigrate had increased significantly. For example, on 6 January 1978 the *Saarbrücker Zeitung* published an article titled “Bucharest Wants Money. Bonn Wants Emigrants,” which declared that “According to the federal government, last year the number of emigrants increased, but family reintegration remains difficult.³⁸ In 1977, for the first time 10,000 Germans could leave Romania. Since the end of World War II, 60,000 have emigrated.”³⁹ The same article argued that the number of approved emigration requests had increased after the visit, but those who wanted to leave the country continued to be under pressure from the Romanian authorities: “because of Schmidt’s visit the Romanian authorities have solved more emigration requests, but in most cases [prospective emigrants] lose their jobs and suffer retaliations. According to the last census, the number of ethnic Germans in Romania stands at 340,000, most of which would emigrate, if given the chance, according to some West German sources.”⁴⁰

The Securitate confirmed that most ethnic Germans wanted to emigrate. A secret document showed that, after Schmidt's visit and his negotiations with Ceaușescu, on 13 January 1978, the passport office in Timiș county recorded 534 emigration requests filed by 1,589 persons. Some 443 families of 1,203 persons filed their first request, whereas the others had already been denied their requests by the Romanian authorities. Of the 1,589 persons who requested permission to emigrate, 1,552 were ethnic Germans and wanted to reach West Germany.⁴¹ It is most certain that similar situations were registered in other Romanian counties.

Before 1978, the Securitate got involved in the emigration of Romanian ethnic Germans in a judicious manner. The secret documents present the manner in which the bilateral negotiations unfolded, often giving the impression of an oriental bazaar because each side wanted to get the best deal for itself, and negotiations explicitly detailed the number of persons to emigrate and the payment per each head. The Romanians wanted to get as much money as possible. The Germans wanted to make as few and small payments as possible. In fact, the Securitate was interested to obtain large sums of hard currency because part of the money, decided by the Council of Ministers and possibly reaching 20 percent of the payment, could be used for purchasing Western goods and electronic devices for the Interior Ministry, to which the Securitate was subordinated.⁴² Thus, Schmidt's visit and the interest of the West German government in regulating emigration at the highest level constituted a golden opportunity for the Securitate, which thus could use the payments to address its own needs.

In November 1979, the Romanian side asked for a payment increase of 30 percent per head, reportedly to cover high inflation rates and the expenses which the Romanian state incurred with the free education of those who sought to emigrate. This issue was re-discussed in 1980 and 1981. The German authorities accepted to increase payments from 4,000 to 5,000 DM if the Romanians increased the number of persons allowed to emigrate.⁴³ Negotiations were ultimately successful, and an appendix to the 1978 agreement was signed in March 1981 in Bucharest and Cologne.⁴⁴

Although a communist institution, the Securitate operated in a market economy as a monopoly that could maximize its profits. In spite of the 1981 agreement, the following year Bucharest asked again for higher payments. Moreover, on 1 November 1982 a Decree of the Romanian State Council provided that "the persons who request and obtain approval to leave Romania and settle in another country must pay all their debts towards the state, socialist organizations and persons, and the expenses the state incurred with their education."⁴⁵ The decree reflected the Romanian state's desire to prevent the brain-drain and to recover the expenses with the training of prospective emigrants, since educa-

tion was free in the country. At the same time, the decree aimed at increasing the hard currency reserves of a state keen on repaying its foreign debt. Initially, the German side refused to increase payments and invoked the provisions of the 1978 agreement, but ultimately it accepted this condition.

The decree set a new ground for negotiations for the Securitate representatives, the more so since the 1978 agreement was about to expire. A new set of negotiations ended on 21 May 1983 with the signing of an agreement covering the 1 July 1983–30 June 1988 period. According to that document, the Romanian authorities had to permit 11,000 ethnic Germans to leave the country each year, while the German authorities had to pay 7,800 per person to cover education expenses. Another agreement, signed on 30 June 1978 in Cologne for covering transportation and custom duties, remained confidential.⁴⁶ The documents demonstrate the efforts of the Romanian authorities (represented by the Securitate) to maximize their profit. In 1984, they asked for the recalculation of payments because of the German mark's depreciation relative to the American dollar. The German authorities accepted to increase the amounts paid, if Romania agreed to use the money for purchasing West German products.⁴⁷

The following years saw continuous negotiations, each party trying to obtain more favorable terms. During his visit to West Germany of 15–17 October 1984, Ceaușescu invited German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Romania.⁴⁸ The German authorities used this invitation to postpone discussions in an effort to gain the upper hand in the negotiations, although their overall goal was to facilitate the emigration of as many Romanian ethnic Germans as soon as possible. Ultimately, on 8 November 1988, after some tough bargaining, a new confidential convention and a special agreement were signed for the 1 July 1988–30 June 1993 period. The convention stipulated the emigration of 13,994 persons (the number for 1987) at 8,950 DM per head.⁴⁹ According to the new agreement, the German state had to pay 390 DM for transportation by train, customs and other administrative expenses for each emigrant.⁵⁰ Given these stipulations, both the convention and the agreement were more favorable to the Romanian state, which gained more money as a result. Although negotiations remained tense because of the Romanians' insistence on ever higher payments, they proved to be favorable for both countries.

Surprisingly, on 4 December 1989 the Romanian authorities decided to unilaterally annul the confidential convention of the previous year. The reasons were the “failure [on the part of the German state] to comply with the economic, political, commercial agreements” assumed by the German state, the lack of reaction of the German authorities against certain persons involved in “acts or attempts at illegally leaving Romania by citizens of German or Romanian nationality,” and the fact that the confidentiality of certain data from the con-

vention had not been respected, the German state/German politicians being accused of releasing information to the press or using it for electoral gains.⁵¹ Many Germans with relatives in Romania or sympathetic to the plight of Germans living under the communist regime were represented by very active associations and formed an important electoral segment that German politicians could not ignore. This is why German politicians often publicly released information about emigration, which sometimes reverberated back in Romania, influencing political views in that country.

The negotiations on emigration from Romania, including discussions about payments, took place in Romania, Germany or Austria. After 1968, the German side was represented by lawyer Günther Hüscher (mentioned in the Securitate secret documents as “Edward”), an influential figure with access to the top German political leaders, including the chancellor.⁵² The Romanian side was represented by several German-speaking high-ranking Securitate officers. Until 1978, when Ion Mihai Pacepa, head of the foreign division of the Securitate and personal advisor to Ceaușescu defected to the United States, the Romanian side was represented by the Securitate Major General Gheorghe Marcu. After 1978, Marcu was accompanied by a few Securitate officers like Major General Gheorghe Zagoneanu (deputy interior minister and Pacepa’s successor) or Stelian Andronic (head of the Securitate department in charge of hard currency transactions).⁵³

The secret archives reveal that the Securitate was directly involved in the emigration process. The Romanian and German parties to the negotiations were seldom mentioned in the secret files under their real names and almost always under their code names. Code names were also used for locations and even countries. The conversations were marked “confidential” and the Securitate always sought to keep the documents and the details about the negotiations secret. Although the Securitate played a decisive role in this “operation,” it remained only a tool in the hands of the political decision-makers. The negotiations were always communicated to the Romanian ministers of the interior and of external affairs and even to President Ceaușescu, who were only very seldom mentioned in those documents, although they ultimately determined their fate. Indeed, Ceaușescu knew what was going on and supervised the “operation” because in 1982 the head of the Securitate, Tudor Postelnicu, told him that the German side was unhappy because very few Germans had been allowed to emigrate that year. Postelnicu asked that 1,100 to 1,900 people should be allowed to emigrate during the coming months, a proposal approved by Ceaușescu.⁵⁴

German Emigration—Source of Illicit Benefits for Securitate and Nomenklatura

AFTER THE Schmidt–Ceaușescu agreement of January 1978, a growing number of Romanian citizens left the country, their number often surpassing the numbers stipulated in the agreements, obliging the Romanian authorities to restrict emigration. Thus, new difficulties and setbacks appeared in the process of obtaining a visa. The most common methods used by the authorities to stall emigration included delaying to answer emigration requests. Once the application was submitted, years passed before an answer, not always positive, came.⁵⁵ In addition, the Securitate involved in the process a long chain of intermediaries, who facilitated emigration for significant amounts of money or presents.⁵⁶ Obtaining such undeserved benefits was punishable by law, and Securitate officers with decisive roles in emigration used intermediaries to cover their own involvement. The Securitate archives mentioned names of people convicted for having asked for money to mediate emigration approvals. Lawyer Günther Hüscher, a German representative in negotiations, was often given such lists to demonstrate the good faith of the Romanian side in dealing with emigration without intermediaries. Such cases were also reported in the press, to discourage those who wanted to benefit from the desperation of those willing to emigrate and show the German side that the Securitate and the Miliția were keeping the phenomenon under control.⁵⁷ When the Securitate found out the names of intermediaries in West Germany, they were presented to Hüscher, so that the German authorities could prosecute them.⁵⁸

At this time we do not possess information about the way intermediaries from Germany acted. They might have drawn up lists of persons in need of urgent departure from Romania, and subsequently submitted them to politicians. In fact, such cases are frequently mentioned in the Securitate archives, when top German politicians (even ministers) intermediated urgent cases. Hüscher submitted these lists to the Securitate; he was allowed to negotiate even larger amounts to be paid if these “special cases” were solved quickly.⁵⁹

Besides the “official” amounts paid by the German state for each emigrant, additional amounts were sometimes paid, a point also underscored by the interviewees.⁶⁰ Besides money, the Securitate officers and nomenklatura members with an important role in controlling emigration often showed interest in the assets of the Germans. The nomenklatura, born shortly after the communist regime was set up, consisted of social luminaries and the politically privileged. It enjoyed genuine class privileges related to membership in the communist party, not their own merits. The nomenklatura included three layers: 1) the top no-

menklatura (the several hundred top party members and state authorities, heads of the Securitate, the army, the courts, and other central organizations); 2) the thousand or so members of the local nomenklatura; 3) and other privileged categories (including tens of thousands of senior Securitate and Miliția officers, heads of large companies, party and union activists, those working in foreign trade, professors, doctors, writers, actors, journalists).⁶¹ Their influence depended on their position in the party-state, but the closer they were to decision makers in the Securitate, the greater their influence. Their interests were similar to the Securitate: to obtain valuables, money or houses for facilitating emigration. Interest in German dwellings emerged because during communism it was very difficult to get permission to build a house in a city and, given the low revenue levels, it was hard to justify the money needed for building a multi-room house similar to those owned by ethnic Germans, which could be taken over relatively easily once they emigrated.

The interest of the Securitate employees in the houses of those who intended to emigrate has been presented by Herman Pitters of Sibiu, who focused on this issue, pointing out that not all dwellings were targeted, only houses in the good city districts.⁶² Hans Klein remembers the interest of the nomenklatura in the emigration of Germans. In Sibiu, being appointed to a higher Communist Party position was a very good opportunity to change housing by “helping” a German family to emigrate in order to take over their home.⁶³

In the last decades of communism, many Romanians from small towns or rural areas wished to live in larger cities, where the economic background and living conditions were better. But big cities were “closed,” and permission to relocate there was rarely given. Klein pointed out the interest of some Securitate officers in Sibiu to own a house in a rural area called Marpod, 32 kilometers away from the city. We have no information about the reason which made them want to own a home there, but we can assume that originally a few leading representatives of the political police and the nomenklatura obtained houses in this village and later, mimetically, other officers wanted to belong to “a select circle” of those who owned residences there.⁶⁴

The issue related to the houses of those who wanted to emigrate was more complex, since Decree 223 of 3 December 1974 allowed the authorities to purchase the emigrants’ properties at fixed prices, well below their real value, to the great disadvantage of the Germans. To avoid highly valued houses being signed over to the state for less than the market value, some of those who intended to emigrate sold their houses before they applied for emigration papers.

All sorts of difficulties encountered by the Germans who wanted to emigrate were evidenced by the Romanians and Germans I interviewed.⁶⁵ As reflected

by these interviews, those who applied for visas were subjected to considerable pressure, and in many cases they faced the additional problem of children attending universities and there was the risk that they may have been forced to give up their studies because of their parents' intention to emigrate.

Another Romanian respondent stated that "all the Germans went crazy. Almost everyone requested to leave, but weren't allowed to do so. The moment they had a chance to go, they left. Some 90 percent [of them] never came back, but they weren't allowed to leave the country. If they had been allowed to take trips or leave... they would not have come back. Some of them, I guess most of them, submitted requests 10 or 15 years in advance... [the Securitate] allowed only a few to go, 100,000 or so... I cannot give an exact number, but I guess there were over a million requests and only a few thousand actually left every year."⁶⁶ Even if the figures presented by the interviewees are inflated, they show how Romanians perceived this huge desire of the Germans to emigrate. This interviewee, like the previous one, insists that the long periods of waiting for the visa approval amounted to a high psychological pressure on the Germans.

Another important problem was with those who requested temporary or permanent departure for medical reasons or relocation. These had to be dealt with on a priority basis, which did not happen regularly, and on such occasions some Securitate officers took advantage of the desperation of those families in order to obtain personal benefits.⁶⁷

Conclusions

AFTER WORLD War II most Germans living in Romania wanted to emigrate to Germany. Although Romania ratified several international treaties which stipulated the respect for human rights⁶⁸ (among them the right to leave the native country at any time), the communist regime constantly infringed these rights. This situation forced those who wanted to leave the country to resort to alternative solutions to emigrate, including trying to apply pressure on Romania through international bodies, by lobbying well-known political foreign representatives, or illegally crossing the border. Gradually, the desire for emigration became a social phenomenon, as a consequence of the large number of people who wanted to emigrate, important sums of money being used to facilitate emigration.

The Securitate identified in the Germans' desire to emigrate a potential source of foreign currency, indispensable for the communist state. After 1962 the Securitate became increasingly involved in controlling the approvals for emigration. After the visit of the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to Romania in 1978,

the Romanian and West German representatives signed a series of secret “conventions” and “agreements.” A careful analysis of the secret police files demonstrates that both parties pursued their interests: West Germany wanted to help as many Germans as possible to leave Romania, while the Romanians claimed “damages” in exchange for emigration permits. Although these agreements were secret, a segment of the Romanian population (both Romanians and Germans) knew about the secret police’s involvement in this matter. The fact that the Germans knew about the Securitate’s involvement could be explained by the fact that the persons who wanted to emigrate were obliged to come into contact with the repressive institution. Although talks about emigration were held in secret because of the fear inspired by the Securitate, some Romanians knew details about this situation, especially those living in mixed Romanian-German communities.

After the collapse of the communist regime, access to the Securitate’s secret archive allowed historians to better understand the involvement of this repressive institution in the emigration process. Although relatively few documents show the decisive role of the Romanian Communist Party leaders in emigration, their involvement is obvious. And the Securitate, as an instrument of repression and social control, implemented the decisions of party leaders and managed the emigration of ethnic Germans from Romania. The Securitate permanently tried by way of countless negotiations to obtain the maximum of benefits for the communist state and for itself, as an institution, because the money received could be used by the political police. Not just the Romanian state and the Securitate benefited from these “transactions,” but also some of the secret officers and representatives of the nomenklatura, who took advantage of the Germans’ desire to emigrate in order to obtain undeserved benefits.

On the basis of the documents and the oral history testimonies, we can appreciate that after 1962, and especially after 1978, the Securitate behaved as a “company” specializing in human trafficking, and the communist regime in Bucharest proved once again to be a totalitarian one for which some fundamental rights (to life, freedom of movement, a decent living) represented only words meant to be mentioned in the Constitution but never respected.

□

Notes

1. The Securitate managed the emigration of the Germans, as its departments were directly involved in solving the problems of those willing to emigrate. From 1978 to 1989, emigration was controlled centrally by the “Centrul de Informații Externe–

- CIE” (Foreign Intelligence Center), in particular the officers of the “Aport Valutar Special–AVS” (Special Currency Actions Unit), which secured the currency necessary to repay Romania’s foreign debt. Officers of other Securitate departments also played an important role given their ability to decide who received approval for emigration depending on a number of factors, including their own personal interest. Florica Dobre et al., *Acțiunea “Recuperarea”: Securitatea și emigrarea germanilor din România (1962–1989)* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2011), passim.
2. For details about migrations and the general reasons of it, see Nicoleta Tufan “Mobilitate vs. Migrație”, in *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială* 19 (2007): 99–114.
 3. Georg Weber et al., *Emigration der Siebenbürger Sachsen: Studien zu Ost–West–Wanderungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2003); David Rock and Stefan Wolf, eds., *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002); Karl-Rudolf Brandsch, *Flucht aus dem Reich Ceausescus: 40 km im Fluss Timisch* (Aachen: Helios, 2006); Siegfried Chambre, *Auf und davon oder Der Traum vom Roten Flugzeug* (Stuttgart: Rex Verlag, 1994); Herta Müller, *Herztier* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1993); Rainer Münz and Ralf E. Ulrich, “Internationale Wanderungen von und nach Deutschland 1945–1994: Demographische, politische und gesellschaftliche Aspekte räumlicher Mobilität,” *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv* 1, 1996; Rainer Münz and Ralf E. Ulrich, “Changing Patterns of German Immigration, 1945–1994,” in *Migration Past, Migration Future: Germany and the United States*, eds. Klaus J. Bade and Miron Wiener (Oxford: Berghahn, 1997); Anneli Ute Gabanyi, “Die Deutschen in Rumänien: Exodus oder Neuanfang?,” in *Die Siebenbürger Sachsen in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Hans Rothe (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 1994); id., “Die aufnahme der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Rumänien (31 Januar 1967): Voraussetzungen und Folgen,” in *Punți în istorie: Studii româno-germane*, eds. Cătălin Turliuc and Flavius Solomon (Iași: Cantes, 2001).
 4. Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 45; François de Singly et al., *Ancheta și metodele ei*, trans. (Iași: Polirom, 1998), 149–150.
 5. Paul Ricœur, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea*, trans. (Timișoara: Amarcord, 2001), 216.
 6. Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Bolovan, “Contribuții privind structura etnică și confesională a Transilvaniei în secolul XX,” in *Sabin Manuilă: Istorie și demografie: Studii privind societatea românească între secolele XVI–XX*, eds. Sorina Bolovan and Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Fundația Culturală Română, 1995), 157–161.
 7. *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 1938), 24; *Recensământul populației din 21 februarie 1956: Rezultate generale* (Bucharest: Direcția Generală de Statistică, 1959), 19; *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 7 ianuarie 1992* (Bucharest: Comisia Națională de Statistică, 1994), 47, 708.
 8. About the situation of minorities in Romania and minority policies of communist regime see Brigitte Mihok, “Minorities and minority policies in Romania since 1945”, in *Patterns of Prejudice* 27, 2 (1993): 81–93.

9. Rudolf Poledna, *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint? Transformări sociale la sașii ardeleni după 1945: o analiză sociologică din perspectivă sistemică* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001), 89.
10. Ibid.
11. An important study about the discourse of the Securitate in relation with Germans was made by Corneliu Pintilescu, “Die Konstruktion politischer Vergehen im Diskurs: Eine vergleichende Analyse dreier Prozesse gegen Angehörige der deutschen Minderheit Rumäniens (1958-1962),” *Transylvanian Review* 22, 4 (2013): 116–140.
12. Dobre et al., 32–33.
13. Ibid.
14. Katherine Verdery, “From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe,” *East European Politics and Societies* 8, 2 (1994): 236.
15. Gabanyi, “Die aufnahme der diplomatischen Beziehungen,” 178.
16. Ibid., 179.
17. “Jahresstatistiken des Bundesausgleichsamtes” (Az.: I/2–Vt. 6.380), quoted in Ernst Wagner, “Minorități etnice și religioase în Transilvania din 1992,” in *Transilvania și sașii ardeleni în istoriografie* (Sibiu: Hora, 2001), 186.
18. Ernst Wagner, *Istoria sașilor ardeleni* (Bucharest–Munich: Meronia, 2000), 94.
19. Andrei Roth, *Naționalism sau democratism* (Târgu-Mureș: Pro Europa, 1999), 317–318.
20. Poledna, 122.
21. Wagner, *Istoria*, 94.
22. *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 7 ianuarie 1992*, 47.
23. Wagner, *Istoria*, 94.
24. Dobre et al., 55.
25. Ibid., 29.
26. Ibid., 33.
27. Ibid., 43.
28. Ibid., 53.
29. For details, see Liviu Țăranu, “Afacerea ‘Peregrinii,’” in *Pietre de hotar*, vol. 6, eds. Constantin Moșincat and Dan Poinar (Oradea: Tipo MC, 2007), 221–229, and Dobre et al., 51.
30. Liviu Țăranu and Elena Gherman, “Câteva considerații pe marginea evoluției economiei românești în ultimul deceniu comunist,” in *Sfârșitul regimurilor comuniste: Cauze, desfășurare și consecințe*, eds. Cosmin Budeancă and Florentin Olteanu (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2011), 108–109.
31. Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, and Pompiliu Teodor, *Istoria României* (Bucharest: Corint, 2007), 545–546.
32. Dobre et al., 55.
33. Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studiarea Arhivelor Securității (The Archive of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives; hereafter cited as ANCSSA), Document Collection, file no. 13381, vol. 13, fols. 12, 20.
34. Dobre et al., 56.

35. Ibid., passim.
36. ANCSSA, Foreign Intelligence Service's Collection (FIS Coll.), file no. 52873, vol. 6, fols. 4–5.
37. Dobre et al., 56.
38. About the problems with integration see Barbara Marshall, "Migration' into Germany: Asylum Seekers and Ethnic Germans," *German Politics* 1, 1 (1992): 124–134.
39. ANCSSA, Document Collection, file no. 13381, vol. 14, fol. 1.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., vol. 13, fol. 39.
42. Dobre et al., 48.
43. Ibid., 57–58.
44. ANCSSA, FIS Collection, file no. 52873, vol. 6, fols. 8–9.
45. Decree 402 of 1 November 1982, *Monitorul oficial al Republicii Socialiste România*, pt. 1, no. 95, 1 November 1982.
46. ANCSSA, FIS Collection, file no. 52873, vol. 2, fols. 135–136.
47. Dobre et al., 65.
48. Ion Calafeteanu, ed., *Istoria politicii externe românești în date* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2003), 547.
49. ANCSSA, FIS Collection, file no. 52873, vol. 6, fols. 59–62; Dobre et al., 65.
50. Ibid., fols. 69–70.
51. Ibid., vol. 5, fols. 187–188.
52. The viewpoint on this matter of the lawyer Günther Hüsich was published in an interview with journalist Hannelore Baier in *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung* (Sibiu), 29 October, 1, 2 and 3 November 2011.
53. ANCSSA, FIS Collection, file no. 52873, passim.
54. Ibid., vol. 6, fol. 10.
55. Interviews with Alice Pfaff (born in 1933, German, worker; the interview was conducted on 14 June 2002 in Orăștie); Helmut Weidenfelder (born in 1968, German, manager in Dinkelsbühl, Germany; the interview was conducted on 11 August 2002, in Orăștie); Cornel Buciuman (born in 1929, Romanian, tailor; the interview was conducted on 19 February 2004, in Orăștie); Vasile Restantia jr. (born in 1962, Romanian, plumber; the interview was conducted on 30 July 2005, in Șura Mare village, Sibiu county); Valeria Brendea (born in 1927, Romanian, farmer; the interview was conducted on 31 July 2004, in Petrești village, Alba county); Aurelia Vasii (born in 1928, Romanian, worker; the interview was conducted on 20 October 2002, in Aurel Vlaicu village, Hunedoara county); author's and Valentin Orga personal interview with Vasile Ghișoiu (born in 1920, Romanian, farmer; the interview was conducted on 31 July 2005, in Călnic village, Alba county); Denisa Bodeanu's personal interview with Klaus Werner Neugeboren (born in 1945, German, priest; the interview was conducted on 19 October 2010, in Bucharest, and is available in the Oral History Archive of ANCSSA). Cosmin Budeancă, "Emigrația sașilor din Orăștie în ultimul deceniu al regimului communist," in *Analele Sighet 10. Anii 1973–1989: Cronica unui sfârșit de sistem*, ed. Romulus Rusan (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2003), 243–244.

56. Renate Göckler-Timoschenko, “Retragerea germanilor din istoria română,” in *România versus România* (Bucharest: Clavis, 1996), 63.
57. ANCSSA, FIS Collection, file no. 52873, vol. 2, fol. 204v.
58. *Ibid.*, passim.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Interviews with Helmuth Frauendorfer (born in 1959, German, writer; the interview was conducted on 26 august 2011, in Râmnicu Sărat); Hans Klein (born in 1940, German, priest-teacher; the interview was conducted on 10 November 2011, in Sibiu, and is available in the personal archive of the author).
61. Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, and Cristian Vasile, eds., *Raport final* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 468–469.
62. Author’s personal interview with Herman Pitters (born in 1932, German, teacher of theology, dean of the Protestant Theological Institute of Sibiu; the interview was conducted on 10 November 2011, in Sibiu, and is available in the personal archive of the author).
63. Interview with Hans Klein.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Cosmin Budeancă, “Percepția emigrării etnicilor germani în perioada 1945–1989 în memoria colectivă a comunităților românești,” *AIO—Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală* 9 (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2008): 183; *id.*, “Emigrația,” 235–251. Interviews with Alice Pfaff, Helmut Weidenfelder, Klaus Werner Neugeboren, Helmuth Frauendorfer, Paul Helmut Niedermaier (born in 1937, German, historian and architect; the interview was conducted on 9 November 2011, in Sibiu); Ion Badică (born in 1940, Romanian, teacher, retired; the interview was conducted on 23 July 2003, in Batiz village, Hunedoara county); Hannelore Baier (born in 1955, German, journalist; the interview was conducted on 10 November 2011, in Sibiu). Interviews available in the personal archive of the author.
66. Interview with Nicolae Ieronim Gritu (born in 1955, Romanian, naval officer, horticulturist; the interview was conducted on 31 October 2004, in Cristian village, Sibiu county).
67. Interview with Carmen Monica Bianu (born in 1955, German, chemistry teacher; the interview was conducted on 13 June 2002, in Orăștie, and is available in the Archive of the Institute for Oral History of Cluj-Napoca).
68. Romania had been a United Nations member since 1955 and was obliged to respect the United Nations Charter; in 1974 it ratified the International Agreement on Civil and Political Rights regarding economic, social and cultural rights; in 1975 it participated in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe and it took note of the Helsinki Final Act, including its provisions related to human rights, without implementing them in the national legislation.

Abstract

**The Merchants of Human Beings: The Securitate's Role
in the Emigration of Romania's Germans (1978–1989)**

In January 1978 the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt visited Romania and had discussions with communist President Nicolae Ceaușescu about the issue of Romanian German emigrants. After this, the two countries signed several 'secret conventions' which set the number of emigrants and the price to be paid for each of them. The former Romanian communist political police (Securitate) controlled this emigration in the period 1978–1989. The present study is based especially on documents of the former Romanian communist political police, oral history interviews, and bibliographical sources.

Keywords

communism, emigration, Transylvanian Saxons, oral history, Securitate