

'Some citizens:' Romani Romanians and Socialist Citizenship in Romania, 1947-1989

Cătălina Andricioaei

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilisation
of the European University Institute

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European University Institute
Department of History and Civilisation

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Abstract

This thesis examines encounters between Romani Romanians and the Communist Party, the Socialist State, and society at large in Romania during the period 1947-1989. Although party policies targeted them as unruly citizens rather than in and of themselves, I draw on local and state archives to show the complex ways in which Roma in state socialist Romania became problematised and categorised in increasingly racialising ways. At the same time, I demonstrate the ways in which Romani Romanians engaged with socialist citizenship, and in so doing, sought to redefine the idea of the Romanian socialist citizen on their own terms. Romani men and women often used government and state prejudices towards them creatively to find ways to exercise forms of agency. They did so particularly through formal procedures of denunciation and complaint.

Drawing on both previously used and unused archival sources, this thesis brings together elements of Romani, gender, and (post)socialist studies. Doing so affords me the opportunity to build on the growing literature which has worked to break down binary understandings of the categories of victim and perpetrator in (neo-)Stalinist Eastern Europe. Notwithstanding these efforts, as I show throughout my thesis, all levels of society, from high state officials to *Securitate* informants, to local groups of neighbours, held and perpetuated relentlessly gendered and racialised anti-Roma beliefs.

For a few months between 1948-1949, Communist Party officials entertained the prospect of treating Romani Romanian citizens as a cohabiting nationality. Yet in 1949 the Central Committee decided to re-classify the Roma as a social category, i.e. 'the needy', rather than as a national minority. This decision was informed by officials' own inherited racism as well as by a lack of financial means and personnel trained to

work with those citizens of Romania who had been deported to Transnistria under the fascist regime. Communist Party authorities did not invent anti-Roma racialising practices, but they refused to engage with the legacies of the deportations and the centuries of Romani enslavement that had enforced those practices. Nor did they stop invoking such practices for socialist ends.

This is a study which weaves top-down with bottom-up approaches. I use a variety of sources, such as Communist Party archives, social services correspondence, character assessments, denunciations and petitions, women's magazines, French media, and oral history interviews to understand the complex history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship in Romania. I lay bare the protean and often surprising faces of state socialism as they affected Romani Romanians. At the same time, over four topical chapters, this thesis unravels questions about who was considered to be a Romani Romanian in state socialist Romania and what dimensions such an identity occupied.

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as an undergraduate for this! Yet his comments have pushed me to rein in my penchant for overarching explanations and to try to think of the local and the situational over the meta-explanatory. By the end of the fifth year, I felt from his comments he had a keen sense of my arguments and my thinking, which always gave his feedback a metaphysical feeling. He also supported me with superb kindness on my road back to writing as I was coming out of both the Covid lockdown and a postpartum period of very little intellectual activity. Without his support and encouragement, I would not have been able to finish what I began in 2017.

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Natalia Andricioaei-Melo was born in the fourth year of this PhD. I have oftentimes felt guilty for turning down her requests to sit down on the sofa and 'watch dese' with her (by which she meant nursery rhymes). I hope, however, she will grow to take pride in a mummy who loves both her academic work and her daughter. I dedicate this thesis to her and her smile.

Introduction

This thesis has come a long way since my initial project. My original proposal was to document the lives of Romani migrants from Romania to the U.K. I had envisioned an ethnographic oral history of ideas of home and the ways in which they become reworked through the act(s) of migration. However, I soon realised that to grasp and analyse such reworkings, I would have had to understand what home meant to Romani migrants before they left Romania. Additionally, there were quite a few scholarly works on Romani migrants in Europe. I subsequently decided I would research the late socialist period in the archives before seeking to interview Romani Romanians who had lived through late socialism.

Most of my intentions and conceptualisations collapsed under the weight of the archival material I uncovered on my first trip to the archives in Bucharest and Târgu Mureş in 2017-2018. On the one hand, there were enough sources, more so than I had been led to expect when I began researching Romani persons. As with any underrepresented communities and/or individuals, the question of 'Would I find enough sources?' always anxiously followed me around. On the other hand, when I uncovered previously unseen materials—alongside the-already-examined ones—another question arose. The sources simply did not seem to answer the ethnographic questions of home and belonging I had in mind. As I began to fully grasp Laura Downs' exhortation that 'Your sources are answering questions, just not the ones you are asking,' I poured over the materials with fresh eyes. And it dawned on me that what I had discovered in the archives, both national and local, was a social history of Romani Romanians and their relationship with state socialism.

More specifically, this study is a social history of encounters between Roma, the Communist party, the Socialist state, and the population at large between 1947-1989. I investigate the ways in which the behaviour and lifestyles of Romani Romanians, persistently misrecognised as 'țigan,' were

racialised, and the ways in which they contested, accepted, and reinterpreted the meaning of the socialist citizen. Whilst party authorities did not invent ad novum the figure of the 'țigan,' they nevertheless invoked and revitalised stereotypes of 'țigan'-ness about questionable forms of employment and promiscuity for socialist ends.

Let me explain what I understand by 'Romani Romanians' and 'misrecognised as "țigan".' By the former I mean citizens of Romani ethnicity who lived in the Romanian Popular, and then Socialist Republic, and were, as well as were made to be, an integral part of the social engineering process. This pairing of terms is a conscious choice. I use the adjective 'Romani' to qualify the nationalist term 'Romanian' to emphasise that during state socialism Romani persons sought to weld the 'Romani' to the 'Romanian socialist' in their distinct ways. The alternative, 'Romanian Roma,' means both too much and nothing at all. Too much because it generally designates migrants in the European Union, owners of Romanian passports. This also usually means that processes of discrimination against them blend a racialising of Eastern Europe with the criminalisation of poverty.¹ And too little because it does not have any meaning in Romania, in the sense of cultural acceptance. As Rachel Humphris states in her ethnography of Romani Romanian families in the U.K., 'The identification of Romanian Roma does not exist in Romania; rather, it emerged and gained meaning through migration.'²

Although a fraught concept when used as ontological, 'ethnicity' gains value when used as a category of analysis. Scholars have shown how in the case of 'othered' communities, it invariably encloses racialising aspects. In

¹ See Nando Sigona, "Locating 'the Gypsy Problem.' The Roma in Italy: Stereotyping, Labelling and 'Nomad Camps,'" in *Roma in Europe. Migration, Education, Representation*, ed. A. Pusca (New York, 2012), 71-83; Claudia Aradau, "The Roma in Italy: Racism as Usual?," in *Roma in Europe. Migration, Education, Representation*, ed. A. Pusca (New York, 2012), 43-49; Étienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", available at <https://204racethought.wikispaces.com/file/view/Balibar+Is+There+a+Neo-Racism.pdf>, (retrieved 02.12.2016).

² Rachel Humphris, *Home-Land. Romanian Roma, Domestic Spaces and the State* (Bristol, 2019), 3. As one of her narrators tells her, 'You will not be able to speak [Romanes] in the shops in Romania.'

the case of Roma, for example, Katrin Simhandl has documented the discursive practices of the European Commission which 'inscrib[ed] ethnicity as a category relevant to "Eastern Europe" [Roma] while avoiding this with regard to [Western Gypsies and Travellers].'³

Yet I begin from the assumption that Romani ethnicity existed during state socialism in Romania. By this I mean that communist party authorities and society at large inherited a vexed relationship with their fellow Romani citizens, who had been marked as different from 'Romanians' by various practices, including enslavement. In order to understand the fraught history between Romani ethnicity; enslavement; and the inherited racialising figure of the term 'țigan,' I draw extensively in the following paragraphs on Petre Petcuț's monograph *The Roma. Between Slavery and Freedom. The Construction and Emancipation of a New Ethnic and Social Category North of the Danube*.⁴ Unfortunately, the monograph is available only in Romanian, and as Petcuț states, he wrote it as a teaching manual for Romanian education providers; therefore, all translations from Romanian are mine. His focus is on the enslavement and the legal emancipation period. At the same time, in demystifying the enslavement period, he also sheds light on the 'țigan' versus 'Roma' controversy. This is a quarrel particular to Romania, where most of the population, politicians included, refuse to call Romani Romanians anything other than 'țigani.'⁵

³ Katrin Simhandl, "'Western Gypsies and Travellers'– 'Eastern Roma': The Creation of Political Objects by the Institutions of the European Union," *Nations and Nationalism* 12 no. 1, (2006): 98.

⁴ Petre Petcuț, *Rromii. Sclavie si libertate. Constituirea si Emanciparea unei Noi Categorii Etnice si Sociale la Nord de Dunare* [*The Roma. Between Slavery and Freedom. The Construction and Emancipation of a New Ethnic and Social Category North of the Danube*] (Bucharest, 2015).

⁵ See Shannon Woodcock, "Romania and EUrope: Roma, Rroma and Tigani as Sites for the Contestation of Ethno-National Identities," *Patterns of prejudice* 41 no. 5, (2007): 493-515 and "Romanian Women's Discourses of Sexual Violence. Othered Ethnicities, Gendered Spaces," in *Living Gender after Communism*, eds J. E. Johnson and J. C. Robinson (Bloomington, 2006), 149-168. See also Alexandra Oprea, "Romani Feminism in Reactionary Times," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 no.11, (2012): 11-21; Alina Vamanu and Iulian Vamanu, "'Scandalous' Ethnicity' and 'Victimised Ethnonationalism.' Pejorative Representations of Roma in the Romanian Mainstream Media after January 2007," in *Postcommunism From Within: Social Justice, Mobilization, and Hegemony*, eds J. Kubik and A. Linch, (New York, 2013), 265-292.

Furthermore, his research into medieval and early modern Romanian history unpacks the perennial question of 'nomadism.' I turn to these two questions in turn.

First,

Prior to the nineteenth century, private and governmental papers used [neither the term indentured nor enslaved]; they used the term *țigan* with the meaning of indentured/enslaved. It was only starting with the seventeenth century that legal codes began to use the term indentured. In the nineteenth century, all three terms are used: *țigan*, indentured, slave.⁶

'From the beginning, Roma were assigned a special legal system which froze them into an economic and legal system so peculiar and so peculiarly theirs, that it ended up being assimilated to their ethnicity.'⁷ The term 'țigan' first made an appearance in October 1385 in *Jara Românească* (the Southern Principality), when a number of 'ațigani' were gifted to the Tismana Monastery. As Petcuț explains it, 'ațigan' came from the Greek word 'athinganoi, which meant in medieval Greek the untouchables.' Most likely, as he asserts, the Roma who migrated from India were given the name 'athinganoi' whilst they lived on the Greek territories, which they then disseminated within Europe when they left Greece. Whilst the term 'țigan' does not exist in the Romanes language, the term 'Roma' does. It means 'man,' and 'romnja' means 'woman.' The term itself was claimed by Romani persons as a self-appellation during their stay in the Balkan part of the of the Byzantine Empire, also named Romania.⁸

⁶ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 3.

⁷ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 6.

⁸ Which explains the not-so-coincidental convergence of names. Both Vlaches, or present-day Romanians, and the Roma were inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire. As Petcuț put it, 'it just so happens that the Vlaches managed to create a modern national state they called Romania, which put the Roma, with their self-appellation, in conflict with the majority population, particularly after 1989 and the "opening" to the West.' See p. 30. For the bruhaha which surrounds the 'one R' or 'two Rs' in the Romanian rendition of the term Roma, see Woodcock, "Romania and EUrope."

As enslaved ethnic Romani persons started losing their own language, they began being called 'țigan' to the 'detriment of the term Roma.' Unlike them, nomadic Roma kept up speaking Romanes, yet Romanian society did not see the differences between the two categories to be so large as to warrant calling them by two separate names. Hence, all Roma were called 'țigan.'⁹

Second, all Roma on Romanian territories were either slaves or became enslaved as soon as they crossed the borders into the Principalities. Nomadic Roma were still enslaved, yet simply refused to do sedentary jobs, and travelled both internally and across borders. According to Petcuț, 'the nomads could disappear for a year and longer, after which they might resurface on their old routes in Moldova and Țara Românească.'¹⁰ They were usually sold and bought *in absentia*.

What we would term semi-nomadic and nomadic were in fact Romani enslaved persons who performed jobs such as gold sifters; spoon and cauldron makers; bear tamers; and musicians. They stopped and performed their crafts in various places until demand for them dried up, following which they would move to a different locality. Furthermore, Petcuț argues, 'traditional nomadism must be seen as a family or group's safety and survival mechanism in the face of imminent physical danger.'¹¹ Both semi- and nomadic enslaved Roma belonged, and paid taxes, to the Ruler. Settled Roma belonged either to the Church or the Boyars and performed land and household duties.

'Most likely free when they entered the Romanian Principalities,' Roma persons became enslaved because they were both non-Christian and foreign to the lands, with the 'crucial' involvement of the Orthodox Church. Viorel Achim, however, offers a different explanation for enslavement. According to him, 'we believe that [the Roma] would have also been slaves in medieval Bulgaria and Serbia' based on 'the position of the Gypsies

⁹ Petcuț, *Rromii*, Chapter one.

¹⁰ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 6.

¹¹ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 132.

during Ottoman domination.’ Therefore, he claims, when Roma travelled from the ‘Balkans to the north of the Danube, they were already slaves.’ Achim understands enslaving in the Romanian principalities to be a practice and institution learned from the Tatars.¹²

Finalised on 20 February 1856, the abolition of slavery in the Romanian principalities did not see the social or cultural advancement of formerly enslaved Roma. With no land, and no prospects of bridging the enormous social divide between them and mostly Romanian peasants, Roma were ‘left at the periphery,’ in both its literal and metaphorical meanings, as Petcuț puts it. What is more, he asserts, ‘the abolition of slavery mid-nineteenth century set off the beginning of Romanian antițiganism.’¹³ Note, however, that Klaus-Michal Bogdal writes that ‘slavery also meant that, early on, native society succeeded in incorporating the migrants into their caste system of feudal Boyar absolutism.’¹⁴ Yet as Viorel Achim argues, ‘[the abolition of slavery] did not also mean the granting of lands and for this reason a substantial part of the Gypsies were not integrated into rural communities.’¹⁵ Similar to Petcuț, Achim too explains the ‘inferior social status’ Roma ‘have held until the present day’ to ‘the fact that the Gypsies were slaves for a long time.’¹⁶

What is most striking about Romani Romanians and state socialism in Romania is the simultaneous presence of both continuities in authorities’ approaches to the ‘țigan question’ and the agentical possibilities which the social engineering project opened for Romani Romanians. Sophisticated accounts of state socialism no longer indulge in a glaring indictment of a black and white regime.¹⁷ Yet party leaders missed a crucial opportunity to

¹² Viorel Achim, *The Roma The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), 29. To Petcuț, this amounts to a whitewashing of the major role the Orthodox Church and Romanian upper classes played in enslaving the Roma.

¹³ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 206. Citations from Petre Petcuț end here.

¹⁴ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma. A History of Fascination and Fear*, trans. Jefferson S. Chase (London: Allen Lane, 2023), 20.

¹⁵ Achim, *The Roma*, 5.

¹⁶ Achim, *The Roma*, 2.

¹⁷ For a critical historical treatment of the historiography on Soviet state socialism, see Anna Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 no. 1, (2000): 119-146. For Romanian historians who

engage with, and problematise, the centuries of enslavement; the dismaying processes of legal emancipation; and the legacy of second-hand citizenship to which these tied Romani ethnic persons. Neither did socialist authorities problematise the legacy of the deportations to Transnistria—the Romanian part in the Holocaust—and the ravages it added to the image of an already maligned part of the population.

The deportations to Transnistria had its roots in the nationalistic commitments of interwar eugenics, when it was 'nationalism rather than scientific commitment' which informed one's position on racial anthropology and serology.¹⁸ Additionally, Turda argues that 'like racial ideologues elsewhere, Romanian eugenicists and racial anthropologists adopted and championed principles of ethnic reengineering and social segregation.'¹⁹ The hard borders separating the ethno-racial 'nucleus within the Romanian nation', which 'the natural and social environment could not obliterate,' was the result of the objectivity deemed inherent in the scientific methods of eugenics and anthropology. Scientific knowledge production about the nation, embodied in practices such as the cataloguing and classifying of blood groups, which would 'prove' biological uniqueness, was contrasted with the subjectivity of literary definitions of the nation (although the latter themselves made use of racial typologies and arguments in the interwar period).²⁰

Furthermore, the fact that Antonescu referred to the Roma as bearers

document the complexities of state socialism in Romania, see for example Andru Chiorean, "Censorship and Cultural Revolution: Political Change and Ideological Control in Postwar Socialist Romania, 1945-53," PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2020; and Florin Poenaru, "Contesting Illusions. History and Intellectual Class Struggle in Post-Communist Romania," PhD thesis, Central European University, 2013.

¹⁸ Marius Turda, "The nation as object: race, blood, and biopolitics in interwar Romania," *Slavic Review*, 66/3 (2007): 416.

¹⁹ Turda, "The nation as object:" 431. In fn. 77, Turda cites other studies which corroborate his view of a direct link between interwar eugenics and Romanian fascism. Cf. Maria Bucur who states that 'the relationship between Romanian eugenics and the policies of the Antonescu's regime, especially with regard to its treatment of "undesirable" minorities—the Jews and Roma—remains unclear.'¹⁹ See Maria Bucur, *Modernisation in interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2002), 113 and 224 respectively.

²⁰ Turda, "The nation:" 415.

of diseases, a statistic 'confirmed' by the doctor who reported on the Suceava and Iasi typhus epidemics in early 1941, 'suggests that he was influenced by Romanian physicians concerned with the threat of epidemics.²¹ Although interwar demographer Sabin Manuila conceptualised Roma as 'more dangerous than the Jews' because, unlike the Jews who kept separate from the Romanians, [the Roma] could 'surreptitiously become assimilated into the healthy body of the nation, greatly diminishing its eugenic potential'.²²

Interwar antisemitism was nourished by several factors, according to Irina Livezeanu. The older anti-Jewish tradition, predating the 1918 union, was fed by the 'insecurities of expansion and of ethnic dilution' following the large territorial additions. Its 'reactualisation, with difficulty at first, as the credo behind the students' mass protests and the motto of the [interwar] generation was made possible by the repression of the left-wing upsurge, the constitutional debate preceding the 1923 constitution, and the broader legitimacy offered indirectly by the policies of nation building introduced by mainstream politicians.²³

By 1941, however, 'gypsies' and Jews were usually mentioned together in discourses on the dangers threatening the purity of the Romanian nation, according to Turda. For example, sociologist Traian Herseni explicitly referenced both Roma and Jewish blood as threatening to infiltrate the Romanian 'ethnic group'.²⁴ The deportations to Transnistria were ushered into being on 22 May 1942, when Ion Antonescu issued the order for the deportation of 'problem țigani,' which he classified according to two criteria: 1) itinerant, and 2) sedentary but recidivistic, or sedentary without an 'honourable' occupation. Shannon Woodcock has written about the opacity of these criteria and the racialising stereotypes which

²¹ Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the nation. Population exchange and ethnic cleansing in Nazi-allied Romania* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 271-272.

²² Bucur, *Modernisation in interwar Romania*, 147.

²³ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation-Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 190 and 265 respectively.

²⁴ Turda, "The nation:" 438.

gendarmes invoked to obey Antonescu's orders after two unsuccessful attempts to find 'sedentary țigani, either recidivist or without an honourable occupation.' As Woodcock has shown, when Antonescu ordered that both 'nomadic and non-nomadic problem țigani' be rounded up for deportation in 1942, the latter posed problems for most gendarmerie branches. Under pressure to find such 'țigani,' those who ended up being listed were Roma individuals settled in the suburbs. Local gendarmes thus applied 'historically developed and contextualized stereotypes of what it meant to be Țigan' to these subjects, such as having an untidy garden, sitting in the pub all day, living in concubinage or working in an unstructured way.'²⁵

In general, sociological works are very good at deconstructing and exposing the mechanics by which Romani persons are continuously marginalised. By now scholars agree that Roma and the 'gypsies' of popular imagination are not one and the same. As Klaus-Michael Bogdal argues in his magisterial analysis of European-wide literature with 'gypsy' characters, this process began early after the arrival of Romani groups in medieval Europe, where 'the lines between the many groups of pilgrims and the constantly growing class of beggars and transients were blurred, so that Gypsies were also assigned to this rather amorphous group.'²⁶ Moreover, in the eighteenth century, 'the invention of the criminal Gypsy originally began as an attempt to classify masterless foreigners as examples of the marginalised 'crooks and beggars' authorities considered equally deceitful and godless.'²⁷ What Bogdal calls the 'first phase of the invention of the

²⁵ Shannon Woodcock, "What's in a Name? How Romanian Romani Were Persecuted by Romanians as Tigan in the Holocaust, and How They Resisted," available at <http://academos.ro/sites/default/files/biblio-docs/327/404-1751-1-pb.pdf>, (retrieved 21.10.2016), 34. Viorel Achim argues that measures against 'țigani' were 'taken against a background of very tough legislation against all sorts of disorderly behaviours: vagrancy, begging, prostitution, the refusal to work etc.' Furthermore, he claims that it was only the "'problem" gypsies' who were deported to Transnistria.²⁵ Having seen the archival sources Woodcock analysed in her article myself, I must point out he is mistaken to claim that there are not enough sources to justify a different take on this topic. Achim, *The Roma*, 168-171.

²⁶ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 18. Bogdal classes medieval chronicles as literary sources too, given that they were written long after the events chronicled and authors usually passed fantasy for empirical data.

²⁷ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 107.

Gypsies,' turned by the 1900s into 'the second phase, which ushered in ethnographic interest.' Yet rather than ending racialising tropes, ethnographers 'expanded the repertoire of how [Roma] were depicted, elevat[ing] the regard in which they were held, but without changing their marginal social position.'²⁸

Romani bodies, therefore, in their conflation with the phantasm of the 'gypsy,' tell us more about society than the Roma themselves. This is not to say 'gypsy' representations of Roma were homogenous across Europe. According to Bogdal, social hierarchies explain the different treatment of Roma, which may be classed as less 'offensive' in certain countries at various points in history. For example, in Andalusia, 'despite the continuing debates about the origins of the art form, it has never been proposed, either in the Romantic nationalist or the *cante jodo* phase, that flamenco be divorced from Spanish folk culture as a whole.' Bogdal finds the same engagement with 'the culture of the native lower classes', which explains the lesser othering of Roma, in Hungarian literature. In both cases, local appreciation of 'low culture' developed as a reaction against French 'high culture.'²⁹

In Romanian history, Romani aspects of musical life are usually associated with *lăutari*, 'an elite class of male musicians among the house slaves who eventually performed for the general public as well.'³⁰ After the end of enslavement, *lăutari* were the providers of entertainment for Romanian audiences. By 1933, a petition discovered in the archives by a scholar places them as 'provid[ing] the musical backdrop for silent film

²⁸ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 280.

²⁹ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 341. Note, however, that Katie Trumpener argues that Béla Bartók, born in the Hungarian kingdom, 'continually execrates the Gypsy influence on Hungarian musical life' within the 'framework of early twentieth-century understandings of race.' Katie Trumpener, "Béla Bartók and the Rise of Comparative Ethnomusicology: Nationalism, Race Purity, and the Legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire," in *Music and Identity Politics*, Ian Biddle (ed) (London, Routledge, 2017), 249-280.

³⁰ Margaret Beissinger, cited in Ioanida Costache, "Sounding Romani Sonic-Subjectivity: Counterhistory, Identity Formation, and Affect in Romanian-Roma Music," PhD thesis (Stanford, 2021), available at <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2901810582?pg-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses> [retrieved 4 June 2024], 199.

projections in Bucharest. Addressed to The Minister of Public Order, '3 000 Roma fiddlers from the Capital' asked that orchestras be introduced to play in cinemas halls, thus providing out-of-work Romani musicians with a source of income. The context was the 'introduction of the talking film,' which spelt the end of musical backdrops, supplied hitherto by *lăutari*.³¹ Yet, Costache argues, 'the recording of the genre beginning in the late 1960s—continuing into the present day in the form of compilation albums—de-emphasizes the Romani-ness of this musical practice and of its performers.'³²

Herself a Romani scholar and a violinist from a long line of *lăutari*, Costache draws on both interviews with Romani writers and performers of *musică lăutărească* as well as the songs themselves to re-claim the erased Romani-ness of the genre. As she puts it unequivocally, 'Romani performance practice cannot be divorced from its roots in slavery.'³³ For example, in unpacking 'the themes of suffering, sadness, bad luck, destiny, and abjection in Romani music,' particularly in songs of sorrow (*cântece de jale*), she concludes that 'we do not find explicit archives of history [in their songs]. Instead, a constellation of affective musico-oral utterances together form an archive of feeling.'³⁴ These are songs which are 'deeply private,' 'performed exclusively among the Romani community at private gatherings and funerals. Thus, performing *jale* becomes a site of unapologetic Romani-ness.'³⁵

For the historians, Costache's analysis shows how Romani Romanians have been coping with their history of racialised discrimination. For example, although neither her Romani music teacher nor other performers can remember songs about the enslavement period—as they put it, 'the elders knew them, but we don't—,'³⁶ there are performers who remember

³¹ Mihai Lukács cited in Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 222.

³² Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 150.

³³ Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 66.

³⁴ Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 297.

³⁵ Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 170.

³⁶ Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 5.

songs about the Holocaust. The lyrics, for example, address Antonescu informally begging him 'to stand in our place.'³⁷ There are also sorrow songs in the *lăutărească* genre which contain encoded messages about Romani prisoners and the forced labour on the Danube-Black Sea Canal they performed in the early state-socialist period. Costache calls these encodings a 'metaphoric language [which] obscures the reference to an unintended [Romanian] audience.' For example, in one such song, Romani performer Gabi Luncă makes *only one* explicit reference to the Danube. Yet, as Costache's mother explained, 'The song functioned as a kind of warning to young Roma that if they were caught committing any petty crime, in lieu of normal imprisonment, they would be deported via train to the Danube to perform forced labour.'³⁸

In spite of the wealth and weight the genre of Romani *lăutărească* music, Costache states she found almost no traces of the songs in the twentieth century at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest, where recordings began in the 1960s.³⁹ Mihai Lukács, writing about the origins of theatre in Wallachia and Moldavia, also finds silence and 'an erasure of the "slave status" of [Romani] jesters.' Enslaved to the great boyars and the ruler, the jesters 'participated for three hundred years at the only theatrical performances of the epoch during the festivities of princes and boyars.'⁴⁰ Furthermore, according to Lukács, Romani jesters were 'intellectual slaves' who were the main voice of 'existing inequitable

³⁷ Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 123, for a transliteration of the verses.

³⁸ The lines are: "Tears fall in two streams / I wipe them with my sleeve / but they flow like the Danube." Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 179.

³⁹ Here is her footnote in full: 'I spent months at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest (IEF) investigating content and archival details of this handwritten catalogue. Despite the important role that Roma play in the musical landscape of Romania, only a handful of recordings exist of twentieth century Romani music. These entries designate the ethnicity of the performer next to their name (*țig.* abbr. *țigan* or "Gypsy"). Others are labeled as "*cântec de mahala*" or "songs of the ghetto," which implies that the song is of Romani origin, given that marginalization pushed Romani to the outskirts of Bucharest where they lived in *mahalas* which were often called *țiganie* (lit. "Gypsy" place). Other entries were more directly labeled "*cântec țigănesc*" or "Gypsy song." Costache, "Romani Sonic-Subjectivity," 148, footnote 78.

⁴⁰ Mihai Lukács, "Roma Slave Jesters. The Origins of Theatre in Wallachia and Moldavia," available at <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/theatre-and-drama/roma-slave-jesters/> [accessed 7 June 2024].

social structures.' Yet, as the role of the jesters was replaced by journalists at the end of the nineteenth century, at least according to Ion Luca Caragiale, one of the most important figures in the literary and political commentary world in the principalities, '[the] ethnicity and lowly slave status [of the jesters] were forgotten, thereby denying the symbolic importance of Roma participation in the construction of a national culture.'

In tsarist Russia, where Roma were 'credited with making a major contribution to the preservation of Russian folk tales,' they inhabited a different world of literary characters. Tsarist Russian literature even featured Roma 'as adroit and expert horse traders.'⁴¹ Indeed, in fin-de-siècle tsarist Russia both academic and amateur ethnographers 'posited Gypsies as a litmus test of enlightened management of ethnic difference throughout Europe in general, and of the Russian state's governing prowess in particular,' trumpeting 'what they regarded as the moral superiority and perspicacity of the tsarist regime.'⁴²

This was in stark contrast with German literature, marked by 'fantasies of delineation and exclusion and the fears of intermingling.'⁴³ As Wilhelm Solms further argues, 'images of Jews and Gypsies which were created by the Christian churches of both confessions towards the end of the Middle Ages were passed down through the centuries through the oral and written traditions of *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen*.' This 'gave new impetus to their persecution and annihilation,' culminating in the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws.⁴⁴

In the case of the late Habsburg Empire, Tara Zahra has shown that Roma 'appeared to expose the limits of the state sovereignty over both its

⁴¹ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 274. Roma were also 'credited with making a major contribution to the preservation of Russian folk tales,' hence their inhabiting a different world of literary characters.

⁴² Brigid O'Keeffe, "Gypsies as a Litmus Test for Rational, Tolerant Rule: Fin-de-siècle Russian Ethnographers Confront the Comparative History of Roma in Europe," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 38 no. 2, (2014): 110-111.

⁴³ Bogdal, *Europe and the Roma*, 342.

⁴⁴ Wilhelm Solms, "On the Demonising of Jews and Gypsies in Fairy Tales," in *Sinti and Roma. Gypsies in German-speaking Society and Literature*, ed. Susan Tebutt (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), 107.

borders and its people.’ The preoccupation with the Roma population arose in a context of intense preoccupation over mass migration. Thus the long-standing perception of Roma’s mobility offers ‘insights into the historical genesis and outcomes of migration panics.’⁴⁵ Interlinked with efforts to manage populations’ mobility were the shifting definitions of ‘gypsies,’ understandings of which shaped citizenship and mobility rights.⁴⁶ Whilst until the mid-eighteenth century, deportation—a practice dating back to the early modern era—was the preferred ‘solution’ towards managing the problem of mobile Roma, new regimes of border control required a rethinking of ‘solutions,’ which ushered in encampment. As Zahra puts it, late Habsburg imperial practices of placing unwanted populations in camps ‘created important precedents for later practices directed at unwanted minorities and refugees.’⁴⁷

It is certainly imperative to historicise, as Zahra herself does and urges others to do, population movements and migrations and ask why migration is unproblematic/problematic at different times.⁴⁸ Julia Sardelic takes this *problematique* further and asks for a reconceptualisation of the ‘old dichotomies of forced and migration by choice.’⁴⁹ Against a background of popular beliefs that Roma migrate because they are nomadic, refugees’ migrations are perceived as justified, whilst Roma remain unwanted wanderers with peculiarly ‘Roma’ practices, such as letting their children roam unsupervised.⁵⁰

Child-rearing can also be instrumentalised in order to screen out unwanted migration whilst simultaneously bypassing accusations of anti-

⁴⁵ Tara Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge’: Roma, Migration Panics, and Internment in the Habsburg Empire,” *The American Historical Review* 122 no. 3, (2017): 703.

⁴⁶ Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness:” 705.

⁴⁷ Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness:” 703.

⁴⁸ Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness:” 725.

⁴⁹ Julia Sardelic, ‘Rethinking (Im)mobilities of Roma in Europe,’ available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/julija-sardelic/rethinking-immobilities-of-roma-in-europe> (retrieved 04.12.2016).

⁵⁰ Julia Sardelic and Aidan McGarry, “‘How the Refugee Crisis Is Dealing Another Blow to Europe’s Roma,” available at <https://theconversation.com/how-the-refugee-crisis-is-dealing-another-blow-to-europes-roma-74000> (retrieved 07.06.2017).

Roma sentiments. In the U.K., for example, assessing mothers' capabilities to raise children the 'proper' way and refusing their leave to stay if such abilities are found lacking is a subtle way to control the undesirability of Roma migrants,⁵¹ a practice which collapses conceptualisations of Roma as 'gypsies' and anti-immigration sentiments.

To be identified as 'gypsy' has not always, however, worked against Romani people. Ari Joskowitz has shown how in the very brief period covering approximately 5 years following the Second World War, 'gypsy' was 'a privileged rather than prejudicial category,' as he puts it.⁵² This meant that Romani and Sinti refugees from Germany, the Czech territory and the Italian-Yugoslav borders were given preferential treatment by the staff of the International Refugee Office. Because staff were themselves refugees, they were very sympathetic towards Roma. With the closure of the Office in 1951, however, and the takeover of migration policies by national governments—'the renationalized border regimes of the 1950s'—'gypsy' became once again a category of exclusion. This re-defined displaced Roma as apolitical, opportunistic migrants. Joskowitz is, however, careful to emphasise that individuals and families who 'fitted "gypsy" stereotypes were more likely to be given that label than those who did not.'⁵³

Romani ethnicity is haunted, therefore, by the phantasm of the 'gypsy.' Although I subscribe to the constructivist school of thought which unravels the processes of the building of identity, I no longer hold the position that 'Roma should be thought of as a political identity,' as one political scientist put it, delegating this task to Romani activists.⁵⁴ First, as Petre Petcuț's research has shown, there has always been such a thing as Roman ethnicity in Romanian history. Second, whilst it is also true that

⁵¹ Rachel Humphris, "Borders of Home: Roma Migrant Mothers Negotiating Boundaries in Home Encounters," *Journal of Ethic and migration studies* 43 no. 7, (2017): 1190-1204.

⁵² Ari Joskowitz, "Romani Refugees and the Postwar Order," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51 no. 4, (2016): 785.

⁵³ Joskowitz, "Romani Refugees:" 766.

⁵⁴ Aidan McGarry, *Romaphobia: The Last Acceptable Form of Racism* (London, 2017).

activism in general 'has a performative, constitutive dimension, contributing, when successful, to the making of the groups it invokes,'⁵⁵ Romani activism has moved away from simplistic understandings of Romani identity.

Romani feminists in particular, such as Angéla Kóczé, urge scholars to 'zoom away from the "Roma Roma Roma" focus.' Instead, research should focus on the socioeconomic conditions of both their historical and ongoing exclusion. At the same time, researchers should look at the ways in which Romani persons function in society as women, as scholars, as activists, and as family members.⁵⁶ In short, as they function as social beings.

Drawing on theories of identity which disavow universalism, Ioanida Costache calls for 'the need to ground [identity] epistemologically in an understanding of a particularly socially-located Romani identity/subjectivity,' which should offer a 'heterogenous history of the Roma.'⁵⁷ As she argues, to gloss over the ethnic particular in search of a universal identity which, allegedly, would unite us in the fight against capitalism, is to erase self-understanding. Identity is both 'performed and embodied,' or, as she eloquently puts it, 'We, Roma, are not (unmarked, universal) human first and Roma second; rather, we are both at once.'⁵⁸ Romani activism, therefore, needs to be read in this context.

Moreover, in Romania, the Socialist State and the Communist Party mired the history of Romani subordination in a paradox, both erasing it and allowing it to continue. In declaring the Roma to be a 'social question' in 1949, Party policy makers performed an act of nonrecognition by erasing

⁵⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 no. 1, (2000): 33.

⁵⁶ Angéla Kóczé and Ana Chirițoiu, "'What's the Point of Studying Kinship if You Don't Connect It to the Broader Power Structure?' A Dialogue," *Martor. Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain* 25 (2020): 165-171.

⁵⁷ Ioanida Costache, "Reclaiming Romani-ness," *Critical Romani Studies*, 1 no. 1, (2018): 41.

⁵⁸ Costache, "Reclaiming," 33. That this should lead to 'a movement towards increased political and social representation may spring,' so much the better, she argues. I fully agree.

their history of enslavement. Yet they simultaneously allowed their subordination to carry on by the continuous use of the racialising term 'țigan.' Writing about the nature of race in the American Constitution, legal scholar Neil Gotanda argues that 'Nonrecognition fosters the systemic denial of racial subordination and the psychological repression of an individual's recognition of that subordination, thereby allowing such subordination to continue.'⁵⁹

To 'Race' or Not 'to Race' (Socialist) Eastern Europe

One of the fraught questions pertaining to my methodology is the two-tiered conundrum of 'race' and the legitimacy of its use to explain the history of Eastern Europe and, in particular, the state socialist period. Although I have drawn great intellectual strength and inspiration from the literature on race and enslavement as developed in North American academia, I do not use the concept of race in relation to Romani Romanians. To be sure, oftentimes Roma were referred to as swarthy, or as having dark eyes. At the same time, there were enough situations when non-Romani Romanians used terminology such as 'it is believed they are țigani at their origins.' To this extent, my use of 'race' is closer to what Ann Stoler found in the Dutch colonial archives when the colonisers attempted to classify the light-skinned poor, 'most often mixed-blood descendants of Europeans.' As she asks, how was difference and belonging ascertained in the absence of somatic markers?⁶⁰ As I show throughout this thesis, and in fullest in Chapter Two, unruly behaviour was used a stand-in for a Romani inner essence.

First, to use terminology developed in North American academia to explain historical events in Eastern Europe or the Balkans in general may

⁵⁹ Neil Gotanda, "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind'," *Stanford Law Review* 44 no. 1, (1991): 16.

⁶⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton and Oxford, 2008), Chapter Four, "Developing Historical Negatives," 105-140.

be questioned by local historians. In her PhD thesis, Miglena Todorova has written about the Bulgarian scholar who admonished her that 'Bulgaria has "ethnicities" not races' and that she was 'imposing "American" concepts onto Bulgaria.'⁶¹ Yet, as she documents in her thesis, 'American racial ideas and practices embedded in popular culture and social science have travelled over the course of the twentieth century outward to far and unexpected locations such as Bulgaria in Southeastern Europe.' Her PhD examined 'the origins of contemporary immigrant identities in the United States by focusing on the Bulgarian immigrant community in the Twin Cities, Minnesota.' According to her findings, Bulgarian immigrants to the U.S., therefore, brought with them 'white' racial self-identifications and knowledges of racial hierarchies they had 'learnt' at home.

Second, as Catherine Baker argues persuasively, there are two reasons for why some historians may have qualms to talk about 'race' in Eastern Europe, particularly during state socialism. On the one hand, 'the race-blind anticolonial solidarities of state socialist internationalism (further intensified for Yugoslavia through the politics of Non-Alignment)' has led to a 'latent racial exceptionalism.'⁶² On the other, 'state socialist geopolitics produced their own Marxist, Cold-War-inflected racial exceptionalism as a result.'⁶³

This timidity to call racialising by its name is what Angela Kóczé deplores in research undertaken by anthropologists and ethnographers. Because they shy away from 'race,' or more accurately, racialisations of Roma, they fail to produce intellectually vigorous research. Nevertheless, I have found the work and analytical framework of one particular anthropologist to be the greatest source of intellectual inspiration. Alaina Lemon's concept of 'race as a way to organise social relations'⁶⁴ is the

⁶¹ Miglena Todorova, "Race Travels: Whiteness and Modernity across National Borders," PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2006, 151.

⁶² Catherine Baker, 'Postcoloniality Without Race? Racial Exceptionalism and Southeast European Cultural Studies,' *Interventions* 20 no. 6, (2018): 760.

⁶³ Baker, "Postcoloniality:" 776.

⁶⁴ Alaina Lemon, "Without a 'Concept'? Race as Discursive Practice," *Slavic Review* 61 no. 1, (2002): 54-61.

overarching theme of my analysis. I engage in a fuller discussion of her argument and the legitimacy of using 'race' in Soviet and state socialist studies in Chapter Two. I will merely reiterate her point here that to 'infer internal, biological, and inherited essences from external (if not always physical) "signs" does not mean to transpose specific histories of slavery and repression from the American continents to Eurasia.'⁶⁵ Sunnie Rucker-Chang and Chelsi West Ohueri agree that historians of Eastern Europe ought not to 'perpetuate Eastern Europe as exceptional, locating race and racism outside of our region.' Rather than embed Southeastern Europe in analytical constructs of identity such as ethnicity and nationalism, they call for scholarship on 'how race is understood and interwoven into everyday social landscapes; to examine [...] how race is practiced.' Additionally, so doing would put an end to the embedding of Southeastern Europe in analytical constructs of identity such as ethnicity and nationalism.⁶⁶

How did such racialising unfold in practice in everyday socialism? Take for example, the description of the 14-year-old girl of 'tigan nationality' in foster care: 'Biologically speaking, she is very well developed for her age.'⁶⁷ The overflowing sexuality threatening to burst free from the body of a child who looked like a woman reminds of nineteenth-century descriptions of Romani women, as luscious adulteresses. Katie Trumpener has shown how tropes about Romani women's uncontained sexuality spread in Europe, with devastating effects.⁶⁸

During later socialism, the racialisation of Romani bodies discarded sexualised biological descriptions to focus on behaviour. No longer associated with eye-catching and bewitching beauty conducive to, and inviting, adultery,⁶⁹ Romani women were reported by character assessors

⁶⁵ Lemon, "Without a 'Concept'?:" 57.

⁶⁶ Sunnie Rucker-Chang and Chelsi West Ohueri, "A moment of Reckoning: Transcending Bias, Engaging Race and Racial Formations in Slavic and East European Studies," *Slavic Review*, no 80 issue 2 (2021): 216-223. Citations from pp. 218-219.

⁶⁷ See Chapter Three for an in-depth discussion.

⁶⁸ Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies: A "People without History" in the Narratives of the West," *Critical Inquiry*, no. 18 issue 4, *Identities* (1992): 843-884.

⁶⁹ See Iulia Haşdeu, "Imagining the Gypsy Woman," *Third Text* 22 no. 3, (2008): 347-357.

to be prone to having extramarital affairs and to selling sex for money. Their overflowing sexuality was classified as the anti-socialist disruption to both the idea of the civilised nuclear family—well-behaved, respectful spouses bringing children up in balanced harmony—and norms of employment—'socially-useful' work, sanctioned by the state. Rather than racialisation based on a sexualised reading of biology, during state socialism racialisation was the effect of reading Romani behaviour as an inherent lack of socialist morality.

Cultural Enlightenment and 'Civilisation'

To what extent is this history specifically Romanian, and to what extent is it socialist, and as such, also embedded in the sweeping changes of postwar development writ large? I should explain at this point that this is not a study of modernity; modernities; or modernisation. I do not engage with the literature on the concept, nor have I found the term in the archives. To be sure, the historian need not be uncritically bound by the language of the sources. Yet throughout this study I write about the 'civilised' lifestyles which were to be brought into being by the social engineering programme. To the extent that 'discourses of modernisation juxtapose images of past and present as a means of opening up a gap that renders the two incommensurable,' then party leaders did imply modernisation.⁷⁰

Party documents use modern in the sense of 'civilised' and as an antonym to 'reactionary.' By which they meant everyone and everything either opposed to, or undermining, the new regime. To live a civilised life was to engage in socially useful activities; to have registered one's domicile with the local authorities; to know and fulfil one's civic and legal duties; and to abide by hygiene and the division of sexes per inhabitable room. It is in this sense that 'modern' is implied in state socialist parlance. Civilised lifestyles implied adherence to hygienic norms of living as defined by the

⁷⁰ Charles Briggs, 'The Politics of Discursive Authority in Research on the "Invention of Tradition,"' *Cultural Anthropology* 11 no. 4, (1996): 449.

party, such as sewerage; the division of sexes per rooms; a recommended minimum of square metres per person. Not only are modernity and modernisation 'muddy' concepts and permeated by the Eurocentrism of colonialism and its conflation of technologies, bureaucracy, and expanded communication with 'modernisation.'⁷¹ What is more, the way I understand party officials' use of the term conjures more a state of mind and hence being. As Chakrabarty puts it, 'to be "modern" is to judge one's experience of time and space and thus create new possibilities for oneself.'⁷² Which is precisely how party officials tapped into socialism. The trappings of industrialisation, therefore, were to feed into and underpin the ultimate reward and crystallisation of the new society and citizen: socialist morality.⁷³

'Home' therefore, has, endured as a category of analysis, and unpacks the stages of the cultural enlightenment programme which was destined to unfold alongside industrialisation. I have, however, expanded the category of home to include social practices of boundary keeping by way of ideas and practices which labelled citizens into good and bad socialists. Although society at large was called upon to invest efforts into the social engineering programme as co-constructors of socialism, not everyone was said to possess the same abilities. For party authorities to have declared Romani Romanians to be a 'social question' in 1949, therefore, was both to invite them to co-construct state socialism in Romania and to racialise them as inherited embodiments of un-civilised lifestyles, such as (semi)nomadism and all its attributed ills.

The erasure of (semi)nomadism was part and parcel of the wider programme of social engineering, and the 'stabilisation' it aimed to effect was paramount to citizens' cultural enlightenment. In July 1948 the State Commission for Planning was brought into being, with the remit of drafting

⁷¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Muddle of Modernity," *The American Historical Review*, no. 116 issue 3 (2011): 663–675.

⁷² Chakrabarty, "The Muddle of Modernity:" 674.

⁷³ Although, in the case of Romani Romanians, it was both a pre-condition and the outcome, as I show in Chapter Two.

a general plan for a nationalised economy, which 'legitimated the scientific nature and veracity of this new and "rational" system.'⁷⁴ Zooming in on Roma's nomadism occurred alongside such other state socialist measures, such as the renaming of streets and institutions in 1951; the dissolution of religious cults in 1948; the expropriations, forced relocations, and colectivisation which began in 1949; and the various literacy campaigns. However, as the construction of state-owned flats began in earnest in the 1960s, it was the home, or more accurately one's flat, that became one of the pivotal aspects of cultural enlightenment, alongside one's factory. Both factory and home were places of production and consumption. Not only in literal terms, but in the promotion of 'the ideologies of everyday life.' In other words, as sites of the production of the socialist citizen, they were the places where the socialist revolution 'colonised everyday life.'⁷⁵

As architecture became the 'most important—and successful—actor in the visual enactment of socialist ideology throughout the 1960s, [...] endless series of identical elements constituted the most common way to signify abundance, even sumptuousness.'⁷⁶ Moreover, as Julia Maxim argues, 'one of the first pieces of legislation of the newly installed socialist regime concerned the positioning of all design-related activities at the city level.'⁷⁷ The new architecture, 'part of the social holism,' was to be 'both the ideological activator and the ultimate reward,' alongside material culture.⁷⁸ It was to be the most transparent and, as such, the most easily accessible means of acquiring the socialist ideology. By which party leaders meant the new way of 'speaking, thinking, acting, and feeling in a specific, studied way,' in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman's phrasing.⁷⁹ Because

⁷⁴ Gail Klingman, *The Politics of Duplicity*, 19.

⁷⁵ These are Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman's formulations. See Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, "Introduction," in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds C. Kiaer and E. Naiman (Bloomington, 2006), 5.

⁷⁶ Juliana Maxim, "Developing Socialism: The Photographic Condition of Architecture in Romania, 1958-1970," *Visual Resources* 27 no. 2, (2011): 157 and 162.

⁷⁷ Juliana Maxim, "Mass Housing and Collective Experience: On the Notion of *Microraiion* in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s," *The Journal of architecture* 14 no. 1, (2009): 8.

⁷⁸ Catherine Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to 'the Radiant Future': Responses of Soviet Architecture,' *Journal of Design History* 10 no. 2, (1997): 141 and 144.

⁷⁹ Kiaer and Naiman, "Introduction," 5.

the new way of living and being was transparent and acquirable,⁸⁰ citizens were called upon as co-constructors of socialism, with the guiding hand of the Party ready to help those with fewer skills, or the historically disadvantaged, such as the Roma.

Paradoxically, in 1949 Party leaders both enabled and erased the Roma. By classifying them as a 'social question,' they left open the possibility of their 'Romanian'-ness. Although they were treated as a problem, they were to be eased into the programme of enlightenment by social actions along other Romanians exploited by 'ruthless elements.'⁸¹ Even in the seventies, policy makers and sociologists still entertained the possibility that the Roma were potential Romanians in need of an extra helping hand.

However, the international shift away from the integrationist drive of the 1950s towards a move to protect minority rights in the late 1960s, brought not only Western eyes on Romania, but travellers interested in documenting the life conditions of Romani Romanians too.⁸² Coupled with Romani activists'—ultimately squashed—efforts to gain ethnic status recognition, certain Romani lifestyles were turned anti-socialist, and following this, anti-Romanian.

Therefore, when 'retired and employed țigani'—most likely informants, or perhaps Ion Cioabă himself, the *soi disant* 'gypsy king'—informed the party in 1972 that there still existed tent-dwelling Roma in socialist Romania, leaders were confronted with two questions. Was it a wilful dereliction of their socialist duties, or was it a party oversight by failing to guide them? Party rapporteurs who gathered information and photographs at the site of the discovery wrote, in quite oblique ways, that

⁸⁰ It is still baffling that local historians who write in an anti-communist vein class the cultural enlightenment project as a political one, in a misplaced attempt to edify the readers of the 'horrors' of state socialism. The political aspect of the social engineering programme was never a secret, least of all to contemporary citizens.

⁸¹ Historically, such intermediaries, called *vătaf* or *bulibașă*, were the Roma middlemen—or foremen, if you will—themselves enslaved, who mediated between enslaved Roma and their owners. See Petre Petcuț, *Rromii*.

⁸² See Chapter Four.

both the party and the population at large had failed to educate the Roma. Yet subsequent party reports marked both the tent-dwelling Roma and Roma as a *category* of shirkers of socialism due to their innate impossibility to become socialist.

At its most basic level, 'citizenship' is a relationship of intersubjectivity—or the two-way struggle for recognition—between the state and the citizen.⁸³ More so than any other state, socialist states sought to acquire the legitimacy of its citizens—at, least those who mattered for the state, the workers. Yet to be a citizen in a socialist state one needed to be recognised as such as embedded in various state-sponsored collectives: factory workers; collective farm workers; mothers. In this vein, the single mother who threatened suicide⁸⁴ drew her legitimacy—and with it the force of her threat—from being recognised as part of the exalted collective of mothers. In this study I look in detail at citizenship as a social identity, by which I mean social practices which aim to both strengthen and signify civic belonging. Such as performing 'socially-useful' employment; participating to social reproduction by agreeing to become a mother of multiple children; observing socialist legality and norms; denouncing and petitioning.

In the case of Romani citizens, socialist citizenship is, once more, paradoxical. Made discursively part of the socialist collective when party authorities declared them to be a 'social question' in 1949, they were nevertheless excluded from the socialist body by racialising attitudes and practices which cast them as inherently lacking the morality to become socialist. Given that citizenship meant putting the 'good of the nation' above individual rights, particularly during the Ceaușescu period,⁸⁵ Romani citizens 'found to live a life almost like in the past in 1972' was seen as a dereliction of socialist citizenship.

⁸³ Nick Crossley, *Intersubjectivity. The Fabric of Social Becoming* (Sage Publications Ltd: 1996), "Chapter Seven. Citizens of the Lifeworld," 150-172.

⁸⁴ See Chapter Four.

⁸⁵ Lorena Anton, "For the Good of the Nation. Pronatalism and Abortion Ban during Ceausescu's Romania," in *A Fragmented Landscape. Abortion Governance and Protest Logics in Europe*, eds Silvia de Zordo, Joanna Mishtal and Lorena Anton (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 210. Anton writes about the pronatalist policies.

A cursory comparative look at the other socialist states reveals Romani persons were racialised in similar ways. In the Yugoslavian case, Julia Sardelic has shown that 'Romani minorities were [...] somewhere in between: not completely included into the working class as well as not completely excluded.'⁸⁶ For socialist Bulgaria, Miglena Todorova argues that the critical drop in the numbers of Romani Bulgarians between 1965-1975 was the effect of what she terms 'socialist racialism,' or 'violent erasure in the name of inclusion.'⁸⁷ In Poland, as Katherine Lebow claims, Romani women 'complained that the Women's League did not want to work with them, while league activists complained in turn that the Roma were interested only in handouts.'⁸⁸ And in the case of Czechoslovak Roma, Celia Donert has shown at length how 'Roma were adapting to socialism on their own terms and that National Committees were lagging behind in their responsibilities to stamp out discrimination and improve the material conditions of the republic's poorest inhabitants.'⁸⁹

The social history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship in Romania had both a socialist and a specifically Romanian aspect, therefore. The remedial; preventative; and constructive aspects of the socialist social engineering project by necessity corralled certain persons, classified into the good, the bad, and the putative, within the grid of 'problems to be solved.' Moreover, in all socialist states inherited tropes about 'gypsies' were compounded by postwar poverty and the redistribution of resources.

The history of Romani Romanians' engagement with socialist citizenship in Romania is full of missed opportunities. Yet it would be historically inaccurate to read it as one of exclusive othering. It is clear that (semi)nomadic Roma existed since the onset of enslavement in the

⁸⁶ Julia Sardelic, "Romani Minorities on the Margins of Post-Yugoslav Citizenship Regimes," *CITSEE Working Papers Series 31*, (2013), available at http://www.citsee.ed.ac.uk/working_papers/files/CITSEE_WORKING_PAPER_2013-31a.pdf (retrieved 01.03. 2021), 7-8.

⁸⁷ Miglena Todorova, *Unequal under Socialism* (Toronto, 2021).

⁸⁸ Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia. Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society* (Ithaca, 2013), 111.

⁸⁹ Celia Donert, *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2017), 106.

fourteenth century, and there still existed such forms of economic internal movement under state socialism. Yet, if in the postwar period this type of movement was problematised as an inherited 'problem' to be fixed through cultural enlightenment alongside other 'problematic' social categories, by late socialism, they were turned into both a socialist and a Romanian impossibility, and the identity to be identified against.

Although the late 1970s is the period most commonly associated with the 'sedentarisation' of the Roma, Ceaușescu's policies laid out during the 1977 November teleconference merely re-problematised an older 'problem.' Local historians, therefore, might read the postwar period in a more charitable fashion, given the array of problems Gheorghiu-Dej and the other Party members inherited and Ceaușescu's abysmal policies. Yet, in both early and late socialism Romani inhabitants were targeted both as themselves and as the 'collateral damage' incurred by persons whose lifestyles fell foul of social ideas. In other words, Romani would-be citizens were targeted both as an ethnic and a social question in state socialism in Romania. Throughout, we see a collapse of (semi)nomadic Roma and nomadism into assumptions, and then tropes, about Roma as a group. Even as the political police (henceforth *Securitate*) reports refer to 'retired,' 'employed,' and 'intellectual țigani' as 'good țigani.'

The reader of Klaus Bogdal's European-, centuries-wide study of literary representations of Roma is left in negative awe of the sheer tenacity of 'gypsy' tropes. Ranging from overflowing sexuality to beggary, to the stealing of food and the poaching of wood, from petty theft to soothsaying, the eating of carrion and the kidnapping of children. All of which, must be added, were alive in state socialist Romania, yet with a socialist twist, as I will be stressing out throughout this study.

Whereas in early socialism Roma in general were still conceptualised as a wandering problem, by late socialism they were described as a 'ball chain'⁹⁰ who willingly resisted socialism. What changed were the terms of

⁹⁰ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 56.

reference. In the postwar period, these comprised first and foremost a willingness to cooperate with the new party-state and participate to the new programme of enlightenment by not roaming free; by collectivising; by paying one's grain quotas; and by becoming attached to a fixed address. By late socialism, and with the programme of housing construction and sped-up industrialisation under way, the terms of reference shifted to 'civilised' living conditions and socialist morality.

Gender and Cultural Enlightenment

I have been referring repeatedly to the processes whereby party and state officials extended the critique of perceived anti-socialist lifestyles to Roma as a corporate group. Yet, as I show in Chapters Two and Three in particular, gender could either 'enhance' or 'lessen' ethnicity, depending on whether an (alleged) Romani person was a woman or a man.

By now, feminist historians have deflated the commonplace notion that the enlightened new citizen was equally man as they were woman. In state socialist Romania in particular, party authorities tied women and their bodies indissolubly to the needs of the republic, 'nowhere more extreme than in Ceaușescu's Romania.'⁹¹ As Klingman points out, planned economies 'were dependent on the mobilisation and utilisation of human resources, namely the availability and control of the workforce.'⁹² Women, therefore, were made responsible for the 'social reproduction' of the republic. To be certain, this did not mean that under socialism all women were equal. As Lynne Atwood has shown for Soviet Russia, it was not easy for party officials to balance work and family and production and reproduction, which meant that 'periodic adjustments were made to the image of the new Soviet woman.'⁹³ Furthermore, Soviet women's

⁹¹ Gail Klingman, *The Politics of Duplicity. Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 20.

⁹² Klingman, *The Politics of Duplicity*, 22.

⁹³ Lynne Atwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman. Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-53* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 2

magazines drew a line between the stay-at-home wife, classed as a slacker, and the stay-at-home wife of Stakhanovite workers, whose labour sustained the work of their high-achieving husbands.⁹⁴

For socialist Romania, Lorena Anton has also documented the periodic adjustments made in pronatalist discourses under Ceaușescu to justify the prohibitions on abortions in a context of coercing women rather than seeking their support, as a people's republic would be wont to do. Alongside the continued presence of 'a pronatalist propaganda', party officials tweaked their messages about the role of Romanian women. Thus, whilst in the 1960s women were addressed as 'mothers,' in the 1970s they were 'women-creators', equal to, and even surpassing, men. By the 1980s, the party discourse had expanded to include children as co-constructors of socialism.⁹⁵

As I explain in Chapter Two, both Ceaușescu and sociologists writing on the new citizen used the word 'om' (pl. 'oameni') interchangeable with 'ființă socială' (social being) or 'ființă' (human being). Yet, as the character assessments in chapter three show, women, and in particular single women and single mothers, were described in terms which remind of bourgeois terms for working-class women. Such as 'she likes to flirt;' 'she wears too much makeup;' 'she likes to gossip;' 'she's too coquettish.' The classist practice of ascribing to women inherently 'womanly' traits, particularly when they were employed in jobs which did not rank very high, was a phenomenon Malgorzata Mazurek has documented for socialist Poland too. Looking into 'the war against *manko*, defined as petty theft and cash shortages in socialist trade,' Mazurek argues that 'characteristically, investigators into *manko* offences sexualized female suspects [and] the official discourse on *manko* stressed that women were susceptible to temptation and vanity.' This in spite of the fact that legal regulations and goods shortages could explain *manko*. Crucially, shop assistants worked

⁹⁴ Atwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*, 104-114. What Atwood describes as "the full-time housewife as a positive phenomenon" versus "the full-time housewife as a negative phenomenon."

⁹⁵ Anton, "For the Good of the Nation," 209-225.

both in unskilled positions and in one of the lowest paying jobs in the socialist Polish economy.⁹⁶

Already in 1994, Katherine Verdery described the 'paternalism' of late socialism in Romania as 'dovetail[ing] perfectly with patriarchal forms central to national ideas elsewhere in the West.'⁹⁷ Gail Klingman too describes Ceaușescu's policies as 'socialist paternalism, predicated on the belief that what was good for the state was good for its citizens.'⁹⁸ I subscribe to this conceptualisation, yet I take the analysis further. In fact, it was precisely 'the state's intrusion into private life through reproductive policies blurred the boundaries between public and private spheres of everyday life, changing the relations between citizens and the state'⁹⁹ that allowed women, and V. in particular, to use such intrusion for their own purposes. It was precisely that which marked women out as different could also allow them to cajole party authorities into acquiescing to their visa requests to marry abroad. Or to threaten the party with murder-suicide unless given a job as a single mother.¹⁰⁰ At the discursive level, women were privileged insofar as they were mothers and wives, alongside citizens of the new world. And since they complained, denounced, and threatened as mothers and wives, socialist women did make use of their agency.¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding, it is precisely because women could complain, denounce, and threaten, I argue, that we should see these acts as strategies employed by women socialised as gendered beings.

⁹⁶ Malgorzata Mazurek, "Dishonest saleswomen: On Gendered Politics of Shame and Blame in Polish State-Socialist Trade," in *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945-1989*, ed. Marsha Siefert (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2020). Citations from pages 124 and 130.

⁹⁷ Katherine Verdery, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe," *East European Politics & Societies* 8 no. 2, (1994): 249.

⁹⁸ Klingman, *Politics of Duplicity*, 28.

⁹⁹ Klingman, *Politics of Duplicity*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter Four.

¹⁰¹ As Massino writes, women-as-mothers devised strategies to spend more time with their infants in the context of daycare shortages during late socialism. Thus, they drew 'on maternalist discourse to persuade doctors to extend maternity leave.' Jill Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions. Gender, the State, and Everyday life in Romania from Socialism to Postsocialism* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019), 248-249.

Scholars who extoll avenues for complaining as enabling socialist women to become powerful grassroots players gloss over structural inequalities. European Communism as a phenomenon did not 'discard the western-liberal division of society into male producers and female reproducers, but rather re-shaped and adapted it to fit their version of modern social mobilisation.'¹⁰² Support for the traditional family was one such reworked policy.

Women, then, were to become socialist citizens within the constraints of the patriarchal state and family. Alternatively, to class women's requests that party authorities punish their violent husbands as 'draft[ing] public agencies into private quarrels' in Soviet Russia is to disingenuously misread the political, and thus public, nature of the party/state-sanctioned nuclear family.¹⁰³

What type of agency specifically did the women who participated in creating and perpetuating terror under Stalin as ordinary citizens have, therefore?¹⁰⁴ Were the married women who denounced other women and their 'illegitimate' offspring to complain about an 'unfair' alimony system which leaked money away from 'their' husbands and sons¹⁰⁵ powerful grassroots agents? What do the 'wronged wives' who denounced 'full of anger and some greed as well' in postwar Soviet Russia tell us about agency as history?¹⁰⁶ Moreover, as Katherine Lebow has shown for socialist Poland by way of the first Polish industrial city Nowa Huta, 'For many Poles, attempts to redraw gender divisions in the workplace had gone against

¹⁰² This is Malgorzata Fidelis' turn of phrase. See Malgorzata Fidelis, "Equality through Protection: The Politics of Women's Employment in Postwar Poland, 1945-1956," *Slavic Review* 63 no.2, (2004): 301.

¹⁰³ The citation is from Brian LaPierre, "Private Matters or Public Crimes: The Emergence of Domestic Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1939-1966," in *Borders of Socialism. Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. Lewis Siegelbaum (New York and Basingstoke, 2006), 202.

¹⁰⁴ Lauren Kaminsky, "Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union," *Central European History* 44, (2011): 63-91.

¹⁰⁵ Wendy Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy. Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, 2005), Chapter 12, "Wives' Tales," 240-261.

biology and women's essential nature, resulting in sexual and moral chaos.¹⁰⁷

It is important to note, as Ioana Cîrstocea has done in her monograph *Learning Gender after the Cold War*, that post-socialist self-styled 'academic feminists' in Romania reframed the socialist past as inimical to women. Funded in the early 1990s by institutions 'whose political vision structured around liberal watchwords such as "democracy" and the "rule of law", the "free market" and "civil society", "individual choice" and "equal opportunities",' Romanian post-socialist academic feminists recast the socialist past as 'conservative and backwards.'¹⁰⁸ Yet, women in socialist countries in Europe did 'boast political participation [...] which was far higher than the world averages of the time.' Moreover, pro-women measures, 'implemented over decades, had brought huge changes in the everyday life and in the social and economic status of women' even if such measures were often contradictory and 'had not put an end to de facto gender-based inequalities.'¹⁰⁹ In keeping with the discarding of the socialist past, women's rights were redefined as 'human rights,' 'gender equality,' and 'gender mainstreaming.'¹¹⁰

I have explained above, in the section 'To Race or Not to Race (Socialist) Eastern Europe,' the effects of the gendered embodiments of lived socialism and its intersection with Romani ethnicity. In Chapters Two and Three, in particular, I provide an in-depth analysis of precisely what this meant for Romani women in state socialist Romanian society. Yet although I too embed my analysis of the archival sources within 'socialism as state patriarchy' and I argue that Romani women in particular had to work the hardest to prove themselves as socialists to the party and society at large, I do not subscribe to the view that women's lives flatly did not improve. Indeed, as Jill Massino argues 'there is no simple, coherent

¹⁰⁷ Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 121.

¹⁰⁸ Ioana Cîrstocea, *Learning Gender after the Cold War. Contentious Feminisms* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2022), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Cîrstocea, *Learning Gender*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Cîrstocea, *Learning Gender*, 9.

narrative of life under socialism, but rather multiple and, at times, contradictory ones.¹¹¹ Moreover, as Massino herself argues, women 'strategised to secure certain resources and benefits' by drawing on their 'social identities as workers or mothers.'¹¹²

Not only was 'equality between men and women' the main claim on which state socialist states professed 'superiority to the West,' but in the Romanian case it is particularly illuminating. As Massino writes, the co-existence of economic restrictions and thaws; of abortion liberalisation and repressive natalist policies; and the co-option of the Orthodox Church to bolster national identity and stigmatise divorce provide 'a more complex understanding of state making' under socialism.¹¹³ Furthermore, the austerity measures which led to a drastic fall in the quality of life during the 1980s may have in fact 'fostered more equitable marital relations' by forcing men to take turns to queue for foodstuffs and to participate in the childcare whilst long stretches of time were spent queueing.¹¹⁴ And as I show in Chapter three, even racialisation might open up gendered avenues for agential possibilities.

Notes on Sources and Methodology

Let me restate unambiguously my central claim. I argue that Romani Romanians were both 'collateral damage' to the project of social engineering and targeted in and of themselves. Yet, whilst it is true that at the level of top-down refashioning of society there were no policies targeting specifically the Roma as 'Roma,' but as unruly citizens, there was an undercurrent of racialising attitudes towards them at *all* levels of society. Which also informed certain party officials' approaches to the question of whether Roma were *willingly* resisting socialism or whether this was a glitch in the system. Racialising practices meant in practice that socialist non-

¹¹¹ Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 2.

¹¹² Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 6.

¹¹³ Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 12.

¹¹⁴ Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 197.

Romani Romanians refused to welcome their Romani fellows in socialist mass organisations, with concrete social consequences. Thus, Romani citizens missed out on education and cultural opportunities. Even the 'sedentarisation' policies of November 1977 were a re-focus on an older problem and came against an international background of a monetary crisis which was making itself felt domestically. Seeking more industrial output in order to achieve economic autarky, president Ceaușescu asked that more workers be put (back) in the state system.

Romanian historians see the 'sedentarisation' policies of the late 1970s as either 'socially-motivated'¹¹⁵ or 'ethnically' so.¹¹⁶ Whereas Achim classifies them as 'a measure of social nature,' Marin describes the policies as inducing the loss of 'ethnic particulars (nomadism, traditional occupations, traditions).' Whereas Achim sees no racialising incentives in the Party's policies toward the Roma throughout state socialism, Marin reifies ethnicity and renders a complicated history into one of 'they'-as-the-Party into 'us'-as-the-Roma.¹¹⁷ I find the either/or approach to sources less than stimulating, which has led me to conceptualise Romani history under state socialism as 'engagement.' In other words, I see this relationship as paradoxical; contradictory; and less clear-cut.

In her ethnographic work among the Roma and peasants in a Transylvanian village during 1996, Ada Engebriksen lived for six months on the 'Romani side', as it were, and for other six on the 'Romanian side'.¹¹⁸ By shifting the emphasis from the perspective of the subaltern to other domains of cultural production, without forsaking the perspective of the subaltern, Engebriksen herself eschews dichotomous frameworks. Her use of a theoretical concept, multi-sited ethnography, offers an understanding of Roma as more than the eternal Other as well. To have framed her

¹¹⁵ Achim, *The Roma*, 191.

¹¹⁶ Manuela Marin, *Romii si regimul communist din România. Marginalizare, integrare si opozitie* (Cluj Napoca: Editura MEGA, 2017), Vol. I, 38. Translations from Romanian are mine.

¹¹⁷ Marin's self-confessed theoretical framework is James Scott's 'hidden transcripts.'

¹¹⁸ Ada I. Engebriksen, *Exploring gypsiness: power, exchange and interdependence in a Transylvanian village* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).

interpretation exclusively in terms of the dichotomy the oppressed/the oppressor would have invited a too uncritical identification with the subaltern.¹¹⁹ This would have obscured the extent to which Roma/non-Roma relations can be interdependent. As she puts it, the moment she saw everything as exchange, rather than hierarchical power structures, complementarity in all relations became significant.¹²⁰ She describes the relations of interdependence between the Roma and the non-Roma Romanians as an asymmetrical interdependence, characterised by negative reciprocity: the aim is, for the Roma, to get much for little from their exchanges with the non-Roma.¹²¹ The peasants, on the other hand, do not really need to buy what they do from the Roma who live in the hamlet surrounding their village; they do it because it allows them to use the magic powers of Romani women (whether these do exist is another question), to use them as secret pawn brokers or to exchange gossip.¹²²

'Engagement' as an analytical category has allowed me to complexify Romani history in state socialist Romania by providing both the larger domestic and global context, as well as—crucially—the undercurrent of racialising attitudes and tropes swelling social practices and everyday encounters. I was able to reach the stage I could confidently employ this framework of analysis by researching sources which were produced both *by* and *for* the Party and State, and *within* them. At the same time, given the numerical superiority of sources on non-Romani Romanians and the specificity of my using *Securitate* reports; *Securitate*-commissioned character assessments; and militia and CC documents, I must explain my methodology.

Let me begin by a discussion of the *Securitate* files. First of all, the CNSAS archives comprise more than informative and operative files, which are both the most researched and the most controversial in that they may

¹¹⁹ George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the world system. The emergence of a multi-sited ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* no. 24, (1995): 110-113.

¹²⁰ Engebrigtsen, *Exploring gypsiness*, 11.

¹²¹ Engebrigtsen, *Exploring gypsiness*, 59-60.

¹²² Engebrigtsen, *Exploring gypsiness*, 169-193.

be used by former 'victims' to take 'their' Securitate officer to court.¹²³ This explains why I was wary of approaching the CNSAS archives to begin with. Contrary to my initial apprehension, the archives comprise documentary materials too, such as character assessments and various preparations for official visits. Even the informative files comprise hand written denunciation letters, such as the one sent by V. (see Chapter Three). Yet when I use informative files, I do not approach them with a positivist outlook. That is, I do not seek to document what specific crimes or offences citizens had or were accused of having committed. Rather, once a denunciation had sparked a surveillance file, my interest lay in gauging how these alleged offenders were described *in relation* to other offenders in general and to Romani citizens, when this was mentioned, in particular.

To attempt to capture the history of everyday life through the CNSAS archives would not amount to much truth-content in any event. As Irina Costache writes of her encounters with the CNSAS archives having conducted interviews and research in 'different forms of archival materials,' she 'already knew about [her] field more than the former secret officers, for bad or for worse.'¹²⁴ Similarly, Katherine Verdery has pointed out both how misinformed the officers were, as well as how accurate some of the reports in the files the *Securitate* had amassed on her time in late-socialist Romania were at times.¹²⁵

Rather, my focus is on the language used in such sources. I do not do so in order to arrive at the psyche of the people talked about in the archives, even when they gave self-declarations. Instead, I am interested in uncovering how everyday social and gendered relations unfolded in what I would term 'embodied socialism,' i.e., practical living and working conditions under socialism. I read *Securitate* files as *both the paper traces*

¹²³ Verdery has an extensive discussion of the role of CNSAS in post-1989 Romanian society. See Katherine Verdery, *My life as a spy. Investigations in a Secret Police File* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

¹²⁴ Irina Costache, "Archiving Desire: Materiality, Sexuality and the Secret Police in Romanian State Socialism," Phd thesis, Central European University, 2014, 219.

¹²⁵ Verdery, *My life as a spy*.

of racializing practices during state socialism and as racializing practices themselves. Most of these files are strewn with handwritten comments; orders; and suggestions from superiors which makes them dynamic materials. Sometimes the comments re-produce and reproduce racializing practices; sometimes they are strikingly humane. In catching a glimpse of the interplay between the ways content was read and the content itself, these sources both re-produce and reproduce society.

It is the same vein that I read all my source materials, from gendarmes' orders and reports to studies compiled for the CC and the social services files on M. I analyse in Chapter Three. My first trip to the archives was to the National Historical Archives in Bucharest, where I knew I would find at least the few files labelled 'țigani' every researcher duly footnotes. I was aware these materials were well represented in the few scholarly works on Roma in Romania, but I was hopeful I would find perhaps handwritten annotations in the margins. I also consulted lists of women shortlisted for maternity awards, hoping I would find at least a short biography of each one of them, yet in vain. However, when I found copies of the studies produced for the CC, held at the National Archives, in the *Securitate* archives, I was struck by the additions to the latter copies. The three instances of summarising thrice the same report for one's *Securitate* superiors introduced three layers of additional racialising practices. Such that by the third summary, Roma in general were described as 'a ball chain and a continuous hassle.'¹²⁶

At the Mureș Archives I decided to have a look at any files which had been catalogued with the terms 'social,' 'women,' 'children.' When I began reading the social services file which contained the materials on M., I did not anticipate I would find any materials. I had spent days looking at various files with not one instance of the term 'Rom' or 'țigan.' I was a few hundred pages in, already towards the end of approximately 100 pages on one particular 'orphan.' It was the only child on whom the Mureș services

¹²⁶CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 56.

had devoted such a large volume of notes and reports, out of all the ones I consulted. On a page towards the end, however, the home assessment (see Chapter Three) mentioned M.'s 'țigan nationality.' I stopped and decided to go back to the beginning of the correspondence on M. and re-read every page with renewed attention. Afterwards, I also photographed the entire file and re-read the reports on M. during the writing-up stage in conjunction with those on other 'orphans' or 'neglected' children.

Therefore, from the beginning on my archival research, my methodological approach was not to stop solely by reports labelled as 'țigani' by either the archivists or party authorities themselves. Yet, having read the reports on the 'socio-economic conditions of the țigani in our country' produced for the CC in the late 1970s, I was confident my speculations that Roma had not ceased to be racialised during state socialism were confirmed. If party rapporteurs themselves obliquely referenced it, I became certain I would find such traces. I found both these and more, such as the character assessments held in the Popești Leordeni warehouse.¹²⁷ Yet I had not anticipated to find ego documents like V.'s 11-page, hand-written letter.¹²⁸ The historian can only hope that there are more such documents in the archives.

If the role of the *Securitate* was mainly to surveil in order to prevent, militia forces were tasked with reinforcement. *Securitate* officers used the militia as auxiliary forces.¹²⁹ Yet they did not have jurisdiction over non-political crimes, as their unproductive efforts to have Ion Cioabă, the main Romani informer, released in the late 1980s when he was imprisoned on embezzlement charges, suggest.¹³⁰ As I will show in Chapter One, and as

¹²⁷ I give an in-depth account of my method in the Popești Leordeni warehouse in Chapter Two.

¹²⁸ I uncovered this letter by complete chance in the central Bucharest main CNSAS archive, when the custodian mentioned there was some microfilm material on a certain Romani citizen accused of political crimes.

¹²⁹ Verdery, *My life as a spy*, 208.

¹³⁰ See Petre Matei, "Roma in 1980s communist Romania and the Roma discourse on the Holocaust between compensation and identity," in *The Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe since 1945*, eds Celia Donert and Eve Rosenhaft (London: Routledge, 2021), 230.

Ion Cirniala has written about the 1964-1989 period, the main remit of the police forces were to 'administer desired mobilities.' The *Securitate's* target was to 'create knowledge about necessary connections' in order to know and thus manage. In other words, *Securitate* officers' remit was to prove correlation between people and 'visible and invisible realities,'¹³¹ or what I call 'actualisation' and 'potential' in Chapter Two. The 'mood of the population' reports; the requests for numbers, occupations, and 'entourages' of Roma per county; and the CC 'studies into the socio-economic conditions of the țigan population in our country' all fed into the production of knowledge about the necessary conditions for a well-ordered socialist society (or not). The police, on the other hand, had to 'eliminate and restrict'¹³² threats. When it came to mobilities, eliminating mobility unsanctioned by the State went hand in hand with 'the ritualized, staged uses of time and space that disciplined people's movements,' particularly during late socialism. Such stagings, which Cirniala terms 'mobilities on demand,' aimed to give 'people the feeling of mobility.' They included political marches, patriotic work, the repartitioning of graduates, usually to the countryside, domestic motorised tourism, compulsory cultural trips, the collection of recyclables, and the unpaid labour school students performed for 'agricultural practice.'¹³³

Generally speaking, although documents produced for and by the state claim omniscience and make truth claims, I have established by now that to take them at face value—that is to look for 'truths'—would be injudicious. Yet that is not to say I discount them as 'untruths' either. My reading of the sources, instead, involves a suspension of judgement, moral or otherwise. Rather, I have let myself be guided by the following

¹³¹ Ioana Macrea-Toma, "The archive as Blueprint: Information in Mass Dictatorships," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mass Dictatorship*, eds Paul Corner and Jie-Hyun Lim (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 146-147. Or what I call 'actualisation' and 'potential' in Chapter Two.

¹³² Ciprian Cirniala, "Power and Mobilities in Socialist Romania 1964-1989", in *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States*, eds Kathy Burrell and Kathrin Hörschelmann (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 45.

¹³³ Cirniala, "Power and Mobilities," 54.

overarching questions. How did such documents use language to 'take stock of' a society in the making? In so doing, whom did they leave out and how did the left-out engage with such processes in their turn? What were the social effects on citizens' lives when such language practices crystallised in social practices? To have followed untreaded and winding paths in the archives has afforded me to intervene in the field of socialist and Romani studies with a study which moves beyond a reading of Romani persons as the perpetual Other. It is also true that I rejoiced at the abundance of sources on Roma, yet this abundance ought to be put in context. Both their history of exclusion prior to the state socialist period and their inclusion in the body of would-be socialist citizens precisely on criteria of their historical exclusion has meant that the sources in the archives privilege Romanians in general. When they turn up on a page, Romani Romanians are misrecognised as 'țigan,' but they are also referred to as Roma, or *rom* (pl. *romi*) in Romanian. Perhaps more research conducted in the local archives would unearth materials such as the Social Services correspondence I draw on in Chapter Three.

Although the bulk of the sources, therefore, are about Romanians, this has afforded me a far more complex and critical picture than had I 'zoomed in on the "Roma", "Roma", "Roma";' in Kóczé's words. Without the numerous sources which described unruly Romanians, only to switch to a different, and racialising, register of language—and hence thought—whenever the person was 'believed' to be 'țigan,' I would have not been able to write this study. Additionally, to my knowledge this is the first social history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship in Romania, 1947-1989. Thus, in order to re-place Romani citizens at the heart of socialist society, I first had to gain a simultaneous, and refined, understanding of Romanian engagement with socialism writ large.

Certainly, party materials reflect the official view. In Artemy Kalinowsky's words, 'they allow us to trace the way officials thought about certain problems, how they assessed ongoing programs, and the kind of

interventions they prescribed.¹³⁴ This is entirely the case in this study too. The character assessments, denunciations, and complaint letters, however, add the next level of historical understanding. They bring to light how Romani Romanians responded to such interventions.

I have read all the sources I have analysed in this thesis both along and against the grain.¹³⁵ By the former I mean the context; the time; the physicality; and the authorship of the sources. By the latter I mean the deeper meaning, often obliquely hinted at, as well as the ends their authors sought to achieve with their use of language.

The heavy use of policing reports and the intrusiveness with which some Romani Romanians were described and prodded, sometimes literally, poses ethical questions. This is an aspect particularly salient in Chapter Three. As I make clear in that chapter, I have kept all names anonymous. This is both a legal requirement and my own choice to protect the privacy of the people I write about. At the same time, however, this is not a study about individuals. Whenever I use case studies, I do so to illuminate wider questions. Additionally, I have cited from the archival sources no more than what I believe to have been enough to make a compelling argument. I am hopeful I have managed to keep the salacious details off the page.

Chapter Synopses

It is the protean and oftentimes surprising faces of state socialism in Romania and what it meant for Romani Romanians that this thesis lays out. At the same time, who was a Romani Romanian in state socialist Romania and what dimensions such an identity occupied is a different story altogether, and one I unravel over four chapters.

Chapter One documents the change in party officials' assessment of Roma as a 'question' requiring a solution. In both the immediate postwar

¹³⁴ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Tractors, Power Lines, and the Welfare State: The Contradictions of Soviet Development in Post-World War II Tajikistan," *ASIA* 69 no. 3, (2015): 565, footnote 7.

¹³⁵ This is Ann Stoler famous phrasing. See *Along the Archival Grain*.

period and under late socialism, policy makers and sociologists targeted what they classified as 'nomadic' and 'seminomadic țigani' as constituting a problem to be solved. Over time, their characterisation shifted from a traditional conflation of 'nomadism' and 'seminomadism' as 'un-civilised' or 'backward' lifestyles when it came to issues as diverse as access to sewerage; the division of sexes per inhabitable room; hygiene; and the nuclear legal heterosexual family. Yet although persons belonging to both categories did live in tents and/or travelled by horse wagon to sell their crafts, I uncover how experts and officials extended this classification simultaneously to the entire Romani population as a corporate group. Uninterested in grappling with the inherited character of the term 'țigan,' due to their own racism, and lacking civic and financial means, party officials set the terms of the population's future engagement with their Romani fellow citizens. Simultaneously, they had traditional tropes born anew with every invocation.

In Chapter Two, 'home' as an analytical category endures. Yet unlike the cases in Chapter One, which traced how ideas of home as a specifically fixed abode drew social boundaries between the good and the bad socialist citizen, here I illustrate how the home became a lens through which socialist identity revealed itself. I draw on character assessments commissioned by the *Securitate* to reveal how non-Romani Romanians attributed the same pattern of anti-socialist behaviour either to 'psycho-nervous conditions,' to criminality, or simply to being Roma. I also show how certain character assessments confirmed that which was seen as traditional knowledge: 'țigan' behaviour revealed the Roma soul and the impossibility that it might ever become socialist.

Yet this assessment was not always predetermined, even under the highly repressive neo-Stalinist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. In Chapter Three, I draw on two legal case studies to illuminate the ways in which tropes about Romani behaviour interacted with the patriarchal qualities of Romanian state socialism to inform and, crucially, shape the final decisions in two legal cases. Although the two cases are 30 years apart, the same

social categories—age, gender, and class—appear to have worked in opposite ways. In the first case, they collided to institutionalise a Roma girl, M., who alleged rape at the hands of her foster father; in the second case, they combined to secure the release of an abusive husband, S., accused of political crimes. I show in detail how M.'s gender pushed her 'țigan nationality' forward, whilst in the case of S. his Roma identity took a back seat. To put it differently, gender 'enhanced' M's 'țigan'-ness, whilst 'lessening' that of S, with critical consequences for their lives. I use the term 'patriarchal bargain' as an analytical category to perform a reading of the two cases.

In Chapter Four, I place a 1984 letter signed by two Romani men asking to be given permission to open a church where mass would be held in 'the țigan language' in the context of letters of complaint and denunciation from the 1970s and 1980s. I argue that Romani citizens re-defined the idea of socialist citizenship on their own terms. I use the analytical frameworks of 'participatory dictatorship' and 'radical civil obedience' to document how Romani Romanians appealed to socialist legality *within* state socialism. In appealing to local decrees and ratified international covenants, Romanian citizens, Romani ones included, depicted themselves as true socialists, constrained in their quests for socialist fulfilment by less-than-socialist party authorities.

1. How to Fashion 'Nomads' into Good Socialists (1949-1989)

This chapter offers a detailed historical overview of the ways in which party policy makers, ideologues, and police authorities conceptualised, classified, and made proposals for the resolution of what they saw as 'the țigan question.' I draw on official decrees; the paperwork of the Central Committee (henceforth CC) of The Romanian Workers' Party (The Romanian Communist Party after 1965; henceforth RCP); censuses; women's magazines and almanacs; and philosophy and sociological studies commissioned by the Party to place the regime's preoccupation with Romani persons in a larger context of building socialism. In so doing, I show how the obsession with the idea of 'nomadic' and 'seminomadic' Roma was a key part of the socialist state's concern with renovating Romanian society. The aim was to produce modern stable living conditions which would help bring about the pinnacle of socialist, and thus superior, living. Although persons belonging to both categories did live in tents and/or travelled by horse wagon to sell their crafts, I uncover how experts and officials extended this classification simultaneously to the entire Romani population as a corporate group. Therefore, what was understood as Romani lifestyles—especially their alleged perennial nomadic quality—was perceived as more than a small obstacle on the socialist roadmap to the future.

How is it that a regime seeking to emancipate, redress, and forge a new society carried on with interwar—and older—racialising practices until they became social ideas? Worries for the socialist future went hand-in-hand with a repudiation of the recent past. Yet, uninterested in grappling with the inherited racialising character of the term 'țigan' due to their own racism, postwar party authorities revitalised such older uses for newer socialist ends. To some extent they also responded to pressure from below, particularly in postwar early socialism, such as peasants' historical and legal refusal to allow emancipated Roma to settle in their villages post-

abolitionism.¹³⁶ By the late 1980s, party-sanctioned magazines were printing stories which featured the 'țigan witch' as the criminal swindling hard-working citizens of their money.

Not only did party leaders' use of long-standing 'țigan' tropes sanctify the associative link between 'țigan' behaviour; somatic types; and Romani ethnicity. It also both legitimised popular uses of the tropes and set the terms for the population's-at-large future engagement with their Romani fellow citizens.

Were Romani citizens in Socialist Romania the specific targets of social engineering, or were they the collateral damage of an ambitious government program to re-engineer all Romanian society? My own argument, and the very short answer, is both. The most egregious form of anti-Roma socialist measures is said to have been the guidelines laid out by Ceaușescu in his 1977 teleconference. At that time, he asked party leaders to disallow that specific element which enabled some Romani citizens to earn a living: travelling for work. Policy studies which offered proposals on how to render Roma socialist in the early and mid-1970s focused on their supposed 'nomadic' and 'seminomadic' character, and this particular characteristic was turned into a kind of shorthand to argue for the fundamental 'backwardness' of all Roma.

Yet a range of other racialising tropes were alive and invoked anew by party officials and citizens at large in early postwar Romania too. The postwar Communist Party inherited a country in disarray, whilst fighting to build a coherent identity for their party and fend off accusations of being Soviet lackeys.¹³⁷ All this was compounded by a cruel two-year long drought with devastating consequences. However, although set on re-

¹³⁶ As Petre Petcuț shows, in Moldova for example, Moldavian prefects decided to settle the formerly enslaved Roma in villages at the ratio of 'one freed for every 20 Moldavian households.' Yet peasants 'only rarely acquiesced to a lengthier stay' for the emancipated Roma. Furthermore, the 1868 Law of Rural Police codified the peasants' discretionary choice to have Roma settle in their villages. Petcuț, *Rromii*, 152-153 and 173. Citation on p. 152.

¹³⁷ 'Stalin's red lapdogs,' as one citizen was reported to have called them.

fashioning society, socialists never problematised inherited anti-Roma discrimination.

Neither did they engage with the deportations to Transnistria and how those recent experiences had transformed the lives and identities of Romani citizens. Paul Hanebrink has documented at length what this refusal has meant for Romania in connection with deported Jewish Romanians. By reframing antisemitism as a 'a capitalist plot' to play down the association between communism and Judeo-Bolshevism, party leaders absolved themselves and citizens at large from interrogating their own complicity or involvement in the Holocaust. Thus, in turning 'specifically anti-Jewish slurs into a general image of the enemy,' party officials allowed antisemitism to continue unabated.¹³⁸ Party leaders' refusal to engage with the deportation of Romani Romanians, combined with their own invocations of racialised tropes, helped them to argue by the 1970s that Romani persons may even have been consciously resisting socialism.

To fully understand how the grand reach of this social engineering project to create a socialist future targeted Romani citizens both directly and indirectly, I use the concept of 'home' as an analytical category. By home I mean both house and the concept of attachment to a place, encapsulated in the party ideal of a fixed domicile. Socialists linked the idea of a fixed home inextricably with social stability, and its antithesis, uncontrolled movement. Movement unsanctified by the party came in many guises and was classed as 'uncivilised' or 'reactionary.' Reactionaries engaging in uncivilised lifestyles were invariably persons found to be living in ways which pre-dated the socialist precepts of 'civilised.'

In 1972, some Roma were reported to be 'living a life almost like in the past.' By this, party investigators meant crowded living conditions in unhygienic tents shared with animals. It was the presence of tents which aggrieved party authorities, for it was both the cause and the effect of 'uncivilised lifestyles.' It signalled that these Romani citizens still partook in

¹³⁸ Paul A. Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe. The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2018).

travelling with their tents by horse wagons. This also raised the question of tax evasion given that this type of self-employment was not declared as income.

Furthermore, as we shall see later, their free movement was also associated with the spread of diseases; theft; failure to register Romani children with schools and/or truancy; and conflict with Romanian peasants. Therefore, some reports cast doubts on the effectiveness of the 'Soviet-style measures' proposed in 1949. Yet other party officials saw this failure as the Roma's complete rejection of socialist living, and thus an effort to circumvent the adoption of a socialist identity. By 1978 they referred to the Roma as a corporate body, describing them as a 'ball chain and [a] never-ending hassle [for] the party and the administrative organs.'¹³⁹

Subsequently, at Ceaușescu's orders, in 1978 the Judiciary Direction within the General Inspectorate of Militia decided to solve the problem by codifying the prohibition on seasonal travel for self-employed work. Whereas in postwar Romania 'nomadism' was generally shrouded in efforts to unmask and stop 'elements inimical to the people' from jeopardising the socialist reconstruction and consolidation of the republic, the crackdown on 'nomadic and seminomadic' Roma in the 1970s re-problematized a postwar concern, raising two uncomfortable problems. First, the party as educator had failed on its promise to educate. Second, Roma as a group were specifically accused of wilfully resisting socialism, which raised the question of their compatibility with socialist citizenship.

.....

On 15 January 1947 the New Law of Circulation, issued by the Ministry of the Interior together with the Ministry of Communications, came into effect. As the law put it,

¹³⁹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 56.

the railway stations and ticket agencies will issue travel tickets *only upon presentation of a travel permit*, issued and personally signed by the head of borough police stations in the case of Bucharest, by police officers in the case of municipalities and county towns, by the head of the commissariat in the other urban communes, and by the head of the gendarme stations in the case of rural communes (original).¹⁴⁰

Those in possession of travel permits were required to carry with them additional papers, such as medical notes for the sick; subpoenas for those travelling to court; registration papers with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for traders and entrepreneurs etc. Each of these would ensure their owners could prove they had a 'genuine reason for travelling.' Additionally, the issuing authorities were asked to 'check on an individual basis with the utmost care the genuineness of the reasons applicants invoke and the permits they displayed in order to avoid any attempt at non-compliance.'¹⁴¹

As if this was not enough, each passenger train on the most travelled routes was to carry a corps of 50 gendarmes under the command of an officer, whilst fast trains were to carry a corps of 25 gendarmes and an officer. These were tasked with ensuring that 'no one mounted on the roof, steps or connection rods, or [got] on and off through the windows' whilst trains were stationary. At the same time, the law stipulated day and night raids to check people's papers. Additionally, officers were ordered to 'continuously check the guard corps so that the mission of repressing clandestine travellers is applied forcefully and in all circumstances.'¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale* (henceforth ANIC), *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 263. Circular Order nr. 159.408/12, January 1946, 1.

¹⁴¹ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 263. Order, 2. The following categories of people were exempt from carrying travel permits: state officials; civil servants and active soldiers travelling for work; soldiers on leave; members of the diplomatic and consulate corps; members of the Allied Mission; members of the Deputies Assembly; travellers in possession of international tickets; and journalists in possession of free railways passes.

¹⁴² ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 263. Order, 2.

By February 1948 rumours had spread that colour-coded passes would soon be issued to the population according to legal categories of mobility. As a security police report for Alba County put it on 24 February 1948, 'the reactionary agents have launched' a new version of the non-free movement rumour. According to it, all who were not allowed to leave their locality of domicile would receive white cards; those allowed to travel within the catchment area of their locality of domicile would be issued with yellow passes; whilst 'red passes will allow their owners to circulate throughout the country. Very few people will be eligible for this category (particularly civil servants of higher rank).'¹⁴³

The report explained that the 'rumours' made the population feel agitated, particularly given that all but party officials seemed to be senselessly targeted. Yet party officials had their own logic. In both the classified preamble and the official communiqué notifying the population of the new law, the reasons given were the general atmosphere of postwar desolation and the priority to transport cereals to areas most affected by the recent drought. Alleged grain speculators, however, 'goaded by elements inimical to the people,' were at the root of 'an overcrowding of personal and freight trains, causing accidents and the lines to become worn, thus having a direct negative effect upon the transportation of collected cereals.'¹⁴⁴

Economic hardships caused by the war had indeed been exacerbated by the previous two years' drought, as the order put it. The 'double crisis' of war reparations to the Soviet Union, combined with the intense drought, caused massive food scarcity and the collapse of the national currency. As Alex Grama documents, it led to hyperinflation and food riots, and disabled industrial production.¹⁴⁵ The effects on everyday living, particularly in the countryside, were enormous. One report on the 'mood of the population'

¹⁴³ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmerie*, File 22/1948. Report no. 61 on the mood of the population, 24 February 1948.

¹⁴⁴ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 263. Order, 1.

¹⁴⁵ Alex Grama, "Labouring Along: Industrial Workers and the Making of Postwar Romania (1944-1958)," PhD thesis, Central European University, 36.

informed the Bucharest headquarters in March 1948 that 'a large part of the population in Tecuci have parasites on their heads.' Although free soap and gasoline had been distributed by order of party authorities, 'the peasants are insistently asking for free cloth and cotton, so they are able to make clothes, which during the drought they had to sell to the regions with surplus harvest.'¹⁴⁶

'Grain speculators' who took advantage of the drought to sell produce at immense personal profits at the expense of the population, aided in their speculating by the possibility of using hitherto unchecked state-owned trains, were found to be the main culprits. It was never specified who these were. But the language of the preamble is telling in the blame it placed on 'elements inimical to the people' and their link to officials' insistence that people's 'genuine' reasons for travel be uncovered. All enemies of the people, gathered under the umbrella term of 'reactionaries,' seemed to be moving freely about the country, unchecked.

Therefore, the 1947 General Plan of Action for the Gendarmerie cast the gendarmes as 'the building block at the disposal of the Ministry of the Interior' and tasked them with reinforcing the provisions of the Law of Circulation. Namely 'the identification and surveillance of all reactionaries, in all their guises.'¹⁴⁷ The gendarmes were thus tasked with controlling citizens' mobility.

To some extent, party authorities were justified in their suspicions that 'enemies of the people' concealed their identity. As one Romanian historian documents, beginning with 1949, anti-communist partisans hiding in mountainous areas would stop tourists and town-dwellers passing by to rob them of '[...] identity cards—which the Demographics Bureau began issuing in 1949 based on very rigorous criteria—to forge their [own] identity

¹⁴⁶ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmerie*, File 23/1948. Report on the mood of the population, 6 March 1948.

¹⁴⁷ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 733/1947-1948. Action plan, 1.

papers.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, purported 'tax evaders, who carry spirits without paying the legally required taxes and duties,' were amongst the reactionaries moving freely and dangerously.

In a similar vein, but rather more prophylactic than the alleged *fait accompli* of alcohol-tax evaders, was the recall of all military maps. Circular order no 170422, dated 10 August 1948, disseminated to all, including the rural gendarmes, stated the following:

As it has been found that numerous civilians are in possession of military maps which could be exploited by foreign espionage agents, all maps at a scale of 1/500 000 to 1/100 000, and all command plans 1/20 000 to 1/10 000, are required by the Ministry of the Interior to be submitted to the respective police/gendarme station by 1 Sep 1948.¹⁴⁹

And perhaps remembering how important a role mobile students had played in the success of the legionary movement in interwar Romania, and their 'potential' for subversion, Circular Order no 3717 from 4 August 1948 specified the following: 'Of special interest will be students who, although they should be sitting exams, are found wandering the country without aim.'¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, 'particular attention' was 'to be paid to the legionaries who are members of democratic organisations *only by name*' (my emphasis).¹⁵¹

There were Romani organisations which the early socialist *Securitate* reports came to classify as 'phoney.' Even if at first party officials referred to the organisations as assistants in the delivering of cultural enlightenment

¹⁴⁸ Dorin-Liviu Bîţfoi, *Aşa s-a născut omul nou: În România anilor '50'* [Thus the new being was born: Romania in the 1950s] (Bucuresti: Compania, 2012), 28. The monograph is breath-taking in its anti-communist bent, yet also useful for providing historical developments such as the one I quote.

¹⁴⁹ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 733, 264.

¹⁵⁰ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 733, Circular Order no 3717, Cluj copy, 4 August 1948.

¹⁵¹ ANIC, *Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi*, File 733. Plan, p. 1.

to Romani citizens. For example, the General Union of Roma in Romania, established in 1933, was heralded between 1948-1949 as the main body that would aid the Party in its enlightening programme. In April 1948, the Bucharest Inspectorate for State Safety gave its blessing:

The Central Committee takes the initiative and has decided to back The People's Democratic Front, which is to say the current Government, and hopes that the latter will lend all their support towards the good running of the Union's programme and the happy resolution of Roma's *doléances*.¹⁵²

Furthermore, on 12 May 1948, Service I within the General Directorate for State Safety issued a report advising that the Romani Union be encouraged and allowed to ask the Central Institute for Statistics for 'all the data they require, because in this way the requirements laid out by the Law for Cohabiting Nationalities will also be observed.'¹⁵³ In the left-hand margin, the head of operations wrote: 'I agree with the proposals in the report.' Indeed, a Cluj Inspectorate of Gendarmes on 31 December 1948, made it known that 'the Union is fighting for the emancipation of all working classes and the Roma' and tasked the gendarmes to let the 'nomadic Roma' within their catchment area know they were to address the Union with their 'material situation and the localities in which they wish to settle with their domicile,' although 'frontier and spa regions, such as Câmpulung-Bucovina' were out of question.¹⁵⁴

On either 25 January 1949 or on 27 May 1949—reports are contradictory—,¹⁵⁵ the General Union of Roma in Romania was dissolved by the Central Committee without permission from the State Safety police.

¹⁵² ANIC, Fond Direcțiunea Generală a Poliției, Secția Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, File 87/1943. Letter, 352.

¹⁵³ ANIC, Fond Direcțiunea Generală a Poliției, Secția Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, Dosar 87/1943. Letter, 359.

¹⁵⁴ ANIC, Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733, 439.

¹⁵⁵ Reports vary.

Some Romani men, however, put themselves forward as leaders of a new organisation, aptly titled The Popular Union of Roma in Romania. State Safety police superiors asked that intelligence be gathered on the new union prospective leaders. When the intelligence on them reached the State Safety authorities, 'phony socialists' were reported to exist among the Romani would-be new leaders, who were accused of plenty of opportunism, both political and material.

The reports charged that: the representative for Cluj County, a watch/clock maker, 'is currently being held under our custody as an accomplice in the subversive organisation "Freedom's Guards," an organisation headed by [name] from Cluj County.'¹⁵⁶ The Union's representative for Deva-Mediaş, a teacher, was reported to 'currently [be] a party member, solely so he can continue with his employment. He keeps dubious company and is a speculator in the wine trade. He is under surveillance.'¹⁵⁷ Finally, the representative for Ialomiţa county, a non-active soldier, was reported to 'have been tried and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for using and counterfeiting money. [...] Vices: he is alcoholic and ambitious. According to our intelligence he is expecting to be named into the Romani Central Committee.'¹⁵⁸ The only good socialist among them appeared to be the Hunedoara representative, 'a party member since 1947; he is known as a good element, a conscientious worker and loyal to the regime.'

On 27 May 1949 the former Inspector for the Organised Roma of Transylvania and Banat petitioned the Minister of the Interior asking him to allow the General Union of the Roma to continue to exist. On 10 September 1949 the Sibiu branch for the State Safety sent in its intelligence report, which the General Direction for State Safety had requested to be conducted

¹⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcţiunea Generală a Poliţiei, Secţia Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, Dosar 87/1943, 389.

¹⁵⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcţiunea Generală a Poliţiei, Secţia Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, Dosar 87/1943, 390.

¹⁵⁸ ANIC, Fond Direcţiunea Generală a Poliţiei, Secţia Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, Dosar 87/1943, 392.

'discreetly.' The report described the former Inspector as a man 'who doesn't deserve to be a [Communist] Party member and who cannot be trusted with a leadership role.' He was also said to have been a member of all political parties before 23 August 1943, 'which is to say whichever party was in government,' testament to his 'lack of character.' He was further described as 'shifty, with no clear political ideology, always on the lookout for his own good. [...] He has been recently excluded from the party by the checking subcommittee, on charges of speculating and embezzling money from the Romani Union.'¹⁵⁹

On 1 October 1949, the Secretariat for the General Direction for the People's Safety wrote to the Secretariat of the Ministry of the Interior advising them that the Romani Inspector's request to be allowed to revive the Romani Union be rejected.¹⁶⁰ The State Safety police officers appeared to be very adept at unmasking political opportunists, although even they sometimes struggled, as evidenced by the Cluj branch's request to Bucharest to send more particulars about the Romani Cluj representative, as 'he could not be identified so far.'¹⁶¹

Unmasking, however, did not come easily, and often it was impossible to know who was passing for what, particularly in the case of people on the move, or 'nomads.' This was made clear by the phrasing of a circular order sent to all gendarme sections on 25 November 1948. The November order, which reprimanded the gendarmes for their lack of vigilance and professionalism, reiterated orders set out in a previous classified circular order dated 30 June 1948. Its opening paragraph stated confidently that 'a significant number of persons under suspicion or wanted by the General

¹⁵⁹ Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (henceforth CNSAS), Fond DGSS 226_1949. Report, 7. In Czechoslovakia too Romani Unions were forbidden as 'separatist' on charges of Romani leaders' 'self-interest and seeking personal gain' in 1958. See Donert, *Rights of Roma*, 138.

¹⁶⁰ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 226_1949. Advisory note, 8.

¹⁶¹ ANIC, Direcțiunea Generală a Poliției, Fond Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România, File 87/1943, 388.

Direction for State Security or other authorities for crimes against State Security or the public order are hiding on rural territory.¹⁶²

Rural areas were said to be particularly prone to this dangerous and insidious phenomenon, both because forests were a very convenient hiding ground and because the gendarmes were thought to be slacking off their preventative duties. The latter aspect was particularly detrimental to the keeping of order, given that 'the surveillance network ha[d] empty spaces through which criminals squeeze[d] very easily.' Said 'criminals,' 'free from police surveillance,' would consequently 'gather in bands [and] attack the inhabitants and the authorities in particular,' in an act of 'undermining the interests of the Romanian Popular Republic and the popular democratic regime.' This variety of mobility was classed by state authorities as law-breaking. Other types of mobility, which appeared legal at a first glance, were similarly classed as dangerous. As one circular order put it, the 'majority of the criminals, after committing crimes, [take] refuge within the territory of other counties, where, by way of fake names and paper, they *cheat the vigilance of police by passing for peaceful people*' (my emphasis).¹⁶³

The purported knowledge that these persons were making use of forged papers compounded an already dangerous state of affairs. According to the gendarmes, not only were there nomads on the road, unable to be counted, conscripted, and/or 'doing socially useful work,' but they were reported to both possess war arms and hide in the woods, thus causing 'evil.' For example, a report on a Bacău event, sent to the Cluj Legion for teaching purposes, informed that a 'band of evildoers,' pursued by four ill-prepared officers, managed to flee, 'leaving behind only one man and the women and children.' At the end of the report, in the last two lines, the report uses the term 'șatră,' used historically in Romania to refer to Romani small travelling groups: 'Taking the șatră by surprise under more judicious

¹⁶² ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 407. Circular order no. 36.476/30 June 1948, 1.

¹⁶³ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733. Circular order no. 38847/25 November 1948, 1.

planning would have instead produced better results and would have led to the capture of the entire band.¹⁶⁴ A follow-up report, meant to reprimand gendarmes for poor planning, as well as the '243 bullets wasted' at Bacău, described the 'band:'

[...] a caravan of nomads consisting of 13 men, 23 women and children, who, from the intelligence gathered, were in cahoots with the bands active in the region, and who were suspected from some evidence to have taken refuge in Putna county.¹⁶⁵

They are further described as 'the bandits in the horse wagon' and 'the bandits.' They were reported to 'have fled in the woods.' In another report, dated 6 April 1948, on the 'discovery of a band of horse thieves,' the Sânmihaiul Roman gendarmes 'uncovered, following persistent enquiries, a band of 24 nomadic Roma, with 13 stolen horses.'¹⁶⁶ It is clear that by 'nomads' the gendarmes meant Roma with wagons, who travelled in groups. Although the 'persistent enquiries' part aimed to underline the gendarmes' good work, the example also demonstrates that all Roma who travelled in groups, with a significant number of horses in particular, were under suspicion. Furthermore, the presence of wagons and animals, difficult to conceal in villages, was clearly used as a sign of their supposed propensity for theft.

For example, in a list of wanted persons, one man, described as 'a nomad' 28-29 years of age, a former 'member in the band of C.L.,' was sought by the Bucharest Inspectorate of Gendarmes. His fixed domicile was said to be in Teleorman, yet 'from the intelligence gathered he operates in

¹⁶⁴ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733, 439.

¹⁶⁵ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733, p. 446.

¹⁶⁶ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 23. Telephonic report no 114, 6 April 1948.

the counties of Olt and Argeş,' on top of Teleorman. 'The following Roma¹⁶⁷ are also part of the band: [names],' finished the reported.¹⁶⁸

The conclusion to a report on a robbery at Putna in mid-January 1948 further reveals the policing logic of associating Roma found in open air with crime. During the robbery, '6 individuals armed with pistols' had robbed the signalman and the switchman at Mărăşeşti station. The report ended with 'In the vicinity of the crime site 6 țigani, of which 3 men and three women, were caught, being retained for questioning.'¹⁶⁹

What is crucial about these 'criminal acts and misdeeds' in postwar Romania is that Roma are usually either 'found' in the vicinity of the crime scene, in which case they were retained for interrogation, or they were 'said' to have been seen with stolen items, such as the case of the 'țigani' thieves who were spotted with a stolen mare by a Romanian schoolgirl in Cluj in November 1948. Clearly, horses in the company of bodies who appeared Romani to the eye and were on the move, for various reasons, were popularly understood as a giveaway for 'țigan' criminal behaviour.

It is becoming clear that 'nomadic' was being used to reference any alleged Romani person in the postwar period. It is becoming clear that 'nomadic' was being used to reference any alleged Romani person in the postwar period. Historian Viorel Achim has reached the same conclusion as myself above. As he puts it, 'although the authorities did not explicitly discuss the former deportees and rarely used the term "deported" or "evacuated", it is clear that when official reports refer to "nomads", they actually mean deportees, because all itinerant Roma in war-time Romania were victims of the deportations to Transnistria.' Yet, why were Romani individuals who reportedly travelled with 'bandits' also classified as 'nomads?' Here, I would like to question a nonchalant reading of the sources, as well as the rural militia's use of the term 'nomad' itself and how

¹⁶⁷ 'Romji,' capitalised, in the original.

¹⁶⁸ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733, 413.

¹⁶⁹ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 22. Report sent by the Police Bureau, 18/19 January 1948.

matter-of-factly gendarmes conflated the 'nomads' with banditry and thievery, even in the absence of visual markers such as horse wagons.

Yet this was by no means a singularly Romanian occurrence. The 1912 French law which enshrined the category of 'nomad' used the overarching category of fixed domicile to codify difference which had been understood and described by way of racial traits in the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁰ As Delclitte documents, extra parliamentary discussions and press articles covered the 'mysterious leader of the nomadic bands that roamed' the French countryside in the lead up to the passing of the law. Its focus was 'the exercise of itinerant professions and the regulation of the movement of nomads.'

Although itinerancy was generally on the decrease, 'large groups of Roma from Central and Eastern Europe, Sinti from Piedmont, and Gypsies from Alsace and Lorraine' had migrated to France. The press called them 'gypsies and other nomads of exotic origin who travell by caravans from village to village.'¹⁷¹ Yet, the 1897 extra parliamentary commission set up 'to look into the vagrants and discover the perpetrators' of the countryside crimes could not use the Criminal Code to draw a correlation between the former and the latter, given that 'nomads travelling in groups by caravans' did not meet the criteria of vagrancy. Vagrancy as a crime required one to have no fixed abode; no means of support; and no occupation. Therefore, the commission suggested that the 'dearth of policing' in the countryside be remedied by mobile police brigades tasked with identifying the 'nomads' by forensic—read racial—methods.¹⁷²

Because local assemblies and agricultural workers 'were asking for hostile measures against the "gypsies";' an opinion campaign gathered pace 'which would only end with the adoption of the law of 1912.'¹⁷³ Even if no one knew precisely who was a 'Romanichel,' identity booklets were

¹⁷⁰ Christophe Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade" dans la loi de 1912', *Hommes et Migrations*, no 1188-1189 (1995): 23-30. All translations from French are mine.

¹⁷¹ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 24.

¹⁷² Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 26.

¹⁷³ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 26.

proposed and the defining criterion of the 'nomad' became the absence of a fixed domicile. Yet fairground people did not possess a fixed above either, and took 'great offence' at having been lumped together with 'those who are at home in Spain, Hungary, France or Kamchatka.'¹⁷⁴ Well organised, the fairground people won their appeal. The law in its published guise, therefore, classed as 'nomads all individuals circulating in France without domicile or fixed residence and [are neither fairground traders nor industrialists], even if they have means of subsistence or claim to exercise a profession.'¹⁷⁵ Thus the difference between a fairground person and a 'nomad' was whether one was deemed to have an occupation or profession, in the absence of a fixed domicile. Any mention of 'racial traits' are absent from the 1912 law. Thus observable differences marked as 'racial traits' in the *carnets anthropométriques* were replaced in the 1912 law by the legal category of nomad.¹⁷⁶ Individual Roma were therefore turned into 'parts of a category,' and a criminalised one at that. Moreover, failure to present the *carnet*, which specified both individual and group provenance, would result in the accusation of vagrancy post-1912.¹⁷⁷

Back in the Romanian countryside, a criminal report disseminated by the General Inspectorate of Gendarmes throughout the country, dated 19 March, followed up on a robbery committed on the national road Bucharest-Urziceni on the night of 10-11 January 1948. Whilst the January report calls the culprits 'a band of țigani armed with pistols and knives,'¹⁷⁸ the follow-up paper stated it was 'a band of nomads' who committed not only this robbery, but various others, as well as thefts.¹⁷⁹ Another report, titled 'Banditry attack,' told of three 'nomadic *șatre*' (plural of *șatră*) in Southern Romania, attacked by six 'nomads

¹⁷⁴ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 27.

¹⁷⁵ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 28.

¹⁷⁶ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 29.

¹⁷⁷ Delclitte, 'La catégorie juridique "nomade":' 30. According to Delclitte, the law still stands today with slight modifications in 1969. 'Even today, Gypsies are in possession of specific documents, which they must have periodically stamped.'

¹⁷⁸ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 22, 42.

¹⁷⁹ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 23. Report nr. 91/19 March 1948.

[names] around 23:00 hours.' The six nomads 'dressed in military clothing and armed with Z.B. arms and automatic pistols [...] fired at the şatre, after which they fled.' The report ended with informing that 'the same band, by passing for gendarme patrols' robbed 3 villagers of a sum of money, all within a two-night span between 27-29 April 1948.¹⁸⁰ Two of the six 'nomads' were the 'band leader' C.L. and the 'nomad' wanted by the Bucharest Inspectorate I mentioned above.

The woods in the countryside seemed to shelter all sorts of 'bands of thieves and burglars who are so brazenly active in various parts of the country,' as one 1948 circular order addressed to 'all police, legions, sectors and gendarme stations within the Romanian Popular Republic' put it.¹⁸¹ 'Deserters' were also said to be hiding in the woods. In Secătura village, the cow shepherds 'informed the head of the gendarme station' of a deserter who was hiding at his father's woodcutting place, 'a deserter for one year and three months and still on the run.' There was another alleged deserter hiding in the woods, and together, the two, having 'smeared charcoal on their face and wearing Z.B. arms', were thought to be 'most likely' the duo who had robbed two village dwellers. Villagers who rebelled against the party-imposed grain dues also fled to the woods. In February, a villager from Târnavă Mica who 'refused to pay the corn due to the State; [...] set his granary on fire, after which he fled into the forest.'¹⁸²

The 'ferocious banditry of lately' and the free movement across the country may also have been mechanisms to cope with the rampant inflation, and a lack of food, clothing, and housing. Non-Romani Romanian citizens also travelled in search of work and food because of the severe draught. For example, a June 1949 report sent by the Corps for Inspection and Coordination within the Câmpulung Social Services to the Bucharest Direction for Re-education claimed that an 'unmarried mother [...] with three illegitimate children' had travelled from Dorohoi to Câmpulung 'during

¹⁸⁰ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 23, 30 April 1948, 140.

¹⁸¹ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 733, 20 September 1948, 345.

¹⁸² ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 22/1948, 261.

the hunger,' as the drought was colloquially known. She was reported to be 'working as a prostitute, [and] asking her children to beg and steal'.¹⁸³

In order to address the 'worrying state of affairs' in which the Romanian rural territories were said to find themselves, a Circular Order dated 30 June 1948 set strict and detailed duties 'regarding the knowing and controlling of the population.'¹⁸⁴ No person—locals, Romanians in general, or foreigners—was spared, and neither was the physical territory of Romania, from spa towns to industrial and mining establishments, from fairs and roads to railways and the border regions. Article 109 of the same order¹⁸⁵ was, however, exclusively dedicated to 'the surveillance and control of nomads.'¹⁸⁶

On 20 August 1948, another circular order set out guidelines 'in order to prevent crimes committed throughout the rural territories by nomads who are still unidentified and free.' It thus gave flesh and bones to what could have remained an underlying assumption, namely that all Roma travelling on rural territories were either bandits or had the potential for it.¹⁸⁷ The order tasked all gendarme sections and legions to compile family booklets for all 'şatre of țigani.' The booklets were to contain the name, surname and age of the family head and all other members; occupation; a census of vehicles, animals and valuables; a census of their previous travels; the direction from which they came; date of arrival; and 'the *real* date/length of stay in locality' (my emphasis).

The gendarmes were also required to 'establish by any means' the 'identity of those who are not in possession of IDs,' whilst also taking photos of 'every individual so that changes of identity do not happen any longer!' Before compiling the booklets, the gendarmes were instructed to check

¹⁸³ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Muncii, File 954/1948 Vol. I, 143.

¹⁸⁴ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 407. Ordin Circular nr 36.476/30 June 1948, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Under regulation number J.2.

¹⁸⁶ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi, File 407. Ordin nr 36.476, 2.

¹⁸⁷ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Jandarmi. Instructiuni privind şatrele de țigani/22 April 1948. This information is taken from the Cluj copy, identified as Circular Order no. 64/4 May 1948, 109-110.

whether or not the 'wealth of the șatră was fraudulently acquired' and whether the village population had any complaints.

In casting the villagers as the party running the risk of being taken advantage of by travelling Romani groups, the policing officials cast the Roma as outsiders imposing on the local population. Socialist authorities' approach takes one back to the 1868 Law of Rural Police, which 'gave communes power of discretion to accept or not Roma on their lands,' in a post-abolitionist context.¹⁸⁸ Party authorities, therefore, sought legitimacy from peasants by referring to their historical legal right to banish the Roma. And while it is true that Romanian state socialists did not invent the figure of the 'criminal țigan,' they neither problematised it nor did they stop invoking it.

.....

Stable domiciles required by law were a state strategy to solve the problems of, and prevent, the kind of anxiety-provoking mobility we have seen in the previous section. Yet fixing people to stable domiciles was impeded not only by inherited racialised anti-Romani tropes, but also by inherited legal problems.

First, before assigning houses to people, party leaders had to contend with the postwar housing shortages. Second, Romani deportees to Transnistria were coming home too, some as early as one year after having been deported. Not only were they adding to the number of persons in need of a dwelling, but they were also laying claim to their old houses. For example, in March 1943, the Iași war-time Safety police reported that in the town of Botoșani, 'the țigan [name] and his wife, [...] his being known as a conman and his wife as a witch in the lists of the Ministry of the Interior' had come back home. He was in possession of travelling permits issued by the War Ministry on the promise of conscription once back in Romania. Not only were they claiming back 'their mobile and immobile wealth' confiscated

¹⁸⁸ Petcuț, *Rromii*, 172.

in 1942. The report also asked for advice on how to treat this situation, given that the man's property 'now legally belong[ed] to the State.'¹⁸⁹ In May 1944, the Constanța war-time Safety Police reported to the General Direction informing about 'țigani who have fled Transnistria, and have clandestinely returned to [Romania] and settled in Tulcea.' In the last paragraph, the head of the security service asked the Bucharest headquarters to advise, 'because given the circumstances, sending them back to Transnistria is no longer possible.'¹⁹⁰ The reader of the report handwrote in pencil: 'To be sent to work and censused.' A subsequent report described the returns home as follows: '[...] țigani, with their former compulsory domicile in Transnistria, and who, taking advantage of the events, have returned to the country together with their families.'¹⁹¹

On 22 May 1944, The Direction for the Safety Police issued an order to all police inspectorates, requiring each of them to report on the number of 'țigani who have sneaked back from Transnistria together with the retreating troops,' as well as their whereabouts and their places of origin.¹⁹² I was only able to find the report for Chișinău, Bessarabia, whose officers replied in June 1944: 'Within the catchment area of this inspectorate we only have 7 țigani, all settled in Cahul town. Of these, one is originally from Cahul county, and the other six are from the town proper.'¹⁹³

The socialist coalition government came into power on 6 March 1945 having to contend with these legal predicaments. By April already, police detectives had been tasked with finding out the details of the deportees' situation. A 16 April 1945 report from Bucharest told of '18 horse wagons carrying brickmaking țigani' who had stopped in a field in Bucharest to celebrate a wedding, before moving on 'towards the Jegalia-Ialomița

¹⁸⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943, 247-248. I was not able to find the reply to Iași in the file.

¹⁹⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943, 296. On 29 January 1949 Transnistria had been ceded to the advancing Soviet troops. Also note how the report does not use the term 'deported' to Transnistria.

¹⁹¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943. Letter from the Head of the Security Police to the Police Vice secretary, 14 May 1944, 297.

¹⁹² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943, 300.

¹⁹³ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943, 296.

commune to make bricks for a landowner called SECELEANU.' The report finished with the following: 'From information given by the Administrative Direction of the [Bucharest] Prefecture of Police it results that so far, no groups of țigani coming from Transnistria have been spotted.'¹⁹⁴

The groups of 'nomads' may well have been returning Romani deportees, unable to claim back their homes and livelihoods, compounded by the effects of war reparations and the drought. The Party took efforts to solve the poverty issue by enfranchising the poor with land. Although the 1945 land reform aimed to find resolution to poverty in the context of an overwhelmingly agrarian society, the conditions of mass land enfranchising neglected personal circumstances. According to Viorel Achim, 'the Roma had received precisely 2.13 percent of the total redistribution from the land reform, and the lands acquired by them accounted for just 3.19 percent of the total. [...] almost half of the Roma population benefitted from the land reform, which was more than any other ethnic group.'¹⁹⁵ Whilst this may be true in the abstract, and it includes formerly deported Roma who were given building plots in the villages of their choice, it obscures, for example, forced re-settlement in Târnava Mare and Mică, former counties in Transylvania. Particularly when party authorities tacitly assumed that non-agricultural workers would have no trouble launching themselves successfully into agriculture. This in addition to being forcibly estranged from family members.

Under the reform, the Party saw that lands expropriated mostly from Transylvanian Saxons were given to various 'Romanians,' Roma amongst them. Most of these were also forcibly sent to colonise the Transylvanian region, which explains the high incidence of dereliction; unkemptness; and returns to the 'communes of origin,' as State Safety reports commented on.

Transylvanian Saxons were prosperous peasants and landowners of German origin before the war. The post-1945 *Securitate* reports invariably

¹⁹⁴ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943. Report, 16 April 1945.

¹⁹⁵ Achim, "The return of Roma deportees from Transnistria," 41

termed them 'kulaks;' 'the Germans;' and 'Hitlerites,' used as a shorthand for their alleged allegiance to Nazism and the reason for expropriation. Yet not all Saxons simply left their houses and lands upon the order of expropriation. In Hunedoara region there were reports that the expropriated Saxons 'refuse to let the coloniser enter the house,' or, alternatively, 'they only allow the coloniser to live in the tool shed.'¹⁹⁶ The holdings of Slovak persons from the Bihor Region, repatriated to the Czech Republic after the war, were also expropriated.

These houses and lands were either sold to needy persons who had to pay for them in grain quotas to the state; given to former war combatants, decorated with the Michael the Brave order;¹⁹⁷ or taken over by the offices of collective farms set up in the region.¹⁹⁸ By 1951 however, reports on the state of expropriated lands and houses and their new owners were dire. According to the conclusions of several 1951 reports which documented the state of colonised households case by case, 'the Saxon landowners have managed in a large number to re-build their small holds.'¹⁹⁹ Photographs of the damage were appended, although I was not able to find the photographs in the archives. As a November 1951 report sent by the Stalin Region branch for the People's Safety to the Bucharest headquarters put it, both 'Romanian and Roma [colonisers]' either left lands and houses to go to ruin or leased them back to their expropriated owners. Furthermore, according to the same report, non-Romani colonisers discriminated against Romani colonisers. Yet the report, in telling of this, added its own piece of racialising trope:

the colonisers at large do not work their lands and make comments such as 'the Roma' have turned gentlemen [by] exploiting the Saxons' labour, when in reality [the Roma] live in dire poverty due to the fact they don't work.

¹⁹⁶ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951, 32-34.

¹⁹⁷ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951, 9.

¹⁹⁸ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951, 30.

¹⁹⁹ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1945, 18.

For comparison, Celia Donert has shown that in the case of the Czechoslovak republic, Romani settlers were similarly deplored as workshy. In 1946, a Czech borderland town reported that people detested the 'bad work ethic of the Slovaks and [mostly Slovak] gypsies,' who had moved to the Czech regions to colonise land 'previously inhabited by the Germans who were stripped of their citizenship and property rights in 1945.'²⁰⁰ Romani colonisers in Transylvania, however, did work. According to the author of the Stalin Region report, one particular Roma, who had been given 5 acres and 'one of the best Saxon small holds,' had left everything go to ruin, and

the land is being worked by various expropriated Saxons, whilst he and his family go to the woods during agricultural labour time, where [they] pick raspberries, blackberries, and mushrooms, which they then sell.²⁰¹

In the same vein as party reports will phrase it in 1977 and 1978, early socialist party authorities simply refused to classify work undertaken on an individual's terms as socially useful labour. Particularly given that Romani colonisers, by working outside of the state-endorsed grid, did not contribute their quota of grains. One Roma man, had been given

one house, two oxen, one horse wagon, tools, and five acres of land. [He] sold the oxen, and currently he deals in the selling of cattle, neglecting to work the land properly, so that out of this year's harvest he hasn't even been able to obtain the quota owed to the State.²⁰²

As a similar report on the Arad rayon explained in November 1951,

²⁰⁰ Donert, *The rights of Roma*, 36-38.

²⁰¹ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1945, 27-29.

²⁰² CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1945, 39.

the Germans [sic] who came back from the Soviet Union do not want to look after their former homes because they say they're not theirs anymore as they were expropriated, whereas the colonisers likewise claim they cannot undertake repairs because no-one told them they were owner occupiers now.²⁰³

A report from Mureş, however, shed some light on the reasons 'Roma colonisers' appeared to have treated the homes and lands they had been given by the State in 1945 with much-reported neglect. 'A high percentage of colonisers lack work animals and tools, a situation particularly prevalent among Roma colonisers.'²⁰⁴ Which explained, according to the report, why the 'Saxon kulaks' were working their former lands: 'With the money they earned from state agricultural cooperatives, the Romanian railways etc, they bought cattle with which they're working the lands leased from the colonisers.'

Furthermore, as the Sibiu region report made clear, both 'Roma as well as some other colonisers [are used to] engaging in other types of earning a living, easier ones.' This, allegedly, found them unprepared for agricultural labour. 'And so, they leased the lands back to the Saxons,' further diagnosed the report.²⁰⁵ There was the additional human aspect of missing one's family, which explained the phenomenon of both Romani and non-Romani colonisers' leaving the colonies to return to 'their places of origin.' As the report elaborated:

Another aspect peculiar to the colonisers is the fact they do not view their having obtained land in the colony as permanent. They tend to return to their native places, hoping to buy houses and land with the income obtained as colonisers. [...] Those who have not joined

²⁰³ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951. Report from the Arad Region State Safety police to the Bucharest headquarters. 14 November 1951, 51.

²⁰⁴ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951, 15 November 1951, 57.

²⁰⁵ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951, 14 November, 75.

collective farms are saying that if they wish to become colonisers they will do so in their native communes, together with their families and friends, and in no way in foreign places alongside the Saxons.

On top of the horse-thieving and work-shy tropes, state representatives also invoked the age-old trope of disease-bearing. For example, a report from the Cluj Direction for State Safety wrote to the Bucharest headquarters on 19 May 1950 to ask advice on what to do with the “caravans” of Roma/țigani/ who have settled in the Vaida commune on lands where the commune pigs graze’ and subsequently infected the animals with swine flu. The report claimed that the Roma ‘either bought an infected pig or [already] had it with them,’ ate it, then left carcass remnants behind, which were grazed on by other pigs. And so, the disease was said to have spread to ‘great pig losses:’

There are many more similar Roma caravans in Cluj County, who deal in nothing other than thieving throughout the communes they pass, and they mostly feed themselves with such diseased or dead animals, which gives rise to various diseases they then spread by their travelling through commune after commune and [thus] cause great prejudices to the village peasants.

The authors of the report asked that ‘these Roma caravans be forbidden from travelling from one site to another, and for a solution to these problems to be found, because it is causing unfavourable moods and prejudices as we have already explained.’²⁰⁶ Not only were Roma cast as

²⁰⁶ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 226_1949, 19 May 1949, 9. The language used to describe Romani actions perceived as prejudicial to the peasants bears a striking resemblance to the language of French police reports in the immediate postwar period: ‘[The nomad is accused of having] committed acts of looting in the region of Volvic to the detriment of the peasants.’ And ‘village residents had complained about “fights breaking out among these tribes, with no respect for order, hygiene, modesty, and dignity”.’ See Lise Foisneau, ‘Mass Arrests and Persecution of “Nomads” in France, 1944-1946: Post-liberation purges or evidence of anti-“Gypsyism”?’ in *The Legacies of the Romani*

intruders on the world of the peasants, but the association of Romani bodies and disease was given as explanation by a 1948 report on the colonisation of Târnava Mare County following the expropriation of Saxons: 'In many communes it has been noted that no full rapprochement between the peasants and the Roma has occurred yet. This is due to the following reasons: the youth refuse to mingle with the Roma because [the latter] have parasites.'²⁰⁷

Yet as we have seen above, lice infestation was a postwar village-wide poverty problem. Not only was there a legacy tying Romani persons to an inferior status in Romanian society, but the possibility that they might not become socialist—and thus Romanian—was present. The only hopeful aspect of this position was the brief few months when party officials might have thought of Romani citizens as a cohabiting nationality.²⁰⁸

Yet post-deportations Romania was not only altered by war destruction, but also by the forcible removal of Romani workshops to the margins of towns and villages, with the threat of deportations used as leverage. For example, on 13 March 1943 the Buzău militia had written to the Council of Ministers of the Military Government notifying them that the 'țigani blacksmiths' whose workshops 'fronted the central streets' in Mizil had not relocated away from the town centre as they had forcibly 'agreed' the year before. The county prefect was asking for approval that 'the țigani who haven't as yet moved their workshops be sent to Transnistria.' He was justifying the request 'not only because they are a permanent hothouse of infections right in the middle of town, but also because whoever visits the town might be left with the impression this is a țigan town, and not a Romanian one.'²⁰⁹ The Council vice secretary approved plans for the Mizil

Genocide in Europe since 1945, eds Celia Donert and Eve Rosenhaft (London: Routledge, 2021), 30.

²⁰⁷ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, File 23. Mood of the population report, 31 March 1948.

²⁰⁸ Remember above when the General Directorate for State Safety encouraged the Romani union to ask for statistics and particulars of Romani citizens in keeping with the Law for Cohabiting Nationalities.

²⁰⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 88/1943, 258.

blacksmiths to be moved 'by force,' not to Transnistria, but to 'the place indicated by the [Mizil] townhall.'²¹⁰

For a comparison on how Jewish deportees returning home were treated, including by some 'of our activists' as a Central Committee report for the Suceava region put it on 29 May 1946, here is an extract from the report:

Antisemitism is spreading in all directions. The Romanian population is more prone to antisemitism today than before the war. Daily, there are Jews returning from the USSR via Siret. In addition to the propaganda conducted by the fascist reactionary elements, there is also the act that some of those who have recently returned become rich very quickly by doing business. More, some Jews answer back 'this is no longer the time of Antonescu' and under the shield of democracy they exploit. Some of our activists are themselves unjust by classing all traders as speculators.²¹¹

Rather than engaging with the consequences of the deportations and antisemitism, as Paul Hanebrink has detailed at length,²¹² a superior's hand wrote a 'to do list' at the end of the report. Bullet point 14 stated: 'Vigilance, cleansing (*epurație*), control [illegible].'²¹³

This was indeed 'no longer the time of Antonescu,' and yet in October 1948 in the commune of Târgușor-Bihor, the former lease holder of the local mill, now expropriated, saw it as a regular occurrence to 'influence' the gendarmes to 'force the Roma in the commune to move to a different part of the commune, which means they have to tear down the homes they have and re-build them in the assigned plot of land.' The lease holder 'had to move back into his personal home after the mill was nationalised. His

²¹⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 88/1943, 257.

²¹¹ ANIC, Fond Comitetul Central (henceforth CC) al Partidului Comunist Român (henceforth PCR), File 112/1946, 7.

²¹² See Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe*.

²¹³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, File 112, 9.

house in the commune abuts the dwellings of the Roma, whom he can't stand.' Unsurprisingly, 'the Roma are in a very agitated state of mind,' as the report put it. Rather than enquiring into the forceful removal of villagers from one end to another, the superior who read the report advised: 'Conduct agitation amongst the Roma in Târgușor-Bihor.'²¹⁴ Why Romani villagers should be expected to accept explanations for the 'need' to rebuild their houses at the request of another villager who should have fallen out of favour with the workers' party following expropriations, was not explained.

Not all relations between Romanian peasants and Romani persons were fraught, however, particularly when formerly deported Roma returned from Transnistria to 'settle in villages they had once frequented and where they were known by the peasants.'²¹⁵ Furthermore, as Achim states, oral histories conducted with Romani returning deportees attest to the help Romanian peasants who 'pitied [them]' gave the returning families seeking to settle down.²¹⁶

Yet outside villages where Roma returnees had already developed relations with peasants, the circumstances of their return were less encouraging. Neither did party officials have to put into words what seemed to be common knowledge. On 5 October 1951, the Secretariat of the State Safety Direction for the Constanța region sent a report to Bucharest. According to it, 'in the last months several groups of nomadic Roma have turned up, who by their behaviour (begging) leave an unacceptable political impression, taking into account what Constanța city represents to foreigners.'²¹⁷ These Roma were said to target 'principally foreign elements

²¹⁴ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, File 87/1943. Telegram on the mood of the Roma in Târgușor-Bihor commune, 13 October 1948, 366.

²¹⁵ Achim, "The return of Roma deportees from Transnistria," 42.

²¹⁶ Achim, "The return of Roma deportees from Transnistria," 43.

²¹⁷ Constanța had a history of forcibly removing Romani persons, stretching back to the annexation of Dobrogea to the Romanian principalities in 1878. See Petcuț's study *Rromii*. As he states on p. 191, 'on 10 January 1891, the Constanta townhall apprised the Ministry of the Interior of its intention to have several Romani families, who had built "several huts on the communal lands during the ottoman government," removed from the town centre.' And 'the Ministry's authorisation was required for "a population

on various ships from capitalist countries, comrade Soviet soldiers, [...] and town exits.' Additionally, it mentioned that the 'question' had already been signalled to the Constanța militia, the latter having been asked to 'remove these Roma groups from the city's catchment area, because they have also penetrated the border area.' The Constanța Militia, however, allegedly did not have permission from the Militia General Direction to do so, and now it was requested that Vice Minister of the Interior Jianu give them permission personally.²¹⁸ On 12 October 1951 the vice minister was sent the report.

In 1952, various persons classified according to 'categories of offence' were forcibly removed from Constanța, the 'Palazu neighbourhood,' and Mangalia, another port city, and relocated to Bicz. The dislocations were written off as actions needed to secure the borders of the new republic, which meant 'evacuating' citizens conceptualised as possible threats to the party. Party clerks compiled lists with numbered entries, keeping track of displaced citizens. There were various categories of such offensive citizens, from 'citizens who belong to imperialist states;' to people with a 'political record;' to 'ex legionary, cell leader, who would sing long live the king in the streets when inebriated;' 'kulak;' '[he] once beat up some Soviet soldiers;' 'gambles too much;' to any 'family member of a traitor to the motherland [or] those who defected abroad after 1 January 1947' and 'thieves, pimps, pickpockets' and those 'suspicious people who have a very good life but no occupation.'²¹⁹

Nearly all entries on forcibly displaced citizens detailed the 'reason for displacement.' For example, in the case of displacements from Constanța to Bicz, under 'Category III (offenders jailed for theft [and] released within the past three years, [and so] suspicious,' such entries read: '[woman] jailed for 18 months for theft;' 'former pimp, suspicious, was last jailed for gambling in 195[0 or 2];' 'repeat offender, last tried in

recalcitrant towards progress and norms of hygiene and public sanitation".' The translations from Romanian are mine.

²¹⁸ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 226_1949, 5 October 1951, 10.

²¹⁹ CNSAS, Fond Documentar (henceforth FD) 0002897, Vol. 5. Displaced [persons] from Mangalia, Constanța, and sent to Bicz. Entries for 1951-1952.

1948 for attempting to cross the border, suspicious.’ Entries 29-52 simply state, row after row, as the reason for displacement: ‘Recidivist Roma’ (*rom recidivist*).²²⁰ These were families ‘from the Palazu neighbourhood’ on the margins of Constanța. Although I cannot unequivocally link these evacuees with the ‘begging nomadic Roma’ in the 5 October 1951 report, in all likelihood the Constanța Militia were given permission to ‘resettle’ the Roma they had complained about in 1951. Furthermore, what is unsettling in the latter entries is that ‘recidivist Roma’ was used as a shorthand for ‘categories of citizens threatening the safety of the state.’ Sure enough, the list compilers knew these were (most likely) the Roma who had been reported as a safety hazard for the new republic and its reputation abroad. This a theme which will resurface in the 1980s, as we shall see in chapter two. More troublingly, however, is the use of the formal term, Roma—*rom* in Romanian—instead of ‘țigan,’ meant to lend legal credibility to the entries. Yet in so doing, the entries sanctified the conflation of Romani ethnicity and criminal behaviour.

Not every official, however, blamed—or at least not fully—Romani citizens for anti-socialist behaviour. The colonel in charge of the Sibiu Security Police replied on 29 August 1951 to a 15 March request from the head of the General Direction for the State Safety. The latter had wished to know whether ‘class enemies’ were to blame for the Romani colonisers in Sibiu who had sold the land and cattle they had been given in 1945. The Sibiu 3 page-answer ended with the following:

[The situation] cannot be blamed on class enemies, but on the lack of house-management skills and cultural backwardness of the colonisers, who prefer not to work but rather hustle which also allows them to put on boss airs, when in actuality it enslaves them.

²²⁰ Entries 29-52 are on pp. 180-182.

He advised that 'the question of these elements be studied by the competent party authorities,' and that the Romani colonisers be punished and expressly forbidden from leasing their lands and damaging their tools and dwellings. Above all, however, he recommended the introduction of '*cultural education amongst these elements who have been hitherto neglected*' (my emphasis).²²¹

This kind of 'cultural enlightenment' of Romani Romanians had been earmarked to fall under the remit of the Romani Union in 1948, as we have seen above. When the Central Committee (CC) decided to dissolve the Romani Union in 1949 on various charges of embezzlement and bourgeois self-interest, they made the 'țigan question' exclusively the Party's project. In so doing they invited the state into the lives of Romani persons, thus mixing the socialist facet of the 'question' with the specifically Romanian one, although the latter was never problematised.

The 1949 report produced by/for the Central Committee (CC) opened by presenting the Soviet approach to the 'țigani question in the USSR.' The author(s) claimed there was 'an identical parallel to the history and social development of țigani in our country.' They described the materials from the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, Moscow, 1934, vol. 60 at some length for four pages, after which they give a total number of 'țigani' in Romania according to the 25 January 1948 Census and a breakdown of 'landed țigani' per county. They admitted 'a sustained enquiry into the requests of țigani had not been possible until now' and blamed the Romani representatives of the dissolved Union for failing to provide 'the aspects we were interested in: numbers, professional layers, etc.' Additionally, the dissolution was further blamed on 'these representatives of the țigan population who aimed to replace the old organisation not with workers, but with elements who would have sought to take advantage of the freedoms afforded to the cohabiting nationalities for personal gain.'

²²¹ CNSAS, Fond DGSS 145_1951. Report regarding the Roma who have alienated their goods following the land reform, 122.

The author(s) also claimed the same representatives informed the CC policy makers of the presence of 'antițiganism' in Romania, which, combined with 'the persecutions they suffered under the Antonescu regime' meant 'the țigani in general are not in favour of țigan organisations.' This was in direct contradiction to what the Romani Inspector for Transylvania and Banat had written in his petition in May 1949. According to him, poor and/or illiterate Romani citizens were wary of addressing the Party directly because they were too self-conscious of their limited or non-existent literacy skills, which meant they greatly needed an educated Romani intermediary.

The CC study then classified the Romani population into 'stabilised țigani' (*țigani stabilizați*), such as 'working peasants (day labourers), factory workers, small artisans and music players' with—crucially—a fixed home, and 'nomadic țigani.' The latter were split into two groups: those 'who wander the villages and communes where they stop for 2-3 days at a time and live in tents' and those who 'spend a week in a certain place where they engage in some form of labour (manufacture of wooden items).'²²² Next, they applied the class treatment to the Romani 'nomads and seminomads,' thus inventing the 'țigan class enemy:' the 'bulibașă' or 'vătaf,' that is Romani 'nomadic' leaders.

Restructuring the Romani population into 'țigan exploiters' and 'exploited țigani' offered an obvious solution to an obvious problem. 'The țigan question is above all a social question,' concluded the study 'based on the Soviet example' and 'from the few aspects we know.' The 'assimilated țigani,' that is 'those who are in employment, who speak the language of the population among which they live, and who send their children to school' were not 'so much of a concern' except for 'an uplifting in their cultural level (literacy, hygiene, and social services campaigns).'

The 'main problem,' and these lines were underlined, were 'the nomadic, tent-dwelling, seminomadic țigani' and their 'freeing from the

²²² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 93/1949. Study, 4.

influence of the *bulibașă*, of the *vătaf* as per the Soviet model.' What is most interesting, and of central historical importance, is that the Department for the Issues of Cohabiting Nationalities approached the 'țigan question' in its trimestral workplan for 1949-1950. As the report put it, among its chief tasks were 'the checking of the January 1948 census data regarding the declared mother tongue of some cohabiting nationalities' and 'the integration in the workforce of cohabiting nationalities, particularly those excluded during the racial persecution.'²²³ At the same time, however, the authors of the report acknowledged they had not had the chance to do much fieldwork concerning the 'the life of the țigan population.' Instead, 'our activity (*munca*) in this regard was limited to coming into contact with some representatives who used to be part of the Roma Union in Romania.'²²⁴ They carried on: 'The materials gathered have brought to light the social character of the problem and the need to uplift the țigan population socially by integrating them into the workforce.' And they drew on the example of Romani colonisers sent to Transylvania to argue for the possibility of successful 'integration.'

The report authors also made two crucial points for the history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship. First, 'The țigan nomad population, however, are making things difficult. Soviet materials and fieldwork can be a starting point for proceeding with this question.'²²⁵ Second, they also stated that the Department had been busy ascertaining 'the availability of means and local staff' with a view 'towards translating into practice the principle of equality of rights in the spirit of class struggle.'²²⁶ What happened during talks with former Romani Union members? Did the latter decide that social relief was more pressing than ethnic recognition, and petitioned for it? As Brigid O'Keeffe has shown for

²²³ ANIC, Fond Consiliul de Ministri, Cabinetul lui Petre Costache, File 12/1949. *Compte-rendu* on the work of the Department for the Issues of Cohabiting Nationalities, 3.

²²⁴ ANIC, Fond Consiliul de Ministri, Cabinetul lui Petre Costache, File 12/1949. *Compte-rendu*, 6-7.

²²⁵ ANIC, *Compte-rendu*, 6-7.

²²⁶ ANIC, *Compte-rendu*, 3

the case of Soviet Roma, in 1924 'Romani activists demanded the socialist transformation promised to Gypsies as an oppressed nationality and hyped an essentialist vision of Gypsies as exceedingly "backward" to bolster their plea.'²²⁷ Most likely, Romani Union former leaders in postwar Romania did too.

Moreover, from the report it is clear that neither the means nor local staff with adequate knowledge on how to engage with the effects of 'racial persecution' were found. Furthermore, party officials' racialising attitudes towards Roma in general were compounded by their interactions with the leaders of the former Romani Union, which they set within the frame of the class struggle. This led to a conceptualisation—instrumental or not—of Romani leaders as exploiters, the 'settled' equivalent of the *bulibașă* or *vătaf*, as it were.

Soviet-style recommendations, filled with the optimism of the scientific belief in the reform of the soul via the refashioning of the body and living conditions, were made. Privileged land reforms; employed work; the financing of țigan collective farms; convincing artisan țigani to join cooperatives; and free loans given for agricultural organising and the refurbishing and building of dwellings were all listed as part of the Leninist approach which had allegedly solved the 'țigan question' in Soviet Russia.²²⁸

Yet the reports never mentioned how these measures were supposed to be funded given the postwar austerity measures. As Alex Grama argues, the austerity measures were 'a domestic strategy to finance industry by indirect means,' which Romania had to impose not necessarily as a socialist state. Postwar socialist Romania was 'constrained by both having to develop within the borders of the nation state and the geopolitical limitations of the Cold War.' Thus, the redirecting of funds heavily towards industrialisation

²²⁷ Brigid O'Keeffe, "The Racialisation of Soviet Gypsies: Roma, Nationality Politics, and Socialist Transformation in Stalin's Soviet Union," *Ideologies of Race. Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, ed. David Rainbow (London and Chicago, 2019), 140.

²²⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 93/1949. 'Study'; 2.

'needs to be read within the context of postwar development of underdeveloped states in mid-twentieth century.'²²⁹

As Artemy Kalinovsky has shown for postwar Tajikistan, these were not Romani specific measures. Resettlement; labour welfare; the giving of land plots, construction materials, and loans to families resettled for work from the mountains to lowland farms were part of Soviet incentives for the re-structuring of society in general.²³⁰ Yet, the lifestyles of 'nomadic and seminomadic țigani' lent themselves so tightly to the socialist engineering programme. As such, the optimism leaking from the 1949 report advising the application of Soviet style 'stabilisation' measures to a population with all the anticipated potential to behave in a socialist manner is palpable.

.....

In late state socialism, housing—with the implied fixed domicile and attachment to a community—as a way to reform Roma, was given top priority. Imagine the furore caused in July 1972,²³¹ two decades after the proposed implementation of 'stabilisation' measures, by the discovery that there still existed Căldărari țigani who 'continue[d] to lead a life almost like in the past.'²³²

This troubling piece of information had been brought to the attention of the party by 'several țigani, formerly Căldărari, [...] all primary-school or high-school educated, either in employment or retired,' who apparently had

²²⁹ Alex Grama, Review of *Ferestre spre Furnalul Rosu. Urbanism si Cotidian in Hunedoara si Calan (1945-1968)*, by Mara Marginean, available at <https://revistavatra.org/tag/adrian-grama/>, (retrieved 27 May 2019).

²³⁰ Kalinovsky, "Tractors," 563-592.

²³¹ The analysis jumps from 1949/early 1950s to 1972 because there seems to be a gap in the national archives covering Party plans towards the Roma for the decades 1950s-1969. Perhaps regional archives hold information which may shed welcome light on this period. However, in the summer of 2019 I had a discussion with a former militia officer and a Romani man from Sintești village, in Ilfov County, near Bucharest. The village was introduced to me as 'a țigan village.' The Romani man said his father had 'been given land to build a house by the Party' in the early 1960s. He refused to grant me a formal interview, and he did not follow up on my request to meet again. Therefore, I decided not to use the information I acquired whilst in Sintești.

²³² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorica, File 6/1972. The Bureau for Letters and Hearings, 36.

sent a letter to the CC. Not only were Căldărari Roma charged with embezzling the state by buying smuggled tin for their crafts, but they were also suspected of resorting to theft, begging etc,' because, it was reported, 'selling tin buckets, which rather means conning the customers,' could not have been enough to ensure their subsistence:

Even amongst those with stable domiciles, very few are in [state] work, and [many] continue to practice their traditional crafts. Many of these procure [the needed] tin and brass in dishonest ways: brass is being smuggled out of factories by certain employees who then sell it to [the Căldărari], thus prejudicing the state.²³³

1972 was also the year when wastage and embezzlement, that is money that was being lost, was repeatedly deplored in reports on the status of the work plans. An April 1972 report regarding efforts made by the party organs and organisations to 'prevent and fight the trespassing of laws and of socialist ethics and morals' detailed various cases of embezzlement and illegal activities engaged in by both party activists and the population at large. As the author(s) put it, measures taken by party organs against the guilty parties, such as 'party membership sanctions, loss of jobs, and even criminal charges' were met with 'the full approval of workers, who have voiced their contentment with the steadiness with which our party and state promote the principles of socialist morals and ethics [and] the intransigence [they show] towards anything that harms the general interests of our society.'²³⁴

The report concluded with the exhortation that party organisations make a concerted and enhanced effort to 'determine the causes which lead to a dereliction of the principals of socialist ethics and morals' and to 'support more fully' policing organs in their quest to uncover and punish 'all

²³³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 6/1972. Letter, 36.

²³⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 16/1972. Report, 11 April 1972, 6.

those who disregard the common wealth [and] social cohabitation norms.²³⁵

Because these Căldărari citizens' living conditions were seen not as poor life choices but as a rejection of the entire ethos of socialist human behaviour and co-habitation, further assessment of the situation was requested. A study followed in 1977, titled 'Study regarding the socio-economic situation of the țigani population in our country,' followed by another which built on its conclusion. A copy, with hand-written annotations and proposals to improve its conclusions, as well as a synthesis, were presented to the *Securitate* personnel in 1978. The author of the synthesis states that the 1977 study was requested by 'Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu,' and was compiled by the joint efforts of representatives from The National Commission for Demography; The Ministry of Education and Schooling; The Ministry of the Interior; The Ministry of Labour; The Ministry of Health; The General Attorney's Office and the Committee for the Problems of Popular Councils.²³⁶

The study concluded that the problem were certain Romani persons who refused sedentary housing in the conventional way—that is, although they had brick and mortar houses, they still possessed tents; carriages, and horses, which indicated an itinerant lifestyle. Photographs were appended. They depicted said brick houses, whilst tents stood in the yards. Inside the tents, the photographs showed Romani persons living alongside horses and cooking on open fires. In another photograph, a new-born swaddled in cloths lay on the floor. Another photograph still depicted some visibly uncomfortable Romani women with children. Some of the women are covering their faces with their hands. Next to them lie piles of duvets and linen, a typical peasant practice, and the interior has a determined Romanian-peasant aesthetic. The handwriting on the photograph titled the women 'house-dwelling țigani.'

²³⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, Fiel 16/1972. Report, 11 April 1972, 6.

²³⁶ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 47.

Perhaps it was the women's clothing, with long flowery skirts and pleated long hair. In any event, no explanation was given for why these women were included in the pictures. In all likelihood, however, the photographer must have read the layered flowery skirts, worn by Căldărari women, as a sign of adherence to Romani traditional values, and thus a sign of backwardness.

The presence of tents where humans shared their living space with animals and families was deplored. Moreover, '5-10 members of both sexes' were found to be living in a shared room in tents as well as mud huts. Not only was promiscuity encouraged by such sleeping arrangements, reported the author(s) of the report, but 'to live almost like in the past' in 1972 appeared unfathomable in its disregard for the basic commandments of the party's grand plans. Living and sleeping arrangements had been one of the central aspects of the new order discussed at length by state architects, with the model two-bedroomed, 24 square-metre flat eventually put forward as the 'epitome of modern living.'²³⁷

The idea of housing was a very serious matter for the socialist programme, even if it was not always realized practically as it was at the level of ideas. For context, according to the 1966 Census, the average floor area of a dwelling room per family member in Socialist Romania was 7.9 square metres—8.3 square metres in urban areas and 7.6 square metres in rural areas.²³⁸ By 1977, the minimum floor area required of a room for it to be classed as a dwelling space was 4 square metres, with a height of at least 1.80 metres for most of its area. It also had to have natural light either directly via windows or external doors, or indirectly via corridors,

²³⁷ The first mention of the 'best suited to the new economic order' flats was made in 1956 in the magazine *Arhitectura RPR*. See Mara Marginean, *Ferestre spre Furnalul Rosu. Urbanism si Cotidian in Hunedoara si Călan (1945-1968)* [Windows overlooking the Red Furnace. Urbanism and Everydayness in Hunedoara and Călan (1945-1968)] (Iasi, 2015), 136.

²³⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 30/1966. Communiqué regarding the preliminary results of the 15 March 1966 population and dwellings Census, 8.

covered terraces etc.²³⁹ In real terms, of course, people still squatted, lived in cellars and attics, as well as in flats where mould made tenants ill and perhaps even led to death.²⁴⁰

Yet the discourse and the socialist ideal of affordable and healthy housing was touted as one of socialist Romania's greatest achievements. In magazines, it was turned into one of the ultimate pedagogical tools to teach about the evils of capitalism. For example, a 1973 article titled 'The slums of misery' in *Almanah Femeia* (The Woman Almanac) shows a photograph of an unidentified slum. Next to it, the author describes the slums in apparently-idyllic western cities as 'areas of misery, inhabited by thousands and thousands of people, who live in houses with leprous walls, without sewerage, usually without electricity, where rubbish is seldom collected and where the notion of "the human condition" is almost unknown...'²⁴¹ The high point of the article is that 'even in the U.S.A, the country which displays the highest prosperity,' 'poverty and misery' could still be found.

In the 1988 issue of the same almanac, an article titled 'Chances of finding a dwelling...' describes the affordable-housing crisis in Canada by focusing on young single mothers and the difficulties they had in finding affordable housing. Because private owners continuously raised rents, the article continues, people at large ended up living in shelters and going to soup kitchens. In conclusion, readers were told, because 'Canada has no affordable housing schemes, ordinary people fall prey to profiteers and the rich.'²⁴²

Certainly, this kind of Cold War rhetoric was employed to strengthen an argument in favour of the Romanian socialist state. And to be sure, non-flat living was not so unusual, even in the 1970s. For example, in

²³⁹ Direcția de Statistică, *Recensământul Populației și al Locuințelor din 5 Ianuarie 1977. Vol. III. Cladiri, Locuinte, Gospodarii* [The Census of Population and Dwellings dated 5 January 1977. Buildings, Dwellings, Households] (Bucharest, 1981).

²⁴⁰ See Chapter 2 on living conditions.

²⁴¹ *Almanah Femeia*, 1973 issue, 118.

²⁴² *Almanah Femeia*, 1988 issue, 35.

Hunedoara, the shacks which used to house mainly steel plant workers were only demolished in the mid-1970s, whilst in 1966 there were 17 000 persons still dwelling in these shacks for very low rents.²⁴³ The Căldărari Roma, however, were always judged against ideal socialist living conditions, against central heating, running water, sewerage and rubbish collections in state-built blocks of flats. Their perceived blatant disregard for sanitary norms was classified as particularly 'backward.' As Romanian workers said in 1967 regarding the new rent setting policy, 'no special taxes should be set for the floor areas of bathrooms because cleanliness must not be seen as a manifestation of luxury but as a mark of civilisation.'²⁴⁴ The point of the 1978 study, therefore, with its comment on the '[Romani] aesthetic matching their lifestyle' brought home a worrisome truth. It signalled a deviation from, resistance to, and failure of, the socialist programme—perhaps even of all three. The author(s) of the 1977 study asserts confidently that:

[...] censusing [the țigan population] with a view towards monitoring principally children's schooling rates, legalising common marriages between men and women, national service fulfilment, and adherence to hygiene regulations have led to changes in the lifestyles of a segment of the țigan population, in their attitudes to work and social cohabitation norms.²⁴⁵

At the same time, however, the authors also bemoaned the sloppiness of official past approaches to 'the țigan question.' This came following the teleconference on 4 November 1977 in which Ceaușescu took a hard line against

the faulty ways in which things were dealt with in this respect, and set guidance for the erasure of nomadism, the prohibition of travelling

²⁴³ Grama, "Review."

²⁴⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 53/1967. Brief regarding the territorial systematisation, dwellings and the new rent setting, 9.

²⁴⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 23/1977, 2 (back).

within the country without a permit and the identification and repatriation to the locality of domicile of all țigani who settled in localities other than those they were allowed.²⁴⁶

The study then proceeds to classify Roma into stable, seminomadic and nomadic categories, and proposes further measures to be taken 'regarding the settling down (*stabilirea*) of țigani in localities and their inclusion in productive activities.' Their 'instability,' as the study puts it, had been, and continued to be, upheld by their free travelling around the country. Yet the absence of a fixed domicile, which always implied a dwelling one treated as one's home, was not merely an aesthetic sore on the socialist fabric. Living as a traveller meant not knowing attachment to a permanent home—most likely a flat—which came with its own neighbours and a sense of community, which in turn fostered good socialist behaviour, rendering the individual part of a collective running on 'socialist ethics and morals.' Not to mention that 'By being unstable, by disregarding their duties, the țigan population creates hardships in the counting and registration of the population and its marital and national service status.'²⁴⁷ The year 1977 was one where President Ceaușescu set out to financially reform the country. As Alex Grama shows, the 1977 pension reform targeted mild disability retirees, with a view towards increasing the active workforce, against a background of 'the domestic impact of the emerging global crisis in socialist Romania.' In September, just two months before the November teleconference, the president of the republic was addressing party officials about the need for disability pensions reform.²⁴⁸

The question of the new aesthetic that should induce a certain kind of community life, befitting the grand plans of social engineering, was not

²⁴⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 6.

²⁴⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study regarding the socio-economic situation of the țigani population in our country, 4.

²⁴⁸ Adrian Grama, 'Labor's Risks: Work accidents, the Industrial Wage Relation, and Social Insurance in Socialist Romania,' in *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945-1989. Contributions to a History of Work*, ed. Marsha Siefert (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2020), 246.

merely a question of perceived messiness and unruliness offending the senses, but a concern cutting straight to the heart of socialism. The socialist aesthetic meant that citizens lived and behaved socialist, one reinforcing the other until its apotheosis: socialist identity. Bad aesthetic, therefore, was akin to a failure of socialism.

It was advice taken to heart after two decades of socialist urban planning and consideration. For example, between 1945-1968, in industrial Hunedoara and Călan, architects conducted social inquiries into the level of income, urbanisation, and social culture of the plants' workers and their families. They concluded that workers and their families be 'spread out over blocks of flats in order to facilitate the integration and grafting of the newcomers onto older urban communities and to prevent the perpetuating of [...] marginal lifestyles.'²⁴⁹

If 'industrialisation was to beget a new aesthetic,' as Romanian architects 'had unanimously agreed,'²⁵⁰ then the sight of humans and animals sharing tents and beds was irrefutable proof that these Roma had circumvented the new order. Space aesthetics were both the cause and the effect of the great changes anticipated and expected to have taken root within citizens, or to have at least created hospitable ground for socialist growth. Even among those Roma who had been touched by the general socialist housing programme and had been allocated state-owned dwellings or had received help from the state to build homes, some reportedly did 'not look after the dwellings, causing severe damage.' They 'cook[ed] on open fires [inside the flats] and use[d] their dwellings to house animals.'²⁵¹ And perhaps not coincidentally, the Woman Almanac 1975 issue spent two pages teaching and deploring the 'dangers of living in improper conditions, [with] open fires, non-electric light, and lack of hygiene.'²⁵²

Dwellings in 'a poor state of hygiene' were a phenomenon commented upon as part of a worrisome population movement trend, which

²⁴⁹ Cited in Marginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul rosu*, 244.

²⁵⁰ Cited in Marginean, *Ferestre*, 143.

²⁵¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, p. 3.

²⁵² Almanah Femeia, 1975.

had 'resulted in the creation of new types of urban living, such as "dormitory localities"' by 1976.²⁵³ Experts worried that these arrangements caused behaviours which opposed 'socialist ethics and morals.' For example, various state-built flats had been illegally allocated by factories to their workers. 'Under the façade of "work accommodation" and "guest rooms" the flats were given to people who were not entitled to them,' said a report compiled after inspections were carried out.²⁵⁴ Given that some of the workers, living within a 40-kilometre area of the factory, could have commuted daily instead of 'selfishly occupying undeserved accommodation,' this was particularly unethical and immoral. Second, to compound an already illicit situation, the flats were found to have 'severe wear and tear and are in a poor state of hygiene and cleanliness precisely because those who inhabit them do not use them as their permanent homes and thus are not motivated to look after them.'²⁵⁵

Whilst in the 1977 study Căldărari Roma were singled out as a problem, in the 1978 study other Romani citizens were found lacking. Those keeping animals in state-owned flats and the 'țigani employed at various factories, who not only leave their jobs early but also take with them their protective wear and tools,'²⁵⁶ were labelled 'relapsed elements.' Various party officials who read the 1977 study added their own comments, thus turning a specifically 'nomadic and seminomadic question' into a broader Romani question. For example, the copy for the eyes of *Securitate* officers has a slightly more sombre extra paragraph inserted, which read:

Although limited, compared with the current possibilities, results prove that wherever sustained efforts have been undertaken among

²⁵³ ANIC, Fond Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice (henceforth ASSP), Secția Sociologie, File 23/1976. The commute as phenomenon, 3.

²⁵⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 6/1973. Note on the misallocation and misuse of flats, 2.

²⁵⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 6/1973. Note, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 2.

this category of population, a portion have given up their parasitic lifestyle, slowly engaging in activities useful to society.²⁵⁷

By the time the *Securitate* copy was summarised by a reader for other eyes in 1977, the Soviet-inspired 1949 policies were re-cast as failures:

The material suggests that because of țigani's backward life outlook, the measures under proposal have not been successful, [and] so customs and traditions which amount to a defying of the rules of social cohabitation are perpetuated from one generation to another.²⁵⁸

And by September 1978, the Judiciary Direction within the General Inspectorate of Militia, which set out to legally codify Ceaușescu's requests in November 1977, had to say this about Romani citizens:

Contempt for work and for the norms for social cohabitation, ignorance of, and dereliction from, the political requirements of our party and state for the multilateral development of the socialist society, to which the țigani contribute with absolutely nothing, are a ball chain and a continuous source of hassle for party and administrative organs.²⁵⁹

Whereas in 1972 what drew socialist alarm bells were 'țigani who still live a life almost like in the past,' that is the 'nomadic and seminomadic' ones, by 1978 all Romani citizens were deemed problematic in one way or another and treated as a corporate body. The legal codification of the 'complex set of measures with a view towards the social integration of the țigan population' proposed by the author(s) of the 1977 study set out to remedy

²⁵⁷ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 37.

²⁵⁸ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 47.

²⁵⁹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 56.

the purported 'backward mentality' of the Roma in general. It was this that was now seen as the fundamental cause for their failure to behave—and to become—socialist.

What party rapporteurs, policy makers and policing bodies called 'backward mentality,' expert academics like sociologist and philosopher Haralambie Culea theorised in 1975 as a 'dissonance' between the Roma level of culture and the socialist one. His treatise on homogenisation, mass culture, and 'the contradictions regarding the mass acculturation of certain categories of the population' is a lengthy text on the 'professionalisation of culture.' By this Culea meant that culture was not to be a random development, but a party-led policy with the crucial, active participation of the population.

In his lengthy philosophical grappling with the mechanics of the professionalisation of culture, he wrestles with the problem of those 'groups of workers who belong to collectives' whose 'level of acculturation' was 'still precarious.' Among them, he singled out rural communities in mountain or valley villages; rural women outside socialist employment; unskilled construction labourers; workers, mostly agricultural, active in anticultural religious sects; and poorly skilled rural and urban youth with minimal cultural interests.

He further stated that the cultural enlightenment process for these groups would be 'extremely laboursome,' given their low levels of culture. In a footnote, he also mentioned the 'Sibiu țigani,' with their 'illiteracy, concubinage, extra conjugal sexual relations, illegitimate children, antisocial crimes, parasitic lifestyles, and unemployment' as the most 'virulent manifestation' of this problem.²⁶⁰ The 'Sibiu țigani' may have been among the Căldărari Roma brought to the attention of the party in 1972.

²⁶⁰ ANIC, Fond ASSP, Secția Filozofie și Logica, File 12/1975, 57. Haralambie Culea, *Omogenizare și diferențiere în procesul culturalizării de masă. Contradicții privind culturalizarea de masă a unor categorii de populație. Lucrare de plan pe 1975.* [Homogenisation and differentiation during mass cultural enlightenment. Contradictions regarding the mass enlightenment of some categories of the population. Thesis for the 1975 work plan].

Culea draws on one I. Prică's 'documentary' study titled 'The professional and socio-cultural integration of țigani,' commissioned by the Political Committee of the Council for Socialist Culture and Education, established in 1971.²⁶¹

The 1977 study laid out the groups of persons with 'different levels of acculturation' who required 'social integration and rehabilitation:'

Given that the solution to the questions of social integration and rehabilitation touch several categories of the population (minors and youths; elder persons with no careers/relatives to look after them; invalids; large families; persons who lead a parasitic lifestyle; țigani; former convicts etc.), we ask for the necessary creation of a commission for social integration and recuperation, which would coordinate the whole action plan.²⁶²

It is clear from the list that capacity for work was the privileged criterion which socialist officials used to underwrite those deemed in need of integration. Any person unable to provide for themselves and support society's productivity, due to either young age, an attributed need for vocational training, or familial pressures, was classified as requiring special attention. Furthermore, as one historian of disability put it, 'incapacity to work' was the criterion which defined disability in socialist Romania, not impairment.²⁶³

To disregard the socialist pledge requiring workers to be involved using honesty, diligence, and initiative in the development of the economy was behaviour that authorities did not look kindly upon. The line between being classified as a 'parasitic element' or a socially useful citizen lay not

²⁶¹ I have not been able to find this study. Also, although not dated, it must have been conducted between 1972-1975.

²⁶² CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 42.

²⁶³ Radu Harald Dinu, 'Medical Discourses on Dis/ability in State Socialist Romania: A Critical Genealogy,' in *Dis/ability in Media, Law and History: Intersectional, Embodied and Socially Constructed?*, eds M. Lee, F. R. Cooper and P. Reeve (London, 2022), 83.

only in being employed either by, or for, the state. It also entailed being a worker who displayed skills of self-management and a willingness to self-assess and play a part 'in the process of labour responsibility.' Not to be engaged in a 'socially useful activity,' whilst claiming the assistance of the state by way of natality allowances and child benefits, as Roma were said to do in the General Directorate of the Militia report, was unacceptable. The report marshalled statistics to support the view that such behaviour was 'parasitic:' Dolj, Prahova and Satu Mare counties were said to pay 32% of their natality allowances to 'the țigan population.' In Dolj county alone the number was as high as 70%.²⁶⁴ Even more unacceptably, the report claimed that 'out of 3 800 țigani fit for work in Bucharest, 2 500 turned down socially useful activities.'²⁶⁵

As the penultimate paragraph of the July 1972 letter claimed, 'the majority of [the țigani, formerly Căldărari] who have raised this problem have expressed the opinion that the avoidance of organised labour [and] a refusal to send children to school must be fought by even more severe means.'²⁶⁶

Means were indeed found. When Ceaușescu requested that nomadism be erased and the laws on fixed domicile enforced, he sought to erase that which made some Romani citizens' existence outside the socialist framework possible. Withdrawing state support for free-travelling Roma by prohibiting the use 'of train carriages and motor vehicles for the transportation of wagons and animals' was one strategy to curb their movements.²⁶⁷

'Repatriations to the locality of domicile' were also enforced. Between November and December 1977, 1,285 'țigani families [...] who did not have a fixed domicile and were not engaged in any socially useful activity in busy centres' were removed from 'Brașov, Timisoara, Oradea and Bucharest

²⁶⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief regarding some problems the țigani population in our country are posing, 4.

²⁶⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief, 3.

²⁶⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 6/1972. Note, 37.

²⁶⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 7.

alone.' The report does not say, however, to where these families had been sent. Physical coercion, and the restricting of their mobility by prohibiting them from using adequate transport for their wagons became violent means of persuasion where incentives had failed.

Another measure for the 'erasure of nomadism' was the annulment and withdrawal of all work permits issued to 'țigani engaged in work outside the state and cooperative units, both in the locality of domicile and the locality of residence as well as in any other locality.'²⁶⁸ According to the 1978 report, by 'work outside the state' the author(s) meant activities both of a 'profiteering nature,' such as 'the selling of old clothes, practiced by some țigani families, the so-called Telali' and 'others, such as mobile shoe polishing, helping with the lifting of heavy furniture and heavy items etc.'²⁶⁹

That there was a clear division between socially useful activities, even those involving self-employment, and the less socially useful activities, is evident from the pleasing tone with which the 1977 study reported that 'profiteering' activities were 'disappearing' whilst shoe-polishing and removals had been 'subsumed to the public sector.' Romani citizens' various occupations were thus to be rationalised, made efficient, and incorporated into the national planned economy.

Taking a holistic approach to re-education was to pay equal attention to financial, medical, judicial, and formal education aspects, requiring both party and state institutions and organisations, as well as activists and 'where appropriate, elements with influence among the țigan population' to work together.²⁷⁰ However, although it was reported that Roma were 'encouraged to join ACPs, cooperative agricultural workshops, guilds and state factories,' their alleged economic inactivity, in spite of their being 'fit for work,' was 'a cause for concern.' The study marshalled statistics gathered by 'the organs of the Ministry of the Interior together with the National Commission for Demographics' in 1976 to convey the extent of

²⁶⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 8.

²⁶⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief, 2.

²⁷⁰ Amongst the latter, both Ion Cioabă and Nicolae Gheorghe lobbied on behalf of Romani citizens, on fraught terms with the *Securitate* at times.

this troubling situation. 'Countrywide, 80,000 țigani fit for work were counted, who do not engage in any activity for the benefit of society, with a higher count in Maramureș, Dolj, Mureș and Bihor.'²⁷¹ The categories of 'seminomadic and nomadic țigani' were particularly disquieting: 'Out of a total of 66,470 nomadic and seminomadic țigani, only 5,600 are engaged in useful activities, the majority on a short-term basis. Out of these, over 900 know a trade, the remainder being unskilled.'²⁷²

Skill, was, of course, in the eye of the beholder. Those 'seminomadic and nomadic țigani' were in fact engaged in self-employed work, as we have seen above. Even when Romani colonisers in the 1950s were reported not to work because they would pick and sell forest produce instead of performing agricultural labour. However, not all forms of self-employment were equal. 'Nominal work-permits for short-term occupations, such as the collection of glass, various waste and feathers' were still to be issued, albeit 'only for areas within the county of domicile.'²⁷³

Yet, with such work permits, party officials targeted two birds with one stone. First, certain Roma were allowed to carry on with self-employed work, which also covered low-skilled jobs other socialist citizens were not willing to take up.²⁷⁴ At the same time, their self-employment was to assist the national economy rather than individual sustenance. Second, and crucially, the county-circumscribed work permits would ensure the eradication of 'nomadism' by foreclosing countrywide travelling.

'Negative phenomena such as a parasitic lifestyle among the țigan population' were said to remain, informed the 1978 study. And in order to drive home the point that good socialist 'țigani' were possible, it also made sure to reiterate that 'a large number of țigani have been employed in industrial units, in state or cooperative agricultural units, crafts guilds, construction work and in the third sector.'²⁷⁵ The study marshalled statistics

²⁷¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 2.

²⁷² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 3

²⁷³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 8.

²⁷⁴ In Chapter Four, in particular, we shall come across this aspect in more detail.

²⁷⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief, 2.

again: '6,800 crimes ha[d] been committed by țigani.' In addition, they were found guilty of 1,800 other offences, such as 'gross behaviour towards the authorities and good morals, begging, vagabondage, gambling, illegal possession of theft and ammunition, profiteering, traffic in foreign currency and other means of foreign pay etc.'²⁷⁶

Profiteering and social parasitism were the types of labels which drew both moral outrage and legal punishment in the context of a socialist society. The 1987 and 1988 issues of *Woman* magazine feature two short stories, written as 'true stories.' Both ended with a socialist moral: that earning one's subsistence by duping hard-working citizens, particularly those going through difficult times in their lives, was not only morally disgraceful, but also punishable by law. Furthermore, and true to the values of socialism, 'human beings have the strength to deal with their problems within them, with the additional help of their fellows.'²⁷⁷ In addition, the stories included elements of cunning and mysticism.

In the 1987 story, a widow with two children is accosted by a woman who, impressed by the widow's visible suffering, promises that a witch she knows can perform the magic that would allow the widow to meet a new husband. The accoster, the author tells us, was an intermediary, with a criminal record, in cahoots with a 'charlatan' who was in the habit of swindling citizens via 'magic.' Upon being told by the witch that 'a lot of magic' was required, the widow was asked to pay increasing sums. Subsequently, the stress of losing money to the witch caused her to become 'frightened and harassed,' to the point that her work colleagues noticed it. Additionally, her performance at work began to suffer, until her 'kind' colleagues managed to extract the truth from her. The widow then frames the witch with the militia's help.²⁷⁸

In the 1988 story, two women friends debate whether to see a witch to help with one of the two friends' husband's drinking problem. After

²⁷⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief, 4.

²⁷⁷ *Revista Femeia*, April 1988 issue, 16.

²⁷⁸ *Revista Femeia*, January 1987 issue, 13.

deliberating, they decide to pay the witch a visit. Once there, the women became overwhelmed. First, by the villa the witch lived in. Then, by the increasing amounts of money she kept asking for. And third, after one of the two friends acknowledged that the magic the witch had performed for her in the past had had no effect whatsoever, the two women decide to frame the witch with the militia's help.²⁷⁹

Both stories make use of the 'coffee and cards reader' trope to highlight the exploitation of vulnerable women. However, whilst the offender in the 1987 issue has a generic Romanian woman's name and is described as a serial embezzler, the offender in the 1988 issue is described specifically as 'a țigancă' ('țigan' woman). 'Fat and ugly, with bulging eyeballs,' she is discovered by the police to have numerous goods in hiding, such as jewellery, perfumes, clothes and savings, received as payment for her magic.²⁸⁰

It is worth keeping mind at this point that in socialist realism, 'the examples that make up the collection's semantic core can be drawn from any number of sources, regardless of their ontological status.' Therefore, 'if an acknowledged fiction reproduces the accepted topoi then it, just as any non-fictional text, can function as a valid simulacrum of "what has occurred,"'²⁸¹ a point I take up again in Chapter Three. It is precisely because party-sanctioned printed media invoked such simulacra of 'what has occurred' that we should be troubled by the invocation of 'țigan' tropes to teach instances of bad socialists. Undoubtedly, the storyline centres on the socially and culturally disgraceful practice of earning a living by profiteering, not only because it was not 'proper' work, but also because fooling hard-working citizens for selfish gain was an affront to the norms of a socialist community. Clearly, by the late 1980s 'țigan behaviour' was firmly associated with anti-socialist tropes of illicit and workshy behaviour

²⁷⁹ Revista Femeia, April 1988 issue, 16.

²⁸⁰ Revista Femeia, April 1988, 16.

²⁸¹ Greg Carleton, 'Genre in Socialist Realism,' *Slavic Review* 53 no. 4, (1994): 1002.

traditionally associated with Roma. Not only at the popular level, but also disseminated in party-endorsed printed media.

In the same way that some party activists were reported in May 1946 to injudiciously refer to all traders as speculators,²⁸² thus solidifying and legitimising in peasants' minds the antisemitic link between Jewish traders and speculators, so too did party-sanctioned use of 'țigan' tropes validate antițiganism. Furthermore, in so doing, party officials implied a non-existent gap between identification and self-understanding. In other words, in sketching out particular somatic traits associated with 'țigan' behaviour, such as greed-invoking bulging eyes and fat bellies, magazine stories such as these indicated that Romani self-understanding and 'țigan' identification were identical.²⁸³

The treatment of demographics regarding the Romani population consolidates this point. The 1978 'Study regarding some problems the țigani population in our country are posing' opens with the numbers provided by the 1977 Census: 229,986 'persons have declared to belong to the țigani population.' The remainder of the paragraph seeks, however, to shed further light on this number. 'The real number' was in fact '541,000, of which 474,000 are stable, 66,500 seminomadic and 500 nomadic.' Yet the Ministry of the Interior and National Commission for Demography never revealed on what basis they had established a gap between the 'real' and the 'self-declared' number.²⁸⁴

Could such populations that continued to demonstrate anti-socialist traits be changed? Haralambie Culea mocked claims that only children could be re-fashioned by socialism. If that were true, then 'our programme would

²⁸² See above.

²⁸³ I take up this aspect at length in Chapter 2.

²⁸⁴ On the last page of the booklet listing the population of Romania by nationality and mother tongue, extracted from the 1977 Census, the reader is informed that 'according to article 4 of the State Council's Decree no. 145/1976, which regulates the counting of the population, every citizen of the Romanian Socialist Republic—in accordance with its constitution and its laws—is entitled to freely declare their nationality and mother tongue.' Out of the many options, Romanian, Magyar, German, Țigan, Ukrainian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Russian, Jewish, Szeklers, Saxons, Swabians, Rhutenians, and Lipovan were only a few.

be essentially limited.²⁸⁵ Yet children were easier both to educate and to, crucially, remove from their families. As the 1972 report on Căldărari Roma put it, the children of nomadic and seminomadic Căldărari were said 'to still have a reluctant attitude towards organised labour,' blamed on their 'illiterate and semiliterate' parents who were 'reluctant to allow their children to attend compulsory education' and were even pulling children out of school and 'tak[ing them] on the road to beg and steal.'

In their discussion of the worst type of bad parents, the author(s) also invited statistics and predictions about Romani child-bearing practices, particularly given the natalist policies under Ceaușescu. The children of 'seminomadic and nomadic țigani' were deemed to be at social and cultural risk. By not going to school and 'being almost exclusively under the influence of the parents, [the children] perpetuate the same uncivilised and parasitic lifestyle.'²⁸⁶ Given that the rate of births among these Roma was said to be '3-4 times higher than the rest of the population,'²⁸⁷ the need for the state to take over the education of these children was deemed urgent.

Following Ceaușescu's teleconference, the Ministry of Education and Schooling set guidelines. During 1978-1979, with the support of all the committees and executive bureaus of county and Bucharest people's councils, it was tasked with taking 'the necessary measures to ensure that all school-age țigani children are enrolled at schools within their catchment area.'²⁸⁸

To ascribe children to catchment areas was to fix their families to a stable home. This also meant that children who were not in compulsory education were both easier to account for and taken under the protection of the state where there was a need for it. Need there was, for according to the officials, 'Not being part of the employed masses is spread among

²⁸⁵ Culea, *Lucrare*, 189.

²⁸⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 6/1972. Note on Căldărari țigani, 36.

²⁸⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 5.

²⁸⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 4 and 9 respectively.

the [țigan] women in particular, which has a negative influence on the education and bringing up of children.²⁸⁹ Bad parenting would not be tolerated. Not only did the workers themselves, such as 'the communists at the Electroaparaj factory,' suggest in 1972 that 'the accountability of parents whose children commit criminal offences should be codified in law,'²⁹⁰ but 'minors free from family supervision' found loitering in Bucharest between 10-13 March 1970 were taken back to their families, with the latter formally requested to look after them.²⁹¹

By necessity, ensuring compulsory schooling went hand-in-hand with processes of identification of 'bad' Roma and their punitive coercion. Yet interwoven with these processes of 'find and discipline' were programmes aiming specifically to support the development of Roma children. School directors were instructed to increase the number of schools with extended learning time in the localities where extra support was needed for 'țigani children.' At the same time, the education of children who were three years older than their school year was to be ensured by enrolling them in distance learning and evening classes. The instructions given to school inspectorates and directors of educational institutions asked them to spare no effort in ensuring that schooling and exam attendance was adequate. Further support for the schooling of Roma children was added by providing free lunches and dinners.²⁹² The condition was that they attend school on a regular basis.

Free lunches and dinners were also offered to 'other categories of children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds,' approximately 6,000 places in total. Here we see how social policies specifically targeting the Roma were embedded in the larger socialist programme, mixing punitive measures with affirmative ones. Although central, however,

²⁸⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 5.

²⁹⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 53/1972. Note on the plenary of CC of RCP, 2.

²⁹¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 5/1970. Note on hooligan and parasitic elements in Bucharest, 1.

²⁹² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 9.

schooling was just one facet of a larger programme. This was a general program of cultural and political enlightenment, in which the 'țigani children' were asked to participate, perhaps because it was believed that teaching 'mutuality' was more easily done with children.

Youth organs and organisations were instructed to 'act more robustly towards the civic and moral education of young țigani' by organising 'enlightening activities with the other youths.' Together, they would participate in the patriotic work of building and improving the aesthetic of the towns and cities of socialist Romania, as well as 'discuss, assimilate and adhere to the norms of the social ethic and morals and the laws of the country.'²⁹³ The 'unenlightened young țigani' were, of course, cast in the role of disciples, but the programme of enlightenment would be supervised not only by the state and party organs, but by Roma themselves, those 'with a say.' Alongside local councils for political education and socialist culture, and young communists' unions and syndicates, 'the help of țigani who have an appropriate behaviour, who abide by the social cohabitation norms and have authority among the other țigani' was to be enlisted.²⁹⁴ The power of example and good collective behaviour were crucial tools of enlightening 'backward' Roma who, according to the Party and state, had eluded, refused, or were refusing to behave socialist.

The challenge for the Roma was not merely to learn a skill and become a link in the national economy, which in turn fostered a socialist economy, but it was also about learning how to behave within a collective mould. Or what the briefs and notes refer to as 'social cohabitation.' There were, of course, bad collectives, and clearly a socialist collective was the only right way. The renewed allocation of building plots and materials, of state loans and state-owned dwellings to 'seminomadic and nomadic' Roma was to be done with care, in order to avoid 'concentrat[ing] this population in certain areas, with a view to prevent negative group influence.' They would be placed in 'areas with a smaller demographic, [...] in collaboration

²⁹³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 12.

²⁹⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 9.

with the demographic councils, so that suitable work and life conditions [were] provided.²⁹⁵ By the same token, the entry of 'young țigani' into the workforce once discharged from re-education centres 'would take place in a locality other than the locality of origin, if it is thought their going back to their milieu of origin might have a negative impact [on them].'²⁹⁶

In effect this policy sought to avoid Romani ghettoisation. At the same time, however, the party state was also seeking to act on its fear that Romani citizens were more prone to be loyal to their own extended families to the detriment of the socialist collective. Party officials, therefore, sought to redirect the Roma's affective loyalties to the state and the party, and towards socialist society.

It was a policy which may have been inspired by social programmes of The Hungarian People's Republic (henceforth HPR). In 1972, the embassies of the Romanian Socialist Republic (RSR) in Prague, Sofia and Budapest sent reports on these socialist countries' efforts 'towards solving the țigan question.'²⁹⁷ The most baffling was the report from Sofia. Bulgarian authorities were reported to have claimed 'not [to] have a țigan issue.' As Miglena Todorova has documented, however, this was the result of Bulgarian authorities' decision to stop counting Romani Bulgarians.²⁹⁸ In 1975, 'or right after the last state legislation on "the Gypsy question", statistics showed only 18,323 Romani Bulgarians, a significant cull in numbers from 148,874 in 1965. As Todorova further put it, 'the disappearance of [nearly] 150,000 Gypsy individuals between 1965 and 1975 was supposed to highlight and prove that the state assimilationist policies worked.'²⁹⁹

In HPR, the building of neighbourhoods housing Roma exclusively had been prohibited, 'it being believed that life among the other population has

²⁹⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 7.

²⁹⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 23/1977. Study, 9.

²⁹⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 19/1972. Documentary regarding some socialist countries' actions towards solving the țigani problem, 5.

²⁹⁸ Todorova, 'Race travels,' 231.

²⁹⁹ Todorova, 'Race,' 231.

a positive influence on them.³⁰⁰ In socialist Romania, the ghettoisation of the Roma had also been prevented by proxy. The housing programme and the systematisation of localities had seen the 'disappearance of some insalubrious neighbourhoods and areas.' In 1978, in Bucharest alone it was reported, 'in neighbourhoods such as Colentina, Floreasca and Ferentari, there [were] no more urban concentrations of țigani.'³⁰¹

Although dispersing the Roma among the population at large was also a policy of control, its *modus operandi* sought to discipline all behaviour that ruined good social cohabitation. Codified in 1982 by Law no. 10, public order and discipline, as well as cleanliness and care towards the public good, became the legal duty and responsibility of all citizens. Norms of behaviour required citizens, socialist units, and people's councils to align their behaviour with the ethos of 'deploying the maximum efficiency' in economic matters. Additionally, all citizens, 'without exception,' were to treat respectfully and lawfully the state dwelling stock and to adhere to sanitary and hygiene norms. All noise 'above the acceptable legal limit' which disrupted citizens' rest and quiet, for example, was prohibited. In sum, 'a high civic consciousness, respect at all times and [the] utmost care [for] the norms of socialist cohabitation and maintenance of public goods' were enshrined in law.³⁰²

Identifying and controlling those who broke the public order had been the subject of a campaign run in 1970's Bucharest by the Party. Its aim was to 'spot and restrain hooligan, parasitic and morally degenerate elements, with no occupation, and to fight against those who disrupt the public order and have a flashy (*stridentă*; in the feminine) outward appearance.' Two hundred and forty-nine people who had broken the public quiet and order by causing arguments, behaving boorishly and harassing others were punished. 'Some elements with no occupation' were given employment. A

³⁰⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 19/1972. Documentary, 5.

³⁰¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief on the țigani population, 2.

³⁰² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția organizatorică, File 68/1982. Law no.10/1982.

total of 1,904 persons, of which 1,117 were school and university students, were asked to 'reconsider their attire.'³⁰³

In 198[3], 'Proposals to complete the "Report" on the socio-economic conditions of the țigan population in our country' were made.³⁰⁴ They were annotated by hand with the caveat 'At the preparation stage; not to be disseminated.' The central topic of the 'Proposals' was the anticipated birth rate among Romani citizens, which was discussed at length. Taking the total number of 'țigani' as 1.5 million—the proposals acknowledged that statistics varied widely, but 'even the highest estimate is probably too conservative'—, 'by the end of the century we can predict their numbers will be 7-8 million.'³⁰⁵ They attributed this number to 'current abortion regulations which favour and encourage indirectly the exaggerated breeding of țigani, given that the population of Romanian nationality have abortions on a large scale, both legally and illicitly.' The proposals added that abortions be further regulated,³⁰⁶ and child allowances be modified to make them conditional on labour, 'to stop the uncontrolled breeding of țigani.' The party, however, enforced neither.

To identify, control and (re)educate were the tools of this enormously ambitious programme of socialist enlightenment. The 'high crime rate among the țigani,' of which 'cases of blatant disregard for the norms of social cohabitation and the disruption of public quiet and order [were] very numerous,' were blamed on 'a serious lack of education.'³⁰⁷ At the same time, however, the recommendations of the two studies from 1977 and 1978 put the blame partly on 'people's councils, education, culture and health institutions' who had 'paid almost zero attention to this problem.' Discriminatory attitudes had prejudiced the way in which 'the employees of

³⁰³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 5/1970. Note on hooligans in Bucharest, 1.

³⁰⁴ Not dated. However, from the content the year is most likely to be 1983.

³⁰⁵ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 222.

³⁰⁶ In spite of the draconian natalist laws which forbade abortions, medical terminations of pregnancies were allowed. Furthermore, as the reports acknowledged, even in a context of stringent abortion laws, 'Romanians are still aborting in high numbers'.

³⁰⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 25/1978. Brief on the țigani population, 4.

these institutions,' who evinced 'a certain contempt for the needs and demands of țigani,' behaved towards the Roma.³⁰⁸ The reports, therefore, recognised discrimination as a hurdle in the realisation of socialism.

It is neither unrealistic nor impossible that this laundry list of party and state organs' shortcomings in reaching out to the Roma and in formulating a rational, holistic program of social inclusion was a rhetorical exercise meant to showcase the self-awareness, introspection and initiative required of the workers. Yet the authors did not neglect to highlight the lack, or sketchiness, of an organic official cultural, social, and sanitary education of the Roma. In recommending that the enlightenment programme be re-applied with renewed vigour, the two studies suggested party authorities had failed to meet the to-be-educated halfway. After all, how could the Roma have taken all the steps to live a life free of ill-health and diseases if 'sanitary and anti-epidemic education, for the prevention of diseases and the conditions which cause them, ha[d] not been provided?'

Conclusions

'Meeting half-way' was party philosophers' approach to wrestling with the hardships that different levels of culture posed to a grandiose programme of cultural enlightenment. Haralambie Culea termed this process 'mutual implication,' a crucial step towards 'homogenisation' which he defined against 'mechanical intergroup assimilation.' In practice, homogenisation would be 'completely respectful of the particularities arising from differences in tradition, lifestyles, language, and culture.'³⁰⁹ Furthermore, to 'successfully and respectfully homogenise,' decision-makers had to get to know cultural dissonances fully. And party officials, by their own accounts, did not fully know the culture, or the cultural needs, of Romani citizens, whilst the population at large and mass organisations were obliquely said to have been unwilling to work with Romani fellow

³⁰⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 6/1972. Note on Căldărari țigani, 1.

³⁰⁹ Culea, *Lucrare*, 58

citizens. Therefore, the introspection of the author(s) of the 1978 study was not merely formulaic. Not only was it part of conceptualising the path towards communism, but it had pragmatic implications at the level of policymaking.

I agree with Adela Hîncu and her analysis that '[although] "social homogenisation" is often held to represent the worst excesses of the Ceaușescu regime in the 1980s, especially the rural systematisation plans and policies towards minorities, [...] the socialist society they had envisioned was not based on the levelling of individuality, but on ensuring equal social opportunities to all, regardless of their aptitudes.'³¹⁰ Yet the sheer ambition of the socialist programme of socially re-engineering Romani Romanians never materialised. First, there was the party officials' inherited racism towards the Roma, which meant the former never looked at their Romani fellows with fresh eyes. True to a programme which promised a renewed society, problems were looked for and identified, chief among them the problem of mobility and antisocialist behaviour. Yet, although solutions were offered on paper, they were not implemented on the ground—or perhaps only partially and stunted. More research needs to be done, above all in local archives, to gain a fuller sense of to what extent proposals for the cultural enlightenment of Romani Romanians were achieved in person.

Overall, however, Romani persons lost out because of their association with criminal and questionable lifestyles. Second, in addition to the discrimination which foreclosed civic and state associations' engagement with their Romani fellows, there was not enough money to invest in such programmes. Both postwar and later socialist austerity measures implemented to raise the capital needed for fast industrialisation left few, or no avenues, for such re-integration policies. Nor did the party train appropriate cadres with a refined understanding of the ways to re-integrate in society persons who had 'suffered from racial persecution.'

³¹⁰ Adela Hîncu, 'Accounting for the "Social" in State Socialist Romania, 1960s-1980s: Contexts and Genealogies,' PhD thesis, Central European University, 143.

Certainly, although some Romani families were placed in blocks of flats among Romanians, they were never accepted as full socialists, as I show in Chapter 2. And as I show in Chapter 4, although schooling was touted as giving everyone the possibility to achieve a higher social position, Romani Romanians were found to occupy non-skilled or low-skilled jobs such as flower sellers; grave diggers; toilet attendants; and taxi drivers.

The gap between the right of every citizen to 'freely declare their nationality and mother tongue' and their lived experience illustrates the uneasy situation the Roma were caught in. On the one hand, they were called by the name 'țigan,' which cast them as different from the Romanians, whilst, on the other, they were asked to behave as part of the Romanian collective. In spite of proposals and the purported cultural enlightenment of Roma in order to turn them into socialist citizens, there was a fundamental incompatibility between the Party's grand discursive plans and what happened on the ground, and even at the policy level.

2. Romani Bodies, 'Țigan' Behaviour and (Non)Socialist Morality

In this chapter, I draw on character assessments (*caracterizări de persoane*) commissioned by the *Securitate* during the 1970s and 1980s to reveal how non-Romani Romanians attributed similar patterns of anti-socialist behaviour either to 'psycho-nervous conditions,' to criminality, or to being Roma. In so doing, I trace how the Roma body and the image of 'the țigan' in late-socialist Romania were fused together, feeding one another in a circular logic that both predicted and explained behaviour by constantly referencing each other.

In the last two decades of state socialism the success of the cultural enlightenment project and its most conclusive crystallisation—socialist identity—came to be known through its embodied manifestation, behaviour. Acts of behaviour enabled one's neighbours, work colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, cast as assessors of socialist identity, to read one's inner life, which implied a complete conjunction between outward behaviour and inner substance. Securitate higher officials were the ultimate assessors of socialist identity, in that they had the final say on the outcome of a character assessment. They also decided whether to ask for further assessments of citizens reported to engage in troublesome or puzzling behaviour. Yet, in order to assess, one had to be in physical proximity to the behaviour of the assessed, which explains why it was society at large, in the role of informants, who did the groundwork of assessing socialist identity.

Knowledge of the good socialist was thus deemed possible through a process of 'revelation by behaviour,'³¹¹ whereby informants assessed

³¹¹ I take inspiration for this terminology from Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia. A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1999), 168. In the chapter titled 'Revealing the Self,' he traces the shift between 1929-1933 from the 'genealogy of social origin' as the Party's 'general method of arriving at the knowledge of an individual' to 'revelation by deeds.' The latter placed the emphasis on the individual, who would henceforth be evaluated as a true Communist (or not) based

behaviour against a prescribed grid of available categories. Such categories were proper/improper; obliging/non-obliging; principled/non-principled; balanced/irresponsible; and moderate/possessed by vices and/or passions, among others.

It was usually neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances who wrote the assessments. Alternatively, lower-rung *Securitate* officers drafted them based on their discussions with informants. Securitate authorities requested assessments as character checks on citizens scheduled for work abroad; on those who applied for visas to travel to 'capitalist' countries; and on citizens whose workplace or home address were deemed sensitive to the party. For example, under *Misiunea Călătorul* (Mission the Traveller), the *Securitate* requested reports on the workers listed for construction work or vocational exchanges in the Middle East and Africa. The reports were to assess the workers' likelihood to smuggle out 'state secrets'—i.e. construction plans; numbers; technological details—and pass it on to capitalist enemies. Assessments would also gauge how likely workers were to engage in anti-socialist behaviour. It is worth mentioning here that those found to have prior convictions for hooliganism and theft had their listings revoked.

Misiunea Traseul (Mission the Itinerary) also required a character assessment of citizens inhabiting flats overlooking Calea Victoriei in Central Bucharest. In these cases, *Securitate* officers sought to ascertain whether citizens might throw themselves in front of cars carrying high ranking cadres; throw objects out of their windows; or make obscene gestures on balconies. These were real possibilities judging by intercepted letters threatening to precisely do this. *Securitate* forces also assessed workers in contact with state secrets who never travelled abroad about how likely they were to pass such information onto capitalist foes via Radio Free Europe, or even by 'blabbering' freely to friends and acquaintances.

on either their political activism or their passivity, and no longer on their origins from either the (good) proletarian class background or a (bad) bourgeois class background.

In this chapter, I rely once more on 'home' as an analytical category to unveil the boundaries between the good and the bad socialists, and the role assigned to Romani Romanians in the process. Yet its analytical contours differ from the meaning with which I imbued it in the previous chapter. In chapter one, home as fixed abode has meant 'civilised' lifestyles such as access to sewerage, the division of sexes per inhabitable rooms, hygiene, and the legal nuclear heterosexual family. The living conditions of (semi)nomadic 'țigani' thus shifted from a conflation of 'nomadism' with 'banditry' to a sociological classification of (semi)nomadism as 'uncivilised' or 'anti-modern.' In here, I bring to light a different angle through which party officials and citizens at large found Romani citizens lacking: socialist morality. I illustrate how the home became a lens through which socialist identity revealed itself. Romani citizens' neighbours and work colleagues offered both descriptive and prescriptive details of 'behaviour at domicile' and in the workplace. In describing how Roma lived and worked, society at large judged whether the former had achieved a true socialist identity. In both chapters, however, party officials and non-Romani Romanians deployed ideas of home to draw cultural, and thus social, boundaries between the good and the bad socialist citizen.

To be sure, these sources do not deal exclusively with the Roma, and this is precisely where their strength lies. Before I proceed with the analysis, let me describe my method. The files which house the character assessments are kept in the Popești Leordeni warehouse, where the bulk of the CNSAS files are stored. Although I was familiar with character assessments as analysed in the literature on Soviet Russia—the *karakterisitka*—I had not considered that the Romanian equivalents might make exciting sources.³¹² However, during my talks with the custodians of the CNSAS archives in central Bucharest, I was told the former *Securitate* archives comprised 'not only informative materials, but documentary ones too.' Which is to say the *Securitate* archives are more than records of trials

³¹² To my knowledge, I am the first researcher to have looked at them.

and tribulations, as I had wrongly assumed. Because being in situ at Popești Leordeni meant instant access to the files, I decided to travel to the outskirts of Bucharest. One of the central Bucharest custodians suggested I should ask for files comprising character assessments of workers from Bucharest factories, given that 'they had plenty in storage'. I did so, and in total I perused around 10 volumes, each numbering between 400-600 pages. This would amount to a total of between 4,000-6,000 character assessments. Some of the volumes had never been researched and as such lacked page numbering, which I had to request on the spot from the archivist on duty.

I began reading the assessments. Page after page of repetitive characterisations, punctuated by scandalous instances of anti-socialist behaviour, such as excessive drinking; extra-marital sexual relations; coarse language; unruliness in the block of flats and the workplace. One day I was reading what seemed to be yet another assessment of your run-of-the-mill socialist. At this stage, I was already a few good hundreds of assessments in when, towards the end of this particular one, there came the line: 'Although they are țigani, no brawls or visitors have been noted at their address.' Both euphoria and relief washed over me as my mind was slowly realising what I had been speculating for three years—that I would find mentions of Romani citizens in the casualness of everydayness, and not only in the files specifically catalogued as 'țigani.'

I stepped out of the small reading room in the Popești-Leordeni warehouse to catch my breath before going back in. I hand copied the assessment in my notebook, all while placing a request for a photograph.³¹³ Following this particular character assessment I began to take notes of 'good,' 'bad,' and in-between socialists, alongside reading and hoping for more mentionings of Romani socialists, which materialised as I carried on.

All the assessments which mention Romani citizens, out of the 4-6,000 I perused in total, feature in Chapter Two. Out of the ones which

³¹³ The CNSAS do not allow researchers to take their own photos of the archives. To do so, one must file a formal request. The photographs then arrive on a CD, in PDF format.

mention non-Romani Romanian citizens, I chose a few representative ones. In particular, I picked those which relayed behaviours that so closely resembled behaviours described as 'țigan.' Yet which were, notwithstanding, attributed to non-Romani Romanians suffering from 'psycho-nervous' conditions. After consulting ten volumes I stopped for two reasons. First, towards the last three files the character assessments stopped mentioning 'țigan' behaviour. And second, I decided my sample was wide and random enough to warrant my interpretation.

The conclusion that informants assessed similar types of behaviour differently, depending on whether the subject was thought to be Roma, was glaring. To show how this came to be, I first analyse at length assessments of non-Romani citizens reported for scandalous behaviour, following which I turn to assessments of Romani citizens. I make plain how the latter type of character assessments re-racialised traditional forms of behaving, this time with a socialist twist. In their assessments, neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances attributed behaviours to an inner 'țigan' essence based on whether the owner of the behaviour was thought to be Roma. In other words, in reading the behaviour of Romani bodies the assessors of behaviour did not in fact gauge the presence or the lack of a socialist identity. Rather, certain character assessments confirmed prior knowledge: 'țigan' behaviour revealed the Roma soul and its impossibility to become socialist.

To be clear, this is not a chapter on socialist subjectivity. It is true that the assessments and the self-declarations given by citizens reported to have engaged in particularly scandalous or puzzling behaviour occasionally offer us a glimpse of people's subjectivity. Eric Naiman described it as such: 'Who a person is, what he thinks, how he views the world—intellectually, affectively—and how he sees himself defined by membership in a community.'³¹⁴ For example, we gain a glimpse of what it meant to be a single mother in late socialist Romania from the self-

³¹⁴ Eric Naiman, 'On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them,' *The Russian Review* 60 no. 3, (2001): 313.

declaration of a woman. She was reported to entertain and have intimate relations with 'predominantly Arab citizens,' at home as well as at work. Because both addresses were located on the itinerary of official convoys in central Bucharest, she was asked to explain her behaviour after a home search failed to find foreign exchange. 'No material benefits were offered to me, I did it out of pleasure, love, [and] feelings of revenge against my own unfulfilled family life given my age, even if I long for a genuine family life given that I have a child to bring up.'³¹⁵ Or consider the tensed self-awareness of the Romani man who replied to his non-Romani Romanian neighbour when asked 'why he repeatedly brought home two blacks, in the evening past 21:00 [o'clock]: The blacks are my friends.'³¹⁶

Nevertheless, I do not seek to arrive at the deeper inner psychological recesses of citizens living in 1970s' and 1980s' Romania. I place a great deal of emphasis on the language used in the character assessments. Yet my point is that the descriptive grid of socialist identity lays bare the positivist conviction that the successful embodied realisation of the enlightenment project—socialist identity—could be read via external manifestations. At the same time, however, this reading of identity through its external manifestations was embedded in a belief about the inherent morality necessary for socialist identity to take root in people's psyches.

I use the language of the sources to uncover how everyday social relations unfolded against the demands of practical living conditions—sharing a block of flats or the flat itself with other persons and the attendant communal duties—and available categories of behaviour. I do so by building on Alaina Lemon's concept of 'racism as a way to organize social relations. In this thesis, socialist identity is not an issue of self-understanding³¹⁷ or

³¹⁵ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 15, 90 (back). Self-declaration, 1985.

³¹⁶ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 5, 55. Report, 1985. I take up the issue of Romani citizens' thoughts on the racialising ways in which they were treated, written and talked about, in Chapter 4.

³¹⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Making a Self for the Times: Impersonation and Imposture in 20th-Century Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian history* 2 no. 3, (2001): 470. Fitzpatrick distinguishes between self-identification, which may be instrumental, and self-understanding, the belief that the self is as one sees it. She works from the 'assumption that the self-understanding of subjects is available to historians only

subjectivity,³¹⁸so much as it is a fabric of social relations. The same patterns of anti-social behaviour, which implied to the assessors a failure to have acquired a socialist identity, were described in terms of an unchanging inherent quality which marked the individual, or a group, as irrevocably tainted.

.....

The ideal socialist was expected to navigate the social world of late-socialist Romania with ease. True socialist identity, as idealised in teaching booklets and Ceaușescu's speeches, should neither be too laboured, nor should it feel like a balancing act. The real socialist was the citizen who seamlessly integrated externally prescribed parameters of behaviour—such as adherence to the laws and the moral norms of social cohabitation—into the inner life, or character.

This ability became a sign of one's socialist identity. Awkwardness and caginess were suspect forms of behaviour that betrayed the signs that the person in question had circumvented the full and sincere assumption of socialist identity. To be 'too obsequious' or 'insecure with the superiors,' as some informants put it in their character assessments, indicated that the assessed had not developed a socialist consciousness. This would have given him/her the assuredness of a worker aware of the revolutionary role and place they now occupied in society. Or the 'uncommunicative, unsociable' description pinned on others, which was as problematic as those denounced for having 'blabbered' freely or gossiped too much.

The issue of gossip brings to the fore one of the most vexed questions in socialist studies. Were women emancipated when they were declared

through practices like self-identification.' Like Fitzpatrick, I too am interested in 'social rather than personal identity,' yet the sources I discuss in this chapter allow us a view not of how people 'locate themselves in a social or group context,' but how they are positioned as such by Securitate informants and personnel, as well as denounciators.

³¹⁸ Naiman, 'On Soviet Subjects,' 311. He criticizes historians of Soviet subjectivity, Jochen Hellbeck and Igan Halfin in particular, for elevating language to the level of the transparent medium through which full Soviet subjectivity can be recuperated by historians. As he puts it: 'Are we not reading totalitarianism the way totalitarianism, itself, would "want" to be read?'

free to join the workforce as socialist workers, and gain economic freedom? Was the category of worker, therefore, liberating in its universalising appeal to paid employment? The historiographical consensus is both that it did not, and it depends on which women we write about. In Chapter Three, I discuss in the depth of one chapter the patriarchal qualities of state socialism in Romania and the consequences of their collision with gender and Romani ethnicity. At a broader level of discussion, as Katherine Verdery already put it in 1994, 'gender equality [was] brought about by the labour requirements of industrialisation more than anything else.'³¹⁹ For the Hungarian case, Eva Fodor argues that 'the discursive foundations of male domination were transformed, but never eliminated under state socialism.'³²⁰ Furthermore, even if Hungarian policymakers redefined women's childbearing capacities as 'socially constructed and changeable, they were [still] considered to impair women's political devotion and reliability.'³²¹ In socialist Poland, women workers complained of harassment and under-employment at work. As Katherine Lebow explains, the Women's Council chairwoman 'was never invited to factory council or party cell meetings;' sexism, therefore, 'was embedded in party and union structures.'³²² And as Donna Harsch has shown for the East German case, a survey conducted in 1972 by students at Humboldt University uncovered that "'companionable paternalism" was the rule' in married couples. Moreover, nuclear families in fact followed a 'modified patriarchal model,' whereby 'the husband allowed his wife to work for wages, but otherwise tried to control her.'³²³

Discursively, the media in late socialist Romania worked hard to advance the ideal socialist citizens, harmoniously cooperating to gloss over traditionally ascribed gender roles in the nuclear heterosexual family. As Jill Massino's research has shown, beginning with the 1960s women in the

³¹⁹ Katherine Verdery, 'From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs,' 230.

³²⁰ Eva Fodor, 'Gender of the Communist Subject,' *Gender and Society* 16 no. 2 (2002): 241.

³²¹ Fodor, 'Gender,' 243.

³²² Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 114.

³²³ Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic. Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton and Woodstock, 2007), 293.

Femeia magazine³²⁴ 'began to appear more modern, carefree, and even sexy.' Meanwhile, 'the new type of husband' articles depicted men who were both hard working and nappy changers.³²⁵ Yet 'women continued to be the target of physical and psychological abuse.' In fact, the July issue of the 1970 magazine focused on spousal abuse and authoritarian fathering.³²⁶ Moreover, in late-socialist Romania domestic violence was covered in legal provisions only by proxy, via criminal codes which assessed the level of injuries sustained.³²⁷ In 1999, the first comprehensive survey conducted in Romania revealed that 'one out of every three women in Romania had experienced domestic violence in her life.'³²⁸

It was precisely because the legal nuclear heterosexual family was one of the building blocks of socialism in Romania that single mothers could be suspected of selling sex to foreigners. In such a framework, the married wife and mother were exalted by both legal and societal discourse.³²⁹ In the character assessments I have perused, women, particularly unmarried ones, are chided for 'an interest in fashion' and/or 'makeup,' for filling up their workday with gossip and blabbering, and for being overly credulous. And, as I show when my analysis turns to assessments of Romani persons, Romani women had to work the hardest to prove their socialist credentials.

However, as a worker, neighbour, and citizen, in other words as a co-constructor of socialism, both women and men were expected to adopt and internalise a harmonious, balanced, hardworking, and vice-free behaviour, and to shun 'anarchy and law-breaking.' These were Ceauşescu's words in his 1971 addresses to the Party, in what came to be known as the July

³²⁴ It translates as 'Woman.'

³²⁵ Jill Massino, 'Something Old, Something New: Marital Roles and Relations in State Socialist Romania,' *Journal of Women's History* 22 no. 1, (2010): 39 and 44 respectively.

³²⁶ Massino, 'Something Old,' 54.

³²⁷ Isabel Marcus, 'Wife Beating: Ideology and Practice under State Socialism in Hungary, Poland, and Romania,' in *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, eds S. Penn and J. Massino (2009, Basingstoke), 127.

³²⁸ Jill Massino and Raluca Popa, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ambiguous: Women and the Transition from Communism to Pluralism in Romania,' in *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe*, eds C. Hassenstab and S. Ramet (Basingstoke, 2015), 180.

³²⁹ Anca Dohotariu, 'The Unmarried Couple in Post-Communist Romania: A Qualitative Sociological Approach,' *History of the Family* 20 no. 4, (2015): 579-592.

Theses. Furthermore, the new socialist citizen was to be an active participant in the construction of socialism and communism, or 'a *human being* who should act consciously, master of their destinies' (my emphasis).³³⁰ The original reads 'om,' which in Romanian is used to denote both 'man' and 'human being.' My argument is that by this Ceaușescu meant both women and men, as co-constructors of socialism, at least discursively. The new citizen, master of their destinies, was to apply the same principles of the scientific planning of society from bourgeois to socialist to his and her own person. In the same way that scientific management and planning—the transformation of society via the organisation and rationalisation of human behaviour and conduct, particularly work, effectively and economically—would 'strengthen coherence in human activity,'³³¹ so would socialist citizens continuously oversee their own self-transformation.

It was not by accident that social engineering took pains to emphasise continuous self-awareness and self-assessment. To become a socialist citizen meant a continuous use of reason, of one's mind, to tweak and adjust one's personality. More specifically, citizens-in-the-making were asked to be unremittingly conscious of their behaviour, as the surest outward sign they were on the right path. In the words of the philosophers at the Institute of Philosophy: 'The *instructional* aspect of the cultural revolution [...] is indissolubly tied to its *educational* one: the formation of a being with traits of character and behaviour (*trăsături de caracter și comportare*) peculiar to socialist morality' (emphasis in the original).³³²

³³⁰ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninista a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii. Expunere la consfățuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei și al activității politice și cultural-educative* (București, 1971), 85.

³³¹ Sandrine Kott, 'The Social Engineering Project. Exportation of Capitalist Management Culture to Eastern Europe (1950-1980),' in *Planning in Cold-War Europe. Competition, Cooperation, Circulations (1950s-1970s)*, eds M. Christian, S. Kott and O. Matejka (Berlin and Boston, 2018), 123-124.

³³² Academia Republicii Populare Române, Institutul de filozofie. *Dezvoltarea conștiinței socialiste în Republica Populară Română. Contribuții la cercetarea problemei* (București, 1961), 39.

To behave socialist was, in other words, to be socialist. Or, to put it even more succinctly, behaviour was identity. Socialist ideals constrained citizens' behaviours. Constrained behaviour was the organic means through which a cultural revolution, and a transformed self-understanding, would be achieved. The Party, meanwhile, acted as the transformative guiding hand. Again, in the words of the booklet on the development of socialist consciousness issued by the Institute of Philosophy at the Romanian Academy:

[without] the party's guidance, without the untiring activities of ideological and political education of the workers [...], the formation of the new human being of communist society, with a superior political and moral profile, with a broad scientific horizon and cultivated aesthetic tastes, would not be possible.³³³

One should also recall from chapter one the exhortations of party officials to intensify 'cultural enlightenment' whenever relapses or complete by-passes were reported and recommended for investigation.

If being an ideal socialist citizen sounds like hard work, it certainly was. Consider the following character assessment in which 'comrade C.M.' shines as the perfect socialist citizen:

He abides by the laws of the country and party and state decisions. He cultivates normal work and life relations, in good neighbourliness in the commune where he lives. He fulfils diligently his share of the duties he incurs as a commune member. He is known as a balanced (*ponderat*), honest and fair man. [He and the wife] have two underage children in whose upbringing he is invested harmoniously.³³⁴

³³³ Academia, *Dezvoltarea constiintei*, 36.

³³⁴ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 19, 119. Appreciation regarding comrade C. M. Out of the thousands of character assessments I perused between September and November 2019,

No vices, passions, feelings, or drives troubled this good socialist. He also embodied in the most successful way the twin goals of the cultural revolution: the human being with 'traits of character' who behaved specifically the way a socialist was expected to behave.³³⁵ The unabashed transparency of the ideology behind the cultural enlightenment programme relied on its believed power to be 'mastered,' that is 'something that could be acquired by speaking, thinking, acting, and feeling in a specific, studied way.' This is Kiaer and Naiman's use of ideology, with which I agree. By it they mean '[something] that is consciously held and can be consciously acquired and imposed.' In other words, the fashioning of the self was made into an objective science.³³⁶ However, precisely because it was acquired, there were 'no native speakers of it,' as Kiaer and Naiman poetically put it.³³⁷ In practice, this meant errors and relapses.

Furthermore, objectivity was to prove the correct direction of history and the inevitable victory of socialism. The tidiness of the prescriptive grid of correct socialist behaviour, with its neat dichotomies, should have posed no trouble to the assessors of behaviour. Yet what was proper socialist behaviour to one official observer was its complete opposite to another. For example, a character assessment of a Romani man shortlisted for work abroad by the Central Direction for Statistics (hereafter CDS) described him as

this one stood out. Note how it is also called 'an appreciation' (*apreciere*) and not 'character assessment' (*caracterizare*).

³³⁵ Soviet communist values were similar: 'devotion to communism, collectivism, diligent work for the good of society, patriotism, honesty, modesty, as well as a conscientious attitude toward family responsibilities, especially child rearing,' in Deborah Field, 'Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era,' *The Russian Review* 57 no. 4, (October 1998): 601. Furthermore, 'Citizens' emotional harmony, and the resolution of all their personal conflicts, were the prerequisites for economic development, social order, and progress toward communism,' 603.

³³⁶ Kiaer and Naiman, 'Introduction,' 6.

³³⁷ Kiaer and Naiman, 'Introduction,' 6. The full phrasing is as follows: 'In linguistic terms, ideology was transformed from a native to an acquired tongue, a language of which there were no native speakers.'

an element with improper behaviour within the family and in society. Being țigan, he uses a vulgar vocabulary within the family, and he is arrogant and contemptuous towards the neighbours. [...] Also, he is known as an element who is not crazy about work, but on the contrary, he likes to shirk it (*nu se omoară cu munca și dimpotrivă, îi place chiulul*).³³⁸

The reader may be excused for immediately wondering why the CDS shortlisted a shirker for work abroad, which seems to have crossed the mind of the *Securitate* superior who read the report too. He underlined by hand the last two lines of the paragraph I cited and placed a question mark next to them. He also placed a question mark next to the lines which described the man as showing improper behaviour. Three weeks later another report followed, elicited by the superior's order to 'check deeper.'

This time, the man is described as 'a worker who is well prepared professionally, honest, fair, with a proper behaviour at the workplace.'³³⁹ The second report also makes a point of describing the informant as 'an official source' as well as giving his full name, to assure that this account should be treated as far more trustworthy than the previous assessment. The discrepancy between the two assessments illustrates how delegating the work of reading the behaviour of fellow citizens to a range of observers left open the door for varying degrees of human bias. It also shows the situational character of both ethnicity and behavioural traits, as well as the possibilities for misreading identity, intentional or not.

The informants always made use of the prescribed categories to describe socialist behaviour. Some are more formulaic, as with the observation that she/he 'behaves correctly and has a healthy civic-moral conduct both within the family and in his/her relations with the neighbours.' Alternatively, he/she is 'balanced, respectful, a fair and honest element.' Or the 'he/she displays reliability (*seriozitate*) and good fellowship

³³⁸ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 322. Report on [name], February 1983.

³³⁹ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 321. Report, March 1983.

(*colegialitate*).’ Other categories remain formulaic enough whilst offering a glimpse of the concrete social life of the assessed: ‘A serious, calm and respectful person, who is on “hello” terms with the neighbours, without, however, paying each other visits.’ Or the more legalistic ‘he/she has no debts to the state and is not behind with utility bill payments’ and ‘he/she has not sublet their dwelling to other persons.’³⁴⁰

There was surely something suspicious about people who refused to reveal their traits of character, and thus be transparent to others. A worker who ‘never speaks, [...] is terrified of putting a foot wrong, [...] is afraid of his own shadow [...] and whose guiding principle in life is “doesn’t see, doesn’t hear, doesn’t talk”’ was the opposite of the good socialist. The man in question had spent 20 years as a furniture worker in his factory without uttering a bad word about his colleagues or being bad-mouthed in turn. Yet his strategy ‘failed;’ as the character assessment stated:

Although he says close to nothing, his colleagues believe that he may have some friends abroad (they suspect FRG), because no matter how hard he tries to guard against it, sometimes he lets slip certain knowledge about life over there.³⁴¹

The man may have had any number of reasons to be extra cautious in his social interactions. According to observations added to the end of the assessment, his wife had died from cancer a few years prior. His son had been indicted for hooliganism for destroying the school register. Nevertheless, in pragmatic terms, an uncommunicative and unsociable person confounded the proper workings of the process of information gathering. An informant’s job was made infinitely easier by persons who kept work friends and engaged in conversations with the neighbours at

³⁴⁰ For the centrality of socialist legality to socialist identity, see Chapter Four.

³⁴¹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 15, 128-130. Informative note, July 1986. The assessment had been requested by the *Securitate* because Institutul Proiect Bucuresti, his workplace, had granted him permission to travel to the Republic of Hungary.

home. At a deeper level, however, timorousness indicated danger. Behind it there could always hide an enemy of socialism.

Take for example the assessment of an unskilled labourer working for the housing association in Bucharest. As the source described him: '[He] became part of the workforce simply to have a "cover". He is known as a thief and a speculator (*bişniţar*), activities which provide him with the necessary material means to feed and clothe his family.' In this case, trying very hard to behave in the proper way was simply a ruse:

Although he tries not to enter into conflict with his neighbours by seeking to behave as correctly as possible towards them, his entourage, the parties he throws, and above all, the vulgar language he uses in his communications with his family members and his guests cause [the neighbours'] indignation.³⁴²

Keeping in mind that two years before, in 1983, he had contacted Radio Free Europe to gain 'approval for his emigration request unless he was given a dwelling,' this man's 'cover' veiled not only 'civic and moral' misdoings, but possible danger to the state as well.

Sometimes not even 'suffering with the nerves,' which usually offered a rational explanation to outsiders for the failure to behave socialist, could fend off accusations of sinister activities. As the hand-written annotations on an assessment about a man who had sent 70 memoranda and letters to various party officials between 1983 and 1987, put it: 'Isn't it possible that his "craziness" is the screen behind which he wishes to hide in order to carry out his activities [injurious to the state]?'³⁴³ He was asking for a better

³⁴² CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 347 back and front. Informative report, October 1985.

³⁴³ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 40, 34, April 1987. Report detailing that the man had refused a flat repartition on the grounds that he had been told by the former tenant that it was not well insulated. The desperation felt from the man's letters is striking; he had lost a baby to lung disease caused by extreme mould, and his wife was severely ill. Finally, in May 1987, he agreed to move into a 3-bedroomed flat in central Bucharest. It is worth mentioning that the same Securitate superior who suspected government sabotage gave instructions, in April 1987, that the man's 'situation, if indeed so precarious, be resolved in a reasonable manner' (34 back).

flat for his lung-diseased family. The assessment was one of many, and they relayed the man had sent letters to the International Red Cross; the ambassador of the FRG in Romania; the UN; as well as to Ceaușescu's home address. The possibility of enemies hiding behind the façade of respectability—or insanity in this case—never left the Party.³⁴⁴ Luckily, in a society where behaviour was taken to be the clearest indication of a true socialist identity, even skilful fakers could not fool the collective. One source described a work colleague as 'A person fairly distant at her core, despite all appearances of affability.'³⁴⁵

The fuller contours of the good socialist emerge in the language of negative assessments of behaviour. 'Apathetic, without initiative;' 'a vacillating character which does not inspire trust;' 'withdrawn, with no relation in the block of flats;' 'rowdy, he/she receives frequent visits from outside the block, parties a lot;' 'conceited, arrogant;' 'receives visits from people other than relatives;' 'keeps a dubious entourage;' 'has a tendency towards blabbering and bragging;' 'he's a good guy, but sometimes he loafs around like a woman;' 'an easy woman, she likes to be courted, she's too coquettish and unreliable;' 'she goes crazy for fashions;' 'a naïve person, easily swayed;' 'fickle, hungry for money;' he/she 'doesn't fulfil their communal and civic duties;' 'an obstreperous and recalcitrant element;' 'inclination towards gossip and minimal effort.'

³⁴⁴ According to Burakowski, the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia fanned Ceaușescu's fears of Soviet infiltration. To make an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust worse, the defection of Ion Mihai Pacepa, Secretary of State and deputy head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, to the U.S. in 1978 'gravely shook Ceaușescu.' See Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989). Geniul Carpatilor*, Kindle edition.

³⁴⁵ In Soviet Russia in the 1920s-1930s, Igan Halfin argues that 'what interrogators ultimately sought insight into was the defenders' subjective state, not their outward behaviour. Actions were relevant only to the extent that they could be interpreted as hermeneutical signs helping to evaluate spiritual conditions' (324). Igan Halfin, 'Looking into Oppositionists' Souls: Inquisition Communist Style,' *Russian Review* 60 (2001): 316-339. However, in the Romanian case behaviour was not merely read as a sign of the underlying 'spiritual conditions' but was morality itself, at once sustaining and reinforcing one another. Which explains why the subject was thought to be transparently 'readable' by the assessors of character and was given the opportunity for self-explanation only when the assessment(s) were so scandalous as to be puzzling.

It bears reiterating here that both Nicolae Ceaușescu and academics conceptualised and teased out the complexities of the cultural enlightenment programme at the discursive—and thus universal level—of the abstract ‘new human being.’ At the level of everyday socialism, however, traditional—and one might say bourgeois—conceptualisations of women as fickle; lazy; and too free with their sexual favours endured. Particularly when assessed against both late socialist natalist policies and committed industrialisation. Moreover, certain formulations encapsulated in a few words the entire ethos of socialist identity, even as they might appear not to reveal much. Take for example that he/she ‘has no vices or passions’ or, alternatively, ‘is consumed with feelings and drives which could lead to exaltation.’ Exaltation, by which assessors meant an intoxication of the senses, might lead the citizen ‘to acts outside the legal frame,’ which was a setback to socialist identity.

To be possessed by vices and passions took one beyond reason and evinced either a failure, or a resistance, to become socialist.³⁴⁶ To be consumed with feelings and drives pointed unreservedly to a suspension of active involvement in the programme of cultural transformation, with the risk of anti-social behaviour invariably peeping through the door separating the socialist from its antagonist. For anti-social behaviour was always classed as anti-socialist, and it always pointed to a failure to behave in a reasonable way. For a reasonable—also read objective—behaviour, as understood by Party ideologues, had the exceptional quality of being predictable.

The expectation of predictability was an integral part of the scientific management of mature socialist Romanian society. If one remembers that the republic’s citizens were as much a national resource as the heavy

³⁴⁶ The Christian undertones of training the body to fight off temptations through the power of the mind are not accidental. In his chapter ‘Working on Oneself,’ which details prescribed Soviet practices of self-transformation, Kharkhordin asserts that ‘earlier sources [1955] even used religious language.’ Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual*, 249. Halfin agrees: ‘Communist civilisation inherited important Christian practices.’ Halfin, “Looking,” 318, footnote 7.

industry and natural resources, then it comes as no surprise that the positivist faith in the ability to 'read' the outward manifestations—i.e. behaviour—of socialist identity permeated approaches to civic socialism.

The revelation of identity to the outside observer had been made possible by what Adela Hîncu identified as the 'theoretical reworking, in the 1970s, of the relationship between individual and society in socialism.' As the collectivist ethos of the 1950s gave way to 'revisionist Marxist and Marxist humanist thought in the early 1960s, party ideologues began to explore 'new ideas and practices of observing, analysing, and intervening in the social realities of socialist society.'³⁴⁷ The character assessments on which the *Securitate* relied in its management of citizens placed the individual within the collective without, however, melting the former into the latter. Even as both the individual and the collective were circularly making and being made by the other.

The *Securitate's* interest in the individual privileged the particularity of behaviour over the universalism of the collective categories of worker and neighbour. Yet I do not argue that this interest in the individual amounted to an atomisation of society for easier control. Rather, the point of the character assessments was to ensure that the individual, with their own degree of acceptable or questionable socialist behaviour, would honour the idea of socialist citizenship. In other words, that they, as individuals, benefitted the social writ large.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Hîncu, 'Accounting for the "Social,"' 14. Hîncu also cites Krylova who challenges the solidification of the collectivist ethos paradigm in Soviet historiography (14). Rather than carrying over the dissolution of the individual into the collective, post-Bolshevik discourse aimed to connect the two. See Anna Krylova, 'Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm: "Class Instinct" as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis,' *Slavic Review* 62 no. 1, (2003): 1-23.

³⁴⁸ Here I have found Anna Krylova's critique of certain scholars' penchant to treat the Soviet period as a Bolshevik boilerplate illuminating. In my reading of Romanian late socialism, I second her analysis that the focus on the individual was not to the detriment of socialist society, for the 'social good.' The latter she defines as 'how to "connect" (that is, relate) individual predispositions and goals [...] with the social (be it community, collective, society, or common good)'. Anna Krylova, 'Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament,' *Contemporary European History* 23 no. 2 (May 2014): 171.

The main remit of the post-Gheorghiu-Dej Romanian *Securitate* was codified in June 1967 by decree. It saw the establishment of the Department for State Security, whose main task was to 'coordinate, control and guide as a whole the activities of the security organs in order to prevent, uncover and extinguish actions aiming to harm the state security.'³⁴⁹ In Romanian historiography, much has been written about the infamous *Securitate* and its role in oppressing the Romanian people. Most of it is in the lachrymose register of post-1989 Romanian anti-communist indignation which asks, rhetorically, how such a 'criminal' institution could have happened to a 'profoundly Christian' people such as the Romanians.³⁵⁰

I am not attempting to downplay what it meant to have been on the receiving end of harassment and life-changing prison sentences in state-socialist Romania. Yet Stefano Bottoni is on the right track when he states that 'during the last two decades of the Communist regime, the state security apparatus acted as an agent of social control more than as an instrument of open repression.' First, as he states, 'The restricted access to information and the impossibility to channel criticism into intraparty discussion made state security the only state organ that could alert unchallenged party leader Ceaușescu about the growing popular dissatisfaction with the regime.'³⁵¹ Furthermore, as I show in Chapter One, *Securitate* officers continued with the tasks of collecting information on the 'mood of the population', as did the Direction for the People's Safety in postwar socialism. Via the 'mood of the population reports' socialist officials literally aimed to know their citizens and their needs, but also brewing discontent. Additionally, the language of the personnel collecting

³⁴⁹ Cristian Troncota, *Duplicitarii. O istorie a Serviciilor de informatii si Securitate ale regimului comunist din Romania 1965-1989* (Bucuresti, 2003), 34.

³⁵⁰ Troncota, *Duplicitarii*, 35. Although I am singling out this monograph, he is by no means the only author in post-1989 Romania to treat the *Securitate* as an unjust historical aberration. See works written under the patronage of the CNSAS in particular.

³⁵¹ Stefano Bottoni, 'State Violence and Social Control in Communist Romania,' available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/state-violence-and-social-control-communist-romania> (retrieved 04.06.2020).

information in the 'field,' as it were, could be ominously honest in their addressing their superiors.

Moreover, the Securitate had a preventative function. Prevention presupposed knowledge, which could only have come from surveillance. And surveillance's greatest role was to help predict behaviour, which would have made the job of uncovering and extinguishing 'activities harming the state security' rational, effective and efficient.

It is according to this logic that I read the character assessments. The sheer volume and effort invested in 'knowing' the population could not have served the singular purpose of policing, which meant to control. Certainly, uncovering meant policing, yet persons 'accused' of particularly scandalous or problematic behaviour were always asked to give a self-declaration explaining themselves. To give one the opportunity to engage in self-reflection and thereby elicit a change in their behaviour was to engage in the socialist practice of self-awareness and self-criticism for ongoing improvement, under the 'moulding hand' of surveillance, as Peter Holquist put it. In his words, 'the whole purpose [of surveillance] was to act on people, to change them.'³⁵²

Generally, in the 1970s and 1980s, if the self-declarations reflected the appropriate degree of self-reflection and self-awareness of one's errors, it was enough to let the person go. I must qualify this statement however, with the caveat that such persons were usually workers—therefore a privileged category to begin with, at least discursively—and their offences were not enormous in their significance. Unlike the category of dissident intellectuals, for example. Self-declarations were essential tools in the

³⁵² Peter Holquist, "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik Surveillance and its Pan-European Context,' *The Journal of Modern History* 69 no. 3, (1997): 417. Holquist traces the shift from imperial modes of control of the population, interested exclusively in whether subjects were obedient or not, with what they thought and believed being of no interest—territoriality—to the Soviet interest in surveillance as the managing of the population's psyches—governmentality. He firmly separates the two and argues that in Soviet Russia different agencies dealt with different types of information, i.e. either pertaining to policing or to surveillance. In the Romanian case, however, the Securitate was both the policing and the moulding hand of the state, and behaviour was taken both to be predicated on and the direct consequence of what people thought.

programme of self-transformation in that they offered citizens the opportunity to unpack, and remain aware of, personal hurdles on the road to a socialist identity.

Nevertheless, character assessments as records of bad behaviour were not destroyed, but archived, just in case the accused fell back into problematic behaviours.³⁵³ And herein lie the inescapable tensions inherent in the *Securitate's* twin remit, as both the policing and the moulding hand of the State. On the one hand, declarations of self-justification offered citizens the tools of their ongoing socialist self-fashioning.³⁵⁴ On the other, misdeeds were archived and the person in question placed under informal vigilance, suggesting that a past misbehaviour meant a possible future misbehaviour. Potentiality of behaviour, therefore, meant either the possibility of misdeed or the actualisation encapsulated in the misdeed itself. The *Securitate* deemed both unrivalled in prevention of harm to the state/party.

It was in the spirit of knowledge as prediction, as prevention, that the officers recorded in the database both actualisations of harmful potential, as well as the potential for harm lurking within citizens who might break the law at any time. In the former category, there were persons 'undergoing legal prosecution or who have been the object of such procedures; those with reactionary political antecedents; those who have travelled abroad for work or for personal reasons and have failed to return upon expiration of their visas.' Instances of the latter comprised persons 'who have applied for permission to settle abroad; who have asked for permission to marry foreign citizens; [and] foreigners settled in Romania.'³⁵⁵

³⁵³ For an example of how self-declarations worked as a tool in the programme of transformation, see the case of S. in Chapter 3. In a masterful feat of linguistic dexterity, he depoliticised a political crime—unredeemable—by skilfully placing himself as a young socialist dad with so much more potential for self-development, including overseeing his child's socialist progress, thereby bringing his political crime into the realm of social misbehaviour—redeemable.

³⁵⁴ As did the 'breaking up of certain entourages; warnings; comrades' courts.' 'Termination of the right to be in the country' and being 'declared an undesirable person' were already policing measures. 'Instructions regarding the organisation and functioning of the Securitate record keeping,' cited in Troncota, *Duplicitarii*, 5-76.

³⁵⁵ Cited in Troncota, *Duplicitarii*, 48-49.

Unlike potential as the optimistic capacity for improvement, here, potential was the probability that one could engage in 'acts harmful to the state.' These filled *Securitate* officers with dread. One could never know in what ways, and more importantly, under what circumstances the latter would become actualised. Would it be right at the moment when Ceaușescu would be crossing Bucharest? Would it be during Gorbachev's visit? This constant uncertainty partially explains why the language describing behaviour ascribed to persons 'suffering with the nerves' remained strictly within the boundaries of the grid describing anti-social(ist) behaviour. A lack of rational awareness and self-scrutiny over one's way of occupying the socialist realm could produce the most unpredictable consequences.

Pregnant with the danger of the intoxication of the senses, and subsequently, with so much potential for misbehaviour and even illegality, so did vices and passions, sentiments and drives. Their presence, laid bare by one's (mis)behaviour, alerted the assessors of socialist identity to a deficit of reason and self-awareness. For the 'psycho-nervously ill' this anti-socialist condition was explicable as a clinical breakdown of one's rational faculties. Yet the failure of the 'non-mentally ill' to behave in a socialist manner seemed to have been a product of a lack of moral sense.

It was not simply that reason was solely responsible for the success of the socialist project. The accomplished socialist, who was supposed to have internalised the educational tenets of the cultural revolution, appeared to already possess the ground on which cultural enlightenment fell so productively. Lenin wrote that revolutionary workers possessed a working-class instinct which led them to 'finally embrace their Marxist destiny both to act in accordance with history and to make it,' even without the party's guidance.³⁵⁶ In the same vein, socialist morality seemed to be both the cause and the effect undergirding the successfully enlightened socialist.

³⁵⁶ Krylova, 'Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm,' 16. Questioning the unjustified centrality of the 'class consciousness' paradigm in Soviet studies, a centrality acquired at the expense of the notion on 'class instinct,' Krylova offers a close reading of *What is to be Done?* by tracing Lenin's genealogy of thought on the revolutionary worker at 'the intersection of the populist notions of self and the biologist undercurrents in late

I have drawn attention above to the discrepancy between the two-character assessments which described the same person in two very different lights. Aside from the expected human bias and the situated character of work colleagues—what is an amazing co-worker to some might be described negatively by others—there is the question of the reliability of *Securitate* sources. Yet to discount them as unusable would mean to miss out on socialist life as lived day after day by flat dwellers and factory workers, both Roma and non-Roma.

To be sure, citizens were coerced into giving false declarations too, as a report on the case of C.E., a young obstreperous woman who shared a flat with two pensioners, attested. One of her neighbours was called to the local militia office to write a declaration about the young woman's behaviour, to be used as evidence in the eviction process started by the dwellers' association in C.E.'s building. After she finished writing about the 'negative' behaviour of C.E., the colonel who took the testimony 'ripped it to pieces' and 'made' the neighbour sign a pre-written one, 'which described, against reality, the positive behaviour of C.E.' At first, the neighbour refused to sign the 'make-believe' (*nereală*) declaration but did so when the colonel threatened not to let her daughter back into the country.³⁵⁷

It is precisely the messiness of these reports, reassuring otherwise, which affords such a rich view of the organisation of social relations in 1970s' and 1980s' Romania. Not least because it was the very messiness which prompted the *Securitate* superiors to ask for wider and deeper checks in certain cases, which also broadened the pool of perspectives, thus adding layers of richness. It is not true that *Securitate* officers were evil

nineteenth-century European philosophy (15).³⁵⁷ As such, Lenin found the 1905 Russian workers to have turned into a revolutionary proletariat by instinct, 'in accordance with its historical mission without a fully conscious intent (16).'

³⁵⁷ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 15, 465 back and front, July 1985. Additionally, as Katherine Verdery states, having been herself on the receiving end of *Securitate* surveillance, some officers would dictate a report and then ask for informants' mere signature. As she puts it, 'I know from another informer used by this same officer that [the *Securitate* officer had provided or even dictated some of the reports].' Katherine Verdery, *My life as a spy*, 226.

automatons bent on locking people away. Some dossiers comprise up to 30 pages on one citizen, including conflicting accounts concerning the same person. It may be the case that higher-ups' orders to their lower-rank officers to 'check deeper' and ensure intelligence was not mere gossip is more revealing of mistrust in their subordinates than anything else. Either way, historians are left with a wealth of voices, perspectives, and bureaucratic trails on social relations in 1970s' and 1980s' state-socialist Romania.

.....

On 20 May 1987, during preparations for *Misiunea Mesteacănul* (Mission the Birch tree), the code name for Mikhail Gorbachev's impending visit to Romania scheduled between 25-27 May, Mrs. P. was reported to have been referred to the Bucharest militia. She was scheduled for admission to a sanatorium for the duration of the presidential visit so as to 'prevent certain negative acts or behaviour.'³⁵⁸ Two days later, an internal handwritten report confirmed, with professional satisfaction, that 'the basement of [her] building has been secured' and the militia had been tasked with sending the woman to the sanatorium until after the visit.³⁵⁹

Her removal from her home address in Calea Aviatorilor in central Bucharest, an artery for the itinerary of party and state officials, ended four years of surveillance reports and character assessments of the woman who was said to be 'psychically ill.' Described either as 'suffering from a psycho-nervous condition;' 'suffering with the nerves;' or as a schizophrenic in the final report, she had been brought to the attention of the Bucharest *Securitate* in November 1983 by a neighbour. At the time, they described her as a person 'suffering for several years from a neuro-psychic condition,

³⁵⁸ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 176. Notice sent to the Bucharest militia by the Bucharest Security, Service 510, May 1987.

³⁵⁹ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 175. Internal report to the Department for the Security of State detailing on the measures taken to 'secure' the building on Calea Aviatorilor, May 1987.

which has lately been worsening.³⁶⁰ A year later, a source described her as follows: 'She is psychically ill, with aggressive expressions of behaviour (*manifestări de comportament agresive*), with a vocabulary unworthy of a civilised person and she completely lacks a sense of responsibility and measure.'³⁶¹ To illustrate this type of behaviour, the informant gave an example: '[...] sometimes she goes out on the balcony and begins to shout using coarse words.'

Of course, what made her a 'person of interest' for the *Securitate* officers was neither a concern for her mental wellbeing nor her erratic behaviour within the building, as unbearable for the neighbours as it may have been. It was the possibility of her committing the unthinkable offence of ruining the republic's reputation by making a spectacle of herself in front of Gorbachev. 'Uttering coarse words' on the balcony, and 'going running into the [itinerary] street and lying in the middle of the road,' would have spelled a diplomatic disaster. Doing so during Ceaușescu's travels would have additionally constituted the political crime of 'sabotaging the government,' as a report following a building check at her address put it.³⁶² The very presence of disorderly people would have alerted the head of the state that the *Securitate* officers were either not doing their job properly or did not have a firm enough grip on the citizenry.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 194. Note, November 1983.

³⁶¹ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 192. Informative note (copy), November 1983.

³⁶² CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 195 back. List of dwellers living at the same address as Mrs. P, with annotations on their individual biographies. Undated.

³⁶³ Certainly, the remit of the *Securitate* was to prevent harm to the security of the state, although temporarily removing a woman 'suffering from schizophrenia' and unpredictable behaviour from the public eye without a long-term strategy does not seem to be the most rational measure within a system claiming rationality and planning as its foundational values. However, keeping up appearances and superficially solving problems rather than attempting to dig deeper into various ills was, according to Adam Burakowski, typical for the official *modus operandi* in Ceaușescu's Romania. The Valea Jiului incident on 16 September 1972, when the miners at the Valea Jiu mines confronted Ceaușescu on the second day of his work visit and complained of being overworked and underfed, is a 'perfect example for how crises were solved and economic decisions taken in Romania under Ceaușescu.' The head of the state immediately reacted and promised the miners that he would decrease the production plan for coal as well as speed up the building of dwellings in the area. He had done all this without consulting any of his entourage, even at the cost of 'derailing the whole national economy for promising to tweak with the five-year plan, simply to defuse a

In any event, her behaviour was worrying enough for a superior to annotate the 1983 report with the following instruction: 'Let us know at all times her behaviour in connection with activities under our jurisdiction.' The practice of surveillance affords us a rich view of both the discursive grid of socialist identity, from the exemplary to the acceptable, but also of how socialist identity played out in everyday encounters, the fraught, the harmonious and the in-between, among citizens.

Let us return to Mrs P. In addition to her possibly government-sabotaging behaviour, she was reported to be lodging her brother 'without legal forms,' and 'together with her brother she consumes alcoholic beverages excessively, after which they engage in obscene behaviour.'³⁶⁴ The use of language and gestures which could offend, outrage or harm the decency of other citizens; being a public nuisance; and disturbing the public peace and quiet had been criminalised by Decree no. 153/1970. The subletting of parts of a state-owned dwelling without a formal contract had been made illegal by law no.5/1973.³⁶⁵

In another case, itself stretching over a few years, a young woman, C.E., who shared a flat with two pensioners was denounced to the president of the dwellers' association (*asociația de locatari*) on 23 October 1985 for bad behaviour. Because the address was Calea Victoriei, the main artery for the itinerary of official convoys, the case was brought to the attention of the *Securitate*, who ordered further information and surveillance. Although the young woman in question had only been in the flat for a year, she was said to 'love to live in promiscuity with her boyfriend, [...] sends the mother to the bathroom whenever she is busy [with men],' and

tense situation.' Simultaneously, he would find local scapegoats, who 'had no influence on decisions taken centrally.' Burakowski, *Geniul Carpatilor*.

³⁶⁴ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 194.

³⁶⁵ Mrs. P.'s brother did, however, have a permit of temporary stay at his sister's address, although an internal report recommended it be withdrawn on the grounds that it had been issued without the approval of the *Securitate*. CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 10, 193 front and back. Note, January 1984.

regularly 'buys and consumes alcohol with her mother.'³⁶⁶ She was also denounced for lodging her mother in her room 'without legal forms.'³⁶⁷

She would also play loud music during the night, slam the doors, call her neighbours names, and terrorise 'the neighbour below her with verbal offences, and by dusting and spitting out of the window.' The denunciation letter assessed the young woman's behaviour as follows: 'From the way she behaves (*după cum se manifestă*) and from her own words, she suffers with the nerves and has behavioural issues (*tulburări de comportament*).'³⁶⁸ From her flatmates to her neighbours and the informant who provided most of the notes, her anti-social behaviour could only be attributed to a suspension of reason caused by a breakdown in her nervous system.

This anecdotal diagnosis seemed warranted all the more given the number of people offended by the young woman's behaviour. More than one neighbour reported her to have carried on with her ways, even after numerous reprimands; her own promise to redress her behaviour after a talking-to by the militia staff at her local station; as well as an eviction order which had been won against her by the dwellers' association.

Whenever anti-social behaviour could not be attributed to criminal causes, it tended to be explained away as 'craziness,' or its less biting synonym, 'nervous condition.' For example, an assessment of an admittedly excellent professional factory worker described his behaviour as follows:

An irascible, violent man (he's had physical fights with several colleagues), and who generally speaking displays the behaviour and nervous fits of the type which fall outside the sphere of a normal person. For this reason, all his work collective considers him to be crazy and they are treating him as such.

³⁶⁶ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 15, 459. Complaint letter dated 23.10.1984, which most probably was the date the letter was added to the woman's file, signed by one of the flat mates and two neighbours, detailing the anti-social behaviour of the young woman.

³⁶⁷ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 15, 456 front and back. Report on the young woman's mother, May 1985.

³⁶⁸ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 15, 459. Complaint letter, October 1984.

He had also reportedly married a 16-year-old, divorced her after the birth of the second child, and married a second time, convincing the second wife to abandon their new-born in the hospital. The second wife was also described as displaying 'totally unacceptable behaviour both at work and outside work, [for which reason] many colleagues no longer consider her in the possession of all mental faculties, although they couldn't convince her to seek help.' To top off this litany of misbehaviour, his home and workplace were 'particularly filthy and dirty' and 'the two of them together have all sorts of active lawsuits at the sector's³⁶⁹ tribunal, both being known as professional litigants (*reclamagii de meserie*).'³⁷⁰

The report links the 'filth and dirt' at home and at work specifically to a breakdown in the fabric of morality of the man in question. This went beyond a failure of hygienic living per se. The complete absence of moral guilt of a father and mother who could abandon their new-born and live completely oblivious to all socialist norms without being criminals by law could only be described as 'crazy' or 'mentally ill.'³⁷¹ What else other than a clinically troubled mind could explain such abject failure to behave in a socialist manner?

What is striking in this language is that behaviour associated with a 'psycho-nervous condition' depicts precisely the type of behaviour associated with anti-social behaviour. It is no coincidence that the language used to describe the behaviour of 'psychically ill' persons could only explain it in terms of a lack of reason. Lacking a sense of responsibility and measure; using a vocabulary unworthy of a civilised person; abusing alcohol and causing brawls and quarrels; living in filth; picking fights; filing suits indiscriminately; and abandoning one's children signified a flight from

³⁶⁹ Sectors were, and still are, administrative territorial units for Bucharest.

³⁷⁰ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 34, 79-83. Relations report, August 1987.

³⁷¹ Doubtless, the label of 'mentally ill' could be applied for the swift and convenient disposal of political enemies. Yet the persons I am describing here were all social cases, which is why the crossover between the language used to describe 'craziness' and that used to describe anti-social behaviour is so interesting.

reason. This was the only possible explanation for such an astonishing failure of the socialist enlightenment programme. The ability continuously to keep one's fancies, drives, and 'passions' in check; the natural exercise of moderation, equilibrium, and restraint as the norm—they all marked one out as a true socialist.

.....

When it came to assessing the character of Romani citizens, there was no mention of the possibility of mental illness. Their egregiously anti-socialist behaviour seemed attributable to some inborn 'țigan'-ness, which resisted acceptance of the values of socialism. The 'nomadic and seminomadic țigani' still lived 'a life almost like in the past'—i.e. one that rejected the norms of modern living conditions—in 1972.³⁷² At that time officials placed the blame at the door of state and party institutions; organisations; and officials for having failed to engage the Roma in the national programme of cultural enlightenment.³⁷³ However, in the character assessments the Roma are single-handedly made responsible for their failure to behave socialist. More importantly, it was their 'țigan' nature, conflated here with Romani ethnicity, which was taken as explanation for such failure. And not their mental state, as was the case with other Romanians.

The language of reports brings to light the way that certain types of behaviour were associated with 'being țigan.' For example, a man approved for work abroad is described, together with his wife, as dwellers who are:

recalcitrant, disruptive and devoid of principles (*recalcitranți, tulburenți si neprincipiali*) in their relations with the neighbours and the co-dwellers who know them. Their children are not properly educated, they disrupt the neighbours' quiet, it being believed that

³⁷² See Chapter 1.

³⁷³ Notwithstanding the requirement for self-criticism as one of the socialist commandments, the authors of the reports on the living conditions of some Roma appear painfully aware that there was little inclination to include them in the cultural revolution programme other than discursively.

at their origins they may be țigani (*crezându-se că la origini ar fi țigani*).

Additionally, the wife, a weaver, is characterised as a quarrelsome and unobliging woman (*o femeie certăreață si neserviabilă*).³⁷⁴

Let us unpack these few words bursting with underlying meanings. The behaviour of the two spouses seems very close to the type of recalcitrance, disruption and general stubborn unwillingness to oblige the neighbours as that of, say, C.E. Yet unlike her case, the behaviour of the 'may-be-țigani' husband and wife are not afforded the mitigating excuse of mental illness, even anecdotally. Instead, the behaviour appeared to stem from their 'țigan'-ness, as did their inability—or unwillingness—to educate their five children in the socialist spirit.

Uneducated children as proof of the parents' failure to be part of the socialist body was certainly not confined to descriptions of Romani families. Although the youth in general were talked about as the building block of the new enlightenment programme, on whom so much educational and instructional attention and devotion was expended, parents' own education was as commented-upon. Sociologist and philosopher Haralambie Culea put in as follows in his 1975 workplan,

if moral education were possible only with regard to children and adolescents—as many authors have been implying, then our national programme, the latest prescriptions on the coordinating of the totality of societal life on the basis of communist and socialist ethics and morals, would be essentially limited.³⁷⁵

As Ceaușescu had driven the point home in 1971, the issue of the new socialist society was a question to be looked at not solely from a materialist

³⁷⁴ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 326 back and front. Communication, December 1984.

³⁷⁵ ANIC, Fond ASSP, Secția Filozofie si logica, File 12/1975. Haralambie Culea, Omogenizare si diferentiere in procesul culturalizarii de mase. Contradictii privind culturalizarea de masa a unor categorii de populatie. Lucrare de plan pe 1975, 189.

point of view, but socially and spiritually too. This 'presuppos[ed] fortifying the spirit of responsibility of each member of society.'³⁷⁶

Failure to educate oneself, which usually was feared to entail the failure to educate one's children as socialists, was therefore a dereliction of civic and moral duty. All parents, be they Romani or non-Romani, were held accountable for the education of the Republic's future citizens. Yet the logic of targeting Căldărari Roma children in particular, whose parents were deemed in 1972 to be especially resistant to being enlightened,³⁷⁷ appears to have been extended to all Roma. It was turned into proof of their deterministic resistance to learn the socialist ways.

Consider the very shrewd use of the children trope in the following denunciation letter sent to 'Comrade General of the Bucharest *Securitate* for sector one' in July 1986:

I [must] add that 'the spectacle' offered in permanence by the private dwellers [...] is 'studied' with much interest by the staff of the [...] embassy opposite, who, when the 'folklore' grows more intense, even take photographs of the completely naked or shabbily dressed children.³⁷⁸

The author's sarcastic use of the term folklore is evidenced by the quotation marks he employs around it. In its non-disingenuous usage, it invokes honoured national traditions and forms or art, usually passed down orally to subsequent generations. It also brings to mind forms of folkloric representation such as dancing, singing, and reciting. All, therefore, to do with the public exhibiting of such forms of art. Yet in putting 'folklore' in quotation marks, the author of this denunciation letter removed all the positive associations with the term, thus foreclosing all possible readings but the salacious. The pairing of Romani children and 'folklore,' therefore,

³⁷⁶ Ceaușescu, *Propuneri*, 51 and 85.

³⁷⁷ See Chapter 1.

³⁷⁸ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 22, 300. Letter to Comrade General of the Bucharest *Securitate* for sector 1, July 1986.

invokes the orality of folklore art as illiteracy; forms or representation as shameless exhibitionism; and the totality of passed-down oral traditions as the inheritance not of a cherished national body, but of aliens.

The private dwellers the author mentions, together with their children, were two 'Roma families'³⁷⁹ occupying two thirds of a state-owned building, together with other neighbours. The other third was rented out to the Foreign Ministry. The author of the letter took it upon himself to let the *Securitate* know of the 'incompatibility,' as he put it, between the high level of one third of the building and persons 'with criminal records among the two Roma families.' Moreover, 'numerous other Roma, strangers, impossible to identify, visit the two families, as do (possibly) Arab students and other dark-coloured nationalities.' Casting himself as the shepherd of Romania's reputation, the author felt 'obliged' to bring to the attention of the *Securitate* 'actions which could prejudice relations between the country and party and certain foreign states.'³⁸⁰

An internal *Securitate* report dated a month and a half later, however, states that the animosity between the letter's author, who lived at the same address, and the two Romani families had been, in fact, caused by the letter writer himself. He had 'pretended to be a retired officer with the Ministry of the Interior and threatened the [two Roma families] with eviction.' Furthermore, according to certain informants, the denunciator 'may be involved in gambling, and it should not be discounted that he allowed himself to become involved in gambling with his neighbours.'³⁸¹ A possibly bitter man who denounced his neighbours to take revenge may appear unsurprising. What is noteworthy is the invocation of the imagery of both

³⁷⁹ The author of the letter uses the term 'rom' (Roma) and not 'țigan.'

³⁸⁰ In the Czechoslovak Republic, such concerns were already voiced in the mid-1950s, when 'The local planning commission in Stará Lubovna requested government funds in mid- 1956 to demolish five wooden huts occupied by Roma quarry-workers and their families in the tourist area of Vyšný Ružbachy on the grounds they might be used as negative propaganda "by visitors from capitalist countries".' The trope of naked, and thus neglected, children photographed by "tourists from capitalist countries" was used by Chief party ideologist Jiri Hendrych in a report in 1958. See Donert, *Rights of the Roma*, 110 and 124 respectively.

³⁸¹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 22, 299. Report, 20 August 1986.

naked 'țigan' children—by which the 'concerned citizen' meant children unlooked after, and therefore uneducated—as well as the trope of 'țigani' fraternising with foreigners as a threat to Romania's reputation.

In addition to potentially threatening both the state's security and its reputation, the two Romani families were also denounced for 'throw[ing] smaller or larger blowouts several times a week, attended by unidentified people, which pollute social cohabitation with the neighbours.' The denunciation letter thus constructs the triad of 'țigan' behaviour which surfaces again and again in character assessments about the anti-socialism of the Roma: 1) their disruptive behaviour at home; 2) their uneducated children; and 3) fraternising with disreputable foreigners and/or other Roma. All character assessments report on the company the assessed kept. Here, what interested the *Securitate* were, of course, potential political links with foreigners or with Romanians settled abroad. Yet the friends one kept and the visits one received also revealed elements of the morality of a person, as well as the person's willingness to learn from the right collective.

This is why the Roma's keeping company exclusively with other Roma was viewed as doubly-suspicious. Not only did their improper behaviour feed other Roma's impropriety, but it also appeared blatantly to disregard Ceaușescu's orders in 1977 that 'seminomadic and nomadic țigani' be allocated building plots and dwellings in such a way as to 'prevent negative group influence,' as we saw in Chapter One. Even when they kept company with non-Romani Romanians, it always seemed to be the wrong sort. Consider the following assessment of a Romani man: 'In the building, the only person with whom [he] has good relations is [name and particulars], who is known to have been in prison for several years for murder, freed on account of his being demented.'³⁸² The same man was also reported to be visited by 'various individuals, țigani in particular, he being țigan as well.'

To be sure, we cannot know for certain whether the particular Roma in these character assessments had themselves been classified as

³⁸² CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 7, 384. Report, May 1979.

seminomadic or nomadic before the allocation of flats and shared rooms. Yet the obsessive reports that noted they were visited by, or seen in the company of, 'other țigani' strongly suggests they were expected to 'learn' proper socialist behaviour from their non-Romani Romanian neighbours. For example, a Romani bricklayer from Bucharest was described as follows:

In the building he is characterised as an unreliable (*neserios*) element, dissolute (*libertin*), consumed with the vice of drink, with an improper behaviour at home and in society. [...] He keeps company with other țigani in the neighbourhood with a similar behaviour and an interest in business (*preocupări afaceriste*).³⁸³

Additionally, he was said to 'return home oftentimes drunk or under the influence of alcohol [whereupon] he has disagreements with the wife, which most times degenerate into arguments and physical fights.'

The Romani bricklayer man had been shortlisted for work outside Romania, and according to the sources, there was no indication that he planned to remain abroad. However, as the sources further made clear, the man 'd[id] not display [the necessary] ethical and moral guarantees to travel abroad.' What did this negative assessment mean when he also received a positive assessment from others? My argument is that rather than look at these assessments as accurate reports on people's everyday behaviour, they instead show how normalised was the association of Roma with particular negative characteristics. Regular drinking, most times excessively; arguments and brawls between spouses; and fraternising with other Roma at least as disruptive—and possibly also engaged in illegal doings—, were the usual accusations that constituted the disreputable moral universe of the Roma.

This is not a generalisation I make lightly. Take the following assessment of a Romani family: 'Our sources state that although they are

³⁸³ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 29, 219 back and front. Report

ṭigani, no brawls or visits have been noted at their address.³⁸⁴ The expectation that Roma-as-ṭigani would engage in morally improper behaviour because they did not possess what it took to become socialist is inescapably encapsulated in the apparently positive appraisal, rendered null by the unforgiving 'although.'

Examples of Roma behaving reprehensibly were plenty. Under checks for Mission *Traseul*, Securitate officers conducted checks on dwellers occupying flats either overlooking or in close proximity to the itinerary of party officials. Three reports informed, most egregiously, of a family who occupied a flat overlooking Calea Victoriei in central Bucharest. The reports convey a portrait of a morally lacking family par excellence. They describe the husband, a carpenter with a criminal record for theft of personal property, in the following terms: '[He] permanently behaves in a recalcitrant way, drinks alcohol excessively and becomes intoxicated, upon which he mistreats his wife and throws bottles and other wares out into Calea Victoriei.'³⁸⁵ His wife was no less disruptive than the husband, as the same report put it: '[She] has the same attitude and she also drinks alcohol.' A different report, on the wife this time, describes her as

known to disrupt the quiet of the dwellers, and lodges persons without legal forms. She is characterised as a person with an improper behaviour in the sense that she has extramarital affairs, drinks alcohol, and causes brawls in the building.³⁸⁶

Salaciously enough, she was said to be sleeping with their illegal lodger, and after rowdy drinking sessions they would brawl and throw 'bottles and other objects out of the window,' as well as causing the husband to have violent altercations with the lodger.

³⁸⁴ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 14, 34. Report, February 1983.

³⁸⁵ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 5, 55. Note, July 1983.

³⁸⁶ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 5, 56. Note, November 1983.

To top it all off, 'their abnormal cohabitation has had a negative effect upon their son [name], recently released from prison where he was sentenced for rape, theft and brawling, and who is prohibited from entering the capital.' In addition, the husband 'has been noted for the past months to bring in the evening, past 21:00 hours, two blacks to his flat [...] Visits from these citizens of colour who appear to be students occur 2-3 times a week, and always at night.'³⁸⁷ Not to mention that the spouses were also reported to be in arrears with their rent and utility bill payments, as well as stealing electricity.³⁸⁸ All forms of improper behaviour, by which I mean anti-socialist, were covered by this family: from activities possibly harmful to the state security; to a dereliction of their civic duties as flat dwellers; to being possessed by vices. All the worse for their son having followed in their reprehensible footsteps.

Yet the family were never described unequivocally as 'țigani,' but rather with the less self-confident words: 'It would appear they are all țigani.'³⁸⁹ Nor were they suspected of 'suffering with the nerves,' as C.E., the obstreperous young woman was, in spite of obvious parallels in their utterly disruptive behaviour. Like her, the Romani family were also proposed for eviction by the dwellers' committee.

One might ask how the informants and/or *Securitate* officers were so sure that certain individuals or families were 'țigani' while at other times their language was less assured? Consider another report assessing a plumber shortlisted for work abroad:

In his building, they say that the assessed is descended from a family of țigani (*despre cel investigat se afirmă la domiciliu că se trage dintr-o familie de țigani*), he is dominated by the vice of drink and oftentimes in his flat he organises loud gatherings and parties (music-fiddlers), disrupting the quiet of the other dwellers.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ This is the same man I mention in the introduction.

³⁸⁸ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 5, 55. Note, July 1983.

³⁸⁹ CNSAS, FD 0013383, Vol. 5, 44. Note, February 1983.

³⁹⁰ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 348 front and back. Communication, September 1982.

Was it the presence of music-fiddlers (*lăutari*), associated in Romania with Romani music, which led the neighbours to think the man in question was 'țigan'? Or was it the fact that 'several times he has had unprincipled discussions (arguments and physical fights) with his wife who has extra-marital relations with various țigani who visit her at the domicile for this very purpose?'³⁹¹

What the assessors of behaviour appear to have been doing in assessing the Roma was not a reading of behaviour in order to infer socialist identity or lack thereof, but as an affirmation of that which was already known. In other words, they were not gauging their behaviour in order to ascertain whether the Roma had acquired a socialist identity, but to confirm their prior knowledge: that țigan behaviour revealed the Roma soul and its impossibility to become socialist.

Let me illustrate this with another example. In September 1981, an internal *Securitate* report forwarded the copy of a letter sent by an 'aggrieved' citizen stating he was ready to renounce his (and his family's) Romanian citizenship and asking that they be allowed to emigrate to Canada unless 'the issue of housing' was sorted. The letter is a restatement of an earlier one sent in June, informing the Bucharest *Securitate* of

the abusive occupation of my housing space by some neighbours of colour (Țigani), the house being state property, and the Țigani have demolished the wall separating the rooms, which drove me to seek shelter wherever I can.³⁹²

The letter further tells us that although the Society for the Management of the Housing Stock had decided that the Romani family were in the wrong, the family still had not vacated the shared house by September. Subsequently, the author of the letter took to sleeping in the North Railway

³⁹¹ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 348 back. Communication, September 1982.

³⁹² CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 35, 402. Letter, September 1981.

Station with his wife and their two children. He wrote: 'We have requested to be given [a dwelling] somewhere else, amongst Romanians as sharing flat mates (*între români cu lumea din apartament*).' On page two he made the same point once more: '[Please] make it so that we are given a dwelling amongst Romanians of ours (*între români de ai noștri*) where I can bring up my children in good health.'

The less assured 'they may be țigani at origins;' 'it is said they are descended from țigani;' or 'it would appear they are țigani' do not tell us less about the alleged behaviour of Roma, as much as the absolute 'being țigan, he uses a vulgar vocabulary' does not reveal the opposite. Certainly, people drank, swore, had extramarital affairs, and threatened their neighbours when admonished. Notwithstanding, what this type of language reveals is the extent to which certain types of behaviour were beyond characterisation as socialist or its absence. Some behaviour was simply 'țigan.' And whilst the image of 'țigan' as a fantasy (and 'gypsy' for that matter) should be analytically distinguished from Romani persons in socialist Romania it was precisely the conflation of the two, anticipating, reinforcing, and confirming one another, historically inherited, which was left unproblematised by party officials and ideologues.

The glaring separation, both rhetorical and physical, of persons between 'our Romanians' and 'Țigani'³⁹³ drives home the point that the state and party had turned Roma into socialist aliens. Precisely because party authorities made so much out of 'rehabilitation and reintegration' yet deployed neither the funds nor the civic willingness to put into practice the discursively ambitious, Romani persons were not accepted as full citizens. At the same time, the choice of words 'neighbours of colour' further suggests two important interrelated points. 'Țigan' as ethnic identity and 'țigan' as behaviour were wilfully elided, with the latter used to infer the former in the absence of markers such as dark(er) skin.

³⁹³ If one were in a ludic mood, one could argue that the demolishing of the wall separating the rooms inhabited by the Roma from those inhabited by non-Roma could have been a symbolic effort to 'demolish' this very divide.

Epilogue

The violence of the fall of state socialism in Romania and the cruelty with which Romani citizens were targeted in the aftermath of 1989 has accustomed us to the idea that post-socialist market capitalism caused, or at the very least encouraged, a gushing stream of ethnic hatred. Catherine Verdery, for example, attributes this to the obsession with blame after 1989, 'so virulent in Romania, which facilitated the substitution of the ethnic dichotomy for the Communist one, with the Țigan blamed for all ill effects of market and economic reform.' Moreover, '*bișnită* (from business) and *șmecherii* (tricks of the street-wise) became the epitome of gypsiness in the Romanian imaginary and the "reason" for Romania's failure to recover from socialism.'³⁹⁴ In the same vein, Shannon Woodcock argues that in order to understand 'why the Țigan is the central site of contestation in post-socialist Romania,' we have to see it in the context of Romania's public efforts to be acknowledged and accepted as European.³⁹⁵

However, as the author of the last letter I analysed makes clear, both the ethnic dichotomy and the centrality of the 'țigan' as a site of contestation were fully alive under state socialism. Furthermore, every neighbour, work colleague, and acquaintance who used 'țigan' tropes strengthened the racialisation of Romani ethnicity by tying it to behaviour attributed to 'țigan' ways and lifestyles. It is more accurate to describe the use of such tropes after the fall of state socialism as a repositioning, rather than an invention, as Julia Sardelic has argued for the Yugoslav/post-Yugoslav case.³⁹⁶

One is bound to look with different eyes at one of the conclusions of the 1972 Party-commissioned report on Căldărari Roma, noting how the 'employees of people's councils, education, culture and health institutions'

³⁹⁴ Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, 1996), 83-104.

³⁹⁵ Woodcock, 'Romania and Europe,' 515.

³⁹⁶ Sardelic, 'Romani Minorities on the Margins.'

had evinced 'a certain contempt for the needs and demands of țigani.'³⁹⁷ It would be too facile to argue that the author(s) of the report attempted to exonerate party officials and representatives by casting blame on the prejudiced masses. As we learned in Chapter One, the author(s) also acknowledged the party's lack of a cohesive programme tailored to the needs of the Roma. Yet the socialist readiness to extend equality and the possibility for re-fashioning—at least in theory—to all, did not preclude an attachment to essences. In the Romanian case the latter was underwritten by the move away from the 'Soviet paradigm' to 'Western genetic models, such as IQ studies and Mendelian inheritance' under Ceaușescu.³⁹⁸

It was not merely the Roma who carried on being imagined, described, and assessed with reference to inherent qualities. Nor was the link between ethnic bodies and social behaviour reserved for them. As Paul Hanebrink has shown in his tour de force on Judeo Bolshevism, in Romania, the 'long history of the Judeo-Bolshevik myth was not extinguished by the Communists. Instead, they transformed its meaning and function.'³⁹⁹ Because postwar Communists struggled to erase the popular belief that 'theirs was a Jewish party,' they instrumentalised Jewish ethnicity to cleave the Party into an indigenous/national faction and a non-Romanian Muscovite faction. The former was meant to comprise party leaders who had stayed in Romania during the war, whilst the latter was, foremost, the faction of Jewish Ana Pauker, which they exploited for the show trials in the 1950s.⁴⁰⁰ Romanian Party leaders stayed quiet on antisemitism in that they never engaged with its history as such. In turn, they subsumed it to 'a much broader and more dangerous enemy: fascism.'⁴⁰¹ Similarly, and an occurrence across the Eastern European socialist bloc, the national courts established to try wartime collaborators and crime perpetrators, were 'quickly labelled "Jewish" because Jews were said, falsely, to drive and/or

³⁹⁷ See Chapter 1.

³⁹⁸ Dinu, 'Medical Discourses.'

³⁹⁹ Hanebrink, 'A Spectre,' 166.

⁴⁰⁰ Hanebrink, 'A Spectre,' 189-190.

⁴⁰¹ Hanebrink, 'A Spectre,' 182.

join these courts to avenge their families.⁴⁰²

Consider this line from a character assessment written in 1973: 'He has the character of a Jew who keeps to himself but seeks to know everything.'⁴⁰³ In 1976, dissident Paul Goma had a book about the time he spent in prison during state socialism published in France. Titled *Gherla*, after the notorious place for political prisoners, the manuscript was published in a Romanian translation in 1990. In the Romanian version, Goma compares Jewish Securitate informants and Romani ones:

The truth is that particularly in the beginning there were many, many Jews working for the Securitate. Of course, [...] not as small-time grass (they had the țigani for this) [...] The Jew was more of 'a thinker'.⁴⁰⁴

Party leaders' unwillingness to problematise the inherited history of antisemitism in Romania encouraged the continuation of antisemitic tropes during socialism, as did their failure to problematise the history of Romani enslavement and the deportations to Transnistria. This left the inherited racialised life of the term 'țigan,' as both social location and a category of behaviour, and its link to Romani ethnic bodies available for re-purposing.

That it was precisely this which marked the Roma as deportation material during the Transnistrian holocaust, the most recent and also traumatic event before Romania turned state socialist, should have tipped off party leaders of the painful need to theorise the link between 'țigan behaviour' and Romani ethnicity.

To be sure, the treatment of Roma during state-socialism in Romania under no circumstance may be compared with their treatment under Antonescu's fascist regime. It is helpful here to draw insights from discussions in the Soviet studies field. Replying to Eric Weitz and his

⁴⁰² Hanebrink, 'A Spectre,' 172.

⁴⁰³ CNSAS, FD 0013831, Vol. 30, 266.

⁴⁰⁴ Paul Goma, *Gherla* (Bucharest, 1990), 42-43.

contention that the Soviets' purging practices were in fact premised on racial hierarchies of differences, Francine Hirsch and Amir Weiner urge an historically accurate, as well as analytically useful, distinction between nationalising policies and racial ones. While the former were premised on the existence of different groups with a shared cultural consciousness, the latter focused on racial type transmitted through biology.⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore, as Weiner makes clear, at the same time race studies reached their apex in Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia rejected race as the defining criterion. Moreover, the 'simultaneous emergence of a full-blown welfare state' spoke loudly about the Soviet trust in the possibility of transformation and rehabilitation via social policies, unlike racial eugenics.⁴⁰⁶

Yet Alain Lemon is also right to use her experience as an anthropologist who worked with Roma in post-Soviet Russia to ask for a reconceptualisation of race not as 'things to be named,' as she puts it, but as 'criteria of difference to organise social relations.'⁴⁰⁷ As she further notes, that terms such as race were new to post-Soviet Russia did not mean that 'those practices themselves were brand new,' begging the question of continuity.⁴⁰⁸ The Helsinki Watch report conducted research in 1990 to document the conditions under which Romani Romanian citizens found themselves. According to the report,

One Gypsy woman expressed a view shared by many of the Gypsies interviewed by Helsinki Watch: It was better under Ceaușescu. We were left alone. No one bothered us. No one tried to attack us. No one called us 'Gypsy.'⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ Francine Hirsch, 'Race Without the Practice of Racial Politics,' *Slavic Review* 61 no. 1 (2002): 30.

⁴⁰⁶ Amir Weiner, "Nothing But Certainty," *Slavic Review* 61 no.1, (2002): 51.

⁴⁰⁷ Lemon, 'Without a Concept?' 56.

⁴⁰⁸ Lemon, 'Without a Concept?' 57.

⁴⁰⁹ Helsinki Watch, 'Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Persecution of the Gypsies in Romania,' (New York and Washington, 1991), p. 1

I was told the same by Elena, a Romani woman who granted me an interview in Bucharest in 2019:⁴¹⁰ 'They were not allowed to call us țigani,' as she put it. She was referencing the socialist constitution, and its promise that all citizens were equal. Yet, as this chapter has made clear, to the two categories of anti-socialist behaviour—the criminal, and the political—we should add a third one: the 'țigan behaviour,' intimately welded to Romani ethnicity.

By refusing to problematise the term 'țigan' and its link to Romani ethnicity in 1949, party leaders promoted silence on the issue. As Emily Honig has shown for Maoist China, the state's silence on sexuality—neither condoning nor banning sexual relations outside marriage—meant in practice that the Red Guards gave themselves carte blanche to police women's sexuality ruthlessly.⁴¹¹ In keeping their silence on the history of 'țigan'ism by refusing to give Romani citizens the possibility of an ethnic identity, party leaders encouraged the racialised life of the term 'țigan' to continue freely at the level of everyday life and in official paperwork. In so doing, they prevented Romani persons from casting themselves anew in socialist clothes.

⁴¹⁰ Author interview, Bucharest, Romania, 2019.

⁴¹¹ See Emily Honig, 'Socialist Sex. The Cultural Revolution Revisited,' *Modern China* 29 no. 2, (2003): 143-175.

3. Immoral Daughters and Innocent Patriarchs. Gender and Romani

Ethnicity in State Socialist Romania

Case 1. On 8 February 1951, the chairman and the secretary of the People's Council in a Mureş Rayon village sent a denunciation-cum-petition letter to the Executive Committee of the Rayon. They denounced a 'love affair' between M., a 14-year-old girl, identified in a later social home assessment as having 'ţigan nationality,' and her foster father. Although M. alleged rape in her self-declaration, by November 1951 she was described as a 'juvenile delinquent' and 'an immoral vagabond' by her caseworker. On 28 December 1951 she was committed to the Budila re-education centre for the morally deficient, where former prostitutes were also sent.

Case 2. On 1 August 1981, a wife, V., denounced her husband, S. whom she identified as 'ţigan,' to the Securitate for political crimes. The 11-page, hand-written letter she delivered to the Securitate officers described in painstaking detail the domestic abuse she had been suffering at the hands of her spouse. Mother to a 17-month-old baby at the time of writing, V. 'felt compelled' to recount 'the thread of my life, in particular my marital life,' a life which her abusive husband had turned into 'a concentration camp; a turbulent waterfall; a roiling sea.' Yet S. managed to depoliticise his crimes by casting himself as a most redeemable fallen father and husband. He was let off with a warning.

.....

In this chapter I draw on two legal case studies to illuminate the ways in which tropes about Romani behaviour interacted with the patriarchal qualities of Romanian state socialism to inform and, crucially, shape the final decisions in two legal cases. In so doing, I show in detail how M.'s gender pushed her 'ţigan nationality' forward, whilst in the case of S. his

Roma identity took a back seat. To put it differently, gender 'enhanced' M's 'țigan'-ness, whilst 'lessening' that of S, with critical consequences for their lives.⁴¹²

Although the two cases are 30 years apart, the same social categories—age, gender, and class—appear to have worked in opposite ways. In the first case, they collided to institutionalise a Romani girl who alleged rape at the hands of her foster father; in the second case, they combined to secure the release of a man accused of political crimes. Intimate violence is the thread which runs through the lives and social contexts of both cases. But if the specific details and effects of violence have their historical particularity, the overarching context of patriarchal family and state structures remains.

Because the socialist state aimed to cohere society as *totality*, the social entailed the webbing of the so-called private and public, and their mutual shaping, culminating in the totalising idea of the new socialist citizen.⁴¹³ As such, the domestic shaped the social and vice versa, which is why the domesticity of these cases, and the efforts invested in their denouement by both protagonists and party authorities, was of utmost importance. It explains why the men at the village People's Council and M.'s caseworker, abetted by M.'s 'țigan nationality,' succeeded in blowing a domestic case into a matter of social importance. It also explains why S., in a mirror move, managed to bring a political issue into the social realm by scaling it down to a domestic question. Both cases, however, owe their climax to the centrality accorded to the nuclear legal monogamous family in state socialist Romania. In other words, both cases succeeded—on different terms—in preserving the patriarchal family intact.

⁴¹² I have anonymised all names. Whilst I am required by law to do so in the case of the Securitate archives, in M.'s case it is to protect her dignity.

⁴¹³ I do not subscribe to the idea of state socialism as 'totalitarianism'. For an eloquent critique of the historicity and political uses of the term totalitarianism, see Anson Rabinach, 'Moments of Totalitarianism,' *History and Theory* 45 no.1, (2006): 72-100.

Yet these are not simply cases that see Romani individuals mired in the mesh of social relations and encounters with the state and authorities. Both the Romani and non-Romani persons involved in the two case studies used language to frame their actions and those of others in ways that would advance their circumstances. A caveat is in order, however. In line with the methodology of the previous chapter, I do not use the language of the sources in order to ascertain intent or to arrive at the psychic workings of the protagonists. Rather, I use the language of the self-declarations; denunciations; social case studies; and internal administrative paperwork to reveal how their gender, class, and age determined official responses towards M. and S., whilst their ethnicity played a more situational role.

To make sense of the strategies employed by M., S., and V., as well as of state officials' responses to them, I use the analytical category of 'the patriarchal bargain.'⁴¹⁴ By patriarchy I mean a way of organising social relations between men and women, whereby women are subordinate to men. The bargain, in Kandiyoti's phrasing, sheds light on 'women's strategies within a set of concrete constraints' under patriarchy. I therefore read letters of denunciation as gendered strategies employed by women. Both cases under analysis were thrust into bureaucratic life by denunciations, the first by the men in charge of the People's Council in M.'s village, the second by an abused wife. Yet, I argue, if the 'comrades' of the People's' council—in the words of M.s' caseworker—did so *on behalf of* the wives in their village, S. turned his wife's denunciation letter *on its head* for his own benefit.

To denounce in socialist Romania was neither a futile nor an empty gesture, as we shall fully see in Chapter Four. The 'grumbling culture of state socialism,' in Mary Fulbrook's words, not only drew legitimation from accepting complaints as a means of communicating with ordinary citizens,

⁴¹⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining With Patriarchy,' *Gender and Society* 2 no. 3, (1998), Special issue to honour Jessie Bernard: 274-290.

but it actively encouraged them.⁴¹⁵ This explains the language of expectation in the letters of denunciation—that the social state take responsibility of its ‘debauched’ charge in the 1950s. Similarly, that the Securitate men punish the fallen husband, and thus jolt him into respecting his legal wife. I would not go as far as to argue that all denunciations and complaint letters were accorded full bureaucratic weight. Yet, because the two cases I analyse in this article had very high social stakes, the level of state socialist authorities’ engagement with them was commensurate. This explains the lengthy bureaucratic trail left behind in the archives.

.....

The letter of denunciation-cum-petition sent to the Executive Committee of the Mureş Rayon on 8 February 1951 by the chairman and the secretary of the People’s Council in M.’s village informed the Mureş authorities: ‘In recent times, there has been talk in the village that [the foster father] is having a love affair with the 14-year-old girl.’⁴¹⁶ Despite their professed innocence, talk in the village carried on. The ‘case’ also gave rise to ‘brawls in the home of the above named,’ until ‘his lawful wife caught the husband in the act with the girl.’ In legally qualifying the foster mother’s status, the signatories were stressing her rights both in law and in the hierarchy of patriarchal sex, signalling that she was the injured party.

Yet where the men of the village committee saw ‘a love affair,’ M. alleged sexual abuse. In her declaration to the Mureş social services, dated 17 September 1951, she stated that the foster father had first ‘seduced her’ on Christmas Eve 1949, whilst her foster mother was in town at the dentist’s. M. was 13 at the time. As time went on and the sexual abuse continued, he also began ‘beating his wife, chasing her away, and every

⁴¹⁵ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State. East German Society From Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven and London, 2005).

⁴¹⁶ Arhivele Nationale Române Mureş (henceforth ANRMS), Fond Sfatul Popular al Regiunii Autonome Maghiare Mureş, Secțiunea Prevederi Sociale, Serviciul Sanitar Mureş. File no. 378, Corespondența Asistența Socială dela N. 3047-5923. Letter, 8 February 1951. I am grateful to Krisztina Rácz for translating this petition/denunciation from Hungarian to English.

time she fled, the foster father would bring me inside the house and take advantage of me,' again in her own words.⁴¹⁷

When she gave her sworn self-declaration in front of her caseworker and two women from the village acting as witnesses, M. was in a home for the elderly. She was awaiting triage for the purposes of institutionalisation, having been removed from the home of her foster parents. A week later, on 25 September 1951, a note sent by the Mureş social services to the Ministry of Social Care, the Direction for Re-education, stated that the 'minor is not amenable to being brought up in a family environment.'

On 17 November 1951 the Mureş Social Services replied to correspondence from the Department for the Morally Deficient within the Direction for Special Vocational Training. They appended the home assessment carried out by M.'s caseworker, together with 'the neuropsychiatric medical assessment,' asking that M. be 'institutionalised in a special vocational training institute.'⁴¹⁸ The neuropsychiatric assessment has not survived in the archives, yet it must have been requested in order to ascertain whether M. was in possession of all mental faculties, and as such, responsible for her actions and capable of acting with intent. To be 'mentally sane' was a pre-requisite for the purpose of rehabilitation through work. Yet crucially, the absence of 'neuropsychiatric conditions' strengthened the social diagnosis of immorality and sexual 'vagabondage,' which by November had congealed into the offence of prostitution.

By 16 January 1952, the foster father had been charged with the offence of indecent assault (*atentat la pudoare*), according 'to article 421 of the criminal law'⁴¹⁹ which punished men who had sex with a girl younger than 14.⁴²⁰ The punishment was doubled if the offender was the girl's tutor,

⁴¹⁷ ANRMS, File 378. Sworn self-declaration, 17 September 1951, 198.

⁴¹⁸ ANRMS, File 378. Note, 146.

⁴¹⁹ Note sent by the Mureş Court to the Mureş Social Services asking to know M.'s whereabouts in order to have her subpoenaed as witness, 16 January 1952, 112.

⁴²⁰ <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/g42doobz/codul-penal-din-1936>. There were amendments to certain articles in 1948, but the articles on 'offences against decency and morals' were left unchanged.

carer, teacher etc. This was the 1936 criminal code, carried over to postwar state-socialist Romania with only partial amendments in 1948. Articles 139 and 140 required the relevant authorities to ascertain whether *delinquent minors between 12 and 15 years of age had acted with discretion* (my emphasis), whilst article 573 provided that 'provisions in articles 139 and 140 apply even to non-delinquent minors, for their protection and redress, should they be judged to be in moral danger.' And finally, article 574 required that minors who were in moral danger and at risk of engaging in begging, vagabondage, and prostitution, should be referred either to the prosecutor or to a juvenile court.

To denounce M., therefore, for having a 'love affair' with her foster father, 'to the public outcry,' was to assert that she had acted with discretion as per the law. Yet the Târgu Mureş judge who read M.'s self-declaration did not appear to have regarded M. as an offender. He had been appointed to review the case following correspondence sent by the Mureş Social Services to the juvenile section of the Mureş Court on 2 November 1951. The case had been transferred from the rural court to the Mureş tribunal, and the social services wrote in asking for advice: '[...] the case has become aggravated; the minor requires immediate admission to a re-education centre for minors.'⁴²¹ The Mureş judge replied with urgency in his words, stating that 'the rural court had only considered the criminal aspect of the case' in charging the foster father with indecent assault. Offering a holistic approach to the denouement of the case, he gave the social services the green light to proceed with institutionalising M. 'for her own benefit.'⁴²² Yet, although he advised that M. be placed in a 'special institution,' and 'urgently so if in moral danger,' he was most likely acting according to article 573. As mentioned above, it required the removal of minors finding themselves in 'moral danger' even when they were not delinquent.

The language of the February 1951 denunciation-cum-petition is therefore decisive. To characterise what happened to M. as a 'love affair'

⁴²¹ ANRMS, File 378. Clarifying request, 25 September 1951, 198 (verso).

⁴²² ANRMS, File 378. Judge's reply, 20 November 1951, 148.

was both to expose and convince the readers that the girl knew what she was doing. The 'comrades of the People's Council,' as M.'s caseworker will identify them in her home assessment, opened their letter by 'reporting' on the foster father as one 'who is a married man.' Given the 'talk' in the village, the signatories 'questioned the above-named, as well as the girl, but both of them denied the thing.' Despite their professed innocence, talk in the village carried on, alongside 'brawls in the home of the above named because of the case,' until 'his lawful wife caught the husband in the act.' The petitioning purpose of the denunciation letter becomes clear in their request that 'the competent authorities dispatch the girl from the house and village.'

M. gave a different version of the events in her self-declaration in front of her caseworker and the two women from the village, 'neighbours of the foster parents.' Following the Christmas Eve 1949 'seduction,' her foster father 'forbade' her from telling anyone. M. carried on:

Afterwards, he would constantly make so that the foster mother was beaten and chased away, and each time [this happened] he would take me into the house and take advantage of me. At first, I didn't dare tell the foster mother, but then I took pity on her, and I told her. This is how the two aforementioned witnesses came to know about it.

If we look at the letter sent by the chairman and the secretary of the village People's Council as a letter of denunciation sent *on behalf of* the women in the village, the motives behind their repeated requests to have M. removed from the village stand revealed. In opening their letter by identifying the foster father as a 'married man' his identity as a husband in a nuclear family is thus both established and pushed to the front. In claiming that 'his lawful wife caught the husband in the act with the girl,' the letter signatories were stressing her rights both in the law and in the hierarchy of patriarchal sex, signalling that she was the injured party. In asking to have M. removed,

their letter, in effect, aimed to protect both the foster mother as the suffering spouse and the other women in the village as possible 'victims' in future scandals involving M.

The two signatories also repeatedly refer to her as a 'girl from the shelter;' 'state girl;' 'belongs in the care of the state.' That she, by contrast, refers to her foster parents as 'foster father' (*tatăl crescător*) and 'foster mother' (*mama crescătoare*)⁴²³ only serves to reinforce the labours to which the People's Council comrades went to stress her status as an outsider to the village threatening patriarchal balance as a precocious man-eater.

The restrained animosity contained within the heavily moralistic tone of the denunciation letter is directed both at M., the threat from outside the village breaking up lawful families, and at the state for being the guardian of such a 'debauched' orphan. As for the claim that she was debauched, they had medical confirmation. Because the foster father and M. kept denying their 'love affair,' the chairman and the secretary of the village People's Council 'transported the girl to the district doctor [...] who examined her, and as the attached health certificate proves as well, the [foster father] indeed corrupted the girl.' The medical note, dated 22 January 2022, stated the following: 'Upon medical examination, the genital organs present no trace whatsoever of a hymen.'⁴²⁴ And to drive home that M. had been engaging in sexual activity for some time, the doctor carried on: 'Comrade M. has been deflowered, yet the exact date cannot be known for there are no traces of her hymen.'⁴²⁵

The doctor's words must have added scientific confirmation to the village rumours, for the committee signatories end their petition with the following prescription: 'We are of the opinion that the girl should be taken to a re-education centre, because, as it is clear from the attached medical certificate, she has stepped onto the path of debauchery.' At this point in

⁴²³ ANRMS, File 378. Sworn self-declaration, 198.

⁴²⁴ The Romanian original reads: 'La examenul organelor genitale prezinta membrana himenului ne mai cunoscandu-se nici un rest'.

⁴²⁵ ANRMS, File 378. Medical certificate, 119.

their narrative, the official role of the signatories as representatives of the party and state becomes salient with full force.

The moralistic tone is carried over in the language of M.'s caseworker, who makes the case, line by line, that the girl had acted with discretion. Yet it would be too naïve to assert that the caseworker was simply mimicking the People's Council officials. On 20 October 1951 she carried out a home assessment, in which she painted a picture of calculated 'debauchery' in detail. 'The minor has been living in concubinage with the foster father as well as other men from the beginning until the [foster parents'] separation,' as she put it.⁴²⁶ The mention of 'other men' had been used by the social services before, to ask for M. to be institutionalised. The request in question has not survived in the file, yet on 9 October 1951 the Direction for the Morally Deficient wrote the following to the Mureş social services:

According to her declaration, the minor has been raped by her foster father at the age of 13. You[r assessment] does not pinpoint which other men she has had relations with besides her foster father. Regarding her institutionalising, you will send us a new assessment with [M.'s] history and the issues she raises.

The home assessment the caseworker carried out on 20 October 1951 was therefore triggered by the official at the Direction for the Morally Deficient, who asked for an in-depth evaluation of M.'s life history as well as 'how she fits the work framework.' I decided to do a literal translation in order to illustrate the many possibilities in such a request: Fitness for labour? Attitude towards work? Employment status?⁴²⁷ The formulaic socialist reference to attitudes towards work should not, however, obscure the fact that in 1951 the penetration of socialism into the souls of the new-men-and-women-in-the-making is not to be overemphasised. As Alex Grama has

⁴²⁶ ANRMS, File 378. Home assessment, 146.

⁴²⁷ ANRMS, File 378, 152. The Romanian original reads: 'Cum se incadrează în muncă'.

shown, the Romanian Communist Party in the postwar period was a meaning machine 'in the making, one which fed on and reordered existing cultural practices in a multiplicity of interconnected social spaces, from factories and industrial communities to villages and farms.'⁴²⁸

Notwithstanding the obligatory insertion of party buzz words, the paperwork filed by the Mureş Social Services on M. is heavily driven by the moralistic language of 1800s' charity which view poverty as moral lassitude.⁴²⁹ And M. certainly was poor—in status as the 'orphaned' daughter of a former daily labourer, as well as in her inability to access the emotional resources afforded by being acknowledged by her surviving family. Because, although she was constantly described as an 'orphan,' M. in fact had surviving family. Born out of wedlock to a mother who used to be a day labourer, 'orphaned' at the age of two upon the death of her mother, M. had a biological father, as well as a brother and a sister, all alive. According to the home assessment, 'M.'s illegitimate father [name] is alive and well, he pays no child support, but has agreed to take on the minor within his family environment for the cost of the [monthly] foster allowance.' The 'minor' refused to agree to it, the home assessment carried on, and she may have been right to do so. 'The [biological] father's family environment is highly unsuitable towards educating the minor,' the report forewarned. Both her brother and her sister, 'day labourers' themselves, were married, although there is no mention of whether they were aware of M.'s existence. This 'orphan' with surviving family, therefore, would most likely have been a day labourer herself had it not been for her foster family.

Orphanhood as class, therefore, collided with her age on the cusp of adolescence and her gender in a postwar village in Romania at the beginning of the new order. In so doing, these factors overdetermined her being cast as sexually promiscuous, and thus seen as a threat to the dignity and livelihood of 'lawful' wives. That M. was essentialised as an orphan had

⁴²⁸ Grama, 'Labouring Along,' 168-69.

⁴²⁹ Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1965), Chapter One.

roots both in interwar Romania and approaches to juvenile delinquency in the early 20th century throughout Europe. As Alexandra Ghiț has shown, in 1920s' Bucharest, 'domestic service was the assumed future occupation' for orphaned girls.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, not only were orphaned girls pauperised, but domestic service itself was gendered and criminalised. For example, servant women in private homes in Bucharest were required to submit to gynaecological examinations, which by 1937 took place in the police building rather than a doctor's surgery, 'enhancing the stigma and unsavoury association of domestic service with contagion and illicit sexual behaviour,' as Ghiț puts it.⁴³¹

Clearly, the (non)virginity certificate which the state socialist comrades at the People's Council asked from the district doctor had a long pedigree. In 'scientifically' codifying M.'s 'debauchery', it sanctioned it. Sarah Fishman has documented how in the early twentieth century the misbehaviour of delinquent girls across the West continued to be seen in moral terms, namely as prostitutes, whereas boys were essentialised as thieves.⁴³² In Central-Eastern Europe, Nancy Wingfield has shown how the Riehl Trial of a brothel madame in Vienna in 1906 provided the opportunity for a public preoccupation with the morals of the lower classes. At the same time, Baumgarten's and Finger's study titled *The Regulation of Prostitution in Austria* in 1909 cast prostitution as a predisposition of girls who 'had grown up in impoverished conditions, where they witnessed their parents' "immorality".' And vitally, when it came to clandestine prostitutes, women who still lived with one responsible parent were deemed 'redeemable' by the police.⁴³³

There are fleeting glimpses that the adults responsible for M.'s care had failed her. For example, the village People's Council denunciation letter

⁴³⁰ Alexandra Ghiț, 'Loving Designs: Gendered Welfare Provisions, Activism and Expertise in Interwar Bucharest,' PhD thesis, Central European University, 2019), 279.

⁴³¹ Ghiț, 'Loving Designs,' 286.

⁴³² Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children. World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2002), 31.

⁴³³ Nancy Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 1; 2; and 5 respectively.

stated the foster father had been proven by the gynaecological medical certificate to 'have indeed corrupted the girl.' The caseworker's home assessment places some blame at the foster mother's door for failing to 'inculcate a love for work' in her foster daughter by 'spoiling her.' Yet M. is still classified as the villain. And this is where her gender pushed forward her 'țigan nationality.' Cast as a hypersexual temptress, she became a danger to the wives of the village in particular and to society in general. On 8 October 1951, the Mureș social services wrote to the rural People's Court asking that M.'s admission into a re-education centre be expedited because, whilst in the care home for the elderly, '[M.] has an immoral attitude (*atitudine imorală*), therefore her admission should happen as urgently as possible.'⁴³⁴

You will remember M. was in a care home when she gave her self-declaration on 17 September 1951, awaiting to be transferred to a re-education centre. But what did it mean for a 15-year-old in a home for persons of retired age to 'unravel the inner order' and have 'an immoral attitude?' Was this the caseworker's way of saying she was engaging in sexual relations with the men in the home? She cannot have behaved 'immorally' and 'unravelling the inner order' unless she had already been classified as a debauched temptress.

Here her 'țigan nationality' seemed to haunt her behaviour, magnifying a precocious womanhood already turned into a problematic by her age. Her 'țigan'-ness is only mentioned twice; once in the orphan's certificate when M. was two years old, and once in the home assessment. The only mention of M.'s mother was in the orphan's certificate which stated that M. had been born 'illegitimately' to a mother of 'țigan nationality,' whose occupation was a day labourer. There is no mention of the nationality of M.'s biological father or siblings. You will remember from Chapter 1 the 1949 Central Committee report on the 'Țigani question in the Romanian Popular Republic' classified 'țigani' into 'stabilised țigani' (*țigani stabilizați*),

⁴³⁴ ANRMS, File 378. Request, 153.

and 'nomadic țigani.' Among the former were 'working peasants (day labourers), factory workers, small artisans and music players' with—crucially—a fixed home.⁴³⁵

Was M. carrying her 'țigan'-ness with her in the guise of her late mother's occupation? And one is bound to ask how the orphanage knew the mother was 'țigan.' As Ann Stoler asked in the context of officials describing indigeneity and mixed bloods, 'How was belonging and desires assessed when they were not available to ocular sense?'⁴³⁶ In her unpacking of representations of Roma in Romanian museums, Iulia Hașdeu discusses the erotic seductiveness inscribed on the Romani woman's body, mainly via colourful skirts worn by Căldărari women. Hașdeu also analyses Zaharia Stancu's novel *Șatra* (The Tribe), where the young Gypsy woman is a lusciously described adulteress.⁴³⁷ This is the same Zaharia Stancu whose novel *Descuț* (Barefoot), published in 1948, is cited approvingly in the 1949 Central Committee report on the 'Țigan question in the Romanian Popular Republic' as proof of the bourgeois behaviour of Romani 'tribe chieftains.'

In the novel, Stancu frames the relations between 'țigani' and their chosen leaders as despotic, and thus inherently exploitative. To be sure, as I have argued in Chapter One for the case of the two stories printed in party-sanctioned magazines, 'the ontological status of the imaginative, the real, the hypothetical and the actual was on an equal in socialist realism.' I will reiterate Greg Carlton's argument: 'If an acknowledged fiction reproduces the accepted topoi then it, just as any non-fictional text, can function as a valid simulacrum of "what has occurred."⁴³⁸ What I am arguing is that by 1951 the seductiveness of the 'țigan woman' was a fact. For M. this meant that instead of being seen as a victim of a violent man—and her carer for that—she was cast as the temptress bent on usurping her foster mother, a lawfully wedded woman.

⁴³⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, File 93/1949. 'Study,' p. 4.

⁴³⁶ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 38.

⁴³⁷ Iulia Hașdeu, 'Imagining the Gypsy Woman,' *Third Text* 22 no. 3, (2008): 347-357.

⁴³⁸ Carleton, 'Socialist Realism,' 1002.

According to decree 351, published on 20 August 1949, setting out the rules and regulations for institutions for the morally deficient, prostitutes were 'all persons who regularly obtain material benefits out of sexual relations, in which they engage for this very purpose with various persons.'⁴³⁹ Therefore, the gifts M. declared to have received from her foster father became seen by the caseworker as part and parcel of the girl's elaborate plan to usurp the foster mother in the home. In M.'s words:

My foster father has bought me dresses [and] sweets on several occasions [...] and has been very nice towards me because of this. [...] He bought me a dainty necklace (*lănțișor*), earrings, shoes, and everything I wanted. He promised to buy me boots and a fitted coat.⁴⁴⁰

In her home assessment, the caseworker made a remark which seemed to come out of nowhere: '[...] biologically speaking, the minor is very well developed.'⁴⁴¹ This girl-woman, who looked ready to sell sex in exchange for material benefits, threatened not only the woman who took her under her wing, but potentially the other women in the village too. Or, as the men of the village People's Council put it in their turn, 'She's disturbing the peace of the village.'

Although M. was aware that her foster father had cast her in the role of lover, painfully contained in her words 'because of this,' she emphasised it had happened against her will: 'I wanted to break free at any cost and so I asked [the foster father] I be allowed to go into service.' M. changed two employers because the foster father wanted her 'back home' when she was in service with the first family, but 'I did not want to live my life under these circumstances any longer and I didn't go.' She found a second employer, yet the foster father 'on 15 September of the current year sent

⁴³⁹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Muncii, Sanatatii si Ocrotirii Sociale, File 60/1949-1951, 317.

⁴⁴⁰ ANRMS, File 378, Self-declaration, 198.

⁴⁴¹ ANRMS, File 378, Home assessment, 146.

for me and threatened me [to go] back home. And so, I went.' The caseworker, however, has this to say about it:

At the age of 13 the foster father deflowered [M.], which was discovered by the foster mother. Upon that, the family environment became unpleasant, [with] frequent arguments and beatings between the spouses, also in the minor's presence. The foster mother has been demeaned and humiliated in front of the minor. In September of the current year, following a severe beating, the foster mother was chased away by the foster father so that [he and M.] might continue undisturbed their concubinage (*concupinajul*).

The caseworker's home assessment further describes the foster family home environment as 'sometimes peaceful, sometimes beset by frequent domestic quarrels caused by dad's drinking.' In other words, fighting between the spouses had not started with M., yet she is scapegoated for the foster mother's predicament.

Read within the framework of the patriarchal bargain, the intent behind both the denunciation letter sent on 7 February 1951 *on behalf of* the women in the village, and the caseworker's escalation in her language to describe M. are laid bare. Both the officials on the village People's Council, and the caseworker, a woman, appealed to the state to have M. removed from the village. The repeated appeals to the state rested both on their claimed rights as socialist citizens and on their authority as representatives of the socialist state.

The letter of denunciation which emanated from the People's Council mixed the prescriptive request with the bewildered telling of a story of village morality and order ruined by a hypersexual alien. In giving the Ministry for Social Protection responsibility to solve the problem, they acted as officials of the Party. In asking to have M. removed, because 'a family breaks up in the village, to the public outcry,' they were writing as men of the village. M.'s internment in a re-education centre was thus a prophylactic

to prevent any further family breakdowns. It should assuage the village women's anxieties about the possible threat to their gendered dignity and livelihood, whilst also preserving the social hygiene of the entire village. Furthermore, in asking to have M. removed, they chose to preserve the patriarchal family and order by punishing not the violence of the foster father—towards his wife and his foster daughter—but the orphan who did not belong in the village.

The caseworker, a woman herself, carried over the moralistic outrage into the criminal classifying of M. as a prostitute, because as a woman she was living both the threat and the indignities suffered by the foster mother vicariously. According to her home assessment, the foster mother fled the marital home that day in September 1951 when she endured one final 'severe beating.' Yet the People's Council's denunciation letter already announced on 8 February 1951 that 'the case has led to a divorce from his wife.' What, then, was the foster mother still doing in the marital home in September, when M. returned following the threats her foster father had made against her?

The People's Council letter indeed stated that for a while the foster father 'took the girl from the commune and said he gave her back to the orphanage.' We know this is not true from M's declaration, where she stated she had left the foster home for work, because she had found her situation unbearable. Her departure must have offered respite both to the village and the foster mother herself. Upon M.'s forced return, however, 'the family scandals have started anew, to the general outcry of the commune,' as the denunciation letter put it. The most likely answer is that the foster mother had nowhere else to go and she was willing to put up with her husband's (unwilling) 'mistress' under her roof.

.....

On 1 August 1981, a wife, V., denounced her husband, S., whom she refers to as 'țigan,' to the Craiova *Securitate* officers for political crimes via a handwritten letter. A report drafted on 2 December 1981 incorporated 11

months' worth of notes, reports, and checks, harking back to when V. seemed to first raise the question of what to do. The report stated that V. had 'contacted our officers in person and denounced her husband [name] for planning to leave the country with a view to reach a capitalist state, [and] for listening to the radio channel "Free Europe" and recording some of its broadcasts.'⁴⁴²

Yet the 11-page, hand-written letter bared V.'s soul. In her own words: 'And now, in spite of myself and in all honesty, I confess I must tell you the thread of my life, and in particular my marital life.'⁴⁴³ S. had made her life 'a concentration camp, a turbulent waterfall, a roiling sea.' She alleged that he had cheated on her with his mistress; that he engaged in 'sexual perversions and sexual inversions and gambling,' and she charged him with pressuring her to rescind her party membership unless he was given a job. He also beat her and verbally abused her to the point of threatening her with death: '[...] he said he's lived his life; he'll kill me and then go to jail.'⁴⁴⁴ V. identifies her husband as 'țigan' somewhat indirectly, towards the end of her letter, on page nine: 'He will not let me have our baby daughter; he says she's white and beautiful whereas they are țigani and she has whitened their bloodline.'

S. was ultimately left off with a warning for his behaviour after he 'acknowledged his misdeeds and assured us that in the future he will behave accordingly, having let go of the will to emigrate,' as one *Securitate* officer put it in a report.⁴⁴⁵ And acknowledge he did. On 4 December 1981, S. gave a hand-written self-declaration in front of two *Securitate* officers, which reads as a veritable feat of mastery over the language of the party and state socialism. He acknowledged that: he had been allocated various jobs as a music teacher in the countryside, which he had turned down, thus leaving him 'bitter and willing to flee the country, either with the wife or on

⁴⁴² CNSAS, Fond Informativ (henceforth FI) 819267. Report, 2 December 1981, 1.

⁴⁴³ CNSAS, FI 819267. Letter, not dated, 1.

⁴⁴⁴ CNSAS, FI 819267. Letter, 14.

⁴⁴⁵ CNSAS, FI 819267. Telex dispatch from the Dolj County Securitate to the Bucharest Securitate, Direction I, 8 December 1981. Direction I dealt with internal affairs.

my own, whichever may prove feasible.' He admitted that wishing to flee the country was 'a reckless thing which I haven't thought through;' that Radio Free Europe broadcasts were 'malignant, inimical to the policies of our Party and state, the economic and political situation of our country, and to socialism in general.'⁴⁴⁶ With hindsight, he was now aware that the broadcasts 'could have influenced me negatively, both in terms of my inclinations and my consciousness.' This demonstrated that he fully understood, and had averted, one of the greatest dangers to the socialist project of human refashioning: mingling with the wrong milieux. Such mingling not only gave one anti-socialist ideas, but it also seeped deep into the soul to ruin a person from one's deepest recesses. And he finished the list of the 'I acknowledge' and 'I am aware' with the true penitent's pledge:

Regarding my deeds I reiterate I am aware of their dangerous nature. I regret them and I pledge in all responsibility to never engage in such deeds again, or any other deed that goes against the laws of our country or that could malign the interests of our state.

Very adept at both teasing out the implications of the crimes he was accused of and cancelling them out and ensuring that his 'entourage'⁴⁴⁷ are not indicted alongside him by virtue of their friendship, S. exculpates his friend Ștefan. On 16 June 1981, a report sent to Direction I, internal affairs, stated that S. did not merely 'happen' to listen in to Radio Free Europe. Rather, he was the 'organiser of Radio Free Europe listening sessions' and

⁴⁴⁶ CNSAS, FI 819267. Sworn self-declaration, 4 December 1981, 4-6.

⁴⁴⁷ 'Entourage' should be distinguished from one's close friends or relatives. For the *Securitate*, it denoted, as Katherine Verdery put it based on her own experience as being surveilled, a situational amalgamation of people with various motivations, 'whose connections can be manipulated' for informing purposes. Verdery's 'entourage' did inform on her, to various extents. Yet, 'entourage' could also morph into a collection of human interactions working against the *Securitate* as it were. As Verdery found out during her 'first and only meeting with a *Securitate* officer' following the publication of *National Ideology under Socialism*, sent to the press the day before the Berlin Wall came down, her "'entourage'" came increasingly to coincide with their lists of enemies.' 'Entourage', therefore, had political purchase one way or another. Verdery, *My life as a Spy*, 132 and 176 respectively.

that two other persons would regularly assist S. in discussing 'various hostile comments.'⁴⁴⁸ In addition, he had recorded Ceaușescu's family tree, all of which he had hidden in a black briefcase under a table.

The finale of his self-declaration explains why S. was let off with a warning:

I pray the state organs to take into account that I am young [with] a family and a child, that I can put myself right, and that through work and righteousness I can become a dignified citizen with the proper behaviour.

In casting himself as a father and a husband, S. depoliticised his political crime by bringing into the social realm, specifically into the area of the nuclear legal family.⁴⁴⁹ There were no doubts that he was a husband and a father. His wife's denunciation letter repeatedly emphasised his status as such, even though the letter cast him as the antithesis of the good husband and father. Yet paradoxically, it was his status as a domestically violent man that reinforced his gendered claims.

Legal provisions in socialist Romania only extended to domestic abuse victims via 'criminal codes articles classifying crimes involving bodily assault based on the level of injuries sustained.'⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, the first comprehensive survey on domestic violence, conducted in 1999, revealed that one out of every three women in Romania had experienced domestic violence in her life.⁴⁵¹ As legal scholar Isabel Marcus put it, discourses of

⁴⁴⁸ CNSAS, FI 819267. Report to Vâlcea Securitate, Direction I, 16 June 1981, 17.

⁴⁴⁹ S.'s case baffled me for months. Having read Sheila Fitzpatrick's distinction between 'ordinary' crimes, which were reformable, and political ones, which were not, I could not fathom why S. would be let off with a warning. I thank Laura Downs for the suggestion he managed to depoliticise the political. Dominika Gruziel pushed my thinking further when she suggested he not only depoliticised the political, but did so by turning them into social, and thus reformable, crimes.

⁴⁵⁰ Marcus, 'Wife Beating,' 127.

⁴⁵¹ Massino and Popa, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ambiguous,' 180.

sex equality in state socialism 'coexisted with essentialised norms of masculinity and femininity.'⁴⁵²

There were no mechanisms 'outside state socialist institutions and the party apparatus to assess whether and to what extent the formal guarantee of sex equality was being realised in practice.' Which explains why V. was bearing the most intimate details of her domestic life on paper to the *Securitate* men, of all officials to whom she might have complained. Why did she feel compelled to tell them—the political police—the story of her life in 11 pages? 'I have so much more to tell you, but I've reached the end; I suffer from terrible headaches and fear is my constant companion'—these were her words even as she denounced her husband for specifically political crimes. And although she never once says she would like to see him in prison, she mentions more than once that she would like to go back north to her parents' village, 'as soon as possible,' on the last page of the letter.

The Romanian socialist magazine *Femeia* (Woman) may have portrayed women as 'more modern, carefree, and sophisticated,' and the successful socialist man as both hardworking and a nappy-changer beginning with the 1960s. Yet the July 1970 issue focused on spousal abuse and authoritarian fathering, 'chiding men for acting in ways that were not only harmful to their wives, but also to the psychological development of their children.'⁴⁵³

Paradoxically, I argue, it was precisely as a violent husband that he met the *Securitate* men on a shared ground of fraternity, or what Isabel Marcus called 'the "private" aspects of masculinity in the family as fathers and husbands.'⁴⁵⁴ One of the 'six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy,' male violence is not an individual issue. It has a 'social structure nature.' Nor does it happen outside of state

⁴⁵² Marcus, 'Wife Beating,' 120-121.

⁴⁵³ Massino, 'Something Old, Something New,' 43-44.

⁴⁵⁴ Marcus, 'Wife Beating,' 121.

structures. In fact, its availability as a resource to men is 'structured by the lack of state availability to stop this.'⁴⁵⁵

The legal wife and mother was as exalted by political discourse and society in late socialist Romania, as she was in postwar socialist Romania, as we saw in the last section. Moreover, as Gail Klingman writes, 'under Ceaușescu "the family" was accorded institutional legitimacy [and] reified in ideological campaigns as the archetypal metaphor of the social order itself.'⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, as Lorena Anton has documented via party archives and oral history interviews, during the aggressive pronatalist policies of the late socialist period, 'motherhood was presented as a "wonder of nature" and "a patriotic duty".' Party discourses referred to women not 'as individual beings, but as "socialist mothers".' This 'identity idealised by propaganda, with a major role in the construction of Romanian communism'⁴⁵⁷ unfortunately also had dire consequences on women's attempts to control their fertility. Simultaneously, women developed tools to cope with the ban on abortions, by resorting to 'anti-pronatalist black humour.'⁴⁵⁸ V.'s own language in describing the hurt her husband had inflicted on her, embedded in the descriptive grid of essentialised pro-natalist family gender norms, must be read as a tool to cope with, and have her abusive husband held responsible for, domestic abuse:

I had hoped that a man like my husband, a graduate of the Conservatory, a man 11 years my senior, would be able to give me the genuineness, harmony, and happiness of a home where the mother, the wife is a pure woman, in all the depth of the word pure, that is both of heart and behaviour.

⁴⁵⁵ Sylvia Walby, 'Theorising Patriarchy,' *Sociology* 23 no. 2, (1989): 224-225.

⁴⁵⁶ Klingman, *Politics of Duplicity*, 28.

⁴⁵⁷ Anton, "For the Good the Nation," 220.

⁴⁵⁸ Anton, "For the Good the Nation," 219.

She then performs a further act of unmasking her husband as morally trespassing the pro-natalist, pro-family policies of late socialism.⁴⁵⁹ The minutiae of the domestic troubles V. lays bare in her letter aim to expose S. as a phony socialist and to position V. as the real one. She presents herself as a genuine hearth-loving wife and mother, a former factory worker who left her job to follow her husband to his new workplace, as well as a party member. For example, on the third page, after a biographical introduction into her life and the meeting with her husband, V. states that she feels 'terrified and sick just mentioning his name, now that I have discovered his true character.' He also

evinces tendencies towards the world of the so-called haute bourgeoisie, haute sloth, traces of which are still evident in the slum where we live [...] and in particular within his family. He has adjusted to the ways of this type of society, but I find them suffocating.

And she delivers the ultimate unmasking: 'His love for me and our daughter has been decreasing, and continues to fall into conjugal formality, which he is cunningly using to shield himself.'

Herself schooled in the language of the party, V. seeks to tear off S.'s mask. Her detailed narrative about the 'humiliating' and painful domestic life may have served as catharsis as well. More importantly, however, exposing the nitty gritty of the 'torture that my life has become' had the purpose of serving as an (unrequested) character assessment of her husband. As I show in the previous chapter, by the 1970s, knowledge of one's socialist identity came to be thought possible through its embodied manifestation—behaviour. To behave was to already allow the others, cast as assessors of socialist identity, to read one's inner life, which for the

⁴⁵⁹ Although abortion had come to be seen as a woman's problem, as Anton writes, partly due to official propaganda itself, the latter also stressed that the act of procreating for the republic occurred in 'strong families with many children whom they have raised with love.' CC of PCR, as cited in Anton, "For the Good of the Nation," 215.

various purposes of the *Securitate* as institution came by way of written character assessments.

With 'bitter thoughts' and her 'heart in cinders,' V. ended her letter hoping 'to have a chat with a wise man amongst [the *Securitate*].' There is no trace of the officers taking her up on her offer to have a talk. True to the *Securitate's* professional remit, her husband's dossier comprises, in addition to her letter of denunciation, reports on home searches and assessments of the husband's acquaintances and friends.

To be sure, *Securitate* officers had the power to conduct checks themselves in order to ascertain social derailments and anti-socialist behaviour. As V. puts it, 'you are in a position to judge the truth more than I am.' She was referring to the instances when her husband had 'transgressed the school rules' where he was interning as a fresh graduate, which had brought about his dismissal. Yet domestic transgressions—not only physical violence, usually visible to the naked eye, but the degradations of quotidian marital unhappiness—had to be spelled out in detail. In making the case, line by line and humiliation upon humiliation, that S. lived an anti-socialist life, V. was laying bare the soul of her husband, thus proving his lack of a socialist identity.

It is in this register that V.'s letter of denunciation, and S.'s appropriation of the crimes he was accused of, must be read. It would be tempting to read her lengthy disavowal of her husband as the words of a bitter, cheated-upon wife. Yet to do so would be to disregard the character assessment both as one of the main tools of knowing the true socialist from the phony.

Additionally, it would mean to misread wives' denunciations either as embittered missives or, on the contrary, vehicles of 'abusing power from below,' as various authors have done. In the available literature, women who denounced are conceptualised as powerful grassroots players who wielded denunciations against spouses and fellow women to further their private goals. Sometimes this is shown to have happened haphazardly; alternatively, their appeals to the state are described as attempts to settle

'private quarrels.'⁴⁶⁰ Denunciations and complaints were encouraged by the Party, and reading women as disruptors from below certainly offers a welcome antidote to the image of the submissive woman-as-wife. Yet to do so obscures the extent to which women were dependent both on the state and gendered domesticity for their welfare. Therefore, although denunciations were an act of agency insofar as women chose to make use of them, we cannot understand why certain socio-cultural tools, which carry negative connotations, were chosen by married women, and thus became gendered strategies, unless we explore them in their historical context. Or, conversely, why some women may not have chosen them at all.

That V. resorted to detailing the misery of her status as abused wife, both emotionally and physically, even as she was denouncing S. for his political crimes, acquires its historically intelligible relief when read within the framework of the 'patriarchal bargain' and the limited agency it allowed her in late socialist Romania. Furthermore, in casting himself as a young father with a family and a child, S. not only depoliticised the political by framing it in domestic and social. He also turned the denunciation against him *on its head* for his own benefit.

This is not to say we cannot allow for the possibility that both V. and S. 'truly' believed in what they were writing. As Susan Gal has persuasively argued, not only is 'lived life' versus 'party prescription' a false historical dichotomy, but it is also intellectually barren.⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, we might also understand V.'s referencing of the purity of the wife within the nuclear legal family at the level of the subconscious. As Kandiyoti asserts, 'patriarchal bargains also shape the more unconscious aspects of [women's] gendered subjectivity.'⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ See, for example, Lauren Kaminsky, 'Utopian Visions;' Wendy Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks*; Vandana Joshi, 'The "Private" Became "Public": Wives as Denouncers in the Third Reich,' *Journal of contemporary history*, 37(3)/2002, pp. 423-432; LaPierre, 'Private Matters or Public Crimes.'

⁴⁶¹ See Susan Gal's critique of James Scott's 'Hidden Transcripts'. Susan Gal, 'Language and the "Arts of Resistance,"' review of 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts,' by James Scott, *Cultural Anthropology* 10 no. 31 (1995): 407-424.

⁴⁶² Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy,' 285.

V. charged her husband's professional qualifications for enabling his anti-socialist behaviour: 'His new social condition—being a professor—leads him to vanity and erotic flirting.' Yet it was precisely education as class, bolstering his claims to the social realm of fatherhood and husbandhood as performed patriarchy, that shaped the encounters with the *Securitate* men to his advantage.

Socialist Romania may have been the state of workers. Yet, as Mary Fulbrook has shown for the GDR case, 'social inequalities were rooted in a complex combination of factors other than private ownership of the means of production.'⁴⁶³ For example, one's particular position in the power hierarchy; party membership; and the prestige of the nature of work done were the main indicators of the new work stratification.⁴⁶⁴ Ultimately, one's primary occupation was one of the 'determinants of social status.'⁴⁶⁵ The same social taxonomy applies to socialist Romania, and although S. was not a party member, his wife was. As V. herself was quoted by an informant to have said about her husband four months prior to writing her letter of denunciation: '[...] he is not [a party member]; all his university [studies] and they still won't make him one.'⁴⁶⁶ The reason for his failure to gain party membership is never stated, and although V. complains more than once that S. is using her member status as 'bait' to force the local authorities into issuing them with a travel visa, this does not seem to harm his case.

Although S. opens his declaration by stating he is 'of Romanian nationality and citizenship,' the *Securitate* reports make the following statements: 'Several țigani get together [person's and street name], where they engage in speculation,'⁴⁶⁷ and 'Being unemployed, he plays poker with other țigani, and dice games with țigani children on his street.'⁴⁶⁸ Yet his

⁴⁶³ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 45.

⁴⁶⁴ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 45.

⁴⁶⁵ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 45 and 248 in particular.

⁴⁶⁶ CNSAS, FI 819267. Note, 14 February 1981, 19.

⁴⁶⁷ CNSAS, FI 819267. Militia report, 6 August 1981, 9.

⁴⁶⁸ CNSAS, FI 819267. Investigative note, 7 March 1981, 20.

'tigan'-ness was not held against him. Even if 'tigan' behaviour had crystallised into the antithesis of the good socialist by the late 1970s, and the identity to be identified against by 1988. In making himself seen as an equal amongst (violent) men, S.'s ethnicity took a back seat. Or, to put it differently, his gender 'lessened' his 'tigan'-ness.

Productivity- and status-wise, S. abounded in the former in potentiality, the latter in actualisation. He had been unemployed for a year at the time of the denunciation letter, mainly because, from his own words, he had refused job allocations 'in rural areas.' After graduating from the Conservatory, he worked as a music and violin teacher for five years, whilst his parents had been supporting him since 'the summer of 1980.' S. therefore had plenty of status as an educated person, and although unemployed at the time, both his education and his previous employment encapsulated the potential of being socially useful. When he ends his self-declaration with the exhortation: 'Therefore I pray through the actions taken against me I be allowed to engage in an activity useful to our society,' S. asked to be given the opportunity to turn his potential into actuality once more. But 'the productive' in his promise to redeem himself through work also extended to his ability to produce more children. Young enough at the time of writing—he was 35 years old—to beget more citizens for the republic, in his appeal to his status as a father and husband he deftly joined all the dots of the most important factors in actually-existing socialism: the young, educated man, with a full understanding of proper socialist living and behaviour, and his duties towards the republic.

S.'s self-declaration even manages to turn the boundary between potentiality and actualisation in his favour, when he stresses that he may have entertained ideas of emigration, yet 'I never made any preparations with a view towards giving concrete shape to my intentions to leave the country; I merely talked about it.'⁴⁶⁹ Moreover, in asking '[...] that the measures taken against me allow me to engage in activities useful to our

⁴⁶⁹ CNSAS, FI 819267. Sworn self-declaration, 4 December 1981, p. 4.

society,' he seized with full force the liberating promise at the heart of the socialist programme of re-fashioning.

His job status as a music professor may explain the confidence with which S. used not only the language of socialism, but language to build himself up as the main character in a narrative of redemption. Compared with the young and often gauche use of language in M's declaration, we can imagine how easily she must have fitted the contours of a *déclassé* element in the taxonomic reordering of the new world. And whilst in both cases the main person is seen as reformable—one cast as so from above, one self-cast—in M's case her Roma identity magnified her uncontained sexuality and born-in-misery status, pushing her gender and her 'misbehaviour' forward. Conversely, in the case of S., his Romani identity took a back seat when he put himself forward as a young father and husband.

Conclusions

Both dossiers were sparked into bureaucratic life by denunciations, a strategy which becomes intelligible with the help of the analytical category of the 'patriarchal bargain.' By performing a deep reading of the materials pertaining to the two cases, I illuminated the ways in which the patriarchal qualities of Romanian state socialism interacted with the categories of age; gender; class; Romani ethnicity; and tropes about Romani bodies to produce two very different outcomes.

In neither story was their Romani ethnicity the main protagonist, not in the sense of its being broadcasted all over the reports, notes, requests, and the general paper trail of the bureaucratic state. Yet, as I have shown, M.'s gender pushed her 'tigan nationality' forward, thus determining the course of their interaction with the social categories of age and class in a village in postwar state socialist Romania. Thus, the top down, as a legal system regarding the protection of 'minors in moral danger' and foster parenting, collided with the bottom up as inherited racialising, gendered, and class-driven understandings of sexual relations. In the case of S., a

legal system which protected the married, nuclear couple, even as it was neglectful of domestic violence, intersected with his educated ability to use the language and the vision of state socialism. He was thus able to push forward his cherished gendered role as procreator and educator of the Republic's future citizens.

There is quite a leap from the early 1950s to the early 1980s. I do not mean to imply that state socialism in Romania was ossified. But in 1949, when Party officials refused to problematise the racialised historical life of the word 'țigan' by declaring the Roma to be a 'social problem,' they allowed inherited prejudice to infuse social relations thereafter. In practice, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this meant that by the 1970s, the link between Romani ethnicity and anti-socialist behaviour had become crystallised. The categories of age, gender, and class themselves changed over the history of state socialism. What I have shown in this chapter is precisely how they intersected and collided with one another and racialising 'țigan' tropes under the patriarchal qualities of state socialism in Romania. In so doing, they worked as a mirror image to literally shut one Romani person away whilst the other walked free.

4. More Socialist than the Party: Identity and the Law

In this chapter I document the ways in which Romani Romanians engaged with socialist citizenship and, in so doing, sought to redefine the idea of the Romanian socialist citizen on their terms. I draw mainly on petitioning letters sent to the *Securitate* offices in which signatories threatened authorities with various disruptive actions. These varied from contacting Radio Free Europe and visiting embassies of foreign states; to going on hunger strike; to jumping in front of the presidential car. Party officials called such actions 'unofficial avenues,' by which they meant directly approaching higher cadres or even President Ceaușescu. By resorting to threatening disruptive actions, petitioners aimed to convince Securitate officers to accept their claims. At the same time, in documenting the ways in which petitioners referenced Romanian socialist laws and international covenants to support the righteousness of their claims, I outline the contours of Romani Romanian socialist identities. I also use militia reports; spontaneous denunciations; and articles in the French printed media to further contextualise such legally informed cultural practices. As with the previous chapters, numerically I analyse more sources on Romanian socialists, than I do on Romani Romanian socialists. However, in order to show that Roma were writing *as* socialists, I contextualise the writing of letters of complaint and threats as a wider social and cultural practice.

To make sense of both the roots and the purposes such practices tried to achieve, occasionally with success, I build on two theoretical frameworks available in the literature. First, Mary Fulbrook's concept of 'participatory dictatorship,' steeped in the 'grumbling culture of state socialism,' allows for a view of lived socialism as active engagement with the system. As she puts it, regarding the German Democratic Republic (GDR), 'people themselves were at once and the same time both constrained and affected

by, and yet also actively and often voluntarily carried' the regime.⁴⁷⁰ She considers the sending of complaint letters to have been an integral part of what she calls 'participatory dictatorship.' Encouraged by the authorities as one means to engage with the everyday citizen, it also allowed citizens to bring the party to task whenever they deemed welfare or consumption promises had not been kept. Or whenever they deemed local officials engaged in corruption. Second, I refer to Benjamin Nathans's concept of 'radical civil obedience' to situate citizens' appeals to the 'laws of our country' and international covenants, most often the 1975 Helsinki Final Accord, *within* state socialism.

I read letters of complaint and blackmail not necessarily as forms of dissidence, but rather as radical ways of demanding that party authorities abide by promises enshrined in law with President Ceaușescu's signature. Nathans writes about radical civil obedience as developed by Soviet dissidents. They 'engag[ed] in or insist[ed] on practices formally protected by Soviet law—such as freedom of assembly or transparency of judicial proceedings.'⁴⁷¹ At its origins this kind of radical civil obedience is tied to famous dissidents—Aleksandr Vol'Pin in this case. However, I have repurposed it to investigate the ways in which ordinary citizens referenced legality to argue that socialist officials were contradicting the law. In other words, in appealing to local decrees and ratified international covenants, Romanian citizens, Romani included, depicted themselves as true socialists, constrained in their quests for socialist fulfilment by less-than-socialist authorities.

Generally speaking, whenever the Helsinki Final Accord makes an appearance in works on state socialism, it usually signals the beginning of the end for state socialism. The Helsinki summit was the result of months of negotiations among 35 countries within the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Final Accord, 'which endorsed the liberal

⁴⁷⁰ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 12.

⁴⁷¹ Benjamin Nathans, 'The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'Pin and the Idea of Rights under "Developed Socialism,"' *Slavic Review* 66 no. 4, (2007): 630.

concept of human rights,' was signed in 1975 by all socialist states with the exception of Albania.⁴⁷² The most unequivocal assessment that the Final Accord constituted the deathbed of state socialism is Jack Donnelly's statement: 'In hindsight, the Helsinki Process can be seen as a chronicle of the gradual demise of the cold war and Soviet-style communism in the face of increasing national and international demands to implement internationally recognized human rights.'⁴⁷³

However, not only do such analyses privilege the few dissidents who became *causes célèbres* abroad, but in the Romanian case international knowledge of human rights abuses did not seem to hamper its trade relations with the US.⁴⁷⁴ As one historian put it, Ronald Reagan was indeed pushed to reconsider American favouritism towards Romania in 1984. It was discovered that 20 000 Bibles sent to the Hungarian Reformed Church of Transylvania by the American World Reformed Alliance in the 1970s had been turned into toilet paper despite promises of delivery. Yet 'according to Romanian documents, even after 1982, the Helsinki Final Act was not employed systematically as a constructive tool to confront the Romanian government when dealing with it bilaterally.'⁴⁷⁵

Moreover, if dissidents have received a lot of attention from Romanian scholars who wrote in an against-the-communist-past vein about heroic acts of resistance to Ceaușescu's regime and the *Securitate*,⁴⁷⁶ acts of

⁴⁷² Angela Romano, 'Pan-Europe. A Continental Space for Cooperation,' in *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s*, eds A. Romano and F. Romero (Abingdon and New York, 2021), 34-35.

⁴⁷³ Cited in Celia Donert, 'Chapter 77 and the Roma. Human Rights and Dissent in Socialist Czechoslovakia,' in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. L. Hoffman (Cambridge, 2012), 197.

⁴⁷⁴ To focus exclusively on dissidents is to also ignore the historical realities of citizens who not only found affirmation in 'some of the values promoted by the state (e.g. social equality, community-mindedness, selflessness, diligence) [...] regardless of ideological affiliation.' It is also to gloss over the fact while many individuals were anti-Ceaușescu, especially by the 1980s, they nonetheless identified with certain aspects of socialist rhetoric and policy (peace, public security, education, orderliness).' Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 6.

⁴⁷⁵ Sylbe Beata Kelner, 'The Reagan Administration and the Promotion of Human Rights in Eastern Europe. The Case of the Romanian Emigration, 1981-1984,' in *New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War. Unexpected Transformations?*, eds B. Blumenau et al (London, 2018), 176.

⁴⁷⁶ See Chapter Two.

everyday radical civil obedience remain under-researched. In this chapter I bring to light such acts. In so doing, I complicate the history of state socialism in Romania in two ways. First, I show how citizens at large used Romanian socialist laws and international covenants as tools to claim that party and state authorities prevented them from being true socialists. Second, I document some Romani acts of radical civil obedience and participatory dictatorship.

These acts, in turn, afford us a twofold view. On the one hand, we see what a Romani Romanian socialist identity might have looked like had party and state officials not foreclosed it. On the other, as the open letter published in response to an article in the French newspaper *Le Matin* reveals, state and party officials did not only continue to brandish the spectre of the 'țigan' to explain violence and social malfunctioning. That they did so in a breath-taking cavalier manner points not merely to an endurance of 'țigan' tropes, but also to a hardening of the association between Romani ethnicity, 'țigan' behaviour and anti-socialism in the 1980s.

This chapter threads together what would seem at first glance disparate sources. I look at requests of redress—of visa denials, or of a prohibition to worship in Romanes—; complaints about embezzlement; the long bitter reply to a French journalist, authored by a self-identifying 'țigan' man;⁴⁷⁷ and de Gila-Kochakowski's scenario of a Romani life under state socialism, among others. Yet they all engage with the overarching question of socialist identity and Romani-ness. Through both their use of the socio-cultural tools of participatory dictatorship and their complaints about authorities' stereotypical scapegoating, Romani citizens filled in the contours of a Romani socialist identity simultaneously as a lived experience and a project to be achieved under the right structural conditions.

⁴⁷⁷ The author was Nicolae Gheorghe, Romani socialist and activist, under the pseudonym Alexandru Danciu. The letter has been published in Romanian in Nicoleta Bițu (ed.), *Nicolae Gheorghe. O viață Dedicată Romilor. Culegere de Texte, Eseuri, Diaologuri* [A life dedicated to the Roma. An edited volume of texts, essays, conversations] (București: Editura Centrului Național de Cultură a Romilor, 2016).

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In February 1984, two Romani men sent a letter to the Bucharest *Securitate* urging officials to intervene on their behalf with the Resița People's Council and militia. The two signatories had been fined for undertaking home alterations without receiving permission for the plans in advance.

They had made the alterations in order to turn their 'dwelling, personal property' into a 'țigan church in our mother tongue.'⁴⁷⁸ They further explained that given their large family and small income, they had paid only a part of the fine, even though the walls they had demolished 'posed no structural risks.' They wrote to the Securitate to ask for the authorisation to function as a church, following the rejection of their application by the Resița local authorities. This, in spite of the fact that, as they put it, 'we were given this right by the Official Bulletin of the Romanian Socialist Republic dated 20 November 1974, signed by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu.'

Decree 212 dated 31 October 1974, which ratified the 1966 UN human rights Covenant, signed by Romania in June 1968, was published in the Official Bulletin on 20 November 1974. The two Romani men continued, explaining why what they were asking for was not only legal, but because it was legal, it was the correct socialist thing to do:

For this we ask that you take into account that our faith is recognised by our state in which we live, we are not a secret faith, we are engaged in no sort of politics or propaganda, we observe the public peace and order, we cause no trouble to the municipality of our state, we gather twice a week in our spare time, [...] all in all seven times a week, we have religious duties the same way others have the right to have fun in various amenities, at shows and restaurants and they

⁴⁷⁸ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 8 February 1984, 272.

steal and they break in, courts are full of those who cause harm and break the state laws, whereas we are not lawbreakers.

Let us unpack these lines bursting with meaning. First, they demonstrate the awareness, in their reiterations that they were no lawbreakers, of the association between 'țigan' and criminality, as we have seen in the previous chapters. I have kept the original orthography, with no full stops, in order to convey in the English language the anxious explanation of their right to have a Pentecostal church where mass would be conducted in Romanes. Yet their reasoning went beyond dismantling the widely held societal link between 'țigan' and criminality. By referencing both the UN Covenant and Romanian socialist legality, the two men wrote as Romani Romanian socialists.

Paragraph 2, article 2 of the Decree published in Romanian stated that the signatories of the UN Covenant pledged to guarantee the implementation of rights, irrespective of 'race, colour, sex, language, religion, political and any other type of opinion, national and social origin, wealth, birth and any other circumstance.'⁴⁷⁹ Furthermore, not only did the Decree pledge not to discriminate based on religion, but the two men were correct to emphasise that the Pentecostal cult was 'recognised' in Romania. They were also careful to point out that they gathered in their spare time, thus ensuring that the *Securitate* officers would not class them as work shirkers. By comparing their 'religious duties' to 'the right to have fun in various amenities, at shows and in restaurants,' they were tapping into the socialist promise to, and right of, workers to use their leisure time to rest and charge their batteries, as it were.

In other words, they were plainly stating that their chosen way as workers to decompress was not to 'have fun' but to gather in church to listen to mass in 'the țigan language.' And in spelling out that they were not 'law breakers' the two Romani signatories positioned themselves as true

⁴⁷⁹ Available at https://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?id=63815 (retrieved 13.06.2023).

socialists as evidenced by their law-abiding record. The men finished their letter with a threat:

In the event you will not solve our cause, we must defend our cause which is righteous by asking for help from foreign embassies in Bucharest [and] by writing to [Radio] Free Europe.

In November 1979 another Romanian citizen, self-identified as 'țigan,' who was travelling by car with friends and family, had been stopped by the traffic militia and had his driving licence and identity card confiscated. In addition, the officers also confiscated several 'Bibles in the Romanian and Hungarian language; cassette tapes with religious songs; and religious poetry.' Consequently, he sent a letter to the Târgu Mureș *Securitate*. He wrote to complain that he had been stopped and searched for 'no reason.' Furthermore, while fined for traffic offenses, the authorities had not issued a receipt for the 'confiscated belongings.'

In a different *Securitate* report, the same man was said to be under surveillance on suspicion of being part of a network of Pentecostal Roma involved in bringing into the country 'illegal mystic-religious' materials via personal cars equipped with special hiding places. By stopping and searching him, the militia officers had possibly hoped to find him in the possession of Bibles. Yet the man, 'deeply offended by being stopped on suspicion of being an offender,' wrote the following:

I cannot be accused of having broken any laws. I engaged in no propaganda, and I think I have the right to listen to, and read, what I like. I am a peaceful man. Just because I am țigan it doesn't follow I should be suspected of all sorts of things as soon as one sees me.⁴⁸⁰

He then cited from the UN Covenant on civil and political human rights:

⁴⁸⁰ CNSAS, FI 375351, Vol. 1. Memo, 19 December 1979, 5.

All persons have the right to choose what they think, believe, and worship. [...] All persons have the right to free speech, which includes the freedom to seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas of any kind, by word of mouth, written, printed, or in artistic shape, or by any other means they choose, regardless of borders.

And he added the *coup de grace*: 'In light of this text, I wonder, on the basis of which law have my belongings been confiscated?' And finally, he signed off with the customary threat: 'I apprise you of our decision to seek justice in the event you should not be able to give us justice.'

In so doing, both he, as well as the two Resița Romani men, tapped into the reservoir of cultural tools with which to hold the Party accountable for its legal promises. 'Legal' is a crucial qualifier, for it was through the law that socialist authorities set about bringing into being the new citizens and society. As Scott Newman put it regarding socialist societies, 'law laid down both geographical and mental boundaries. It set the terms for cultural self-understanding and political self-determination, as well as eligibility for important social resources.'⁴⁸¹ Law was the state embodiment of the socialist community and its power to mould mentality, as we have seen in Chapter Two. Both law and community were means of education, by way of which the communist party was to bring into being the new and improved citizen and the new socialist society.

Precisely because the law was one of the most valuable tools of social engineering, everyday citizens referenced it so avidly in their complaints. The law was also crucial to the counting and distributing of the population according to party and state plans. Recall from Chapter Two that Mrs. P., accused of suffering 'with a psycho-nervous condition' was also reported by her neighbours to 'lodge her brother without using the required legal forms.' Not to register one's lodgers with the local authorities was the equivalent

⁴⁸¹ Scott Newton, *Law and the Making of the Soviet World. The Red Demiurge* (Abingdon and New York, 2015), 5.

of allowing citizens to engage in uncontrolled movement. Recall also from Chapter One that movement unsanctioned by the party and state was akin to covering for 'enemies of the new order.' And because socialist striving for improvement and self-improvement was never-ending, socialist legality was essential to ensure the resolution of 'social problems by a socialist citizenry who subject[ed] their world to constant review with the aim of ever-possible improvement.'⁴⁸²

In order for this to be possible, socialist society had to make 'its political institutions accessible and fair.'⁴⁸³ In allowing citizens to complain and petition, late-socialist Romanian authorities signalled that socialist institutions were accessible. Yet, in threatening, cajoling, beseeching, and pestering officials with memos, letters, and 'disruptive' behaviour, the citizenry also let the authorities know that socialist institutions were not only unfair. They were also preventing citizens from fulfilling their socialist destiny.

Even when citizens wrote threatening the party with visits to foreign embassies and letters to 'international fora and newspapers,' they wrote within the terms given by the state, not against it.⁴⁸⁴ For example, in 1981 a young Romanian widow sent 'yet another memo' to the *Securitate* officers asking for resolution to a 'matter of life and death for me.'⁴⁸⁵ She had applied for a visa to marry a Romanian citizen domiciled in Holland, which the Minister of Interior had rejected. In her appeal to convince the *Securitate* authorities to issue her a visa, she first positioned herself as a worker, yet she was careful to emphasise that the state would not lose much by letting her go: 'I'm not a trained, high cadre but a mere clerk.' She carried on, emphasising that her position could be 'easily filled by one

⁴⁸² Christine Sypnowich, 'Comment. The Future of Socialist Legality: A Reply to Hunt,' available at <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i193/articles/christine-sypnowich-the-future-of-socialist-legality-a-reply-to-hunt.pdf> (retrieved 15.02.2023), 85.

⁴⁸³ Sypnowich, 'Comment,' 87.

⁴⁸⁴ This is Paul Betts' phrasing for the GDR case. See Paul Betts, 'Socialism, Social Rights, and Human Rights,' *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3 no. 3, (2012): 420.

⁴⁸⁵ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 20, 347. Undated, but most likely 1982.

of many very well-trained youths with no job.’ Furthermore, she highlighted her inability to fulfil her duties to the republic because of the visa woes and her pining for her partner: ‘Please reconsider with the utmost care because I’m in pain and I’m struggling, [I’m] thinking about him all the time, and my output at work is suffering as a consequence.’ And in her appeal to the objectivity of ‘socialist ethic and morals,’ she brought forth the full force of socialist legality:

By refusing my request, the organs in question are in disconnect with the party’s policy, for, according to the moral guidelines of socialist ethics and equality put forth by the party, I will never be able to have my own family, which I can only bear to have with this man settled abroad; therefore I don’t seem to have the right to life, said to be held very dearly by the party. [...] I wonder in this situation, where is the tight fit between what is preached and what is done by the party, the way I was taught as a child?⁴⁸⁶

In referencing the right to a family, denied her by the Minister of the Interior’s rejection, the woman held socialist authorities in contempt of their own vaunted socialism. It is important to note, once more, that to complain to the authorities and *Securitate* officers about infringements on socialist rights was not to engage in political dissidence.

Citizens sent such letters not only expecting, but ‘demand[ing] delivery from the state,’ as Mary Fulbrook has shown. This ‘institutionalisation and routinisation of a “grumbling culture”⁴⁸⁷ was a practice in which citizens from all socialist countries engaged, the GDR in particular.⁴⁸⁸ Moreover, according to Fulbrook, in the GDR letters of complaint were not a sign of ‘growing individualism.’ That the Romanian socialist woman referenced the right ‘to life,’ by which she meant a family

⁴⁸⁶ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 20, 348.

⁴⁸⁷ Fulbrook, *The People’s State*.

⁴⁸⁸ Betts, ‘Socialism and Rights,’ 419. According to Betts, ‘the scale and intensity of the citizen complaint system were unique’ to German socialism.

life, reinforces Fulbrooks's point. As I have shown in the previous chapters from different angles, party policies held the nuclear reproductive family in sublime glory. This, in turn, brought the family, associated under 'bourgeois' governments with the private realm, into the public. Her reference to her own happiness, as it were, was not a request for individuality. She was asking *Securitate* officials to honour socialist citizenship both at the level of ideas and as lived socialism, and in so doing to promote the health of socialist society.

What is more, improvements and rectifications were 'still related to systemic shortcomings, even when couched in individual terms.'⁴⁸⁹ Romanian workers too denounced, petitioned, and complained in the name of the state in order to 'save it.' For example, in the early 1980s,⁴⁹⁰ a group of workers sent a letter to the Securitate, telling of their foreman who was syphoning factory money into his 'private endeavours.' Additionally, they reported the foreman for doing such private jobs on factory time. Their main grievance was the injured dignity of the workers whom the foreman 'would threaten with layoffs if they dared tell him that what he does is wrong.'⁴⁹¹ They also denounced their foreman for 'tak[ing] money from workers,' on top of using their labour to 'refurbish his personal flat,' and other private endeavours. 'The threatened workers keep quiet; they will not talk for fear of being laid off. Is this the humane thing to do?,' the workers continued in their denunciation letter.

To ensure their letter was given due attention, they framed their denunciation of their foreman as a state-saving act:

Please take the issues we are bringing to your attention very seriously; it is above all about the state's savings, so that they are not depleted. [...] We must not forget the state needs savings, not

⁴⁸⁹ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 287.

⁴⁹⁰ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 36, 33. Undated, but most likely from the first half of the 1980s.

⁴⁹¹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 36, 33. Undated.

waste. Communism needs honest people, not people who only care about their own personal business.⁴⁹²

'Honest people' was indeed how the two Romani men who sent the Resița letter cast themselves. In their own words, the honest socialist citizen was a law-abiding one, who worked during work hours and worshipped in his spare time. Recall again from Chapter Two that honesty was crucial to allow character assessors to judge behaviour. Honest behaviour implied transparency, which was required if the assessors were to gauge the presence or lack of a socialist identity. The two men's spotless behaviour—'we are not lawbreakers'—ensured that they would be understood to be productive citizens. Yet they defined productivity in a back-to-front sense: productivity here as the absence of criminal behaviour. And as Fulbrook argues, the most privileged citizen in socialism was the productive citizen.⁴⁹³ Therefore, they made their case for a socialist identity.

Although the two Romani men made their case with panache, they did not miss out on the opportunity to let *Securitate* officers know they would resort to complaining by what law enforcers termed unofficial channels if necessary. Unruly complaining usually meant stepping in front of the state leader,' like the threat made by the family with two children who tried to emigrate to the US.⁴⁹⁴ A 'widowed woman' with two children was reported to have 'stepped in front of the party and state leaders on 11 September 1976 in Timiș County.' She had asked to be allowed to emigrate to FGR for marriage purposes, but was denied her request.⁴⁹⁵ An 'unskilled worker' was said to have travelled on his own to Timișoara Airport, where 'hiding behind a group of pioneers, he jumped out and handed a letter to comrade the president as he was passing by.'⁴⁹⁶ Or the electrician who, whilst at the same airport with a group of workers from his enterprise, was

⁴⁹² CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 36, 33 and 34.

⁴⁹³ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 273.

⁴⁹⁴ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 20, September 1982, 185.

⁴⁹⁵ CNSAS, FD 0009675, Vol. 1. Report, 13 September 1976, 205.

⁴⁹⁶ CNSAS, FD 0009675, Vol. 1, 205.

said to 'have surreptitiously grabbed someone else's flag, stood in the front row and as soon as the head of the state passed by he stepped forward and handed [the president] a letter.'⁴⁹⁷

I have examined the two volumes of the monograph *Letters to Radio Free Europe*⁴⁹⁸ to ascertain whether the two Romani signatories followed through on their threat to contact Radio Free Europe. I have found no letter signed with their names, or with content commensurate with their request.⁴⁹⁹ However, they appear to have indeed visited—or 'attempted to visit'—foreign embassies. A report from May 1983 sent by the Caraş-Severin Securitate to the Bucharest headquarters informed on one of the two Romani signatories, whom I will name C. The report was sent in reply to a telex request by Bucharest headquarters asking that 'action [be taken] to identify [ţigani] from our country and to compile personal files [for them].'⁵⁰⁰

The Bucharest order was issued as a prophylactic measure 'to stop said elements from being recruited for actions hostile to our state' in light of 'the second edition of the Romani International Festival [which] will take place on Chandigarh, India between 29-31 August 1983.' County Securitate branches were also requested to send in information on 'the security problems ţigani in your database are posing' and how they were dealt with, by 15 September 1983.

Caraş-Severin Securitate classified C. as a 'ţigan with a say,' most likely because he was further identified as 'the self-declared leader of a group who meet without authorisation and are putting pressure on the authorities to have authorisation for a church just for ţigani.'⁵⁰¹ The report

⁴⁹⁷ CNSAS, FD 0009675, Vol. 1. Report, 13 September 1976, 206 back.

⁴⁹⁸ Gabriel Andreescu and Mihnea Berindei (eds), *Ultimul deceniu communist. Scrisori catre Radio Europa Libera* [The last communist decade. Letters to Radio Free Europe]. Vol I, 1979-1985, and Vol. II, 1986-1989 (Bucuresti, 2015).

⁴⁹⁹ Note that, according to Ioana Macrea-Toma 'the two editors did not rely on Radio Free Europe's archive at Blinken Open Society Archives, but on the personal copies of Berindei. Ioana Macrea-Toma, 'The Eyes of Radio Free Europe: Regimes of Visibility in the Cold War Archives,' *East Central Europe*, 44 (2017): 110.

⁵⁰⁰ CNSAS, FD 0001444, Vol. 12, March 1983, 132.

⁵⁰¹ CNSAS, FD 0001444, Vol. 12, May 1984, 231.

continued: 'He has also attempted to visit the USA embassy in Bucharest for this purpose.' Subsequently, he was 'fined in accordance with Decree 153,⁵⁰² which regulated the disturbance of the public peace and quiet as well as 'behaviour incompatible with the moral core of the socialist being.'⁵⁰³ That C. was fined according to Decree 153 and not Law 23/1971, which criminalised the revelation of state secrets to foreigners, strongly suggests he also never made it inside the embassy. He may well have been apprehended outside the embassy, as one citizen who received a warning after becoming involved in a physical argument explained in his self-declaration to the *Securitate*: 'Seeing that in the RSR I can get no justice, I attempted to contact the USA embassy in Romania, but I was apprehended by the state organs before I had a chance to go in.'⁵⁰⁴

Most of the letters which threatened visits to foreign embassies in Bucharest singled out the American embassy, most likely because of the status of 'most favoured nation' that the US had extended to Romania and the possibility of emigration it augured. There was also the hurt petitioners were hoping to inflict on the 'special' economic relationship between the U.S and the Romanian Republic.

When petitioners did not threaten visits to the American embassy, they framed their requests as being sanctified by the socialist legal framework of the Romanian Republic; the 1966 UN Covenant, ratified by the Republic in 1968; the Helsinki Final accord Ceauşescu signed in 1975; and the 1980 Madrid Conference for Cooperation and East/West trade. Unlike analyses which cast the famous Helsinki Accord as the beginning of the end for state socialism,⁵⁰⁵ I read it as one of several tools with which citizens sought to point out the less-than-socialist treatment they received from party officials.

⁵⁰² CNSAS, FD 0001444, Vol. 12, May 1984, 231.

⁵⁰³ Available at <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/252> (retrieved 13.06.2023).

⁵⁰⁴ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 20. Self-declaration, 29 February 1985, 171.

⁵⁰⁵ See the citation from Jack Donnelly above, footnote 376.

In a similar vein, Celia Donert has taken 'the critique of the Helsinki narrative in a new direction' by looking at ideals of community and solidarity in support of Roma rights during the 1970s and 1980s in circles of social workers and cultural activists, rather than from the angle of dissidence.⁵⁰⁶ Likewise, Paul Betts has stressed that rights in the 'East German Civil society developed [not] against the state but rather very much within it.'⁵⁰⁷ It was 'the extraordinary rights to intervene in and shape society in order to create a substantive equality,' as Michael Kopeček put it, that gave citizens the impetus not only to expect their social rights to be fulfilled, but to also write with impunity to party officials to ask for perceived wrongs to be righted.⁵⁰⁸

Take, for example, a mother's threat to commit suicide after she also threatened to murder her two children. In August 1981 a *Securitate* informant relayed information about a woman, mother to two children, who 'found herself pushed to quit her job as a typist by bullying and unfair treatment at work.' Without a job since 24 September 1980, she had allegedly stated that 'she will commit suicide after she's killed her children unless the job situation is sorted out.'⁵⁰⁹ In a society where the lives of mothers and children were 'guaranteed by the State,' as one petitioner put it, the suicide-murder pact of a mother-woman citizen who had been allegedly unfairly dismissed carried with it the crushing weight of party and state failure to deliver on its much-vaunted visionary plans.⁵¹⁰

This is not to say that threatening *Securitate* officers was a fool proof means of achieving resolution to complaints. Authorities usually retaliated

⁵⁰⁶ Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, chapter seven.

⁵⁰⁷ Betts, 'Socialism and Rights,' 420.

⁵⁰⁸ Kopeček, Michal, 'The Socialist Conception of Human Rights and Its Dissident Critique: Hungary and Czechoslovakia, 1960s-1980s,' *East Central Europe* no. 46, (2019): 261-289.

⁵⁰⁹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 11, 299.

⁵¹⁰ Such practices carried over into the 1990s. During one of my two interviews with Ana, a Romani Romanian migrant in Nottingham, U.K. in 2017, she mentioned she found herself jobless in the very early 1990s. She had been working as a street sweeper, and she petitioned the townhall for a job. Upon being repeatedly fobbed off, she asked for an audience with the mayor whereupon she threatened him with immolation unless given a job.

against individual letter writers by various means: terminating party and communist organisations membership; fining petitioners for 'revealing state secrets' or for 'hooliganism.' The Securitate officers pushed back against requests for better accommodation; visa requests; and demands for jobs.

In spite of this, petitioners were not discouraged. On the contrary, they used the punishments that were meted out to them as proof that they were in the right and the state and party officials in the wrong. For example, the flat-seeking family man we encountered in Chapter Two wrote to the head of the International Red Cross: 'I have received no reply [to my requests for a flat]. On the contrary, lower-rung bosses threatened—against the constitutional provisions of the RSR—that I will become homeless.'⁵¹¹

Threats and blackmail, however, did work on occasion. For example, the Passport Direction within the Bucharest Securitate Department advised that a certain couple's request for a passport with a view towards indefinite settlement in the USA be 'reassessed and positively sorted out.'⁵¹² The couple in question had submitted in December 1986 a visa request to be allowed to leave Romania for good. Because their visa had been denied, the note further stated that the 'above-mentioned are planning to cause disorder, with threats that they will resort to "protesting measures" such as [going on a] "hunger strike."' Furthermore, the two were serious about causing disorder. 'In the workplace, the spouses have taken up an approach of pure slackness and disinterest,' the note relayed further. This meant, grievously, that the work plan was left unfulfilled.

The couple took further measures when even subverting the sanctity of the work plan did not seem to bend the *Securitate's* will. They had sent 32 postcards to 'certain party and state organs, (CC of RCP, The State Council, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, The Direction for Passports and others),' wherein they announced their plans to go on

⁵¹¹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 40. See footnote 31 for the full story.

⁵¹² CNSAS, FD 013832, Vol. 35. 'Note,' 20 October 1987, 41 back.

hunger strike to said officials. Bombarding party and state officials seemed to cause the disorder the couple were seeking, with positive results. Their emigration request was granted, and at a time—1988—when the possibility to obtain a visa was not promising. The activism of two US congressmen who expressed moral objections against his regime drove Ceaușescu to retaliate by renouncing 'The Most Favoured Nation' status.⁵¹³ Subsequently, in this year 'emigration to the US in the first nine months, registered a dramatic 40 percent decrease.' It might have been that harassing party and state organs gave the impression that *Securitate* officers were unable to keep order. Or perhaps slacking at work during a period of grievous austerity measures and an export-oriented economy were enough of a reason to convince the passport officials it was not worth fighting to keep these citizens in Romania.

President Ceaușescu's willingness to sign the Helsinki Final Accord in 1975, with its human rights clause, came at a time when ideas were shifting. In the late 1960s, the international community saw a radical shift in protection of minority and indigenous rights and away from the 'integrationist drive' of the 1950s, a move supported by 'sympathetic officials of the International Labour Organisation and United Nations secretaries.'⁵¹⁴ Additionally, according to Federico Romero, socialist states looked at the Helsinki Accord as the 'high point of détente and the crowing of [their] efforts to obtain international legitimacy and stability.' Furthermore, the risks posed by the human rights clause to a society like late socialist Romania, where Romani persons were not acknowledged as a minority, 'appeared manageable and seemed more than balanced by Helsinki's substantial results and promises.'⁵¹⁵ President Ceaușescu must

⁵¹³ Kelner, 'The Reagan Administration,' 178.

⁵¹⁴ Hanne Hagtvedt Vik and Anne Julie Semb, 'Who Owns the Land? Norway, the Sami and the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Convention,' *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 20, (2013): 518-519.

⁵¹⁵ Federico Romero, 'Socialism between Détente and Globalization,' *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s*, eds A. Romano and F. Romero (Abingdon and New York, 2021): 17-18.

have trusted the Securitate forces to keep the budding risks of Romani ethnic activism under control.

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Roma in socialist Romania were never given the status of an ethnic or a national minority. In 1983, Vania de Gila-Kochakowski, the Romani vice-president and cultural adviser to the French organisation Romano Yekhipe, wrote to Nicolae Gheorghe, the foremost Romani Romanian sociologist and activist. De Gila-Kochakowski lamented Gheorghe's absence from a UNESCO meeting in 1983 in Karasjok, Norway. 'It is lamentable that your seat at Karasjok was empty: this will give some the pretext to judge your country,' wrote de Gila-Kochakowski.⁵¹⁶ Although he supported socialism as the guarantor of 'secure attachment' and deplored narratives which exalted 'the faux romanticism of țigan freedom which allows them to wander,' de Gila-Kochakowski assessed the ethical and constructive integration of Romani citizens into Romanian socialist society in the following way:

If Romania were to say to the Roma: [...] we will allow you to live a dignified life like the Romanians do, and, what's more, we'll allow your children to be taught their history, their culture, and their language, and this not to make you stick out, but so that you remember your glorious past [...] and all the humiliations inflicted by the Turkish-Romanian boyars. [...] This, my dear brother, would be my favourite socialist narrative.⁵¹⁷

This ideal socialist scenario never came to pass. What is more, attempts to forge a Romani Romanian socialist identity were labelled either hostile Western propaganda or as a tendency to 'interpret [țigani's] socio-

⁵¹⁶ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 126. All translations from the French language are mine.

⁵¹⁷ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 125.

economic background in a tendentious manner.⁵¹⁸ By October 1989, *Securitate* reports were highlighting the effects religious organisations from abroad, such as the National Council of Romanian Christian Țigani based in California, had on local Roma. 'These foreign citizens have promised the locals in Alba Iulia a Pentecostal church in France, one that would be țigan only with all activities held in the țigan language, thus goading [the locals] to emigrate.' It was all described as 'hostile actions under the mask of religion,' as the report put it.⁵¹⁹

In this light, the 1984 Resița letter was sent in a context of heightening state party antagonism to perceived threats of public Romani ethnic claims, such as asking for the right to use Romanes as a language of worship. Beginning in 1981, *Securitate* agents started to turn their attention to what they termed as the question of 'țigan nationalism.' It was purportedly abetted by western ethnographers; linguists; and organised religion as fronts for stirring up 'anti-socialist' and 'anti-Romanian' sentiments. At the same time, however, both Ion Cioabă and Nicolae succeeded in having a decade-long collaboration with the *Securitate* in order to claim compensation from the German state for Romani Holocaust victims. Together, they were the originators of the 'discourse on the Holocaust and compensation' from Germany to Romani victims. Petre Matei has documented how the two activists, 'connected to the international Roma movement,' generated a narrative with Roma at the centre not 'as an identity marker for the Roma.' Rather, in asking the Romanian authorities to allow the existence of a Roma organisation in Romania who would mediate between Romani Holocaust survivors and the German state, Cioabă (and Gheorghe) hoped to find a 'basis for dialogue' with the hope of achieving ethnic recognition in the future. Ultimately, the Council for State Security eventually put an end to this collaboration without any compensation claimed or received. As Matei argues, state authorities feared

⁵¹⁸ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 376. The latter was a jab at Nicolae Gheorghe, who was forced to give up Romani activism towards the late 1980s due to being harassed by the *Securitate*.

⁵¹⁹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 63 back.

that Cioabă had become privy to too much information. Yet that they should entertain this collaboration for a decade was impressive in itself, particularly when the last decade of state socialism is 'conventionally viewed in historiography as a period of extreme repression and hardship.'⁵²⁰

Sometime following the Third Romani International Conference at Göttingen between 16-20 May 1981, Ion Cioabă, the *soi-disant* 'gypsy king' who attended the conference in person, and Nicolae Gheorghe wrote a report for the *Securitate*. Based both on Cioabă's first-hand analysis and press materials, the report informed the *Securitate* that:

The presence of six representatives of țigani from Eastern European countries suggests that in the future the focus of the țigani international organisations will turn towards the East, in particular the problems țigani in these countries are dealing with, given their higher numbers in these countries and their better-preserved cultural characteristics.⁵²¹

The *Securitate* higher-ups took measures to deflect international interest towards Romani citizens. Thus in June 1982, the Direction for State Security sent a circular order to all counties asking to gather statistics and intelligence on 'the țigani within your jurisdiction.'⁵²² The particular information the *Securitate* heads were interested in were: 'Data regarding the leaders of this population; their connections and relations with țigani from other counties or abroad and the nature of these relations;' 'any info on țigani who have travelled abroad between 1980-1982 and those known to be in touch with the "International Union of Roma" in Switzerland;' 'persons, in our country or abroad, known to be gathering data on this category of persons for hostile purposes.'

⁵²⁰ Matei, 214.

⁵²¹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 99, Report, undated.

⁵²² CNSAS, FD 000137, Vol. 14, 83.

One such person 'in our country' was Romani sociologist Nicolae Gheorghe, who had been denounced to the *Securitate* in March 1980 for studying 'the problems of the Gypsies' by a colleague.⁵²³ Gheorghe collaborated with Sam Beck, a North American researcher, who was deemed 'persona non grata in 1984' by the *Securitate* and refused further entry in Romania.⁵²⁴ Gheorghe's collaboration with Beck commenced in Cluj in August 1979 during a Romanian-American joint conference where Gheorghe gave a presentation titled 'Is there a Gypsy Problem in Romania?' As Fosztó argues, the *Securitate* file mentioned that the presentation aimed to prove the title right.⁵²⁵ Although Beck has disputed that their joint work was an attack on state socialism, Gheorghe was prevented from travelling abroad. For example, his Fulbright visa to the US was rejected in 1983.⁵²⁶ Further harassed and with his visa requests repeatedly rejected, he began 'limit[ing] his correspondence abroad and started to avoid contacts with foreigners.' His surveillance file was closed down in April 1989, and in the last report on him the *Securitate* officer argued that attempts to 'discourage Gheorghe from his actions' had been achieved.⁵²⁷

Ion Cioabă had a different relationship with the *Securitate* than did Gheorghe. Although they worked closely together, and Gheorghe was Cioabă's secretary, thus infusing an academic rhetoric to Cioabă's written paperwork and arguments, the latter was considered to be more docile. A September 1986 *Securitate* report even praised Cioabă for 'preventing Nicolae Gheorghe from initiating hostile activities among the Roma and "at the same time, he was trained to misinform and confuse the reactionary circles from abroad" [...]'⁵²⁸

⁵²³ László Fosztó, 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem" in Socialist Romania? From Suppressing "Nationalism" to Recognition of a National Minority,' *Studia UBB Sociologia*, 63 no. 2 (2018): 118.

⁵²⁴ Fosztó, 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem"?:' 125.

⁵²⁵ Fosztó, 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem"?:' 118.

⁵²⁶ Fosztó, 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem"?:' 127.

⁵²⁷ Fosztó 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem"?:' 130. According to Fosztó, the *Securitate* propositioned Gheorghe that he become a 'future collaborator,' but no evidence of a collaboration has been found.

⁵²⁸ Matei, "Roma discourse on the Holocaust between compensation and identity," 230.

Many county *Securitate* agents sent in their reports, although it is not clear whether some did not, or simply that the reports have not been preserved in the archives. Apparently, lower-rung personnel took seriously neither interest from abroad in 'the lives of țigani in socialist Romania' nor the 'hostile purposes' *Securitate* higher-ups imputed to foreign researchers or curious persons. That is until a West German journalist travelled to Romania in 1984 in search of 'genuine țigani,' purportedly found them, and wrote an article in a German newspaper, subsequently broadcast by Radio Free Europe. The *Securitate* report on the broadcast was worrying enough to elicit a warning from a general in his handwriting:

Maybe in reading this bulletin, Direction I will become convinced, once more, that this issue needs dealing with in a more determined fashion. This in addition to what I already wrote on a set of papers I signed off yesterday.⁵²⁹

The article, broadcast by Radio Free Europe on 28 February 1984, was an exoticising piece *par excellence*. The *Securitate* report identified the author of the article titled *There where the Bulibașa reigns* as 'the West-German journalist Uschi Demeter.' According to her account, the author had decided to travel to Romania at the advice of her 'țigan language professor, Johan Strauss, who [...] explained that if I wish to see authentic țigani, who still train bears and travel in covered horse carriages, I should travel to Romania.'⁵³⁰ Her account is full of the exoticising relish she had hoped for. Whilst the Transylvanian Saxons' houses looked unwelcoming 'with their huge, locked gates,' the home of Ion Cioabă was 'packed with swarthy happy faces.' Furthermore, 'țigani have an archaic instinct for solidarity,'

⁵²⁹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 364. Direction I managed Romanian émigrés' organisations, including the threat of ethnic mobilisation.

⁵³⁰ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 364.

which allegedly helped the journalist recognise them 'even when they are dressed like everyone else.'⁵³¹

Nevertheless, parts of her article do give us a picture of what it meant to be a Romani person in late socialist Romania. After first 'falling into the tourists' ghetto,' where she evidently did not find any 'authentic țigani,' she encountered them 'close to Tîrgu Neamț,' having spotted some horses grazing grass by a forest, next to covered carriages. She 'gave greetings in the țigan language and I was replied to instantly.' An elderly woman then took her into the 'midst of the șatră' where three generations lived together. The elderly woman's husband identified himself as a 'Căldărari, and he travels all summer long with his family from village to village and mends peasants' brass cauldrons.'

The journalist then explained for her West German readers that doing so was allowed by socialist authorities on the basis of a work permit valid solely within the limits of its issuing county. 'Should they be found by the Militia outside their permit area, their most treasured goods—their horses—are confiscated, and if they are unlucky, their carriages burned.'

In her account we see in practice the social effects of Ceaușescu's guidelines for 'the erasure of nomadism and semi-nomadism' he issued in 1977, as documented in Chapter One. First, Romani citizens still travelled during the summer to earn a living with their skills, albeit with work permits issued by the state which tied them to a fixed domicile. Second, they took risks and travelled outside of their permit area, which was in turn harshly punished by police officers. Furthermore, according to the author 'the carriages of țigani are often stopped and searched by the Militia.' This dissuaded her from 'living amongst [the țigani]' and convinced her to travel to Sibiu to visit 'the Bulibașă,' having been authorised by Agerpress, the Press Agency, to 'deal with țigani.'

⁵³¹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 364. She undoubtedly meant this essentialising bit of observation as a compliment, yet I should note such tropes are still used in Romania.

For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to focus on both the purported home and the work life of Ion Cioabă and his extended family. 'The Bulibaşă,' as the journalist refers to him, offered her 'his business card with a certain sophistication, which he is entitled to if we stop to think he is "the comrade CEO" of a cooperative which makes tin products.' In line with the exoticising remit of her travels to Romania and the story she told, the journalist was keen on reading her interlocutors as wilful outsiders to socialism. When told that 'brothers, cousins, nephews and their wives, all work together in the same enterprise which furnishes several counties with stamping dies, pots, and tubs,' she 'expressed appreciation for their talents and enthusiasm for work.' In turn, one of the family members 'retorted *with the same irony*: "What are we to do? This is our contribution to building socialism"' (my emphasis). Having made her mind up a priori that being 'authentic țigani' entailed avoiding socialism or, if not, at least disavowing it whilst nevertheless being—or made to be?—part of it, the journalist's philo-'țiganism' racialised the Roma.

Fake or not, their 'talents and enthusiasm for work' ensured them a secure job and regular income whilst working alongside their family. At the same time, the house the extended family inhabited was by no means the 'colourless and depressing blocks of flats' she had derided one page previously. In the journalist's own words: 'With curiosity, I stare at their enormous house [comprising] two floors, turret, columns and a porch.' To be sure, Cioabă's status as the most prized *Securitate* informant no doubt afforded him benefits unbeknownst or simply out of reach for many citizens. Yet to be able to run a successful business which employed his extended family, within a state-sanctioned framework, can also be read as evidence of a compelling case of a Romani Romanian socialist identity.

At the same time, as she crossed Romania 'obstinately searching for happy țigani,' the West German journalist recorded instances of Romani Romanians occupying low-skilled or unskilled jobs. Against the 'propagandistic' official number of 230,000 'țigani' in Romania, the journalist had the number down as

really over 1 million, [and] you will come across them with every step, even in the capital city. I have learned to recognise them instantly, as the street sweepers, the flower sellers, the graveyard diggers, the public toilet attendants, the taxi drivers, and perhaps even as militia officers.

Most Romani Romanians occupied unskilled or low-skills jobs, at least in the capital city, which raises questions of fair access to resources.⁵³² The author took her exoticising excitement further. According to her claims, she soon learned to recognise Romani citizens 'even when dressed like everybody else,' thanks to 'their innate sense of solidarity' which meant Romani Romanians were soon 'revealing themselves to her.'

Such exotic accounts were not the preserve of West Germans in search of thrills. In an undated essay—but most likely from the first half of the 1980s—a Romani man wrote in Hungarian with proposals for a cultural enlightenment programme. He was hoping to be published as an amateur writer in the contest 'How I started reading.' A self-declared Romani citizen, he also hoped to 'dare have a say for the enlightenment of my fellow țigani.' He opened his 'proposal' with an appeal to socialist legality: 'Taking into account the rights provided by the Constitution of the Romanian Socialist Republic, I take the liberty to make some proposals for the enlightenment of my țigan relatives [...].' He was also aware his 11-page essay would end on the desk of *Securitate* readers, which may explain why he indulged in racialising stereotypes of Roma as 'wanderers, lovers of tradition, and born

⁵³² As Katherine Lebow has shown for Nowa Huta in socialist Poland, Romani citizens usually 'held undesirable forms of employment (for example, garbage collection).' Overall, socially and professionally they lagged behind the other residents. See Chapter 4 in Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, here 111.

instrument-players.⁵³³ Practices of self-racialising were not new, as I show in Chapter One.⁵³⁴

The self-declared amateur Romani writer too distinguished between ethnic Romani persons and the mythical figure of the 'țigan.' As he put it, 'Romanians, Hungarians and people of any nationality think the țigani are all țigani.'⁵³⁵ His proposals were alongside the customary ones, as we have seen in Chapter One, such as teaching Romani Romanians how to dress; how to speak; and to give them useful employment. For the purposes of this chapter, I am interested in uses of traditional tropes about Romani lifestyles and behaviour, which did not lose their currency under late socialism and could be exchanged for personal recognition.

The most astounding and astute engagement with what it meant to be Romani in late socialist Romania came from Nicolae Gheorghe himself who wrote as a self-identifying 'țigan' under a pseudonym. On 15 February 1982, *Le Matin* published journalist Bernard Poulet's account of his trip to Ploiești, Romania, the week before, to pay a visit to 'Vasile Paraschiv, hero of free syndicalism.' In his article, titled 'How I Was Clobbered in Romania,' Poulet recounts Paraschiv's phone call from prison to 'a Romanian friend in Paris on 21 January [1982].' The phone call prompted the French journalist's trip to Romania, given that 'everyone had thought Paraschiv dead in prison.'

Poulet tried three times to find Paraschiv at home, yet unsuccessfully. On the third try, two men hit him 'violently, no doubt with truncheons,' and

⁵³³ According to László Fosztó, the author was a Hungarian Romani singer from Covasna County. In 1976 he 'came to the attention of the Securitate because he was unsatisfied at not being employed as a singer by the Wild Roses dance ensemble, which functioned as part of the local House of Culture.' Having been repeatedly rejected as a singer, he attempted to cross to Hungary with no IDs, upon which he was ordered to go back. 'After returning home, he started submitting long letters in Hungarian to the authorities advocating for the emancipation of the Roma during the early 1980s.' See Fosztó, 'Was there a "Gypsy Problem" in Socialist Romania?': 133.

⁵³⁴ See also O'Keeffe, 'Soviet Roma.' His mentioning of inborn musical talents was perhaps also a hint at his own (rejected-by-the-authorities) talents?

⁵³⁵ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 12, 341.

stole his papers, his recorder, and his money. The introduction to the article blamed unequivocally 'agents of the Securitate, the political police.'⁵³⁶

The editorial board framed Poulet's article as 'a means to fight the policing methods used by Eastern countries by deploring them,' and, it added, 'we are of the opinion that Bernard Poulet's article contributes to the fight against repression in these countries.'⁵³⁷ On the afternoon of the third day, Poulet writes, he had been told by a neighbour of Paraschiv's that the latter would be released from prison that same evening around 8pm. This time, the journalist noticed 'several civilians clad in leather and with sinister-looking faces, who decidedly are taking too keen an interest in me.' At 9pm, on his way to Paraschiv's flat again, 'straight in the centre of Ploiești, in Republic Square, I receive a violent blow on the head.' Nobody answered his shouts for help, and 'half fainting,' Poulet felt his pockets being cleared out. Yet as soon as the aggressors had fled, 'civilians who apparently had heard nothing up to that moment come to my rescue.' Here in Poulet's article come the lines which triggered Gheorghe's reply: 'Curiously, one [of the rescuers] speaks French and goes on to explain that undoubtedly I had just fallen victim to <tzigane thieves>.' The journalist carried on: 'These tzigane thieves are scapegoats, and I will keep on hearing about this in the following days.'

With sarcasm, Poulet goes on to demystify the French-speaking 'civilian's' take on the incident:

And yet the aggressors, having lifted my money, all my documents, and my recorder, seem particularly keen on my papers. How strange that illiterate Tziganes should steal my notebooks and calendars whilst neglecting to nick my overcoat and my Rolex.

And he drove the point home once more when he relayed that he was forbidden post-incident to try to find Paraschiv at home one last time: '[...]

⁵³⁶ Le Matin, front page.

⁵³⁷ Le Matin, 7.

the militia headquarters are located less than 100 metres from the spot where I was clobbered. Funny the nerve the Tziganes had!

The main target of Poulet's contentious sarcasm was the *Securitate*, whom he calls 'one of the most vicious political police [forces] in the East.' For my purposes, however, and that which triggered the angry reply of Gheorghe, it was the ease with which party authorities deployed the trope of the 'țigan thief' to explain a staged mugging of a foreign citizen. All the more so given that informed foreigners were well aware both of the tactics used by *Securitate* officers and the deployment of 'țigan' tropes to scapegoat Romani citizens. I am not certain why Poulet termed the alleged thieves 'illiterate Tziganes.' It may have been a literary artifice with the aim to expose the absurdity of the *mise-en-scène* by the *Securitate* officers, who stole Poulet's paperwork but left his valuable watch alone. Yet why should 'țigan' thieves be necessarily illiterate, he never explained.

On 30 March 1982, *Le Matin* published an open letter signed by Alexandru Danciu, self-identifying 'țigan.' The letter was read out at Radio Free Europe on 5 April, after which it made its way onto a *Securitate* desk. Nicolae Gheorghe/Alexandru Danciu, the author of the open letter, objected strongly to the way the *Securitate* had framed the 'clobbering.'

Personally, I have been induced to write to you by your article in general and a certain aspect of your storytelling in particular, the one whereby the Ploiești militia men tried to explain away the assault to which you were subjected by hinting it had been țigan thieves, who might have even slashed you with their knives,

read his explanation.⁵³⁸ Gheorghe further addressed Poulet: 'You, however, have understood well it wasn't real țigani who followed you around and brutalised you, and those who offered this explanation know how mendacious it is.' In pointing out the gap between the phantasm of the

⁵³⁸ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15. Bulletin F(ree) E(urope), 6 April 1982, 315 back

'țigan' as the locus for criminal and anti-socialist behaviour and ethnic Romani citizens, the author of the letter laid bare the ends to which Romani persons had been scapegoated as the ideal anti-socialist:

I have been surprised to see the extent of Romanian officials' xenophobia and racism against țigani, and the ways in which prejudices about dangerous țigan thieves were employed. It is indeed a socialist aberration. Unlike the cliché of the petty thief now we have the țigan thief who steals journalists' notes [...] and – who knows – thieves who might even steal [kidnap] the undesirable political dissidents themselves!

charged the author with sarcasm.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, although

[...] nobody talks about prejudices against ethnic minorities, țigani included, the dangers posed by țigani are talked about only 'amongst us' – us, that is those who are in power and have to stay in power, spreading fear, mistrust, and hatred amongst those whom they govern. Being țigan myself, I am familiar with the mindset, more and more prevalent amongst today's Romanian officials, that the țigani in Romania, more and more numerous, are a constant source of dangers of all sorts.⁵⁴⁰

He then proceeded to give an assessment of 'a political regime which plays the dangerous card of cheating' by summarising the ways in which 'țigan' tropes were used by late socialist officials:

It is the țigani who are held responsible for thefts and the increase in crimes, not low incomes, food and consumable shortages, [and] the frustration of people who, exposed daily to violence, answer back

⁵³⁹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 316.

⁵⁴⁰ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 318.

with violence. The țigani are social parasites, in the same way dissidents in Romania are [...] Țigani have a large number of children, because they want to abuse the little social help large families are entitled to. Rather than being worried by the increasingly lower standard of living, many Romanian officials are worried by the growing number of țigani – over 1 million at present – and the danger it poses for *the ethnic integrity of the Romanian state* (my emphasis).⁵⁴¹

In the last line, the author of the open letter went to the heart of a historical question dating back to 1918 and the formation of the Romanian state.⁵⁴² Furthermore, Gheorghe drew a direct line between the interwar regime and late socialism:

Many of the țigani who have to bear the consequences, moral and physical, of such prejudices remember with trepidation the not-too-long-ago times when many of them or their relatives, were deported to concentration camps in far-away, hostile regions of the country on charges similar to those of nowadays.

He further described the situation of Romani Romanians in the framework of rights afforded to co-habiting nationalities, at least on paper: 'The țigani do not even have the modicum of cultural rights that ethnic minorities such as Hungarians, Germans, Muslims more recently have, who boast higher economic and political prices on the Romanian diplomatic market.'

This was a regular occurrence: whereas Romani Romanians used to compare their position in Romania by reference to other minorities, party officials would only compare them to 'several [social] categories of the population (minors and youths; elder persons with no carers/relatives to look after them; invalids; large families; persons who lead a parasitic

⁵⁴¹ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 316 back.

⁵⁴² See Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*.

lifestyle; [țigani]; former convicts etc).⁵⁴³ Nicolae Gheorghe signed off his open letter:

[...] as a man and țigan wishing to be seen as more than a prospective thief[.] For prejudice and mistrust, regardless of their target, are merely one of the many faces of the terror which has been reigning—for how long?—in Romania.

His summary of the social effects of racialised tropes against citizens was underlined by the Securitate reader who scribbled down 'd iii.' Direction III dealt with 'counter sabotage.' This means the Securitate authorities classified Gheorghe's public indictment of Romanian officials' discrimination against Roma in the name of 'ethnic purity' as state treason. I did not find the follow up to this letter. Was it ever revealed that Nicolae Gheorghe was the author of the open letter? Particularly given that he had been forbidden by the *Securitate* to continue with his sociological studies into the dire living conditions of some Romani citizens in the 1980s. My suggestion, however, is that the *Securitate* officers did not seem to mind that much. And, according to Adam Burakowski, President Ceaușescu was oblivious to everyday lived socialism, unless informed by his acolytes. Perhaps the *Securitate* officers involved in the 'clobbering' of Poulet overestimated the effects of violence. Moreover, the not-so-secret human rights abuses did not hurt Romania's economic dealings with the US. As Sielke Kelner shows, it was only in the second part of the 1980s that President Reagan was compelled to take action in this regard.⁵⁴⁴

.....

In drafting and sending their letters of complaints and threats to the *Securitate*, petitioners appealed to their citizen rights as co-constructors of

⁵⁴³ CNSAS, FD 000144, Vol. 15, 42. See Chapter One.

⁵⁴⁴ Kelner, 'The Reagan Administration,' 176.

socialism. Although party officials were the touted overarching guiding hand in the programme of cultural enlightenment, citizens' letters held them in contempt of socialism. In claiming 'we have broken no laws' petitioners struck at the heart of socialism and socialist society by emphasising their legal role in the co-construction of socialist society. Not to break the 'laws of the republic' was to abide by them. This constituted powerful evidence of an impeccable socialist identity. In fact, petitioners' claims, both Romani and non-Romani, amounted to the revelation that they were the true socialists, whilst party authorities were behaving in an anti-socialist fashion.

Here, for example, is the explanation made by an electrician whose request to emigrate to Canada with his family was rejected in 1984: 'Throughout all the memos we've sent to the competent organs we asked that the international agreements be observed and that we are not made to break current laws in order to reach our goal.'⁵⁴⁵ In October 1980 the Bucharest *Securitate* had given him and all his family the all-clear to emigrate. However, in 1984 the Governmental Commission rejected his visa request. Yet in November 1984 the Bucharest *Securitate* wrote a report advising he be allowed to emigrate in order to avoid 'antisocial actions' because 'he is an element intent on causing disorder by accosting the higher party and state ranks, by going on hunger strike, by protesting with banners, [and] by contacting international fora.'⁵⁴⁶ In the self-declaration he gave to the *Securitate* in November 1984, the electrician further justified his family's intentions:

I note that our request to leave the country is true to the laws and treaties signed by Mister Nicolae Ceauşescu: decree 212 dated 13 October 1974, which ratified the international convention on human political and civil rights, whereby according to article 12, paragraph

⁵⁴⁵ CNSAS, FD 0013832, Vol. 34, 26.

⁵⁴⁶ CNSAS, FD 013832, Vol. 34, 24.

2, any person is free to leave any country, including their own. [The] document was signed at Helsinki.⁵⁴⁷

In fact, he confused historical dates, since Decree 212 dated 31 October 1974 in fact ratified the UN 1966 Covenant on Human rights, which Romania had signed in 1968, whilst the Helsinki Final Accord was only signed in 1975. However, the crucial aspect is that his justification exposed the Government Commission as non-socialist and framed his desire to emigrate as his socialist right ratified by the ruler of a socialist republic. He went on to drive the point home, whilst also threatening authorities with 'disorder:'

We are determined to be the masters of our destiny and not to give up our request to leave the country for good, given that we are not breaking the laws of the country and our request abides by the signature of Mister N[icolae] C[eașescu].⁵⁴⁸

President Ceaușescu had turned blaming him and the Party for the abysmal living standards into *lèse-majesté*, thus reinforcing the social/political divide. First, Ceaușescu sought both to have his cake and eat it, as it were. The very idea of a totalising society encompassed 'bringing the revolution' inside, as I discuss in the introduction.⁵⁴⁹ This blurred, by and in itself, the private, recast as the social now, and the public, recast as the political.

This meant that, for example, the nuclear heterosexual family, legally elevated in socialist Romania, was public by virtue of its being sanctioned by the state.⁵⁵⁰ To be sure, that Ceaușescu was keen to see the divide kept is glimpsed in an informant's spontaneous denunciation to the *Securitate*

⁵⁴⁷ CNSAS, FD 013832, Vol. 34, 26.

⁵⁴⁸ CNSAS, FD 013832, Vol. 34, 28.

⁵⁴⁹ Kiaer and Neiman, 'Introduction.' Also see the introduction to this thesis.

⁵⁵⁰ The infamous pronatalist policies under Ceaușescu were the most barbarous logic of this process. At the same, however, it was precisely the Securitate's upholding of the social/political divide which allowed S., the abusive husband in Chapter 3, to re-cast his political crimes as social ones, and thus be set free with a warning.

relaying a conversation with a retired pensioner in the early 1980s. According to the informer, the neighbour had blamed the food shortages caused by the austerity measures on the party in general and on Ceaușescu in particular. As the informant put it, 'our conversations reveal he has trespassed the limits of mere discontent.'⁵⁵¹ In other words, being unhappy with the hardships of the 1980s was acceptable, as long as the complaints were kept in the social realm and not turned into a political issue. Yet as co-constructors of socialism citizens felt free to challenge such a distinction. Crucially, however, in the case of Romani citizens party and state authorities did not allow them to participate in the task of building the great new society as co-constructors. Neither without qualifications nor without their having to work overtime to assert their socialist credentials in order to make any demand or claim on the state.

Epilogue

I have read Mary Fulbrook's concept of 'participatory dictatorship' in conjunction with Susan Gal's interrogation of the dichotomy 'private' versus 'public' life. In her review of Jame's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Gal questions Scott's proposal of 'the idea of scripts,' which ushers in 'a notion of the precultural.'⁵⁵² In *Hidden Transcripts*, Scott investigates subordinate groups, such as peasants, labourers and serfs, and their strategies of resistance against dominant groups. He frames such strategies, which may appear counterproductive at a first glance, as 'hidden transcripts.' They range from gossip, anonymity, ambiguity, and jokes and are the tools of their private resistance. Scott juxtaposes this private dimension to the publicness of the tools the dominant use to assert their hegemony, such as parades, state ceremonies, and rituals of apology. When

⁵⁵¹ CNSAS, FD 0008831, Vol. 11, 188.

⁵⁵² Susan Gal, "Language and the 'Arts of Resistance,'" review of 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts,' by James Scott, *Cultural Anthropology*, no. 10 issue 3 (1995): 409.

the dominated take their hidden transcripts into a direct confrontation with the powerful, this results in public forms of resistance, such as revolt.

However, Susan Gal takes issue with Scott's simplistic assumption that 'ambiguity and irony are assumed to have intrinsic functions such as subversion or regardless of the linguistic ideologies and cultural contexts in which such practices are embedded.'⁵⁵³ In other words, because Scott assumes language effects to be universal, he fails to accurately contextualise his case studies, an effect of his equally unproblematic use of 'public' and 'private.' As Gal argues in 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,' public and private are themselves hierarchical taxonomies, which participants—both the dominant and the dominated in Scott's case—re-create in everyday practices. This, in turn, leads to an 'embedding' of private and public, based on 'the occasion and the situation.' In other words, positions 'are not fixed or permanently laminated to the individual.'⁵⁵⁴ Moreover, Scott's universalist understanding of language and ideology, and public and private, leaves no space for 'counterdiscourse, or the contradictions of mixed beliefs.'⁵⁵⁵

It is precisely the interplay between the socialist culture and its drive at legitimation through the inviting of denunciations, complaints, and petitioning, that the concept of 'participatory dictatorship' encapsulates. Moreover, as I have shown in my analysis of letters of complaint and blackmailing, not only did citizens, both Romani and non-Romani, blend the public and the private, but in pointing out they were spotless law-abiding citizens, they positioned themselves within socialist culture.

Although the Minister of the Interior declared Romani Romanians clamouring for ethnic status to be an 'anti-Romanian, anti-socialist plot' in 1988, there did exist such a thing as a socialist Romani Romanian. This was someone who simultaneously spoke Romanes; abided by the laws of the Socialist Romanian Republic; worshipped in their spare time; and read

⁵⁵³ Gal, 'Review:' 409.

⁵⁵⁴ Susan Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,' *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, no. 13 issue 1 (2002): 77-95.

⁵⁵⁵ Gal, 'Review:' 414.

religious poetry. It also was someone who ran a very successful family business within state-sanctioned frameworks.⁵⁵⁶

Deniz Kandiyoti has termed this presence 'the coexistence of multiple registers of thought [and] action,' of which she found examples in Central Asia during fieldwork. She gives the example of a retired kolkhoz brigade leader who spoke with pride both of her recent pilgrimage to the hajj and of the numerous red flags her brigade earned as champions at the cotton harvest.⁵⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Alexey Yurchak has written about Soviet communist youth who were deeply involved with both the Communist ideology and 'bourgeois' culture. They considered themselves to be conscientious, ethical, and creative Soviet citizens invested in communist ideals and the common good, which made listening to 'Western "black market" rock music perfectly logical.'⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁶ Ion Cioabă was imprisoned in the late 1980s for embezzlement. It is not clear whether the charge was trumped up when his role as an informant fell afoul of the *Securitate*.

⁵⁵⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, 'The Politics of Gender and the Soviet Paradox: Neither Colonised nor Modern?', *Central Asian Survey* 26 no. 4, (2007): 622, footnote 75.

⁵⁵⁸ Alexey Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton and Oxford, 2006), 209.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have looked at encounters between Romani Romanians, the Communist Party, the Socialist State, and the non-Romani population at large. I have argued that both party officials and Romanians in general continuously racialised the behaviour and lifestyles of persons of Romani ethnicity, by invoking practices encapsulated in the term 'țigan'. In so doing, they had such practices be born anew with a socialist twist. Thus, by the 1970s non-Romani Romanians expected Romani citizens to lack the inherent morality to behave—and thus become—socialist.

I have built my argument on the assumption that there is such a thing as Romani ethnicity. In this thesis, therefore, I have investigated the ways in which Romani Romanians contested, accepted, and re-interpreted the meaning of the socialist citizen. As I show in the Introduction drawing on Petre Petcuț's research into the enslavement and emancipation periods, both enslavers and society at large were aware that the Roma were 'foreign' to the Romanian Principalities. The peculiarity of enslavement as a juridical practice, however, welded Romani ethnicity to the legal term of 'țigan-as-slave.' My use of the terminology 'Romani Romanians' has its own logic. First, the alternative, Romanian Roma, has only come into being through recent emigrations from Romania. To the extent that the term encapsulates the mixing of a racialising of Eastern Europe with the criminalisation of poverty within Europe, it is too expansive to be applicable to the state socialist period. Second, the term 'Romanian Roma' would imply cultural acceptance in current-day Romania, which remains nebulously unreached. In state socialist Romania, a Romani Romanian identity was precisely what the persons in this study attempted to flesh out for themselves.

I have documented the ways in which Romani Romanians were both 'collateral damage', as it were, to the programme of social engineering, and targeted in and of themselves. In order to construct anew, party authorities had to rectify by classifying—and thus also inventing—problems to be

solved. Much has been made about the staleness of late-socialist Romania as the nationalist, neo-Stalinist terrorising state. Yet, as I have shown, late-stage socialism did not lose its creativity.⁵⁵⁹ Nicolae Ceauşescu's government is infamous for the abhorrent natalist policies and the drop in the quality of life in a context of severe austerity measures. Notwithstanding, in his teleconference in 1977, when he laid out the guidelines to correct the anti-socialist lifestyles of Romani citizens who 'lived a life almost like in the past', he tapped into the creative power of socialism as a social engineering project.

Romani citizens, then, were perhaps the perennial archetype to be remoulded by communist party leaders, unleashing the creativity of state socialism. To the extent that state socialism thrived on predicting and organising, the Roma were also the perfect anti-socialists and showed the limits of such an ambitious project as the social engineering project. At least insofar as the association between free roaming and Romani bodies was not shattered.

Neither party officials nor society at large invented ad novum the term 'țigan.' A cursory comparative look at the other socialist states reveals Romani persons were racialised in similar ways. In the Yugoslavian case, 'Romani minorities were [...] somewhere in between: not completely included into the working class as well as not completely excluded.'⁵⁶⁰ For socialist Bulgaria, the critical drop in the numbers of Romani Bulgarians between 1965-1975 was the effect of what she terms 'socialist racialism,' or 'violent erasure in the name of inclusion.'⁵⁶¹ In Poland, Romani women 'complained that the Women's League did not want to work with them, while league activists complained in turn that the Roma were interested only in handouts.'⁵⁶² And in the case of Czechoslovak Roma, the 'Roma were adapting to socialism on their own terms and that National Committees

⁵⁵⁹ I thank Anna Dobrowolska for making this point at the 'Intimate Borders' workshop in Florence, 5-6 October 2023.

⁵⁶⁰ Sardelic, "Romani Minorities on the Margins," 7-8.

⁵⁶¹ Todorova, *Unequal under Socialism*.

⁵⁶² Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 111.

were lagging behind in their responsibilities to stamp out discrimination and improve the material conditions of the republic's poorest inhabitants.⁵⁶³

Yet it was precisely the party authorities' insistence that the Roma be turned into a rehabilitation programme, without spending the resources on it, that marked the historically disadvantaged Romani citizens as a socialist impossibility. There were neither the money, the time nor the civic inclination to aid the Roma to behave, and thus become, socialist. In 1949, therefore, party leaders took what appeared to them the easiest route towards engineering Romani Romanians. Paradoxically, in 1949 Party leaders both enabled and erased the Roma. By classifying them as a 'social question,' they left open the possibility of their 'Romanian'-ness. For a few months between 1948-1949, communist party officials in Romania entertained the prospect of engaging with Romani Romanian citizens as a cohabiting nationality.

Yet the officials' obstinate use of the term 'țigan' was intimately tied in with their decision to classify Romani Romanians as a social question rather than an ethnic minority. To some extent party officials bowed to pressure from below, codified in the legal and social post-emancipation practices of the two principalities. It is in this context that party administrative organs issued orders that Romani citizens travelling for work in the summer should not 'bother' peasants. Notwithstanding, in 1949, the Central Committee authorities' decision to classify the Roma as a social category—the 'needy,' in other words—set the course for the history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship in state socialist Romania. In refusing to problematise the inherited racialising history of the term 'țigan,' partly due to their own racism, and by continuing to use the term themselves in official paperwork, party officials sanctioned the conflation between Romani ethnicity and the phantasm of the 'țigan.'

Racism itself is bound to have played a part in the *Securitate* not perceiving Romani ethnic activism as dangerous until the very late 1980s.

⁵⁶³ Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 106.

Racism renders the racialised both visible in their differences and invisible as equal citizens. Left unproblematised, racism becomes a refractory background form of life. In any event, the Ministry of the Interior (MI) only classed the Roma to be an 'anti-socialist, anti-Romanian plot' in 1988. This followed two decades of activism and interest in the lives of Romani persons from abroad, which brought a flurry of travellers and Radio Free Europe broadcasts on the evils of Ceaușescu's regime. At this point, I cannot tell whether this was a last, desperate act, with the aim to contain, once and for all, Romani ethnic activism. More research, and ideally oral history interviews with members of the then-Ministry, would hopefully shed light on this. Notwithstanding, in late state socialism party officials did not distinguish between 'Romanian' and 'socialist.' They were—or at least discursively supposed—to be one and the same. Therefore, to classify the Roma as anti-socialist carried with it the tacit charge of anti-Romanianness, even before the MI declared them to be such in the late 1980s.

Given the universalism of the category of the socialist worker, to what extent was this history Romanian? And what was socialist, or even European, about it? Historians who have asked for a reframing of state socialism as a postwar European development point out that intense industrialisation financed with grievous austerity measures was 'underdeveloped states' route towards development,' particularly when constrained by 'the borders of the nation state and Cold War geopolitics.'⁵⁶⁴ 'To provincialize state socialism', as Alex Grama calls for, is to shed the obsessive shroud of antagonism to the regime certain historians revel in 'uncovering.'

To provincialise state socialism would also mean to lay bare the continuities rather than the purported break the new order was vaunted to have ushered in. Anxieties that Romani families travelling for work from village to village might antagonise peasants were not the preserve of socialist authorities. Post-emancipation legislation in 1868 codified the

⁵⁶⁴ Grama, 'Review.'

asymmetrical relationship between formerly enslaved Roma and the peasants by casting the peasants as the shepherds of their own villages. Crucially, it also legally marked the Roma as lower than the peasants, and as potential troublemakers. Yet, for a party which exalted the human potential for betterment, the communists missed—partially willingly, partially constrained by material conditions—the opportunity to guide the cultural emancipation of Romani Romanians. Yet it was precisely the party authorities’ insistence that the Roma be turned into a rehabilitation programme without spending the human and financial resources on it, that marked the historically-disadvantaged Romani citizens as a socialist—and ultimately Romanian—impossibility. Or, to put it in legal terms, ‘the inescapability of regulatory logic: what law had conjured up, law now had to sort out, one way or another.’⁵⁶⁵ That it never could do so, is the inconsistency of this history.

Studies of Roma usually reveal more about limits and possibilities, than about Romani persons themselves. As such, their authors write about society *through* the Roma. Bound by the nature of the archival material, this thesis too has somewhat fallen into this pattern. Yet what would it mean to uncover more hand-written letters by abused wives who racialised their husbands as ‘țigan’ in their denunciations to the *Securitate*? What would it mean to come across more self-declarations, hand-written by the denounced husbands themselves, and the ensuing dossiers on their intimate and social lives?

By placing Romani Romanians at the heart of state socialist society in Romania I have also offered a way to provincialise the history of Romani engagement with socialist citizenship. In this study, therefore, I argued for a scholarly need to go beyond a reading of Roma as the eternal Other. Instead of treating them as a *problematique* and the thing *to be* explained, such approaches ossify ‘identity.’ Neither should we think of marginalisation as solely promoted by physical seclusion. The very de-ghettoization policies

⁵⁶⁵ Newton, *Socialist Legality*, 272.

issued by Ceaușescu in 1977—placing Roma families in blocks of flats amongst Romanian families—furthered rather than banished the attribution of un-socialist behaviour to an inner ‘țigan’ essence.

To the extent that ‘states are people too’,⁵⁶⁶ in this thesis I have shown that the local and the situational weighted far more than a so-called idea of a *Securitate* which controlled society with an iron fist. Not only did citizens’ letters of blackmail work on occasion, but *Securitate* higher-ups also intervened on behalf of suffering citizens. This is not to say citizens were not harassed. The point is rather that the story of Romani citizens’ engagement with socialist citizenship was as complex and situational as was state socialism in general. Gender might overrun ethnicity, and even racialisation might open up avenues for agentical possibilities as the example of V.’s denunciation letter illustrates.

⁵⁶⁶ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Hegel’s House, or “People Are States Too”,’ *Review of International Studies*, no. 30 issue 2 (April 2004): 281-287.

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