

Spaces of Marginality and Cultures of Dissent at the Black Sea in Socialist Romania

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche as spaces of relative freedom in socialist Romania during the last two decades of socialist rule. This microhistorical study refutes simplistic and dichotomous views of the communist past which focus on key political figures and events, exploring instead how ordinary people negotiated with the state and carved out a life for themselves. The dissertation uses a multidisciplinary approach by bringing together a variety of sources: Communist Party documents, secret police files, personal memoirs, public record oral history interviews, ethnographic films, songs, and artistic performances. In recounting the story of one of socialist Romania's most iconic places, this dissertation intertwines three narrative threads: that of the visitors, mainly members of the Romanian intelligentsia, young people, and hippies, that of the local inhabitants, and that of "the authorities," the state agents actively engaged in supervising the place.

My dissertation contributes to research on the character of communist regimes and their relation to society, by studying how transgression and collaboration were elaborated locally, categories of victim and victimizer overlapped significantly, and members of the *nomenklatura* engaged in behaviour that deviated from party prescriptions. The study of Vama Veche and 2 Mai as sites of behaviour tolerated but not fully controlled by the communist regime reveals shades of dissent/consent and resistance/collaboration that scholarship has neglected to date, the changing stance individuals adopted in the face of state authorities, and the plurality of views and behaviour among party luminaries. It also allows us to unpack the often troubled relationship between village residents, the party intellectuals vacationing there in the summer, and local and central state authorities.

Résumé

Cette thèse analyse les villages de 2 Mai et Vama Veche comme des espaces de liberté dans la Roumanie au cours des deux dernières décennies de régime socialiste. Cette étude micro historique réfute les visions simplistes et dichotomiques du passé communiste qui se concentrent sur des personnalités et des événements politiques clés, explorant plutôt comment les gens ordinaires ont négocié leurs relations et vie personnelle avec l'État. La thèse utilise une approche multidisciplinaire en rassemblant une variété de sources: documents du Parti communiste, dossiers de la police secrète, mémoires, souvenirs, films ethnographiques, chansons et performances artistiques. En racontant l'histoire d'un des lieux les plus emblématiques de la Roumanie socialiste, cette thèse utilise trois fils narratifs: celui des visiteurs, principalement des membres de l'intelligentsia roumaine, des jeunes et des hippies, celui des habitants locaux et celui des autorités, soit les agents de l'État qui étaient activement engagés dans la surveillance de ces lieux.

Ma thèse contribue à la recherche sur le caractère des régimes communistes et leurs rapports à la société, en étudiant comment la transgression et la collaboration se manifestent localement, les catégories de victime et d'agresseur se recoupent significativement, et les membres de la nomenclature adoptaient des comportements qui s'écartaient des prescriptions du Parti communiste. L'étude de Vama Veche et 2 Mai en tant que sites de comportements tolérés, mais pas entièrement contrôlés par le régime socialiste révèle des nuances de dissidence/consentement et de résistance/collaboration que la recherche a négligées jusqu'à présent, l'évolution des postures adoptées par les individus face aux autorités étatiques, et la pluralité des points de vue et des comportements parmi les sommités du parti. Il nous permet

également de débiller les relations souvent troubles entre les habitants du village, les intellectuels du parti en vacances l'été, et les autorités locales et centrales de l'État.

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Dedicated to the warm memory of my father, grandmother and grandfather, who passed away before this thesis was completed

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Contribution to Original Knowledge

This thesis as a whole presents an original contribution to the interpretation of Romanian history between 1965 and early 2000s. This dissertation fills a gap in the extant historiography on socialist and post-socialist Romania by employing an everyday life perspective and a bottom-up approach of historical sources. To this end, this dissertation incorporates a variety of primary sources most of which have never been used in the English language before. The microhistorical study is also an exploration of one the least studied regions of Eastern Europe, Dobrogea. While studies about Dobrogea's complicated history under the Ottoman Empire or the interwar period exist, they stopped short of analyzing the post-socialist period. At a historiographical level, this thesis presents a nuanced approach to the understanding of dissent and opposition to the communist rule in one of the most tightly controlled societies of Eastern Europe.

Contribution of Authors

The author confirms they are the sole author of this work. All the translations of the Romanian sources belong to the author. The tables used here were developed by the author. All the photographs, maps, and images were used according to copyright rules and, in case of the photographs, with permission from the authors.

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List of Abbreviations

A.N. – (Arhivele Naționale) – National Archives of Romania

A.N.I.C. – (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale) – Central Historical National Archives

C.C. – (Comitetul Central) - Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party

C.N.S.A.S. – (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității) - National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives

D.J.C.A.N. – (Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Constanța) – National Archives of Romania Constanta County

H.C.M. – (Hotărârea Consiliului de Miniștri) - Decision of the Council of Ministers

I.N.S. – (Institutul Național de Statistică) – The National Institute for Statistics

O.N.T. – (Oficiul Național de Turism) - National Office for Tourism

P.C.R. – (Partidul Comunist Român) – The Communist Party of Romania

R.P.R. – (Republica Populară Română) – The Popular Republic of Romania

R.S.R. – (Republica Socialistă România) – The Socialist Republic of Romania

Introduction

Communist rule in Romania began at the close of 1946 and can broadly be divided into three-periods: a period of consolidation of power (the Stalinist period under Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej from 1947 until 1964), a period of controlled relaxation from 1964 until 1971, and the national communist period from the July Theses of 1971 until the Revolution of 1989.¹ Nicolae Ceaușescu became General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in 1965, and, together with his wife Elena, ruled the country for 24 years. During his first years in power, Ceaușescu continued the policy of relaxation initiated by his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. In 1971, after having visited the People's Republic of China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia, Ceaușescu reversed course and issued the *July Theses*. This speech marked the beginning of a cultural revolution that ushered in political centralization, an increasingly erratic personality cult, extreme nationalism, increased control of the Communist Party over all domains of private and public life, the deterioration of foreign relations with Western Europe and the Soviet Union, economic mismanagement, and a massive decrease in living standards. In the arts, Ceaușescu pushed for a return to censorship and the strict guidelines of socialist realism, a state-sanctioned canon for art that originated in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and demanded that all art forms reflect and promote the ideals of socialist society. The communist leader also promoted folk art

¹ I employ the periodization proposed by Katherine Verdery in *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 106-107.

and local artists. The *July Theses* of 1971 were reinforced in 1983 by the *Mangalia Theses* and maintained until 1989.²

Against this background, certain artists, writers, actors, musicians, students, and young professionals in search of more permissive grounds for self expression and creative inspiration took refuge in Romania's southernmost point during the summer months and shaped a space of marginality, outside official norms. There, in the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche, they were able to experience a particular kind of freedom difficult to find elsewhere in the country. This dissertation explores these landmarks of the Romanian socialist space, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche, during the 1970s and the 1980s. The two villages need to be analysed together since they shared the same beach, were located five kilometers away from each other, formed part of the same administrative unit, and both attracted large groups of non-conformist tourists. This dissertation analyzes how individuals sought to escape and resist state power by exploring everyday life in a marginal, rural setting which came to be construed by the intelligentsia, young people and hippies as one of the most iconic places in socialist Romania. I begin with a historical overview of Romania and the development of socialist tourism there to illuminate the particular ways vacation time was spent in seaside resorts. A bottom-up analysis of tourism, leisure and everyday life under socialism, this study also looks at cultural exchanges between locals and visitors through various activities such as cooking, storytelling, and home decoration.

The dissertation includes an analysis of the physical space in its broader, geographical sense, as well as in its narrower, private residential space with reference to delimitations and urban planning norms. This emphasis on the physical components of space is important because

² The speech that Ceaușescu gave in Mangalia in 1983 is known in Romanian historiography as *The Mangalia Theses*. In it, Ceaușescu elaborates on his already famous *July Theses of 1971* and proclaims that the leading role of the Communist party in all aspects of social life needed to be enhanced.

it accounts, at least in part, for the specificity of the two villages. The analysis ends with fragments from personal and institutional files at CNASAS and individual testimony that showcase the institutional gaze of state agents engaged in keeping an eye on the villages, their inhabitants, and the seasonal population.

Key questions this dissertation asks are: What constitutes resistance under a one-party system and how do larger conventional definitions fit the Romanian context of everyday life? In what ways do leisure and everyday activities subvert socialist authority? How did 2 Mai and Vama Veche turn into alternative cultural spaces, and what were the reasons why such oases of freedom were tolerated by the state? What strategies did locals and tourists use to circumvent socialist laws? How did these small, rural communities respond to historical processes such as urbanization and collectivization? In what ways did locality, gender, language, and ethnicity shape community, space, and socialist realities? How did state intervention manifest locally and what was the impact of state agents on interpersonal relations?

This dissertation fills a gap in the extant historiography on socialist and post-socialist Romania. Known for experiencing a particularly harsh brand of communism that culminated in the bloodiest of the 1989 revolutions, historians looked at the country's past by focusing on the state and political actors and less on society, everyday life, and ordinary people. The latter were portrayed as either victims, perpetrators, bystanders or collaborators, and very rarely these categories overlapped. Little attention has been given to spaces of behaviour alternative to those prescribed by communist propaganda, where individuals interacted with each other and the state authorities in ways different from their interactions in other spaces or localities and in ways that defied propaganda and censorship.

This dissertation uses post-structuralist theory as applied by anthropologists, geographers, and historians such as Michel de Certeau, Alexey Yurchak and Doreen Massey. The purpose is to challenge conventional, binary opposition between opponents and collaborators as the core of the historical analysis and shed light on marginal and marginalized discourses and narratives by bringing them to the fore.³ Post-structuralism operates from the premise that words and texts have no fixed meanings and need to be analyzed alongside other mediums and cultural practices in terms of specific historical meanings and contexts.⁴ To this end, the dissertation incorporates a variety of sources to showcase the multiple layers of everyday life under socialism. According to philosopher Jacques Derrida, deconstruction is a rethinking of Eurocentrism and Western metaphysics, inasmuch as it “de-totalizes self-enclosed totalities by placing them face to face with their internal differentiation enabling us to see the partiality of the partial, not by itself giving an absolute reading, but by attempting to show that no absolute reading is at all possible.”⁵ In deconstruction, Derrida explains that binary opposites such as good vs. bad, rationality vs. spirituality, nature vs. culture do not have a peaceful co-existence but in fact, they are violent hierarchies that overlap.⁶

Drawing on Doreen Massey’s threefold conceptualization of space which depicts it as a dynamic entity simultaneously defined as: 1) the product of interrelations, 2) a sphere in which different trajectories coexist, and 3) a continuous process and De Certeau’s claim that people manipulate their environment through everyday actions to resist and ultimately reconfigure a

³ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁴ Joan W. Scott, “Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Post-structuralist Theory for Feminism,” *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 1 (1988): 35.

⁵ Anh Tuan Nuyen, “Derrida’s Deconstruction: Wholeness and Difference,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 3 no. 1 (1989): 36-38.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 41.

given order, this research centers on the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. In so doing, the dissertation illuminates how spaces of marginality served as oases of individual and collective freedom. Such spaces shaped communities and stimulated transgression and cultural opposition even in a country where the authorities firmly controlled society until the last days of their reign.⁷ Similar to the last Soviet generation, Romanians born and raised during the 1960s and 1970s were positioned simultaneously inside and outside the official sphere.⁸ While most formally adhered to the social norms established by the communist regime such as voluntary work and mandatory Party, mostly propagandistic, meetings, they also listened to Radio Free Europe, Western music, and critiqued the economic and political developments in their country. Locals and tourists alike, irrespective of their gender, class, or ethnicity, crafted their own individual, private spaces that ensured their spiritual survival. This liminality went beyond the traditional binaries of state and society. As this dissertation demonstrates, some individuals chose to lead lives full of culture and art within their own personal networks, while others opted to interpret official values in inventive and meaningful ways.⁹

Literature Review

This dissertation draws on the corpus of literature about dissent, resistance, opposition, and transgression to show that in socialist Romania, 2 Mai and Vama Veche were not only sites of collaboration and compliance but also, to a certain extent, spaces of non-conformity and cultural opposition to communist rule. This dissertation examines the various positions individuals assumed vis-à-vis the communist state and its impositions on political thought, creative energy,

⁷ Massey, *For Space*, 9-11; de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv-xxi.

⁸ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 14-16.

⁹ Ibid, 23-28.

and daily life. These different positions include collaboration, compliance, dissent, resistance, and opposition – open and not so open, individual and collective - in small gestures or grander deeds. The following pages present a short overview of the literature on dissent and the evolution of historiography on socialist Eastern Europe, and Romania. While at the beginning the analysis appears centered on the elites and established definitions, its purpose is to extend their boundaries and find new concepts that explain cultural practices and everyday life in the exceptional case of socialist Romania in which the particularities of the 2 Mai and Vama Veche sites stand out as even more distinctive.

Early work on the Eastern Bloc emphasized the overreaching power of the state over society, reflecting the harsh realities of the communist takeover and consolidation of power. As some communist regimes liberalized during the 1960s, a new generation of scholars shifted attention to the way in which society and non-state actors complied with, collaborated, accepted, worked with, or ignored the state. Communist leaders sought to secure legitimacy through consent, rather than coercion and violence.¹⁰ Starting with the late 1970s, a new generation of historians working on the Soviet Union focused on agency during Stalinist times. A similar approach was made possible in Eastern Europe in the early 2000s once newly opened state archives added new layers of detail to understanding communist regimes.

For the last fifty years, writers, dissidents, and political scientists have sought to distinguish between dissent and various forms of opposition to the regime in order to show the

¹⁰ Rodney Barker, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Martin Dimitrov, *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Johannes Gerschewski, “The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-optation in Autocratic Regimes,” *Democratization* 20, no. 1 (2013): 13–38; Steffen Kailitz, Daniel Stockemer, “Regime Legitimation, Elite Cohesion and the Durability of Autocratic Regime Types,” *International Political Science Review* 38, no. 3 (2017): 332–348; Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule* (Bucharest: Civic Academy Foundation, 1998), 276–290; Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 187–232.

complexities of individual life in socialist societies. This was a difficult undertaking since the character of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe changed over time. Scholars and ordinary people alike distinguish between the Stalinism of the 1940s-1950s, which was characterized by gross human rights violations, and late communism, when repression was milder and regimes tried to coopt people more than punish them and rule by consent rather than coercion. As the character of the communist regimes changed, so did the scholarship. The totalitarian paradigm, used to describe early communism, dominated Soviet studies until the 1970s.¹¹ In the late 1970s, historians recognized that European communist countries were no longer Stalinist, unitarian, and under the strict control of the Party state, but rather mobile and socially fragmented.¹²

Soviet and East-European society, as portrayed by dissident writers, was comprised of individuals alienated from the system but following its rules and rituals due to inertia, career considerations, or degraded morals. Symptomatic of this model of communist society was the displacement of the “true believer,” active during Stalinist times, by a new category, the “conformist.”¹³ The dissident intelligentsia led a double life, passively resisting the system through manipulation and laughter, “thinking one thing, saying another and doing a third,” as

¹¹ Total control of society had its starting point in studies about the Holocaust and Hannah Arendt’s influential book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1973). The goal of totalitarianism, argued Arendt, was total domination, namely, to eliminate spontaneity and hence to destroy “man” as a moral agent and as an individual. This was most fully realized in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany but even there, moral life survived.

¹² Sheila Fitzpatrick, “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” *Russian Review*, 45, no. 4 (4 October 1986): 367. Fitzpatrick, one of the earliest and most influential proponents of the revisionist model, expressed her critique of the totalitarian model in three postulates: 1) the impossibility for any political regime to control, repress, and successfully plan the development of a society in a desired direction by anticipating all the consequences of political actions; 2) the question of primary sources, their narrowing to official ones, and the false impression that everything was controlled from the top which was an automatic consequence of the source base; 3) the consequence of the “top-down” approach “that seemed to reproduce the official Soviet picture of total party control and omniscience, thus merely replacing a positive evaluation with a negative one.

¹³ A. Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1, no. 1 (2000): 119–146.

Andrei Amalrik explained.¹⁴ Towards the late 1970s, dissidents in Eastern Europe also argued against the traditional dichotomy between victim and oppressor. In his famous essay, “The Power of the Powerless” written in 1978, dissident Vaclav Havel proposed the “living in truth” strategy, a simple but courageous idea that involved telling the truth in response to official propaganda.¹⁵ The system has become so ossified politically, claimed Havel, that there is practically no way for nonconformity to be implemented within its official structures, as the strictest definition of dissent would require.¹⁶ Polish dissident Adam Michnik also explained that that when both “revolution from below” and “reform from above” failed, the only option that remained was the creation of a parallel polis.¹⁷ This involved organizing a network of alternative cultural institutions that would circumvent the communist state’s total colonization of public discourse. Dissident voices, as well as the self-publishing phenomenon known as *samizdat*, made possible the appearance of alternative cultures with parallel publics, a phenomenon that Václav Benda in Czechoslovakia later called “the parallel polis.”¹⁸ Ultimately, concludes Adam Michnik, freedom lies with the individual:

In Polish intellectual circles it is common to complain about the restrictions on our rights, about the lack of freedom, about censorship. Far be it from me to minimize the importance of these issues. And yet it is not only the political

¹⁴Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

¹⁵According to Havel, in the late 1980s the conflict was not between different social classes, since the communist regime did away with them, but was internalized by each individual, “for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the system.” Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1990*, ed. and trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Vintage, 1992), 37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁷ Adam Michnik, “The New Evolutionism 1986,” in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, trans. Maya Latynski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Václav Benda, “Parallel Polis or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry,” *Social Research*, 55, no. 1-2 (1988): 211-246.

authorities who are responsible for our moral and intellectual life. We all share responsibility. The authorities can expand or restrict the boundaries of freedom, but they cannot make people free. Our freedom begins with each one of us, not with the authorities. If we do not circulate our carbon-copy book manuscripts, if we do not publish in uncensored émigré publications, if we are silent in the face of persecution, then it is not the authorities who are responsible for this but we ourselves.¹⁹

In Romania, during the 1990s and thereafter, the totalitarian paradigm continued to be employed in relation to Ceaușescu's regime.²⁰ Some analysts, such as Juan Linz, argued that Romania did not go through a destalinization process and thus missed the markers of a more relaxed cultural life.²¹ Political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu pointed out that the "living in truth" approach was not an option for the majority of the Romanian intellectual elite.²² However, Tismaneanu further argued that it was a mistake "to indict Romanian intelligentsia for its passivity" without accounting for the particularities of the Romanian context.²³ Literary critic Adrian Marino distinguished between passive and active resistance, as well as between official and alternative culture, defining the latter as: "independent, parallel, autonomous,

¹⁹ Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. David Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 212.

²⁰ Trond Gilberg used the term "Ceaușescuism," a set of unique traits that includes a form of national, personal, and nepotistic communism, in *Nationalism and Communism in Romania. The Rise and Fall of Ceaușescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 47, 57. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan used "sultanism-cum-totalitarianism" to describe its personalistic type of leadership in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 350.

²¹ Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 349.

²² Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 212.

²³ *Ibid.*, 223-224. Tismaneanu identified three key factors responsible for this state of affairs: the intellectuals' social and historical background, the sacrifices they made in the aftermath of the communist takeover, and its psychosocial profile.

unconventional, pluralist, particular, and privatized.”²⁴ Marino’s observations refer to the literary domain and two categories of writers: those who refused to write on political demand and thus practiced passive resistance, and those who published subversive texts in Romania by avoiding the censors or openly critiqued the regime by writing to Radio Free Europe or publishing their texts abroad. All these actions can be construed as forms of resistance since they entailed serious professional and personal consequences for their authors. In the artistic realm, Caterina Preda argued that the visual art scene was divided between an official and a personal scene.²⁵ Alina Asavei, however, argued against such a neat division by acknowledging that the boundaries of resistance can be elusive, blurred--and that “resistances” can take various shapes, in accordance with constantly changing configurations of power.²⁶ For Asavei cultural resistance during Romanian late communism was multifarious and the focus on political resistance alone is not enough to understand the phenomenon. Clarity comes from the analysis of form and content of cultural practices and artefacts.

The cultural approach suggested by Asavei has been put into practice by COURAGE, a multinational research project proposed to expand the understanding of opposition, from open political resistance and mainstream narratives of politically articulated dissident groups and individuals towards broader frameworks of political participation that include the complex scenes of non-conformist cultural practices.²⁷ In her chapter, “Romania,” historian Cristina

²⁴ Adrian Marino, *Politică și cultură. Pentru o nouă cultură română* [Politics and Culture. For a New Romanian Culture] (Iași: Polirom, 1996), 280.

²⁵ Caterina Preda, *Art and Politics under Modern Dictatorships: A Comparison of Chile and Romania* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 270.

²⁶ Maria Alina Asavei, *Art, Religion and Resistance in (Post-)Communist Romania Nostalgia for Paradise Lost*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 8.

²⁷ COURAGE: Connecting Collections, Cultural Opposition: Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries is a registry of collections that relate to various forms of cultural opposition in a vast geographical area embracing all member and potential member states of the EU in the former socialist bloc. The project involves twelve institutional partners from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and The United Kingdom. So far, the platform includes documents pertaining to 325

Petrescu distinguishes between two key concepts: resistance through culture and cultural opposition.²⁸ While apparently both relate to actions and behavior of intellectuals and artists, “cultural opposition” adopts the broader definition of culture which describes it as an everyday lived process not confined to the creation of ‘high’ art.²⁹ This way, “cultural opposition” allows for the inclusion of popular culture and youth subcultures. “Resistance through culture” is a concept employed by some Romanian intellectuals to explain their country’s internal opposition to communist rule and the scarcity of formal openly public dissident voices and attitudes as implied by the historiographical and theoretical mainstream definition of dissent.³⁰ In a somehow paradoxical situation, literary critics such as Lidia Vianu claimed that “art was perfected under communist censorship...when censored writers joined hands with censored readers in a dance of bitter frustration.”³¹ The problem was not that the Romanian intellectuals ‘made’ culture, but rather that “they made only culture.”³² Simply put, intellectuals turned their attention to elitist topics and old philosophers and away from the current political reality affecting life under communist rule.

collections, 386 organizations, and 671 people. The platform includes collections of material culture referring to communist Romania. The chapter on “Romania” from the *The Handbook of COURAGE: Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018) Balasz Apor, Peter Apor, Sandor Horvath, eds., provides a detailed analysis of the particularities of the Romanian case.

²⁸ Cristina Petrescu, “Romania,” in *The Handbook of COURAGE*, 151-170.

²⁹ Resistance through culture and cultural opposition differ in regard to “the adopted definition of culture as representing a system of shared meanings and everyday practices, and the idea of opposition to the former regime as variable in time,” Petrescu, “Romania,” 153.

³⁰ The “salvation through culture” models were employed by the literary critics Matei Calinescu and Ion Negoitescu, who advocated the articulation of “more or less political messages only through the agency of fiction. See Irina Culic, “The Strategies of Intellectuals: Romania under Communist Rule in Comparative Perspective,” in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 53.

³¹ Lidia Vianu, *Censorship in Romania* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), viii-ix.

³² Cosmina Tanasoiu, “Revisiting Romanian Dissent under Communism. The Unbearable Lightness of Solitude,” *History of Communism in Europe*, 2 (2011): 342.

Such heated debates on this issue usually distinguish between two types of cultural resistance: resistance as opposition understood as the cultural production that went against the regime, and resistance as survival seen as cultural production that did not take an open stance against the regime but aimed to preserve individual autonomy in spite of all constraints on it.³³ Philosopher Andrei Pleșu, one of the proponents of “resistance through culture” strategy, enlarged the category of resistance to claim that even such small acts as humour, or the hoarding of scarcely available food, the so-called “samizdat of clandestine food,” were acts of resisting the communist regime and thus he raised quotidian activities pursued by millions of Romanians during the economically challenging 1980s to the level of regime defiance.³⁴ The very fact that Romanians survived the 1980s, when the communist regime subjected them to food, electricity, and gas restrictions, was seen by Pleșu as resistance. People were resisting by eating in a country where food was scarce.

An informal, popular resistance imbued everyday life during the 1970s and 1980s in the Soviet Union and Romania, as well as most of the Bloc. The generation born in the 1970s and early 1980s ritualistically participated in official practices while engaging in other sorts of activities that were technically beyond authorized boundaries, such as listening to rock and punk bands which were considered dangerous by the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Romania. This way the distinction between true and not true, official and unofficial became blurred.³⁵ In Romania, protests against the regime emerged continuously but most of their initiators remain unknown since the socialist state was very efficient in cracking down on opposition. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the distinction between passive and

³³ Asavei, *Art, Religion and Resistance*, 43.

³⁴ Andrei Pleșu, “Păcatele și inocenta intelectualilor” [Intellectuals’ Innocence and Sins], *Obscenitatea publică* [Public Obscenity] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 104.

³⁵ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 5-9.

active resistance became problematic when leading civil society figures, seeking to translate their cultural capital into political gains, presented themselves as former opponents of the communist regime. The blurring of dissent, the fact that the categories of victims and victimizers overlapped significantly, and the unclear lines between passive and active opposition have perpetuated public controversy over the role and the nature of activities that would qualify someone as an opponent to the former communist regime. The term cultural opposition facilitates the transition from political history to social and cultural history by including a wider range of activities many of which, such as listening to foreign music, are everyday life practices. In contrast, “resistance through culture” refers exclusively to high culture and a small number of public intellectuals.³⁶ Recently, the term “resistance through culture” was recuperated and employed in the realm of artistic creation and aestheticism by Caterina Preda who argued that the role played by “resistance through culture,” was to promote art for art’s sake and not only as a political instrument to transform society.³⁷

The COURAGE project does not claim to put an end to the debate but rather expand and illuminate the understanding of the communist past in Eastern Europe. Cultural opposition is thus defined as a dynamic stance that includes a wide variety of activities and social groups that did not profess an explicit political program but were nevertheless perceived as a threat by communist regimes and labeled as opposition by state authorities, over a range of different periods. In defining collections of cultural opposition, Petrescu points out their critical attribute: “to preserve traces of past actions or discourses that illustrate the existence of a critical, alternative, non-conformist, independent thinking in relation to the system of ideas and values

³⁶ Cristina Petrescu, “Romania,” 153.

³⁷ Preda, *Art and Politics under Modern Dictatorships*, 269.

imposed by the party state at a given moment.”³⁸ Such collections deal not only with officially prohibited or marginalized activities but also with tolerated and supported ones as long as they conflicted with the official system of meanings.³⁹ This dissertation expands the meanings of cultural opposition as laid out by the COURAGE project and defined by Petrescu. The analysis developed in the subsequent chapters provides numerous examples of individual or collective benign practices such as cooking, painting, reading, or listening to popular music and explores them in connection with individuals, place, and historical context to build a broader, nuanced, more inclusive narrative about the socialist past.

To better contextualize resistance within a political context and identify its limitations as a concept, this dissertation uses the term “transgression” to describe individual acts of non-conformity since it allows for a more precise yet nuanced analysis.⁴⁰ In the 1980s, the term “transgression” was defined and used in cultural studies.⁴¹ Scholars of geography and political science borrowed the term and applied it to very particular contexts.⁴² In its initial and more

³⁸ Petrescu, “Romania”, 154.

³⁹ Petrescu, “Romania”, 154-162. The analytical category of cultural opposition therefore includes: the information collected by state agents in the former secret police archives, acts of political dissent, collections of oral history interviews which preserved the memory of communist crimes, artefacts, diaspora collections recording acts of confrontation with the regime gathered by those who worked for broadcasting agencies such as Radio Free Europe, private or institutional collections of works intentionally kept at the periphery by the regime such as avant-garde and experimental art, books and films that passed the censorship only to be withdrawn from the bookshelves and the cinemas days after their official release, and manuscripts that never gained approval from the censorship board, collections of images and painting documenting churches and monuments to be destroyed or moved by the communist authorities as part of the urbanization campaigns, the collection of samizdat and documents related to the struggle of Hungarian and German ethnic groups for civil rights, the archives of ecclesiastical institutions of Catholic and Calvinist denominations, the archives of the secret police documenting acts of resistance of certain religious groups, the archives of Radio Vacanta Costinesti station documenting non-conformist activities, the mountaineering collection of self-made escalade materials, film translator and critic Irina Margareta Nistor’s collection of dubbed foreign movies screened in private homes, private collections of foreign posters, LPs, and photographs related to jazz, rock, punk and other non-conformist music mostly produced by foreign singers, etc.

⁴⁰ This term has been employed in a similar yet more restrictive Romanian context by Ioana Preda in her thesis, “Resisting through Culture in Communist Romania: Taking the Public’s Perspective,” MA Thesis, University of Warwick, 2013.

⁴¹ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

⁴² Ulrich Best, *Transgression as a Rule: German-Polish Cross-Border Cooperation, Border Discourse and EU Enlargement* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007).

general literal meaning which this dissertation employs, the term describes “crossing over the boundary of the imaginable, the allowed, or the civilized.”⁴³ Simply put transgression is “that which exceeds boundaries or exceeds limits.”⁴⁴ Unlike “opposition,” the term “transgression”:

involves hybridization, the mixing of categories and the questioning of the boundaries that separate categories. It is not, in itself, subversion; it is not an overt and deliberate challenge to the status quo. What it does do, though, is implicitly interrogate the law, pointing not just to the specific, and frequently arbitrary, mechanisms of power on which it rests – despite its universalizing pretensions – but also to its complicity, its involvement in what it prohibits.⁴⁵

Transgression can be seen as an example of possible tactics for resistance to the established norms shared by the society and imposed by the state. Since transgressive acts are judged to be “out of place” by dominant institutions and actors (the press, the law, the government), they provide “potential” for resistance. Resistance, however, implies intention, while transgression is not always intended.⁴⁶ In addition, there is a difference in magnitude. Tim Cresswell explained the distinction: “transgression is judged by those who react to it, while resistance rests on the intentions of the actor(s).”⁴⁷ Following this line of enquiry, some acts of resistance can be construed as transgression; similarly some actions judged as constituting

⁴³ Laura J. Olson and Svetlana Adonyeva, *The Worlds of Russian Village Women: Tradition, Transgression, Compromise*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 9.

⁴⁴ Chris Jenks, *Transgression* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7.

⁴⁵ John Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern: Explorations in the Western Experience of Otherness* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 4.

⁴⁶ Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

transgressions were intended by the actors and thus also constitute resistance. Ultimately, Cresswell concludes that intentional transgression is indeed a form of resistance “that creates a response from the establishment—an act that draws the lines on a battlefield and defines the terrain on which contestation occurs.”⁴⁸

In sum, transgression, resistance, and dissent showcase different degrees of contestation. In general, of the three, dissent is by far the easiest to recognize because of its public character, while resistance, in the Romanian context, is often associated with the armed, partisan resistance that opposed the communist takeover and collectivization in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the strictest and most limited sense, a dissenter is someone who opposes an organization from the inside, while in its most common understanding, in the Romanian socialist context, a dissenter is an intellectual who confronts the regime publically. In its broader understanding, dissent is “an anonymous critique of power.”⁴⁹ James C. Scott proposed the model of “hidden transcripts” in an attempt to explain how “offstage” discursive practices could be transformed into public dissent, or a moment of “rupture” that has revolutionary implications.⁵⁰ Scott included a variety of acts of resistance in his “hidden transcripts”: rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theatre.

The issue is not that opposition to the communist regime in Romania did not exist or that it was limited to a handful of intellectuals disconnected from one another and the populace. The

⁴⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁹ In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 290, James C. Scott offers a broader, albeit technical and Marxist, definition of resistance as including “any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims made on that class by superordinate classes or to advance its own claims vis-a-vis those superordinate classes.” Such a definition was not without problems, as Scott himself admitted, but it posed certain advantages: it allowed for “both individual and collective acts of resistance,” it did not exclude “those forms of ideological resistance that challenged the dominant definition of the situation and asserted different standards of justice and equity,” and it “focused on intentions rather than consequences, recognizing that many acts of resistance may fail to achieve their intended result.

⁵⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xiii.

problem is that ever since the fall of the communist regime the study of life under socialism had been subjected to political and ideological constraints. As such, Romanian and foreign scholars used the restrictive lenses of the totalitarian paradigm which employed categories of “oppressors,” “victims,” and “heroes” and neglected the constant negotiation that occurred between the state and the individual on regular basis, as well as the “everyday life” perspective.⁵¹ The definition of “opposition” was restricted to open, public contestation of socialist power because the regime used fear to rule its people. It is important to note that, as historian Muriel Blaive pointed out, communist “regimes feared their people too.”⁵² This study uses a bottom-up approach that portrays individuals from various social categories as “active social agents instead of passive recipients of communist dictatorship.”⁵³ In so doing, the dissertation extends the boundaries of “opposition” to communist power to include smaller and individual acts of transgression.

This research does not propose to redefine the concept of dissent in the socialist context but uses the term “transgression” instead. For the purposes of this dissertation, transgressions are defined as individual, smaller acts of rebellion not always openly directed against the regime and the social norms it imposed- but primarily designed as strategies of economic, cultural, and mental survival. Furthermore, this dissertation uses labels such as “dissident”, or “collaborator” only if mentioned by the files of the secret police or specific historians. While the Securitate

⁵¹ Studies on East Germany and Soviet Union proposed a more nuanced approach that looked at the strategies employed by communist regimes to gain and keep popular support. For the East German case see, Mary Fulbrook, ed., *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Gareth Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany, 1945-1989* (London: Routledge, 2005). For the Soviet Union, see, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Wendy Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵² Muriel Blaive, ed., *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe: Regime Archives and Popular Opinion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 2.

⁵³ Blaive, *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe*, 7.

issued precise definitions for the term “collaborator” which will be detailed in the fourth chapter, it did not do the same for “dissident.” In fact, Securitate avoided the use of the term since “dissident” entailed public, mostly Western recognition of opposing voices that could be heard inside Romania, something that the system dreaded. In fact, Ceausescu himself had proclaimed in 1968 that only a madman could call into question the Romanian communist regime.⁵⁴ References to civil and criminal legislation will be used to further contextualize opposition to the communist regime.

Central to this research is not the formulation of strict categories that include or exclude individual acts but rather the study of how individuals adapted to larger processes of change and made sense of the past. Instead of looking at “dissent” and “collaboration” as separate categories, I build on Barbara Falk’s continuum model to show how the private sphere was the place of an alternative life.⁵⁵ While dissent implies an assumed, usually public act of opposing a norm and collaboration involves a social or economic exchange, transgression occupies the middle ground between the two. As this dissertation will show, during the course of a life, an individual could find herself or himself in all three situations.

For example, this dissertation will dwell on the case of the socialist intellectual and writer, Nina Cassian, a regular visitor to 2 Mai and Vama Veche, but acknowledges that labelling

⁵⁴ Cristian Vasile, “Numai un nebun poate contesta socialismul [Only a Madman Can Contest Socialism],” *LaPunkt* (Bucharest), August 2013, <https://www.lapunkt.ro/2013/08/numai-un-nebun-poate-contesta-socialismul/>.

⁵⁵ Barbara J. Falk, “Resistance and Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe, an Emerging Historiography,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 25, no. 2 (May 2011), 318-360. In Falk’s “continuum model” there is no clear-cut line between resistance and dissent. At one end of the spectrum lie benign activities such as the preference for personal travel and sporting activities rather than official party-sponsored events. In the middle of the continuum is the “grey zone,” or the activities that take place inside the “parallel polis,” such as listening to a banned radio broadcast, writing an essay “for the drawer,” publicly telling jokes, or reading samizdat. Towards the other end of the spectrum would be agreeing to sign a petition or discussing with friends a particular broadcast and spreading news obtained there. Finally, “dissent” in its most clear and widely accepted definition would be the production and distribution of samizdat, public protest, active involvement in independent groups outside the control of the party-state, all of which risked persecution and imprisonment at the hands of the regime.

her a dissident would stir controversy among older generations of Romanians. Cassian could easily fit into the category of “dissenter” as she was a party member who recanted at least some of her political views. She attempted to “live in truth” by refusing to comply with the *proletkultist* (writing for the workers) demands of censors and turned to the writing of children’s literature and music instead. Cassian made her disaccord with the regime known and as a consequence was kept under close surveillance by the Securitate. Moreover, she became associated with later known dissidents like Gheorghe Ursu, left Romania and subsequently had her house searched and property confiscated. Cassian’s mock poems satirizing Ceaușescu and his wife were circulated among her friends. Still, such acts are not considered enough for Cassian to be labelled as a dissenter for those who contend that Cassian’s Securitate file includes very little that could qualify as political trespassing. Moreover, her critics argue that these developments should be juxtaposed against her broad, eager and well known collaboration with the regime in her early years. For those who had to learn by heart her poetry glorifying the regime’s achievements and then recite it for school celebrations, she would forever remain an enabler of some of the worst policies of cultural suppression of free thought, to the exclusion of her other work and cultural merits.

Cassian is a complex artist. If we were to refer to her poetry alone and for the sake of the argument to oversimplify it by dividing her body of work into three categories: socialist realism, children’s literature, and neo-avangardist and it would be difficult to assert which left the stronger impact, since, most of those born in the 1970s and 1980s are familiar with the tiger cubs Ninigra, Aligru and Prince Miorlau.⁵⁶ The debate over Cassian’s role as an ideologue and public

⁵⁶ In fact, the *Lyric Story of Two Tiger Cubs Ninigra and Aligru* published in 1969 was so popular with older generations that a second edition came out in 2010. *Prince Miorlau* was published in 1957 and a second edition in 2014.

intellectual can only be resolved once her work and life are reassessed and analysed in detail to include other aspects such as gender, sexual politics, and domestic violence, but this is not the focus of this dissertation. References to Cassian appear in different parts of this dissertation since her figure was very much associated with the summer escapist milieu of 2 Mai and Vama Veche; her diaries written at the time of the events, confiscated by the secret police, and published in 2010, talk at length about the long weeks of summer she spent in these places for more than 30 years, since the early 1950s until 1985.⁵⁷ On a deeper level, Cassian serves as a trope for the entire dissertation since the writer's life mirrors the complexity of this research.

On account of its numerous references to the cultural milieu of the late Romanian socialist period, this dissertation is also a foray into the field of cultural history. The multi-layered analysis proposed here posits that, because of their peripheral, geographical location, ethnic and confessional variety, and a particular mix of historical, social, and economic factors that fostered a succession of large historical processes and an influx of various groups of people into a small territory over a relatively short period of time, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were spaces of reprieve that harbored transgressions and cultural opposition in ways that would have been inconceivable in other parts of the country.

Studies on Central and Eastern European socialist tourism and the development of a particular model of consumption in the socialist block have also shaped the content of this dissertation.⁵⁸ These works help to frame the second chapter of this dissertation within the larger

⁵⁷ Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. I-III (Bucharest: Tango Books, 2010); Nina Cassian, *Confidențe fictive* [Fictitious Confidences] (Bucharest: Tango Books, 2008).

⁵⁸ Diane Koenker, *Club Red, Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor, eds., *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2010); Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Adelina Ștefan, "The Socialist State and Workers' Leisure in Communist Romania of the 1950s," *Interstitio: East European Review of Historical Anthropology* (June 2007): 119-30; Adelina Ștefan, "Between Limits, Lures, and Excitement: Holidays Abroad in Socialist Romania during the 1960s-1980s" in *Socialist and Post-Socialist Mobilities*, eds. Kathy Burrell and Kathrin Horschelmann

theme of everyday life and the relationship between state and citizens. Studies about everyday life under socialism were instrumental in my effort to go beyond restrictive interpretations of socialism as a repressive totalitarian system and consider “ordinary” experiences such as work, marriage, family, consumerism and leisure as relevant for understanding life during the period in question.⁵⁹”

This dissertation employs the term “socialism” and “socialist” in reference to the period between 1945 and 1989. The term “communism” or “communist” is used only in reference to the Communist Party. Otherwise, the term describes a philosophical or ideological system whose ultimate goal, the establishment of a classless society, was never reached. The Soviet Union and the East European countries never claimed to have attained that goal and instead struggled to transition from socialist to communist societies.

Sources

This dissertation uses a combination of data collection from multiple archives, public record oral history interviews, biographical writings, media reports, films, music, and other art forms. Some of the archival documents have never been used in English-language research. My study traces the origins of these seaside escapist sites from the beginning of the twentieth century and explains their particularity through the convergence of several factors: location close to the

(London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 87-105; Adelina Ștefan, “Postcards Transfer across the Iron Curtain: Foreign Tourists and Transcultural Exchanges in Socialist Romania during the 1960s and 1980s,” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity (HCM)*, 5, no. 1 (2017): 169-195.

⁵⁹ Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: the Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Melissa L. Caldwell, ed., *Food and Everyday Life in the Postsocialist World*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009); Daphne Berdhal, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010); Slavenka Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism And Even Laughed* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993); Andi Mihalache and Adrian Cioflâncă, eds., *Istoria recentă altfel: perspective culturale* [Recent History Written Differently: Cultural Perspectives] (Iași: Editura Universității Al. Ioan Cuza, 2013); Liviu Chelcea, “The Culture of Shortage during State Socialism: Consumption Practices in a Romanian Village in the 1980s,” *Cultural Studies* 16, no.1 (2002): 16–43.

border, ethnic and cultural diversity, and scarcity of resources. The dissertation also makes an analysis of the laws of the communist period to explain the political context but also to help situate responses from the general population, tourists and locals alike and explain how larger historical processes affected these localities.

The dissertation weaves together three different narratives: the voices of the local and central authorities, those of the tourists and visitors, and those of local inhabitants. To this end, the dissertation makes use of several state archives: the National Archives of Romania, the archives of Constanța County and the township of Limanu, and the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, CNSAS), a governmental institution that holds the archives of Romania's former communist-era secret police, the Securitate.

My research into the archives of the Securitate did not turn up the abundance of material that I had expected. Though many of the tourists mentioned in this dissertation had been under the Securitate's magnifying glass and had files, some - like Alexandru Paleologu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, and Constantin Bălăceanu Stolnici - even extensive ones, said files contained no references to their holidaymaking in 2 Mai or Vama Veche.⁶⁰ Though many important figures of the socialist artistic milieu were frequent visitors to 2 Mai and Vama Veche, tracing their footsteps or all the names that appeared in the CNSAS archives in connection to 2 Mai and Vama Veche proved an impossible task, beyond the scope of this dissertation. Aside from individual files there are network files, penal files detailing criminal proceedings against those charged with criminal offenses, which sometimes obscure political dissent charges, operational

⁶⁰ This does not imply that known collaborators such as Bălăceanu-Stolnici stopped reporting to the Securitate while on vacation, but simply that no information about what took place in the two villages could be found in their Securitate file. If they provided Securitate with reports about fellow tourists in 2 Mai or Vama Veche, they did so under an alias and that information, if not lost, is most likely archived in the file of the person they reported on.

files and thematic, also called “problem files,” such as the ones dedicated to the Islamic community in Romania or to the border patrol agency. The starting point of the research into the CNSAS file was a list of names of writers who had spent their summer vacations in 2 Mai and who were known for having crossed paths with the Securitate.⁶¹ Aside from the detailed file of Nina Cassian, this line of enquiry turned up few results since some files were not available and others that I have looked at contained only scattered pages unrelated to the presence of their subjects in the two villages.

In order to avoid stirring up public and political controversy, I chose not to ask for the files of people who were still alive and active on the cultural scene, such as Vintilă Mihăilescu or Andrei Pleșu, or political figures.⁶² The thought of making similar enquiries about painters and actors crossed my mind, but I then realized that such an approach risked engulfing me into a witch hunt that could derail the entire research project. The files of the secret police were only one part of the narrative and my focus was not the Securitate and those individuals who collaborated with this institution. The study proposed to bring together three different narratives and the one pertaining to state agencies, such as the Securitate and its agents was only one of them. Villagers and their guests, whether from the cultural milieu or other social groups, their relationships, everyday life, leisure activities, particular brand of tourism, and the ways in which they circumvented the limitations imposed by the socialist state - details which rarely appeared in the official files - were equally relevant for the content of this dissertations.

⁶¹ The list included the name of writers: Alexandru Paleologu, Nina Cassian, Dan Petrescu, Liviu Antonesei, Luca Pitu, Dan Petrescu, Laurentiu Ulici, Mihnea Gheorghiu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Mircea Iorgulescu, Mihai Ursachi, and others, for a total of 30 names.

⁶² Vintilă Mihăilescu (1951-2020) was a leading Romanian cultural anthropologist. Andrei Pleșu (1948) is a popular philosopher and cultural journalist who served as Minister of Culture from 1989 until 1991.

This dissertation could have benefitted from the use of other state archives, such as those of the National Office for Tourism (O.N.T.). Unfortunately, I was told that the archives are not available to the public. Furthermore, the institution filed for bankruptcy in 2011 and it was not clear who was in possession of its documents. The O.N.T. archives would have provided me with lists of tourists who rented accommodation in 2 Mai, for how long, how much they paid, and what amenities were available, as well as information on their hosts, their houses and if they complied with state regulations. The local archive of the town hall of Limanu to which the two villages belong was partially destroyed by a flood in 2016. The local archive could have offered valuable information about zoning regulations, development of houses and streets and plans of the local institutions such as Dobrogeanu Restaurant. The archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that of the Ministry of Justice -- although available to the public as part of the National Archives Inventory -- are protected by the law of archives.⁶³ The most recent document available for consultation at the National Archives dates from 1947. The records of *the miliția*, Romania's socialist police, are not kept by the CNSAS but by the National Archives. However, only the first three years of the life of the institution (1949-1952) are available for consultation. For the above-mentioned reasons, with the exception of a limited number of CNSAS files, I was not able to access documents pertaining to the 1970s and 1980s. The file of the *miliția* post in Limanu and that of the border guard post documenting disturbances, transgressions, confrontations, arrests, and attempts to flee the country or black market operations were not available for consultation.

⁶³ The law stipulates terms upon which particular category of documents become accessible for public consultation: personal files of employees, 75 years after the date of creation; documents pertaining to the private life of a person, 40 years after the person's death; documents concerning state security, 100 years after the date of creation; documents related to criminal affairs, 90 years after the date of creation. As such, only documents from the beginning of the twentieth century until the early 1950s are available for consultation.

This dissertation incorporates memoirs, public record oral history testimonies, autobiographical fiction, official autobiographies and media reports into the narrative.⁶⁴ The dissertation also uses elements of material and immaterial culture such as objects and everyday practices like food dishes, poems, songs, films, and artistic performances, and sees them as mediums that convey lived experience. The purpose is to provide a multi-layered historical narrative about the ordinary and extraordinary of everyday life in socialist times. I analyze memoirs as primary sources for historical enquiry while also acknowledging their complexity as a memory source. Due to their eclectic content, having been influenced by post-factum developments, their dual nature as personal documents with a public vocation and their multiple significations as works of art and historical documents, published memoirs are situated half-way between memory and history.⁶⁵

Memoirs are not based on historical documents but “document” what their authors have witnessed and experienced. This dissertation uses memoirs of former tourists, mostly accomplished writers, journalists, or academics, such as Nina Cassian, Dan Ciachir, Luca Pițu, Ion Ioanid, to show how intellectuals carved their own personal spaces and in so doing transgressed socialist rules. Some of these memoirs, such as Cassian’s or Pițu’s were written at the time or shortly after the socialist period, but published only after the regime’s demise because they would have never passed the communist censorship. The dissertation also uses accounts collected from multiple sources such as Cristian Pepino’s two books on socialist and post-socialist vacation time in 2 Mai and Vama Veche, published recently.⁶⁶ Pepino’s books are not

⁶⁴ Official autobiographies are not life stories but short overviews of one’s life that highlight loyalty to the regime. They were written for state organs for various purposes such as gaining employment or obtaining a visa.

⁶⁵ Ruxandra Petrinca, “Halfway Between Memory and History: Romanian Gulag Memoirs as a Genre,” *Slovo*, 29, no. 1 (2017): 3.

⁶⁶ Cristian Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015); Cristian Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016).

based solely this author's first hand experience with the socialist villages, but incorporate the souvenirs of his friends, and anecdotes passed on orally. Vacation time is usually a happy memory and even less fortunate circumstances such as those described by anthropologist Irina Nicolau or psychologist Aurora Liiceanu are presented in a humorous and idyllic manner. Moreover, recollections about 2 Mai and Vama Veche are also memories about their authors' youth. As such, these memoirs trigger positive feelings from audiences who had either participated in the events, or shared a similar connection with the space, around the same time. In addition, for those born after 1990, these recollections are a window into the lives of the non-conformist members of their parents' generation, as well as everyday life, vacation routine, and youth culture in socialist times.

Because I aim to bring to the fore marginal voices pertaining to the writers and artists on the fringe of the socialist canon, young intellectuals who reached a certain degree of fame during the post-socialist era, and ordinary people, visitors, and locals who are mostly absent from the historical metanarrative of socialist Romania, an important part of my dissertation are personal memoirs, and literary and travel journals. The use of journals, be it those of travellers written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, those written almost in coded language during communist times, and the memoirs of writers and artists who chose to share their memories about the past in more recent years, is meant to supplement official documents.⁶⁷ Aside from providing colour to the narrative, these "personal documents" complement the archives by helping the reader understand how people engaged and responded to policies, decisions, and political events. They also speak to agency by unveiling the strategies employed by citizens to

⁶⁷ See, for example, Dr. Camille Allard, *Souvenirs d'Orient: La Dobroutha* (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1859); Luca Pițu, *Însem(i)nările magistrului din Cajvana* [Notes and Insemination of Cajvana Magister] (Iași: Editura Institutului European, 1992); Dan Ciachir, *Când moare o epocă* [When an Era Dies] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005).

circumvent obstacles that at least on the surface appeared to be insurmountable. Lastly, it is through the small details of these documents that the reader will develop a more complete, nuanced, and complex understanding of what everyday life during socialist times in Romania looked and felt like.

During the 1980s the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche acquired an iconic status as non-mainstream summer vacation destinations and their popularity only increased during post-socialist times. Over the last three decades reports about 2 Mai and Vama Veche appear regularly in the media, from early May until late September. The storyline features some kind of testimonial either from local inhabitants or long time visitors.⁶⁸ The dissertation used some of these accounts, favoring lengthy, public record testimonials and personal recollections over opinion pieces written by journalists. After 1989, Romanian writers also provided accounts about the summers they spent in 2 Mai and Vama Veche during communist times.⁶⁹

The villages of Vama Veche and 2 Mai's reputation as non-mainstream travel destinations increased after the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Oral history research in the two villages, which began in the early 2000s was centered on the "Save Vama Veche" campaign.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ I searched the archives of present-day newspapers such as *Adevărul* or *România Liberă* and literary magazines, such as *Observatorul Cultural* or *Dilema Veche* using the tags 2 Mai and Vama Veche as well as the names of writers and artists mentioned by other written sources, such as memoirs or dissertations, in connection to these villages.

⁶⁹ Dan Alexe, *Dacopatia și alte rătăcirile românești* [Dacopatia and Other Romanian Moments of Madness] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015); Angela Baci, ed., *4 zile cu Nora* [Four Days with Nora] (Bistrița: Charmides, 2015); Ion Ioanid, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison], vol. V. (Bucharest: Albatros, 1996); Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu, "Zarea Vamii la Doi Mai" [Vama Horizon at 2 Mai] in Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu, ed., *Cum era? Cam așa... Amintiri din anii comunismului românesc* [How Was it? It Was Something Like This... Recollections from the Years of Romanian Communism] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006); Bujor Nedelcovici, *Cine sunteți, Bujor Nedelcovici? Bujor Nedelcovici în dialog cu Sergiu Grigore* [Who Are You, Bujor Nedelcovici? Bujor Nedelcovici in a Dialogue with Sergiu Grigore] (Bucharest: Alfa, 2011); Luca Pițu, *Însemnările magistrului din Cajvana* [Notes and Insemination of Cajvana Magister] (Iași: Editura Institutului European, 1992); Ana Maria Smigelschi, *Gustul, mirosul și amintirea* [The Taste, the Smell, and the Memory] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013); Ciachir, *Când moare o epocă* [When an Era Dies] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005); Alex Tocilescu, *2 Mai-Vama Veche și înapoi* [2 Mai-Vama Veche and Back], Published online: scribd.com, 2009.

⁷⁰ A major part of the "Save Vama Veche" campaign is the 2003 founding of the Stufstock music festival which attracted tens of thousand of people and it was organized yearly until 2013. "Save Vama Veche" campaign and

The campaign lobbied for the area's environmental conservation and a halt to development and mass tourism, but it also served to increase the popularity of Vama Veche, to transform the village into a "brand," and the feeling of belonging to a "community" of free spirits in the consumption of and the participation in this "brand."⁷¹ Carried out by academics, students and social activists who sought to legitimate a discourse about the conservation of an idyllic past which was in many ways different than the mainstream narrative about the country's socialist past, the research placed memories at the foundation of future development. The village as a community needed to remember, be remembered, and remain as close to its initial state - which is the moment when the visitor first experienced it - as possible. The attempt was a futile one for several reasons: the original inhabitants had been displaced, the current population, which was mostly seasonal had acquired the land to develop a touristic infrastructure and make a quick profit, and former tourists lacked the time and capacity to spend the same amount of time in the village as they had during socialist times. From a seasonal vacation destination in socialist times, twenty years after the fall of communism, Vama Veche had turned into a city break destination that catered mostly to the needs of young employees of business from the country's capital born after 1990.

The situation was different in 2 Mai where enough people remained in place to keep the memory of socialist and even pre-war times alive. The personal memories of the villagers in 2 Mai have been used by the media to validate the discourse of exceptionality that still accounts for the cultural identity of the place as a non-mainstream summer vacation destination.⁷² These

Stufstock Festival were initiated by an NGO, the "Association for the Conservation of Bio-Cultural Protected Areas."

⁷¹ Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua: 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [A Kind of Break. 2 Mai and Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Tipografia Adi Center, 2011), 63.

⁷² Joan Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.

memories were coded differently by women and men according to age, origin, social status, and cultural values, and the relationship with the interviewers and how they perceived his or her presence. The two villages are frequently covered in Romanian media, especially during the summer season and oral testimony is often called upon in support of various narratives about it ranging from the tourist presence and economic development to the refugee crisis and bio-conservation issues.⁷³ Memory is thus filtered and constructed, at times even unconsciously, to fit the needs of the present.

I draw on 42 transcripts of oral history interviews which are testimonials collected by other researchers (Miruna Tîrcă and Liviu Vasile) as part of other academic projects dedicated to the transformations that these villages incurred after the fall of communism and conducted during the 2000s.⁷⁴ During those years, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were the object of research in the sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies programs at the University of Bucharest.⁷⁵ Liviu Vasile's anthropological and ethnographical study includes transcripts of the nine extensive oral history accounts that he collected in 2010 and 2011.⁷⁶ Miruna Tîrcă's thesis

⁷³ Cristian Gherasim, "Is Romania Ready to Deal with Its Rising Migrant Numbers?," *Euronews* (Lyon), September 16, 2017, <http://www.euronews.com/2017/09/16/is-romania-ready-to-deal-with-its-rising-migrant-numbers>; Ioana Niță, "Bulgarii anunță o nouă serie de proteste contra explorării gazelor de șist în Costinești și Vama Veche [Bulgarians Announce a New Wave of Protests against Shale Gas Exploration in Costinesti and Vama Veche]," *Ziarul Financiar* (Bucharest), May 13, 2013, <https://www.zf.ro/business-international/bulgarii-anunta-o-noua-serie-de-proteste-contra-explorarii-gazelor-de-sist-in-costinesti-si-vama-veche-10875226>.

⁷⁴ Miruna Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai. O istorie orală a zonei* [Stories from 2 Mai. An Oral History Account of the Area] (Pucioasa: Antet, 2004); Liviu Vasile, *Un fel de piua: 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [A Kind of Break. 2 Mai and Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Tipografia Adi Center, 2011).

⁷⁵ There were three bachelor theses that analyzed the transformations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche: Simina Guga's *Impactul turismului asupra populației gazdă. Studiu la nivelul comunității locale din satul Vama Veche* [The Impact of Tourism over Host Population. A study of the Local Community in Vama Veche], University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, February 2006, Miruna Tîrcă's self-described short attempt at tourism anthropology, *Povești de la 2 Mai. O istorie orală a zonei* [Stories from 2 Mai. An Oral History Account of the Area] and Liviu Vasile's anthropological and ethnographical study of the two villages, *Un fel de piua: 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [A Kind of Break. 2 Mai and Vama Veche]. Tîrcă transformed her dissertation into a book which included 33 interviews, 11 with tourists and 22 with locals.

⁷⁶ Liviu Vasile, *Un fel de piua: 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [A Kind of Break. 2 Mai and Vama Veche], <https://www.vamaiot.com>. Titled "Memories," the first part recounts the atmosphere in 2 Mai during the late 1970s and 1980s exclusively through the testimony of tourists without any interference from the researcher. The second

used fragments from 33 oral history accounts she conducted in 2003 and 2004 to showcase various aspects of leisure and everyday life during socialist and post-socialist times.⁷⁷ Simina Guga's thesis, too, was largely based on oral history but since it does not include transcripts or fragments from her interviews, I have only rarely quoted from it and did so only when information was verified and used by other scholars.⁷⁸ In addition to the studies mentioned above, three other researchers focused on the two villages.⁷⁹ Iuliana Dumitru's dissertation on 2 Mai focuses on the artists who found inspiration in 2 Mai and Vama Veche during socialist and post-socialist times. Miroslav Tașcu Stavre's institutional analysis of the social transformation in 2 Mai and Vama Veche and Vintilă Mihăilescu's anthropological research project on alternative tourism in the two villages were both partially based on the authors' first hand experience in the two localities.⁸⁰

part of the book refers to Vama Veche and aside from testimonials about the village it also includes Vasile's anthropological analysis.

⁷⁷ Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 80-81.

⁷⁸ Guga's thesis was the most difficult to access and I am using it here having gained access and permission from the author.

⁷⁹ So far, Dumitru has published five lengthy articles: "De la aproape către departe: Un tur vizual prin 2 Mai și Vama Veche" [From Near to Far: A Visual Tour through 2 Mai and Vama Veche], *Scena 9* (Bucharest), October 23, 2020, available online, <https://www.scena9.ro/article/de-la-aproape-catre-departe-expozitie-2-mai-vama-veche>, "30 de veri la 2 Mai" [Thirty Summers in 2 Mai], *Scena 9* (Bucharest), August 30, 2017, available online, <https://www.scena9.ro/article/30-de-veri-la-2-mai>, "La mare. Nenea Dan" [At the Seaside. Uncle Dan], *Dilema Veche* (Bucharest), August 24-30, 2017, "Camping 2 Mai, povesti de familie" [Camping 2 Mai, Family Stories] in Gabriel Troc and Bogdan Iancu, eds., *Moduri de apropiere și rezistență socială* [Modes of appropriation and social resistance] (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2015), 139-159, Iuliana Dumitru, "Childhood in 2 Mai. An Insider's Perspective," *Martor*, 18 (2013), 35-48. Dumitru also curated one exhibit whose description is included in the appendix of this dissertation: "De la aproape către departe: Un tur vizual prin 2 Mai și Vama Veche" [From Near to Far. Visual Cartography of 2 Mai and Vama Veche Spaces], *Tranzit.ro*, 2020.

⁸⁰ Vintilă Mihăilescu, ed., *Societatea Reală* [Real Society], vol. III. "Între stil și brand. Turismul alternativ la 2 Mai - Vama Veche [Between Style and Brand. The Alternative Tourism in 2 Mai and Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005); Miroslav Tașcu Stavre, *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste. O analiză a transformărilor din 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition. An Analysis of the Transformations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche] (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2017). Mihăilescu's was always at work anthropologist who had spent his vacations in 2 Mai during socialist times and decided to return as a researcher in the post-socialist era, while Stavre was a social activist turned researcher who became involved with the Save Vama Veche conservation project in 2004 and later wrote his PhD dissertation on the evolution of the local communities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche in the context of post-socialist touristic development of the area.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter of this dissertation uses a *longue durée* frame to provide an overview of the region in Romania where the two villages are situated. The chapter uses physical and cultural geography text-books, statistics, laws and regulations, accounts from travelers visiting the area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, information produced by the local administration, and the secret police files to argue that physical and geographical elements such as the border and the sea constructed a space of marginality, populated by a variety of ethnic groups which served as a place for political, social, and economic experiments in both modern and socialist Romania. Situated on the fringe of empires and later, at the very end of the southern part of the country's territory, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were different micro-experiments in the larger demographic, social, and economic laboratory that the province of Dobrogea had been from the moment of its incorporation into the Kingdom of Romania, in 1878, until the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The development of tourism infrastructure on the Romanian side of the Black Sea coast was the last of these experiments, which did not touch the two villages because of the socialist state's concern with border security. As a result of their geographical and ethnic configuration, as well as state policies, a particular form of tourism, detailed in Chapter 2, developed in the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche.

The second chapter continues the exploration of socialist tourism to further familiarize the reader with the particular kind of tourism that developed in the two villages in opposition to the conventional tourism of the era. On an analytical level, this chapter shows that 2 Mai and Vama Veche meet all three requirements of the definition of cultural dissent and can be therefore referred to as sites of cultural opposition at least during the summer season. The very gatekeepers of state ideology came together with hippies, students, artists and intellectuals professing an

attitude of cultural dissent though not entirely a publically assumed one. Leisure practices such as nudism, yoga, life performances and other creative acts such as writing, painting, or music making, parties, the formation and cultivation of friendship networks, and the circulation of banned books bear witness to an alternative cultural life, not sanctioned by state authorities and the making of a non-conformist albeit exclusivist and elitist micro-universe in which defiant attitudes towards the communist regime manifested themselves quite openly.

The third chapter posits that individual histories of the local residents and the visitors intertwine with that of the place, with its distinctive elements of material culture, to create an oasis of state-supervised yet not fully controlled freedom which facilitated transgressions against authority or at least a micro-universe which in time turned into an alternative, mostly cultural site, to the uniform state-sponsored, controlled, and recommended group tourism. The chapter explores the history of the two localities through the lenses of “community” and analyzes the various elements that came together in the building of this unique space in socialist Romania: kinship, hospitality, leisure practices, and landscape alteration over time.

The fourth chapter delves into the inner workings of surveillance, the interaction between individuals and the Securitate, as well as the limits of state supervision. Since resistance to socialist power was a complex phenomenon, the Securitate’s response to perceived threats and any and all factors that could threaten the socialist order was equally complex. Small acts of defiance, disobedience, and non-conformism, rumors and gossip, comments praising living standards abroad or discontent with local management expressed over a pint of beer were reported, written down, and carefully analyzed first by the local police, the *miliția*, then by the county bureau of Securitate in Constanța city. Yet, the secret police did not possess enough resources to pursue every thread of information or to gather intelligence from as many sources as

they would have liked. Due to its size, proximity to the border, access to the sea, the influx of tourists, people in transit, and seasonal migration of workers from the village to the neighboring cities and resorts and from other regions into the village for harvest time, as well as the variety of ethnic and religious local communities inhabiting the township, it was not always possible to police, report, prosecute, impose or correct improper behaviour and attitudes.

The way these places are presented and talked about in the recollections of some of those who spent their summers on the pristine beaches of the Black Sea is ultimately a matter of time, choice, and context. One aspect everyone agrees upon is that 2 Mai and Vama Veche were landmarks of the Romanian socialist space. A closer look at these sites of behaviour, tolerated but not fully controlled by the communist regime, suggests that, there, individuals interacted with each other and the state authorities in ways different from their interactions in other spaces or localities. This state of affairs should not surprise the reader since Dobrogea, the region where these villages are situated, had long been known for its history of political, social and economic experiments.

Chapter 1

Permeable Borders, Geographical Markers, and Ethnic Diversity in Dobrogea

Introduction

The villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were settled in 1887 and 1811, respectively, in Dobrogea, one of Romania's most ethnically diverse regions.¹ The timing of the settlements coincides with the formation of modern Romania, and their history reflects the troubled centuries whose major challenges still impact the present: colonization, war, population exchanges, political activism, persecution, industrialization, modernization, collectivization, poverty, and socialist and democratic transitions. Various historical factors shaped a space of marginality, on the fringe of empires, constructed around natural borders, and defended by the state's obsession with a secure borderland. Construed as "exotic," in the twentieth century, these villages became summertime gateways for those looking for tranquility, inspiration, and an escape from the socialist vacation routine.

This chapter provides background on the region in which the two villages are situated. It starts with a history of the region, explains the ethnic configuration of the territory, and presents the major population shifts that occurred over time,--colonization, migration and population transfers,--examines the evolution of the administrative organization of the two communities, and ends with specific references on the two villages.² The chapter employs a *longue durée*

¹ This dissertation will use the Romanian spelling for the region of Dobrogea. The spelling in other languages is different: Dobruja, or Dobrudja in English, Dobroudja, Dobrougea, or Dobroutcha in French, Dobrudscha in German, or Dobrogiia in the Romanian language of the nineteenth century.

² Alberto Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico : la contesa fra Bulgaria e Romania in Dobrugia del Sud, 1918-1940* (Cosenza : Periferia, 2001) ; Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship : The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866-1918," *European Review of History : Revue européenne d'histoire*, 8, no. 2 (2001): 157-186; Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation, and State-Building: The Integration of Northern

approach focusing on the state's perspective while also incorporating the voices of the various ethnic and religious communities that inhabited the area and weaves the broader history of Romania into the narrative about the two communities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. This chapter develops the argument that the spatial, geographical, and imaginary presence of the border and all the complexities and varieties of official and communal interactions that came with it, the ethnic diversity, and at rapid succession of historical processes were responsible for the development of a particular kind of tourism.

The villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were different from other Romanian seaside resorts. At times, geographical and administrative markers overlapped and physical demarcation lines changed names and parameters in response to historical developments.

The Black Sea's neighboring states -- the big powers Turkey and Russia with their histories of numerous invasions and resettlements brought waves of religious and ethnic groups seeking to impose their specific visions on the region. The smaller states of Romania and Bulgaria, with their quests for independence, sovereignty, and concern for a national specificity that needed to be imposed and fiercely defended, competed as well for influence on Dobrogea. As one ethnic group died out, moved, or was forcefully relocated, another took its place. The succession of various administrations changed the spatial delimitations, language, and ethnic composition of the region. Each historical moment left its mark, transformed the landscape, and altered the communities inhabiting the place. These processes led to an alternative form of

Dobrogea into Romania,” *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1607 (November 2002): 1-86; Nicolae Comnen, *La Dobrogea (Dobroudja); essai historique, economique, ethnographique, et politique*, (Lausanne : Payot, 1918); Apostol D. Culea, *Cât trebuie să știe oricine despre Dobrogea : Trecutul, prezentul, viitorul* [What Everyone Should Know about Dobrogea : Past, Present, Future] (Bucharest : Casa școalelor, 1928); Grigore Danescu, *Dobrogea (La Dobroudja) : etude de geographie physique et ethnographique* (Bucarest : Imprimerie de l'Independance Roumaine, 1903).

tourism, celebrated by some, and lamented by others, and it is these precise interactions that account for its specificity.

The Historical Region of Dobrogea

2 Mai and Vama Veche, are situated on the border between Romania and Bulgaria, in one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the Balkans, Dobrogea. The region of Dobrogea is comprised of two provinces, Northern Dobrogea which was incorporated to the Romanian state in 1878 and Southern Dobrogea, located in Bulgaria.³ A dry and windy region with few natural resources, and two major ports, Constanța and Mangalia, Dobrogea served as a laboratory for colonization, ethnic homogenization, population shifts, militarization, collectivization, marketization, decommunization, and globalization.⁴

A strip of land stretching from the Black Sea to the Lower Danube, Dobrogea was one of the most advanced Muslim military bastions in southeastern Europe according to scholar Alexander Vezenkou, the Danube-Sava line, having been the border of the Ottoman Empire in Europe until 1877.⁵ Starting in the sixteenth century, the Russian Empire fought the Ottoman

³ In 1913 Romania acquired Southern Dobrogea and held control over both until 1940. The First World War provided Bulgaria with the possibility of acquiring both parts of the province, but Bulgarian rule over the entire province of Dobrogea was short lived, from 1916 to 1919. In 1940, Romania returned Southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria and kept the Northern part.

⁴ Decommunization is the process of dismantling the communist legacy.

⁵ Alexander Vezenkou, "Entangled Geographies of the Balkans: The Boundaries of the Region and the Limits of the Discipline," in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans, Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-) Representations*, eds. Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Tchavdar Marinov and Alexander Vezenkou, vol. IV, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 123. In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 to 1878 (also known in Romanian historiography as the War of Independence), though the Treaty of Berlin (1878), Romania acquired the northern part of Ottoman Dobrogea previously known as the Sanjak of Tulcea. Prior to 1878, Dobrogea constituted an integral part of the Ottoman northern frontier. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) divided Dobrogea's territory of approximately 22,272 square kilometers between Romania and Bulgaria. This arrangement added 15,536 square kilometers to the Romanian national territory and 6,736 square kilometers to the Bulgarian territory. The new territorial changes were explained in articles two and forty-six of the treaty. Article two established the border between the two states on a continuous line connecting Silistra in the west with a point situated to the south of Mangalia in the east. Article forty-six listed the territories granted to Romania: the islands of the Danube Delta, the Serpent Isle of the Black Sea, and the kazas of the Sanjak of Tulcea, namely Kilia, Sulina, Mahmudia, Isaccea, Tulcea, Măcin, Babadag, Hârșova, Constanța, and Medgidia. Romania also received a small part of the Southern Dobrogea "as a line starting from the east of

Empire to gain access to the sea, and Dobrogea became a battlefield for the long series of Russo-Turkish wars.⁶ As a consequence, Dobrogea carried a specific Ottoman legacy most evident in its demographics.⁷ It is here, in Dobrogea that different political, social, cultural and religious legacies met and coexist.⁸

Prior to its incorporation into Romania, in 1878, Dobrogea's frontier economy triggered several waves of migration and settlement.⁹ According to statistics compiled just prior to the annexation of the province, 225,692 individuals lived in Northern Dobrogea.¹⁰ The ethnic markers indicated that 71,146 inhabitants were Tatars, 48,783 Turks, 46,504 Romanians, 30,177 Bulgarians, 12,748 Russians, 6,994 Circassians, and 1,134 Germans. Other less numerous groups included Italians, Greeks, and Armenians. These statistics indicated the existence of a Muslim majority, 60 percent of which was comprised of Turks, Tatars, and Circassians.¹¹

The circulation of people and goods also brought Arabs, Romani, Albanians, and others to the region.¹² When the Turks left, ethnic Germans were brought in, along with Gagauz, Tatars,

Silistria and terminating on the Black Sea, south of Mangalia." The precise demarcation of the frontier was to be determined by the European Commission appointed for the delimitation of Bulgaria. For a detailed account of the Treaty, see Sir Augustus Oakes and R.B. Mowat, eds., *The Great European Treaties of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), 354-355.

⁶ Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation, and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1607 (November 2002): 1.

⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 161-183. Population shifts occurred mainly due to the implementation of various Ottoman policies, created to meet specific military, political, and economic objectives. The *Pax Ottomana*, argued Maria Todorova, abolished state and feudal frontiers, therefore facilitating enhanced population movements.

⁸ Todorova, "Spacing Europe: What is a Historical Region?," 68-72.

⁹ As a result, at least eleven ethnic groups lived in Dobrogea, most of them Turks and Tartars, followed by Bulgarians and Romanians. Other groups shared the same area: Armenians, Russian-Lipovans, Zaporozhian Cossacks, and Germans, refugees from the Russian Empire, Jews, and Greeks. Out of strategic reasons, the Ottoman Empire brought Circassians, a Northwest Caucasian ethnic group known for its military skills, to Dobrogea.

¹⁰ Statistics for this early period are problematic. See Catherine Durandin, "La Russie, la Roumanie et les nouvelles frontières dans les Balkans le cas de la Dobroudgea," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 20, no. 1 (1979) : 68-71.

¹¹ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 199.

¹² Transhumance brought hundreds of flocks of sheep together with their shepherds from the mountainous areas of the Sub Carpathian regions and the East of Balkans to spend the winter in the plains and valleys of Dobrogea.

Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Ashkenazi. In 1859, while writing a report on the development of agriculture in Dobrogea for the Ottoman authorities, agronomist Ion Ionescu de la Brad portrayed this region as the “California of the Romanians.”¹³ In addition, in his *Souvenirs d'Orient*, Dr. Camille Allard, a French medical practitioner, traveller, and diplomatic envoy to Dobrogea during the Crimean War (1853-1856), described the ethnic mosaic of the region:

All populations from the East seemed to have made an appointment here. In the days of rest, the Vlachs indulged in their national dances, while the Russian, the Cossack, and the stupid Bulgarian drank rakiout; and all were soon falling together, some tired, others drunk. The Greek, the Jew, the Armenian, were agitated in the middle of all this crowd, always seeking some opportunity of gain. The Tatar, behind the smoke of his Ichibouk, sometimes seemed to regret the severity of the prophet, and the impassive Turk, legs crossed before the door of some *cafedji* at the ground floor, kept the impassible gravity which never leaves him. Nothing was more curious and bizarre at the same time than the mixture of all these customs, which, through their contrasts, often produced the most charming effect.¹⁴

Access to the sea was a relatively new experience for Romanians, and it came only with the Treaty of San-Stefano in 1878, when Romania acquired Northern Dobrogea from Russia in

¹³ A place that attracted immigrants in search of economic opportunities. Ion Ionescu de la Brad, in ed. Victor Slavesco, *Correspondența dintre Ion Ionescu de la Brad și Ion Ghica, 1848-1874*, [Correspondence between Ion Ionescu de la Brad and Ion Ghica, 1848-1874] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Nationala, 1943), 127.

¹⁴ The word *cafedji* describes a coffee shop. Dr. Camille Allard, *Souvenirs d'Orient : La Dobroutha* (Paris : Charles Douniol, 1859), 16.

exchange for southern Bessarabia. Romanian politicians, however, were displeased as southern Bessarabia was more important for their country, at least on a symbolic level.¹⁵ The new territory of Dobrogea needed to be developed and colonized, and the Romanian authorities embarked on an ambitious ethnic integration project that saw the dilution, displacement, and resettlement of some of the ethnic groups in the region.¹⁶ Historian Constantin Iordachi argues that “in order to foster the national and economic incorporation of the multi-ethnic province of Northern Dobrogea, Romanian political elites designed a threefold mechanism composed of ethnic colonization, cultural homogenization, and economic modernization.”¹⁷ Colonization did not include equality of rights, however. Inhabitants of Dobrogea enjoyed only limited citizenship and, alongside Jews and women, were not allowed to vote.¹⁸

Romanian reforms in Dobrogea included an administrative reorganization of the territory which entailed the division of the territory between two counties, Tulcea and Constanța.¹⁹ Two years later, in 1880, a new law for the organization of Dobrogea under a special regime was adopted, so as to sanction the administrative integration of Dobrogea into Romania.²⁰ According to the new regulation, the county of Constanța would include three sub-regions or *plasa* as they

¹⁵ Toader Popescu, “On the Nation’s Margins. Territorial and Urban Policies during the Romanian Administration of Southern Dobruja (1913-1940),” *Marginalia. Architecture of Uncertain Margins*, 4 (2016) : 104.

¹⁶ Constantin Iordachi, “‘La Californie des Roumains.’ L’intégration de la Dobruja du Nord à la Roumanie, 1878-1913,” *Balkanologie*, 6, no. 1-2 (2002) : 167-197.

¹⁷ Iordachi, “Citizenship, Nation, and State-Building,” 2.

¹⁸ Dobrogea had a special status within the Romanian state between 1878 and 1913. The province was subject to an extra-constitutional and highly centralized administrative regime under which its inhabitants were granted only a “regional form of citizenship, and excluded them from political rights.” Iordachi, “Citizenship, Nation and State-Building,” 20-28.

¹⁹ On 28-30 September 1878, the Romanian government adopted the *Regulation for the Division and Administrative Organization of Dobrogea*. Although three counties were created by the regulation, in the end only two, Tulcea and Constanța, remained. In broad terms, the administrative unit corresponded to the Sangeac of Tulcea during the last years of Ottoman rule.

²⁰ The law replaced the Regulation of September 1878. Decretul nr. 2533/1878 referitor la regulamentul de impartire si organizare administrativa a Dobrogei [Royal Decree no. 2533/1878 concerning the regulations of territorial and administrative division of Dobrogea], published in *Ziua de Constanța*, 5 October 2017, <https://www.ziuaconstanta.ro/stiri/ziua-dobrogei/citestedobrogea-1878-noiembrie-13-bucuresti-decretul-nr-2533-1878-referitor-la-regulamentul-de-impartire-si-organizare-administrativa-a-dobrogei-640448.html>.

were called in Romanian: Kustenge, Hârșova and Mangalia. Plasa Mangalia included the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. In 1894 Plasa Mangaliei included one urban commune, 16 townships, and 68 villages and comprised 13,449 inhabitants. Două Maiu was part of the urban commune of Mangalia, while Agilar (Hagieni), Caracicula (Limanu) and Ilanlic (Vama Veche) were part of Sarighiol, the present-day township of Albești.²¹ In 1879, the French traveler Willem Baron d'Hogguer published one of the first economic monographs of Dobrogea and wrote that during the last years of the Turkish regime, Mangalia's population was 2,000 inhabitants, mostly farmers and a few merchants.²² By 1900, the population of Mangalia had risen to 22,064 inhabitants. Thirteen ethnicities coexisted in Plasa Mangalia, and Romanians made up only 38 percent of the local population.²³

²¹ Două Maiu was the ancient spelling and pronunciation of 2 Mai. George Ioan Lahovari, C.I. Brătianu and Grigore C. Tocilescu, *Marele Dicționar Geografic al României, alcătuit și prelucrat după dicționarele parțiale pe județe* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania Drawn from Partial Dictionaries on Counties], vol. IV (Bucharest: I.V. Socec, 1901), 230-231, and "Date privitoare la populațiunea României în 1889-1890" [Romanian Population Data for 1889-1890], *Buletin Statistic General al României* [General Statistical Bulletin of Romania], Bucharest: Direcțiunea Statisticeii [Statistical Bureau] (1892), 30.

²² Baron d'Hogguer Willem, *Renseignements sur la Dobroudja – Son etat actuel, ses ressources, et son avenir* (Bucharest : 1879), 45.

²³ Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea*, 908.

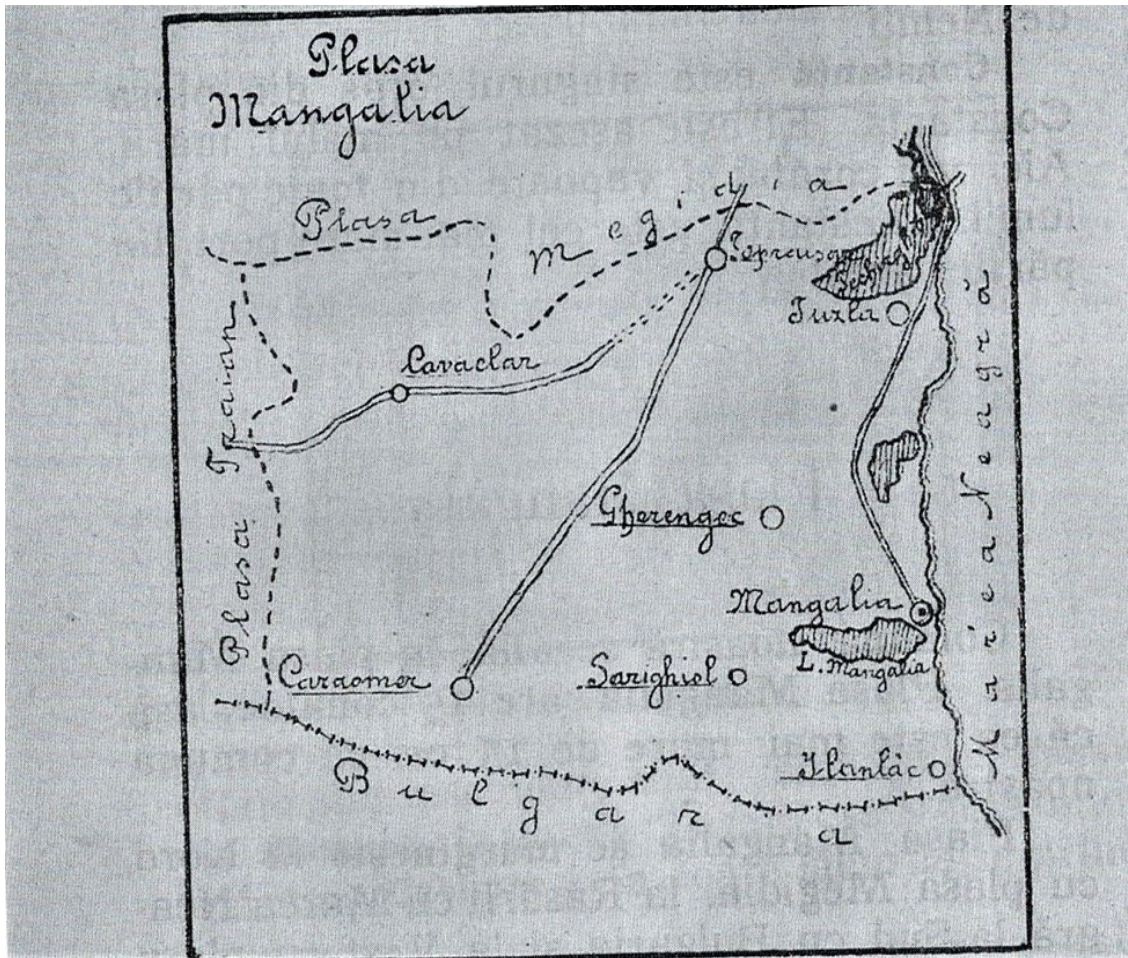


Figure 1.1: Map of Plasa Mangalia from 1911.²⁴

Politicians such as Mihail Kogălniceanu, Scarlat Vârnav, Ioan Nenițescu, and others became big landowners in the newly acquired province, for they took advantage of new regulations and bought land at very low prices at the same time that the properties of the Muslim population were expropriated.²⁵ Once a new mechanism of land ownership was put in place,

²⁴ Dimitrie Bujila, Mihail Mitache, *Geografia Județului Constanța și cu generalități asupra României pentru clasa a II-a primară urbană și divizia a II-a rurală, anul I și II* [Geography of the County of Constanța with Generalities on Romania for Second Year Primary School in Urban Areas and Second Division in Rural Areas, First and Second Year], first edition (Bucharest: Editura librăriei H. Steinberg, 1911).

²⁵ This issue is mentioned by the son of Mihail Kogălniceanu, Vasile. In a work titled *Dobrogea 1878-1909. Drepturi politice fără libertăți* [Dobrogea 1878-1909. Political Rights without Freedoms] (Bucharest: Socec, 1910), Vasile Kogălniceanu describes the profoundly immoral manner in which ownership titles were granted.

populating the new province became a government priority.²⁶ Mihail Kogălniceanu settled the village of 2 Mai during the first wave of colonization, in 1887, and populated it with *Skoptsy*, a sect from the Russian Empire, who were displaced from southern Bessarabia.²⁷ After the end of the Balkan War in 1913 and the beginning of the First World War, the *Skoptsys* left 2 Mai and German farmers settled the abandoned farms. German historian Paul Traeger documented the process.

After the war, most of the former inhabitants, relatives of the Russian sect of the *Skoptsy*, fled from Doumai [2 Mai], about 20 minutes south of Mangalia. In March 1917, German farmers made their homes in those vacant farmyards and leased land from our military authorities. They came from the Kherson Gouvernement (Worms, Rohrbach) and were eventually on the estate of a German-Austrian in Emerlik, in the southern most part which only fell to the Romanian part of Dobrudscha in 1913. At first, there were only 3 families, on my second visit in the autumn there were already 6 with 27 souls, and others were expected. Presumably, the change of the situation has disturbed its further development otherwise the little *Skoptsy* village would very soon have become a German one.²⁸

²⁶ Romanian colonization of Dobrogea occurred in several waves: 1884-1891, 1893-1897, 1904-1907, and 1912-1914. For details see, Toma Ionescu, "Studiu asupra proprietății și a colonizărilor din Dobrogea" [Study about Property and Colonization in Dobrogea] in *Analele Dobrogei* [Annals of Dobrogea], vol. 1, ed. Constantin Bratescu (Cernăuți: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editura "Glasul Bucovinei," 1928), 266-267.

²⁷ The colonists could lease individual plots; following a twelve-year period of continuous occupation, the lease turned into full ownership.

²⁸ Paul Traeger, *Die Deutschen in der Dobrudscha*, Stuttgart: Ausland und Heimat Verlags Aktiengesellschaft, 1922, trans. Allen E Konrad [The Germans in Dobrudscha], part 7 (2017), 83, http://www.blackseagr.org/research_village.html#Outside_of_Black_Sea.

In 1913, Leon Trotsky, visited Mangalia as part of his mission to cover the Balkan wars as a war correspondent for the Kiev newspaper *Kievskaya Misl*. The city's ethnic configuration had not changed much: Trotsky describes the streets of Mangalia as an ethnographic exhibit where bearded Turks slowly sipped their coffees, *Skoptsys* from a nearby village drank tea with lemon and talked about young ladies, Romanians played dice, two Bulgarians and one Gagauz drank beer, and one Greek offered Trotsky and his party Turkish delight.²⁹ The Lipovans crowded in front of the grocery store across the street, Tatars drove their horse wagons, while Turkish and Romanian gypsies strolled up and down the street.³⁰

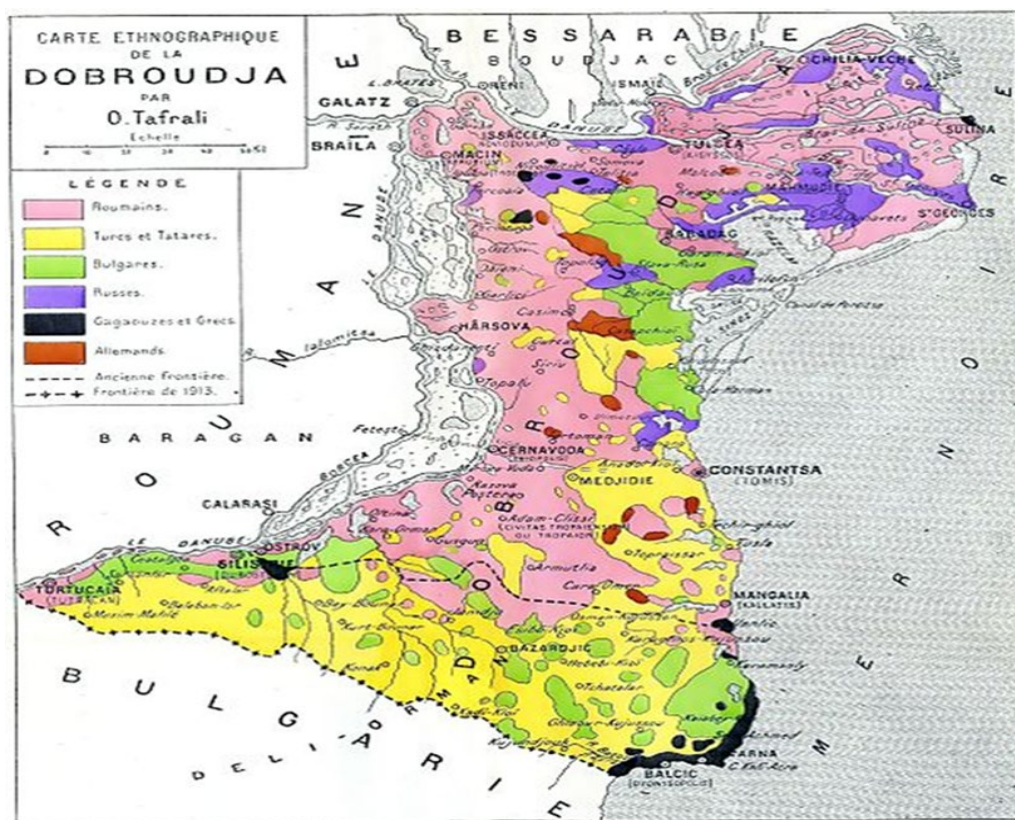


Figure 1.2: Ethnographical Map of Dobrogea from 1918.³¹

²⁹ Leon Trotsky, *România și războiul balcanic* [Romania and the Balkan War] (Iasi: Polirom, 1998), 139-140.

³⁰ In his depiction of Mangalia Trotsky uses the word “gypsies.”

³¹ Orest Tafrali, *La Roumanie Transdanubienne (La Dobroudja). Esquisse géographique, historique, ethnographique et économique* (Paris : Éditions Ernest Leroux, 1918).

Following the devastation wrought by the Second Balkan War (1913) with its cholera epidemic, and the First World War with its brief, albeit bloody, Bulgarian-German-Turkish triple occupation, the administrative unit of Mangalia and neighboring villages were again severely depopulated and villages of Plasa Mangaliei were destroyed or abandoned.³² In 1925, as part of the cultural process of assimilation and colonization, the names of the villages were changed or translated into Romanian. Caracicola became Limanu; Hagilar turned into Hagieni. In 1930, Plasa Mangaliei included four rural communes.³³ The town of Mangalia retained its status as an urban commune. The last of the pre-socialist administrative reforms was enacted in 1938. As a result, Plasa Mangalia included among its 21 villages, Hagieni, Limanul, Vama Veche.³⁴

After the First World War, the Romanian government gradually shifted its attention to establishing ethnic Romanians as the dominant social, political and economic group within the state, and Dobrogea.³⁵ Ethnic Romanians from Argeş and Vâlcea settled in the villages of Limanu, 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the 1930s. According to Constantin Iordachi, once Dobrogea became integrated into Romania, the province functioned as an “internal America” and became a melting pot of regional differences and a laboratory for fostering Romanian

³² Vasile Helgiu, “Școala primară în Dobrogea în curs de 40 de ani (1879-1919)” [Primary School in Dobrogea during the Last Forty Years (1879-1919)], *Analele Dobrogei* [Annals of Dobrogea], no. 2 (1920), 236. The villages of Casimcea, Haidarchioi, Bașpunar, Polucci, and Caciamac were completely destroyed in 1922, while Bașpunar, Hoșcadin, and Polucci were abandoned four years later. Constantin Brătescu, “Două statistici etnografice germane în Dobrogea” [Two German Ethnographical Statistics on Dobrogea], *Analele Dobrogei* [Annals of Dobrogea], 2, no. 1 (1919), 67.

³³ “Monitorul județului Constanța. Tablou de împărțire administrativă a Județului Constanța” [The Official Gazette of Constanța. Table of Administrative Division of the County of Constanța], *Analele Dobrogei* [Annals of Dobrogea], 7 (1926): 156-157.

³⁴ The other 18 villages that formed Plasa Mangalia were: Agigea, Albești, Arsa, Biruința, Coroana, Costinesti, Cumpăna, Ileana, Duminică, Dulcești, I.G. Duca, Lazul, Moșneni, Muratan, Potârnichea, Hermitage, Straja, Topraisar, Tuzla, Vânători, and Voievodul Mihai.

³⁵ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

national identity.³⁶ The census of 1930 counted 17 ethnic groups in the province.³⁷ Historian Lucian Boia, commenting on the ethno-demographic and confessional realities of Dobrogea, argued that: “Dobrogea was an ethnic and cultural mosaic out of the ordinary. Nowhere in such a small space could such an amalgam of languages, religions and ways of life [...] in Europe exist. More or less, all the nationalities of Europe and the Near East were represented.”³⁸

Romanian state policy of colonization and cultural homogenization from 1880 to 1933 did not undermine the great diversity of this area. During and after the Second World War, other population movements occurred. Stalin’s and Hitler’s murderous regimes uprooted, transplanted, expelled, deported and dispersed some 30 million people in the years 1939-1943.³⁹ Nazi Germany forced Romania to give the Cadrilater back to Bulgaria. The Romanian-Bulgarian Treaty of Craiova of 1940 stipulated a mandatory population exchange.⁴⁰ Sixteen families totaling 50 persons of Bulgarian ethnicity left the township of Limanu and moved to Bulgaria.⁴¹ Twelve Romanian families from the Cadrilater totaling 52 people were resettled in Limanu, nine of them in 2 Mai.⁴² In 1941, eight families totaling 18 ethnic Bulgarians remained in Limanu.⁴³

Population transfers implied forced relocation; people resisted, tried to avoid resettlement, and at times moved back to the same territory they had been forced to abandon. A document dated 26 May, 1948 from the archives of the secret police presented a list of 188

³⁶ Iordachi, “Citizenship, Nation, and State-Building,” 33.

³⁷ Jean Roman, “La population de la Dobrogea” in *La Dobrogea Roumaine. Études et documents*, ed. Anghel Demetrescu (Bucharest : L’institute pour l’étude de l’Europe sud-orientale, 1919), 92.

³⁸ Lucian Boia, *România - țară de frontieră a Europei* [Romania the Borderland of Europe] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002), 17.

³⁹ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 21.

⁴⁰ 62,278 ethnic Bulgarians living in 267 villages in Romania relocated to Bulgaria. In turn, 103,711 ethnic Romanians from Southern Dobrogea moved to Romania. Of this total, 11,856 colonists were settled in Northern Dobrogea, in the villages that had been previously vacated by the Germans and Bulgarians. Dorel Bancos, *Social și național în politica guvernului Ion Antonescu* [Social and National in Ion Antonescu’s Government] (Bucharest: Eminescu, 2000), 111-114.

⁴¹ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 67, 1940, 27.

⁴² DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 67, 1940, 22.

⁴³ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 84, 1941, 30.

former Romanians turned Bulgarian citizens who were caught crossing the border illegally and moving back to their former homes. A report from the Regional Security Bureau in Constanța stated that in 1947, 47 Bulgarian citizens who crossed illegally into Romania were caught, tried, and sentenced to short periods of incarceration but were not sent back to Bulgaria. The Romanian local authorities apparently sympathized with the plight of these former Romanian citizens, but the central authorities insisted on their deportation.⁴⁴ Those wishing to remain used ethnicity as a strategy to resist resettlement. For example, Zaharia Banciu contested the evacuation order by claiming he belonged to another ethnic group, the Gagauz. The local authorities brought his case before the Romanian-Bulgarian Mixed Commission and the appeal was accepted. The local authorities also notified the county administration that his son could be drafted into the army. Bulgarian ethnicity prohibited enrolment in the Romanian army since the two countries were officially at war, but Gagauz ethnicity did not carry such restrictions.⁴⁵ Banciu's family was the first one from a list of eight Bulgarian families who managed to remain Limanu.

The Soviet military presence in Dobrogea also encouraged the Lipovans to leave Romania for the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ In Limanu, of the nine persons who choose to be repatriated to the Soviet Union, not all were motivated by special ties or ethnic solidarity with that country. According to a memo dated 22 March 1945, Gheorghe Nezarzog and Maria V. Toma left the township of Limanu for the Soviet Union for personal reasons. Gheorghe lived in a state of

⁴⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Collection, file no. 016404, 2.

⁴⁵ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no.84, 1941, 49.

⁴⁶ Almost half of them answered the call, and their number decreased from 43,074 in 1945 to 27,375 in 1948. Marian Cojoc, "Despre unele minorități din Dobrogea, 1944-1948. Ruso-lipovenii (I) [About Certain Minorities from Dobrogea, 1944-1948. Russian-Lipovans (I)], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* [Archives of Totalitarianism], no. 2-3 (1998): 19-20, 27; Dumitru Sandru, "Plecarea minoritarilor slavi și armeni din România în URSS, 1944-1948" [The Departure of Slavs and Armenians from Romania to the URSS, 1944-1948], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* [Archives of Totalitarianism], no. 1-2 (2001), 38-45.

concubinage with the widow Maria and her five children, who were left behind. The mayor of Limanu asked his superior, the pretor of Mangalia, to make the necessary enquiries in order to find the woman and bring her back to raise her children.⁴⁷

Anunțarea Com. Sui-civil
Județul Constanța
Tablou Comunal
De persoanele care au fost repatriate în U.R.S.S. din
această comună în baza convenției de amnistie

No.	Numele și Prenumele	Staten ani.	Observații
1	Serbeuciu Nicolai	22	q. th. Neguzac. 22 ani.
2	Coanța Curuc	41	
3	Maria Vasile	43	
4	Gheorghe Ciupan	31	
5	Justina Gh. Ciupan	20	
6	Ciobotariu Simion	22	
7	Maria Constantin	44	
8	Petre Ciupan	44	

Se certifică de noi prezența tabloului
Primar Ciupan
Pretor Vasile

Figure 1.3: List of the persons to be repatriated to the URSS from the township of Limanu in 1945.⁴⁸

From the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, the province changed administration several times.⁴⁹ Each territorial or administrative change encouraged the

⁴⁷ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 124, 1944, 6. Pretor was the title used for the administrative officer in charge of the *plasa*.

⁴⁸ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 144, 1945, 20.

⁴⁹ The Ottoman administration in place from 1420 until 1878 was replaced by the Russian administration in 1771, 1790, 1809, 1829, and 1853. The Romanian state took over the territory of Northern Dobrogea in 1878 and that of Southern Dobrogea in 1913, and held control over both until 1940. The First World War provided Bulgaria with the possibility of acquiring both parts of the province in 1916, but Bulgarian rule over Dobrogea ended in 1919. The German forces held all of Romania with the exception of the province of Moldova from 1916 to 1918. In 1940,

settlement of new ethnic groups to replace previous ones that had been resettled forcefully or by their own free will.⁵⁰ Dobrogea's inhabitants only received full political rights in 1912, but their exercise was short-lived.⁵¹ During the twentieth century, Romania, including Dobrogea, experienced four dictatorial regimes: the royal dictatorship of Carol II, 1938 -1940, the brief but bloody Iron Guard power grab, 1940-1941, the military dictatorship of Marshal Ion Antonescu, 1941-1944, and the communist regime, 1947-1989. Dobrogea reached a certain degree of political stability, development, and economic prosperity during the communist regime but the process was not a smooth one. Internal colonization in Dobrogea continued during the socialist period. In Vama Veche, seven families received lots of five hectares each in 1948.⁵² Lipovans from the county of Tulcea and ethnic Romanians from the countryside in southern Romania came to 2 Mai in the 1950s. The urbanization and industrialization of Mangalia and its surroundings continued to attract people searching for economic opportunities, yet low population density across Dobrogea remained a problem.

The Socialist Period

Once peace finally settled in, after the end of the Second World War, communism began its own internal war. Despite population exchanges and the resettlement of ethnic Turks, Tatars, Germans, and Bulgarians, Dobrogea remained a multi-ethnic region. The census of 1956 showed

Romania returned Southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria and kept the Northern part, which remains part of Romanian territory to this day.

⁵⁰ Cossacks (1775-1828), Turks, Arabs, and Tatars (1512; 1855; 1861; 1936), Circassians (1864-1879), Germans (1840-1892; 1940), Bulgarians (1830-1940), Lipovans (1740), Skoptsy (1876), Gagauz (1812), Greeks (seventh century BCE; 1651; 1856; 1913; 1949), Italians (1880), Jews (1828; 1918), as well as Aromanians (1925). The dates refer to the period these ethnic groups settled in the region. Some of the dates are approximations since for the earlier years and splinter groups such as Cossacks, Circassians, Lipovans, Skoptsy, or Gagauz, written sources are scarce and only mention them in connection with particular events, such as the Russian War of 1812. This enumeration is by no means exhaustive.

⁵¹ Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship," 171-177.

⁵² DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 167, 1948, 2.

that Romanians were a majority in Dobrogea, yet Russians, Tatars, Turks, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Bulgarians and other, smaller ethnic groups continued to live in the region.⁵³

In another state experiment, the region of Dobrogea was the first in Romania to be fully collectivized in 1957. Borders--both internal and external-- played a crucial role in this process, for the Danube acted as a natural border separating Dobrogea from the rest of Romania. As the communist regime was trying to consolidate its grip on power, the state accelerated the process of collectivization and socialist transition in the region in an effort to secure its borderland.

Constantin Iordachi provides a geo-strategical explanation for the process. According to him, the development was threefold: the Black Sea with its strategic location played a crucial role because the Soviets wanted to secure a strong presence in the region and the Mediterranean basin. On the Bulgarian side, Southern Dobrogea was also the first collectivized region in that country.

Another explanation for the rapid pace of collectivization in Dobrogea was the ethnic composition of the region and the devastating effect of the war. As a scarcely populated region, Dobrogea was more receptive to the socialist plan for agriculture. Moreover, the large number of ethnic groups still living in the province motivated the communist authorities to consolidate administrative powers in order to avoid any potential conflict or rebellion. Lastly, party activists and official propagandists did a better job of marketing the process to the impoverished and depleted Dobrogean population than elsewhere in Romania.⁵⁴

The reform instituted by the first communist government had an ideological and economic motivation as it allowed the state to control big property. The state thus transferred all

⁵³ According to the *Statistical Yearbook of RPR for 1959* of 635,950 inhabitants, 560,521 were Romanians, representing 88,1 percent; 26,639 or 4.2 percent were Russians; 20,253 or 3.2 percent were Tatars, of whom 11,468 or 1.8 percent were Turks; 6,720, or 1.1 percent were Ukrainians and Ruthenians; 904 were Bulgarians; and 9,445, or 1.5 percent belonged to other ethnic groups. For more details, see, Direcția Centrală de Statistică [Central Bureau of Statistics], *Anuarul statistic al RPR 1959* [Statistical Yearbook of RPR for 1959] (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1959), 73.

⁵⁴ Dobrinu and Iordachi, *Transforming Peasants*, 103-105.

private lots to the newly established collective agricultural cooperatives (GAC) or (CAP), commonly referred to as collective farms. In the township of Limanu, by 1949, the process of redistribution of land and the establishment of collective farms resulted in the expropriation of eight families who owned more than 50 hectares each, and the confiscation of 438 hectares in total.⁵⁵ Another twelve families owning 356 hectares were labeled *chiaburi*, their land soon to be expropriated as well.⁵⁶ The first applications for the establishment of a GAC in Limanu were registered in 1949. By 1952, 91 families had formed “Drumul socialismului” (“The Road to Socialism”), the township of Limanu’s second GAC. The first GAC had been established in Hagieni, in 1951.⁵⁷ The land reform and the establishment of large collective farms on the territory and the vicinity of 2 Mai and Vama Veche had a strong impact on the future development of Mangalia and its neighboring resorts. Tasked with supplying produce to the resorts north of Mangalia, the collective farms of the township of Limanu and the village of 2 Mai faced constant pressure from economic planners, difficulties in retaining a workforce, and constant internal migration.

In 1950, under the socialist administrative reform, the *plasa* territorial unit was abolished, and the territory was divided into regions, districts, cities, and communes.⁵⁸ Mangalia and its adjacent townships, with the exception of Vama Veche, became part of Constanța, later the

⁵⁵ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 173, 1949, 30.

⁵⁶ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 181, 1950, 12. The word *chiabur* is a communist term designating peasant that owned more land than they could work themselves (5 ha).

⁵⁷ “Pentru Victoria socialismului la sate” [For the Victory of State Socialism in Villages], *România Liberă* (Bucharest), March 5, 1952.

⁵⁸ Legea nr. 5/1950 pentru raionarea administrativ-economică a teritoriului Republicii Populare Române [Law no. 5/1950 for the economic and administrative division into raioane of the territory of the Popular Republic of Romania] abolished the previous 58 counties, 424 plase, and 6,276 rural and urban communes and divided the Romanian territory into 28 regions, 177 districts, 148 cities, and 4,052 communes. In 1952, the number of regions was reduced to 18, then, in 1956, to 16. The law was abrogated on 26 December 1960 and replaced by Legea nr. 3/1960 [Law no. 3/1960].

Dobrogea Region.⁵⁹ The most recent administrative reform in Romania, which dates back to 1968 divided the territory into counties, cities, and communes. The Mangalia administrative territorial unit is composed of seven summer resorts: Mangalia, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Cap Aurora, Neptun, Olimp. Today, in accordance with the last administrative law of 1968, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche, along with Hagieni and Limanu form part of the township of Limanu.⁶⁰

Genius Loci: The Villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche

At the turn of the last century, the village of Două Mai was incorporated administratively into the city of Mangalia, being located between Ilanlic and Mangalia, about 4 kilometers south of the city.⁶¹ The village was founded in 1887 by Mihail Kogălniceanu on the site of an ancient Turkish village, Kecege, and was populated with sectarian Skoptsy brought in from Bucharest, Iași, and Galați.⁶² In a table showing the population of Plasa Mangalia, distributed across villages and nationalities around the year 1900, the village of Două Mai appears inhabited by 173 Skoptsy. The source tells us that this sect came to Dobrogea after that territory was annexed by Romania.⁶³

⁵⁹ Vama Veche was incorporated into Negru Vodă District.

⁶⁰ Legea nr. 2/1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Law no. 2/1968 regarding the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], published in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Gazette], 17 February 1968, modified and republished on 27 July 1981.

⁶¹ The name of the village became 2 Mai in 1968 in accordance with the “Nomenclature of Localities of the Socialist Republic of Romania,” annexed to Law no. 2/1968.

⁶² Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea*, 334, 458, 466. The village was named by Mihail Kogălniceanu, a famous Romanian politician and prime minister in celebration of Al. I Cuza’s coup of 2 Mai 1864. On that day in 1864, the first ruler of the United Principalities of Țara Românească and Moldova dissolved the legislative assembly to promote his reforms: the first distribution of land, universal male suffrage, education reform and a new constitution. Mihail Kogălniceanu was also famous for his role in the unification of the principalities, and drafting the legislation to abolish Roma slavery.

⁶³ *Dicționar Geografic al României* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania], vol. III, (1900), 214.

In 2003 Naum Roman, an old Lipovan from 2 Mai, still recalled the presence of the Skoptsy in the village and described their way of life:

There were some people around here, about 18 families, settled here by Minister Kogălniceanu, farmers who raised cattle and birds (...) they did not have children, (...) they lived together but were Skoptsy, did not make children, did not make love (...) Skoptsy plowed the fields, went to Mangalia to sell milk and hens, they did not spend, only sold and sold, (...) they took from village the best boy and the better girl, arranged with their parents and said, “From now on I will castrate him,” and if the family was poor, they agreed and said yes (...) they came then and got them when they were old and could not work anymore (...) well off families would not do such a thing, but poor people said yes.⁶⁴

By the end of the nineteenth century, the village of Două Mai had 29 families totaling 90 inhabitants, most of them ethnic Russians who withdrew with the Russian troops in 1916.⁶⁵ Tatar horse breeders, Romanian shepherds, Greek fishermen, and Lipovans also inhabited the village. The place of the Skoptsy was taken for a short time by German colonists, then by families of Lipovan fishermen, coming from Tulcea County, and, following the agrarian reform of 1921, by Romanians coming from Teleorman, Vlasca, Gorj, and other places. In 1936, the population of

⁶⁴ Interview with Naum Roman dated December 4, 2003 and published in Miruna Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai. O istorie orală a zonei* [Stories from 2 Mai. An Oral History Account of the Area], Pucioasa: Antet, 2004, 12. In this colorful depiction, Naum Roman portrays the Skoptsy and their practice of adopting children.

⁶⁵ According to archivist Constantin Cheramidoglu, interviewed by Ana Fulas Ionescu, “Povestea satului dobrogean populat de lipoveni scopiți” [The Story of the Dobrogean Village Inhabited by Lipovans of the Skoptsy Faith], *Cuget Liber* (Constanta), October 28, 2015.

the village totalled 646 people, of whom 476 were Romanian and 170 Russian. After the Second World War the population grew, reaching 1,433 inhabitants in 1966 and 2,848 in 2011.

Five kilometers away from 2 Mai lies the village of Vama Veche (*vama* means customs in Romanian), the last village in Romania before the border with Bulgaria. Initially called Ilanlic (meaning place of snakes in Turkish), the village was founded in 1811 by a handful of Gagauz families. The next year, in 1812, Bessarabia was annexed by the Russian Empire, and following the exchange of populations between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, the Gagauz were displaced to Bugeac and replaced by Bessarabian Tatars.⁶⁶ The Turkish name was kept until 1913 when, due to the annexation of the Cadrilater (1913-1940), customs were moved further south to Eccrine, and Ilanlic was renamed Vama Veche.⁶⁷

According to M.D. Ionescu, around 1900 Ilanlic was a small village in the commune of Sarighiol, Plasa Mangalia. It consisted of 42 families and 124 inhabitants, whose main occupation was fishing.⁶⁸ In his detailed book, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea* (Dobrogea at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century), published in 1904, Ionescu presents his impressions of Ilanlic, which he describes as a village with 38 to 40 houses and huts inhabited by the “least hospitable population of Dobrogea, the Gagauz”:

I stayed at this point of the border for two months, during which time I suffered from lack of food that I had to buy from Mangalia; neither wood or water can be

⁶⁶ Jean Nouzille, “La Frontière Bulgaro-Roumaine en Dobroudja,” *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 35, no. 1-2 (1996), 27–40.

⁶⁷ Ekrene in Turkish, and Kranevo in Bulgarian.

⁶⁸ *Marele dicționar geografic al României* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania], vol. 4 (1901), 229-230.

found with ease; in winter the population eats dung cakes and dried weeds, and in the summer I did not see them making fire, but they eat cheese.⁶⁹

(...)

The whole village has only a single well, and the water comes from very deep; during the day only dogs stay in the village, the entire population goes to work; the land is rocky and barely able to provide for the miserable souls of Ilanlic. The statistics that call the inhospitable inhabitants of this village Romanians are wrong.⁷⁰

The Gagauz, wrote Ionescu, were mistakenly considered Romanians, even though at the time of his visit they spoke a Turcic language, and none of them could speak Romanian.⁷¹

Marele dicționar geografic al României [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania] provides similar numbers, 42 families or 124 souls.⁷²

At the end of the nineteenth century, the village of Hagilar, currently Hagieni, the third village that forms part of the township of Limanu, was larger than 2 Mai and Vama Veche combined, and its population numbered 82 families and 325 inhabitants.⁷³ Its houses were small, scattered, and poorly built.⁷⁴ M.D. Ionescu did not provide any information as to the ethnicity and socioeconomic status of its inhabitants, but wrote that Hagilar had a Turkish school.⁷⁵ Cara-Aci-Culac, present day Limanu, the administrative unit that comprises all four villages, had few

⁶⁹ “Dung” is an approximate translation. The word in Romanian is “balega.”

⁷⁰ Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea*, 468.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁷² *Marele dicționar geografic al României* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania], vol. IV (1901), 42.

⁷³ *Marele dicționar geografic al României* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania], vol. III (1900), 681.

⁷⁴ Grigore Danescu, *Dicționarul geografic, economic, statistic și istoric al județului Constanța* [Geographical, Economic, Statistical, and Historical Dictionary of Constanta County], 92.

⁷⁵ Cpt. Marin Dobrogeanu Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea* [Dobrogea at the beginning of the Twentieth Century], 468.

houses. Those that existed were badly built and mostly destroyed by the Turkish and Basibazouk invasions.⁷⁶ A total of 421 people or 105 families lived in the village, mostly farmers.⁷⁷ The population of the township of Limanu comprising the four villages mentioned above has quadrupled since the census of 1936. The villages of 2 Mai and Limanu registered a constant increase of population, while the population of the more ethnically diverse Hagieni and Vama Veche fluctuated in response to historical processes such as the emigration of the ethnic Turks.

Population by Locality	Years of Census					
	1936	1966	1977	1992	2002	2011
Township of Limanu	2693	3775	4321	3838	4747	6270
Village of Limanu	1538	1834	1902	1703	2170	2990
Village of 2 Mai	630	1433	2100	1881	2248	2848
Village of Hagieni	338	402	224	139	151	150
Village of Vama Veche	187	106	95	115	178	282

Figure 1.4: Table with the population of the township of Limanu, according to the 1936, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002, and 2011 censuses.⁷⁸

After population transfers, migration, and all the other tumultuous events of the last century, according to the 2011 census, the township of Limanu (which includes the villages of Vama Veche, 2 Mai, Hagieni and Limanu) is home to ten ethnic groups: Romanians, Lipovans, Tatars, Turks, Roma, Hungarians, Germans, Greeks, Gagauz, and Armenians, and to seven different faiths, Orthodox, Old Calendar Orthodox, Serb Orthodox, Muslims, Baptists,

⁷⁶ Basibazouk were irregular soldiers in the Ottoman army.

⁷⁷ *Marele dicționar geografic al României* [The Great Geographic Dictionary of Romania], vol. II, 1899, 170.

⁷⁸ Institutul Național de Statistică din România (I.N.S.), Direcția județeană de Statistică Constanța [The Romanian National Institute for Statistics, Constanta County Statistics Directorate], *Anuarul statistic al Județului Constanța 2009* [Statistical Yearbook 2009], “2.3 Populația pe localități, la recensămintele din 1966, 1977, 1992 și 2002” [Population by Localities at the 1966, 1977, 1992 and 2002 Censuses], 12, and I.N.S., *Rezultatele finale ale Recensământului din 2011*, “Populația stabilă pe județe, municipii, orașe și localități componente la RPL_2011” [Final Results of the 2011 Census: Population by Counties, Municipalities, Towns, and Townships].

Pentecostals, and Roman-Catholics.⁷⁹ Such a high concentration of ethnic groups, languages, faiths, and customs on a small territory served to increase the appeal of the villages to tourists and their aura of exotism.

<i>Ethnicity</i>		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
All		6270	100.00%
1	Romanian	5337	85.119%
2	Hungarian	8	0.127%
3	Roma	84	1.339%
4	German	3	0.047%
5	Turkish	6	0.095%
6	Lipovan	178	2.838%
7	Tatar	179	2.854%
8	Greek	3	0.047%
9	Armenian	4	0.063%
Not Available		465	7.416%

*Figure 1.5: Table with the population of the township of Limanu by ethnicity according to the 2011 Census.*⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Institutul Național de Statistică din România [The Romanian National Institute for Statistics], *Rezultatele finale ale Recensământului din 2011* [Final Results of the 2011 Census], „Tab8. Populația stabilă după etnie – județe, municipii, orașe, comune”, „Tab13. Populația stabilă după religie – județe, municipii, orașe, comune” [Table 8 and 13: Population by Ethnicity and Religion, by Counties, Municipalities, Towns, and Townships], accessed 15 December 2021, <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2>. The 2011 Census does not provide a special category for the Gagauz ethnicity, pointing that for 465 persons the ethnic information is unavailable.

⁸⁰ Source: I.N.S., *Rezultatele finale ale Recensământului din 2011* [Final Results of the 2011 Census], “Tab8. Populația stabilă după etnie – județe, municipii, orașe, comune” [Table 8. Population According to Ethnicity by counties, municipalities, towns, townships].

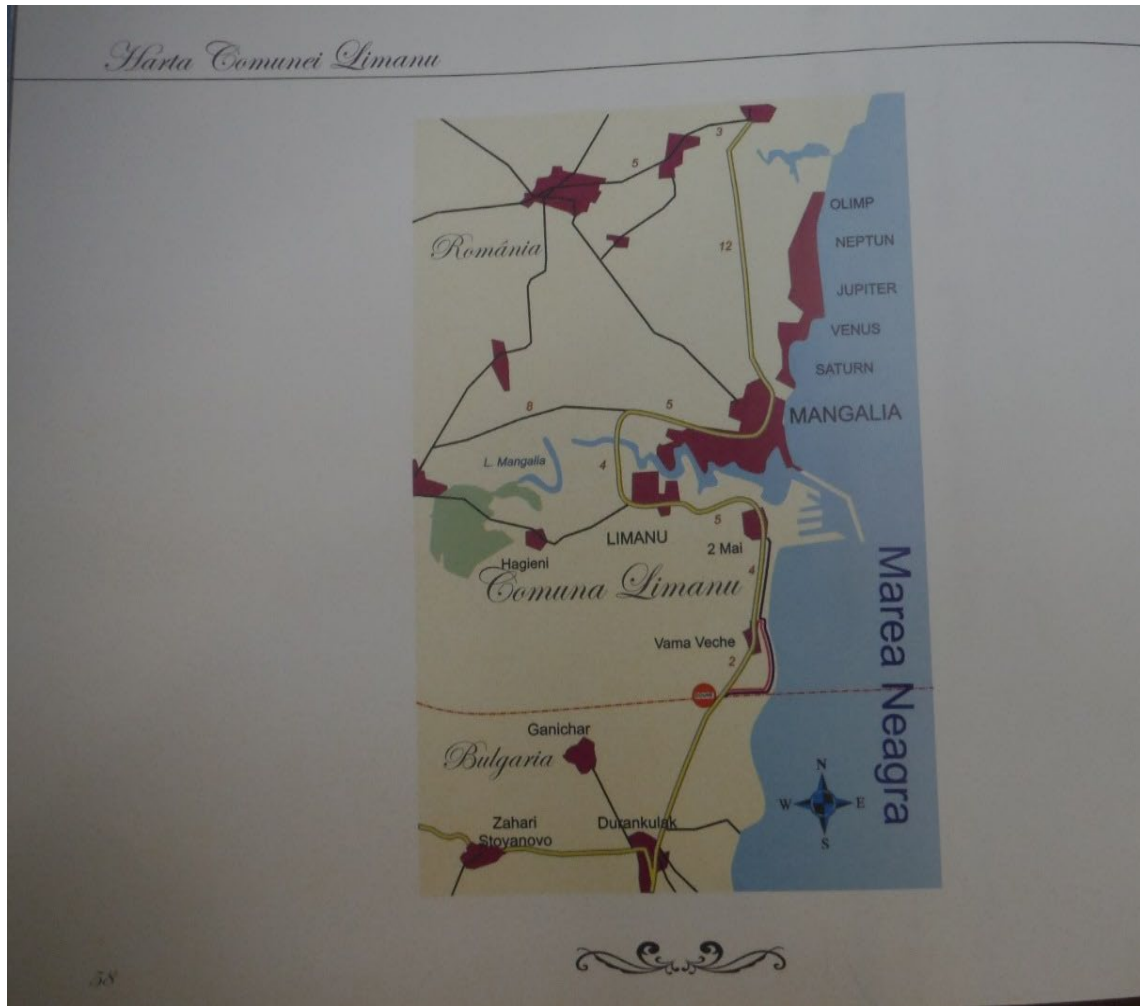


Figure 1.6: Map of the Township of Limanu from 2011.⁸¹

Legacy and Change: The City of Mangalia

The Romanian shore of the Black Sea which is 245 km long, stretches from the Bay of Musura in its northern part to the village of Vama Veche in the south. Tourism on the Romanian seacoast began at the turn of the nineteenth century and developed on the stretch of land between Cape Midia and Vama Veche, on a surface of 82 km. City planners developed the first beach in Constanța in 1882. The sea water was advertised as a cure for all sorts of ailments and the baths

⁸¹ *Monografia Comunei Limanu* [The Monograph of the Township of Limanu] (Constanța, 2011), 45.

became so popular that the city set up a new beach with bathing facilities. “La vii” was inaugurated in 1885 and became Constanța’s most popular beach.⁸² In 1906 new bathing facilities were inaugurated near Mamaia village.⁸³ Spa tourism in Romania began around the same period. In 1894, Eforia of Civil Hospitals in Bucharest built a sanatorium for the treatment of rheumatic patients who were previously housed in tents.⁸⁴ The oldest Romanian seaside resort, created in 1898 as a seasonal spa due to its healing waters and the therapeutic mud of the nearby Lake Techirghiol, is Eforie Sud. Originally named Movilă Techirghiol after the then name of its landowner, the resort was first renamed Carmen Silva in 1929, and then Vasile Roaită in 1948 before it became Eforie Sud in 1962.⁸⁵ The massive touristic infrastructure that emerged there in a very short period of time, from 1959 to 1965, was finalized during Ceaușescu’s rule from 1982 to 1985.⁸⁶

Mangalia, the ancient city lying 5 km north of 2 Mai village, was praised for its beautiful beaches from the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the Russian-Turkish War of 1828, the French officer Hector de Béarn passed through Dobrogea on a military mission. In his notes,

⁸² “La vii” Baths functioned until 1899, when they were moved to make room for the extension of the port. Constanța became a spa resort and more beaches with bathing facilities opened up for tourists: Duduia in 1900, Modern in 1906, Tataia in 1914S.J.A.N. Constanța, fond Primăria Constanța, dosar 7/ 1889, 30. Marin Ionescu-Dobrogeanu, *Cercetări asupra orașului Constanța. Geografie și istorie* [Research on the City of Constanta. Geography and History] (Bucharest: Tipografia și Fonderia de Litere Thoma Basilescu, 1897), 47.

⁸³ A suitable place for bathing was found close to Constanța and near the village of Mamaia. In 1905 construction of bathing facilities began, and in 1906 Romania’s most famous seaside seasonal resort named after the aforementioned village, Mamaia, was inaugurated. The Mamaia resort was in effect a new town and the largest hotel complex in the country. Maria Comăniță Cica, *Poveștile Mamaiei. Centenarul stațiunii Mamaia. 1905-2005* [The Stories of Mamaia. The Centenary of Mamaia Resort. 1905-2005] (Constanța: Telegraf Advertising, 2005), 46-50; Sabin Ivan, *Talasoterapia la Mamaia* [Thalassotherapy at Mamaia] (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2002), 22.

⁸⁴ This building was the nucleus of the future resort of Eforie Nord. The facilities were administrated by the township of Techirghiol until 1937. Nicolina Ursu, “Din istoricul stațiunii Eforie Nord” [From the History of Eforie Nord Resort], *Litoral*, no. 1158, 29 June 1982, 3.

⁸⁵ Benone Zotta, “Considerații geografice asupra turismului pe litoralul românesc” [Considerations on Romanian Coast Tourism], *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai: Geografie*, 12 (1967): 381.

⁸⁶ Andronic et al, *Litoralul românesc al Mării Negre* [The Romanian Coast of the Black Sea] (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1989); Ion Dunăreanu, *Litoralul românesc al Mării Negre* [The Romanian Coast of the Black Sea] (Bucharest: Editura Meridian, 1967); Iulian Berbecaru and Mihai Botez, *Teoria și practica amenajării turistice* [The Theory and Practice of Touristic Amenities] (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1977).

Quelques Souvenirs d'une Campagne en Turquie, he made the following remarks about Mangalia: “a small town without a harbor but sitting right on the seafront. Here there was enough water and we decided to offer the troops a day and a half of rest. The beach was beautiful, the sea was absolutely calm, and everyone was bathing, the humans and the transport animals all.”⁸⁷ Writing about Mangalia at the beginning of the twentieth century, N. D. Ionescu said that, during the summer, the city was visited by several families for its sea and sulfur baths: “Everywhere in Dobrogea, the sea does not have a larger and more beautiful beach than in Mangalia.”⁸⁸

The city port of Mangalia, one of the oldest and most colourful cities in Romania, was founded as the Greek colony Callatis in the sixth century B.C. The city endured countless invasions and witnessed multiple waves of migration. By the nineteenth century, Mangalia had become a rural settlement, destroyed by the Russian-Turkish Wars. In 1877, the city was burned three times during the Basibazouk invasions and, only after the Russian administration took over the city, did part of the population, around 1600 inhabitants, return.⁸⁹ The new Romanian administration of 1878 rebuilt the city as a port and a resort.⁹⁰ The 1930 census indicated a population of 2,800 inhabitants. The settlement became a tourist center known for its cosmopolitan atmosphere with a Levantine air.⁹¹ Well known Romanian writers such as Gala

⁸⁷ Hector de Galard Brassac comte de Béarn, *Quelques Souvenirs d'une Campagne en Turquie, par Hector de Béarn, Paris, 1839*, cited by Ion Conea, “Hector de Bearn, un călător francez prin Dobrogea în 1828” [Hector de Bearn, a French Traveller in Dobrogea], *Analele Dobrogei* [Annals of Dobrogea] vol. 2, ed. Constantin Brătescu (Cernăuți: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editura “Glasul Bucovinei,” 1928), 201.

⁸⁸ Cpt. Marin Dobrogianu Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea* [Dobrogea at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century], 465-466.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 465, 909.

⁹⁰ Due to its sulphurous springs and their curative properties, the city was declared a Maritime and Spa Climate Resort in 1899, Aurelia Lăpușan and Ștefan Lăpușan, *Mangalia în paginile vremii* [Mangalia in the Pages of the Period] (Constanța: Dobrogea 2007), 32.

⁹¹ Ion Alexandrescu, “Recensămintele României: 1899-1992” [Romania’s Censuses: 1899-1992], in *Enciclopedia de istorie a României* [The Historical Encyclopedia of Romania], edited by Ioan Scurtu, Ion Alexandrescu, Ion Bulei and Ion Mamina (Bucharest: Meronia, 2002), 358.

Galaction and Vasile Voiculescu sought inspiration and relaxation there. According to Galaction, in 1921 “Mangalia was a forgotten place, with a mixed population, and Turkish houses scattered in an immense ruin. I loved her sweet oriental sadness and tried to pull out from written memories and broken glass her glorious story, and added the confessions of the eternal contemporary, the sea, to the mix.”⁹²

The development of resorts was put on hold in the interwar period, as the Romanian administration focused its efforts on the newly acquired territories of Southern Dobrogea. The beginnings of Romanian niche tourism, a particular form of hospitality that involved lodging with locals and catered mostly to those interested in exploring wild landscapes and non-mainstream destinations, on the shores of the Black Sea are to be found in the Bulgarian town of Balçik. In 1913, Balçik became part of the Kingdom of Romania. It was regained by Bulgaria during the First World War (1916–1919), but Romania restored its authority over it after hostilities in the region ceased. The town remained under Romanian administration until 1940, when it was ceded to Bulgaria one last time.

Encouraged by the success of the colonization campaign in Northern Dobrogea, the Romanian authorities were quick to incorporate the territory of Southern Dobrogea into Romania through colonization, education and economic projects.⁹³ Romanian administration hoped that Romanians would soon become the dominant ethnic group in Southern Dobrogea as well. The Romanian state called upon intellectuals, artists, and writers and tasked them with popularizing the region of Southern Dobrogea and inventing a vocation for the sea, a landscape that had not been part of the Romanian national imaginary until the acquisition of Northern Dobrogea.

⁹² Adriana Niculiu, *Gala Galaction, omul și scriitorul prin el însuși* [Gala Galaction, The Man and Writer through Himself] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1971), 164-165.

⁹³ For a detailed history of Balchik during the interwar period see Lucian Boia, *Balcic, micul paradis al României Mari* [Balchik, the Little Paradise of Greater Romania] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014).

During this period, the town of Balcic became not only the favorite summer residence of Queen Marie of Romania (1875-1938) and her immediate family, but also a destination for Romanian intellectuals and avant-garde painters, lending its name to an informal school of post-impressionist painting, the Balcic School.⁹⁴ Virtually all Romanian painters visited Balcic, a place that was called the “Romanian Barbizon” or the “Romanian Mecca” for painters.⁹⁵ In his famous *Journal*, a popular Romanian writer Mihail Sebastian, described Balcic as a place where time stops and where “idleness feels very good, the only place where it doesn’t demoralize me.”⁹⁶

After the end of the Second World War, and Romania’s loss of Balcic to Bulgaria, Romanian artists sought refuge and inspiration in Mangalia. Film critic Manuela Cernat remembers the atmosphere in the city immediately after the Second World War:

Paradoxically, in full Sovietisation, far from the capital city, and forgotten at the border, Mangalia still breathed and lived in the pre-war rhythm. Writers Radu Tudoran and Geo Bogza, the painters Marcela and Florica Cordescu, the novelists Cezar Petrescu and Iosif Igirioșianu, actors Grigore Vasiliu Birlic and Radu Beligan, directors Sică Alexandrescu and Marietta Sadova, epigramist Păstorel Teodoreanu and a pile of beautiful and extremely elegant women lightened the hours of walking on the seafront.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Queen Marie’s summer villa is located in Balcic.

⁹⁵ Magda Cârneci, “Balcic: Barbizonul românilor” [Balchik: Romanians’ Barbizon], *Revista* 22, 25 October 2004.

⁹⁶ Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal 1935-1944* [Journal 1935-1944] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016), 160.

⁹⁷ Lăpușan and Lăpușan, *Mangalia în paginile vremii* [Mangalia in the Pages of the Period], 12.

The urbanization of Mangalia started in 1959; in contrast to the development of other seaside resorts, it included demolition of the city and population movement.⁹⁸ The socialist state developed the northern part of the city, also known as Comorova or Mangalia North, into six seaside seasonal resorts, Olimp, Neptun, Jupiter, Aurora, Venus and Saturn, from 1967 to 1973. A new port was also built in Mangalia in 1977. That same year the transformation and massive construction on the Romanian shores of the Black Sea ended. From then on, the socialist state concentrated on maintaining and renovating the existing infrastructure while also creating conditions for the first holiday villages.⁹⁹ Anthropologist Claude Karnoouh explained that:

By 1980 only two villages (2 Mai and Vama Veche) still preserved rustic cottages for tourists uninterested in the promiscuity of the large hotel complexes and who were happy to sleep under the same roof as their hosts, who prepared their food in the rural way, and to spend their evenings, often naked, on more or less unspoiled beaches.¹⁰⁰

Following the return of Balçık to Bulgaria in 1940, the industrialization of Mangalia, and the gentrification of Mamaia village which had been engulfed by the ever expanding Mamaia

⁹⁸ Cezar Lăzărescu, "Reconstrucția orașului Mangalia" [The Reconstruction of the Town of Mangalia], *Arhitectura RPR* [Architecture of the People's Republic of Romania], no. 6 (1959), 12-23.

⁹⁹ Tamara Simon, Mirela Mazilu, Mădălina Andrei, Roxana Severineanu and Costin Dumitrașcu, "Aspects of Tourist Development on the Romanian Black Sea Coastline," *Recent Researches in Geography, Geology, Energy, Environment and Biomedicine* (WSEAS 2011), 67.

¹⁰⁰ Claude Karnoouh, "De la particular la general. Sau cum și-a confirmat România comunistă integrarea în capitalismul mondial prin vastul proiect social și apoi turistic de urbanizare a litoralului de la Marea Neagră" [From the Particular to the General. Or How Communist Romania Confirmed Its Integration in Global Capitalism Through Its Vast Social and Then Tourist Project to Urbanise the Black Sea Coast], in *Vederi încântătoare: Urbanism și arhitectură în turismul românesc de la marea neagră în anii '60-'70* [Enchanting Views: Romanian Black Sea Tourism Planning and Architecture of the '60s and the '70s], eds. Alina Șerban, Kalioppe Dimou and Sorin Istudor (Bucharest: Asociația Pepluspatru, 2015), 153.

resort, all three places lost their appeal as alternative cultural spaces and niche tourist destinations for Romanians. In the late 1960s, a select few from the well-established, white-collar, middle class, together with members of the *nomenklatura*, members of the Romanian Communist Party appointed to top-level government positions, rehabilitated former political detainees, artists, writers, and socialist youth from the country's leading universities, looked to 2 Mai for escape from the constraints of daily socialist life. The archives of the township of Limanu mention that in 1966, in the village of 2 Mai there were two buildings whose purpose was the hospitality industry: one children's camp and one room registered as accommodation for guests.¹⁰¹ According to the inhabitants, the camp's grounds and buildings were also used for school-related activities before the construction of a new school building. A campsite and a restaurant were also developed in 1970 and the village was briefly listed as a resort by the Institute for Research and Development of Tourism, a governmental agency.¹⁰² Once the 2 Mai shipyard was built in 1980, the village lost a very big section of its beach, and tourists started moving to Vama Veche, at least for beach-related activities. In 1972, a summer camp for the employees of the Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj opened in Vama Veche and the regular influx of tourists it generated during the summer season made spare accommodation for random tourists difficult to find.

After the Second World War and until the late 1950s the entire Romanian seacoast was considered a military border area and for this reason access to it was severely restricted.¹⁰³ In order to visit Constanţa, one of Romania's largest cities, ordinary citizens needed to apply for a

¹⁰¹ DJCAN/fond Limanu 495, file no. 274, 1966, 44.

¹⁰² ANIC, Fond 3432, file no. 2/1970, 13.

¹⁰³ Decret nr. 200/1956 privind regimul de frontieră [Decree no. 200/ 1956 on the Frontier Zone], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 15, 11 May 1956.

special permit.¹⁰⁴ Mangalia was opened to tourists in 1954, but its military port remained closed to navigation for foreign ships until 1969. Decree 678 of 1969 banned access of foreign citizens to Hagieni, Limanu, and other villages neighboring Mangalia's military port. Access to the border villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche continued to be formally restricted until the end of the communist regime.¹⁰⁵ The state's obsession with secure borders peaked in the late 1980s. In 1989, during the last months of the communist regime, preparation for the demolition of Vama Veche and the resettlement of its inhabitants in apartment buildings in Limanu were under way. Ironically, it was this particular obsession of the socialist state for border security and patrol sight lines that spared these villages the development that occurred in other Romanian Black Sea resorts. As the permit restriction was abolished in Constanța and other seaside resorts including 2 Mai, and tourists found ways of circumventing the travel restrictions in Vama Veche, the two seaside villages became a hangout for intellectuals fleeing the prying eye of the police state.

¹⁰⁴ Decret nr. 678/1969 privind regimul de pază al frontierei de stat a Republicii Socialiste România [Decree no. 678 /1969 on the Security of the State Frontier of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 106, 7 October 1969.

¹⁰⁵ Decret nr.61/1981 pentru modificarea Decretului nr.678/1969 privind regimul de pază a frontierei de stat al Republicii Socialiste România [Decree no. 61/1981 amending Decree no. 678/1969 on the Security of the State Frontier of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 17, 25 March 1981.

Conclusion

In an interview dated August 24, 2005 for *Jurnalul Național* newspaper, Nea Romca, an 81-year old Lipovan, summarized the history of 2 Mai in the following manner:

When my grandfather was alive, there were ten families of Skoptsy in 2 Mai. The war came, and grandfather went to war, and grandmother moved to Jurilovca for fear of the Germans. In 1918 they both returned to 2 Mai where they found the same ten families they had left, and themselves, the only Lipovans of the place. At the time migrants from Tulcea came to 2 Mai in search of work. In 1924, other “settlers” came from Argeș; the state gave them a house, oxen, a plow, and nine hectares of land and one of pasture for agriculture. Communism brought even more people to 2 Mai, including Tatars, with the establishment of collectivized farms.... Little by little 240 houses of Lipovans were built in 2 Mai, 13 or 14 of Tatars, and the rest Romanians. Then, in 1955, the tourists began to come. They were delighted with the marvelous beauty of the beach, of which now not even a quarter remains.¹⁰⁷

The Balkans, Dobrogea, and the frontier zone of 2 Mai and Vama Veche experienced numerous waves of migration and settlement. The presence of the borderland brought hardships but also the promise of prosperity. The mix of ethnicities and faiths together with the presence of the sea ensured the fluidity of the space in both its geographic and human characteristics. To this day, Dobrogea remains a multi-ethnic region, and in smaller communities such as 2 Mai and

¹⁰⁷ Miruna Mihalcea, “Oamenii apelor, lipovenii din 2 Mai” [People of the Sea, the Lipovans of 2 Mai], *Jurnalul Național* (Bucharest), August 24, 2005.

Vama Veche, the presence of this ethnic diversity is felt stronger than in the big cities. The sea, the borderland, and the multi-ethnic local community were key factors in the development of niche tourism, a process that started in the early nineteenth century, reached its peak during the socialist era, and continues to the present day. The following chapters examine the particularities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche tourism as well as the limitations and control measures the socialist state imposed on the two localities as a consequence of their borderland status.

Chapter 2

Varieties of Socialist Tourism: Individual and Communal Holidays on the Southern Shores of the Black Sea

This was the interesting part; you would find writers, philosophers, musicians. And the freedom you were speaking of was not thought, but felt. That is, you would not go there to escape the communist atmosphere, but after many years you realized that this was actually the main reason. It's just that you were not aware at the time [of this reason] and believed you were going there for the sun, or the beach, or the water, and for the tranquility of rural life which your host offered you. But after a while you discovered that in that place existed a kind of unthinkable freedom in comparison to the regime in Bucharest.¹

Aurelian Trișcă, architect, 2010

Introduction

This chapter examines the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche as sites of reprieve in an increasingly tightly controlled socialist environment, starting in the late 1950s up until 1989. The bulk of the chapter tells the story of the two villages through the voice of their visitors: writer Nina Cassian, dissident Luca Pițu, sportsman Dan Constantinescu, architect Aurelian Trișcă, puppet theatre director Cristian Pepino, and others. The chapter then identifies those who chose these sites as vacation destinations, their routines, and the reasons that attracted them to the country's most southern point. The seasonal community of long-term tourists that inhabited these

¹ Aurelian Trișcă, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Kind of Break], 13.

places from late May until late September was made up of smaller communities constituted along regional, ethnic, social, professional and ideological lines. The local institutions, the Dobrogeanu Restaurant, the campground, and the Babeş Bolyai University canteen will also be discussed, since they constitute reference points present in the memories of all those who spent their summers in the villages. The final section of the chapter situates the communities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche within the larger field of the historiography on dissent.

Tourism, The Most Successful Socialist Experiment

One explanation for the popularity of the seaside resorts in Romania was the introduction of the universal paid holiday. The right to a paid vacation was established in 1951, and, by 1967, Romanian legislation stipulated a minimum of 15 workdays of paid holiday each year.² In the early 1950s, domestic tourism was focused on visiting spa and therapeutic facilities. At that time, the communist regime had already nationalized hotels, restaurants, campgrounds and holiday villas, and placed the existing infrastructure under the supervision of the Central Council of Trade Unions, which was a government agency tasked to protect workers' rights.³ Organized tourism was privileged over individual tourism, and financial incentives were offered to those workers sent on vacation by the labor unions. There were two categories of prices, a lower one for those who travelled in organized parties, and a higher one for tourists, including families, who chose to make their own arrangements, outside the state's agencies. Aside from discounts for medical spa treatments, the contribution of the employed worker amounted to a maximum of

² Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 186/1951 and Law no. 28 of December 27, 1967 on the annual leave of employees, *Buletinul Oficial al RPR* [Official Gazette] no. 113 of December 28, 1967.

³ Luminița Banu, "Turismul internațional din România în anii '60- ecouri din arhivele Securității" [Foreign Tourists in 1960s Romania], *Magazin istoric* [Historical Gazette], no. 1, January 2010, 23. The Central Council of Trade Unions, renamed the General Confederation of Labor, and then the General Union of Trade Associations had 7.5 million members in 1989.

25 percent of all expenses – if using the packages offered through workplaces or party cells; all those who made their own travel plans had to cover 100 percent of the cost. Each factory, university, or state, and professional organization had a limited number of such packages, and therefore quite a lot of people, while employed, had to make their own arrangements and pay the higher price.⁴

In 1949 the Romanian Writers' Society passed a regulation that recognized the Literary Fund, an institution whose purpose was to provide financial support for writers.⁵ Amongst other measures, the Literary Fund proposed the building and financing of holiday homes. It took more than two decades for Paltinul Vila in Neptun to open its doors to members of the society.⁶ However, not all Romanian writers could spend their summer holidays in Neptun. One had to be formally registered with the Society and in good standing to benefit; amateur writers who were members of other professions and professional associations did not qualify even if they paid annual dues. In addition, priority was given to those who were in the regime's good graces. While holidaymaking in Neptun involved status recognition and was a privilege, it also meant searching for relaxation in one of the most intensely surveilled places in the country, something many found incompatible with the very purpose of vacation.⁷ By 1971, when renovation to Vila Paltinul was completed, writers also vacationed in other resorts, such as Eforie, Mangalia, Costinești, or 2 Mai. In short, those writers who were not entirely compliant with the regime and

⁴ Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 641/1960.

⁵ Decret nr. 31/1949 pentru stimularea activității științifice, literare și artistice [Decree no. 31/1949 for the stimulation of scientific, literary, and artistic activity], *Monitorul Oficial* [The Official Gazette] no. 24 of 29 January 1949.

⁶ The summer resort of Neptun had gradually become the favored seaside holiday spot for the upper echelons of the Romanian Communist Party. The resort's accommodation consisting mostly of villas and small hotels with restricted access was dedicated to various favored social categories, such as the presidential couple, regional party secretaries, journalists, foreign delegates, etc.

⁷ For a detailed account of writers' holidays in Neptun, see Ozana Cucu-Oancea, *Marea scriitorilor. Între Olimp și zidul puterii* [The Writers' Sea. Between Olympus and the Wall of Power] (Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca, 2012).

those on the fringes of the socialist literary movement chose 2 Mai and Vama Veche over the well-structured, state sponsored, highly surveilled Neptun vacation space.

International tourism was managed by the Carpați National Office for Tourism (Oficiul Național de Turism, O.N.T.), a government agency established in 1955 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Trade. O.N.T. also offered packages to foreigners wishing to travel in Romania.⁸ The same year, the national program for the development of the Black Sea coast was launched. On an ideological level, the Black Sea coast functioned as a vast publicity apparatus for socialism itself, and “a certain form of consumerism and material happiness, along with its attendant advertisement strategies, were mobilized to show that socialist planning could produce not only tractors and steel and grain, but also pleasure, with equal efficiency and abundance.”⁹

Gradually, most of the activities related to the tourist industry became the responsibility of the O.N.T., “a central state administrative body in charge of enforcing state policy in the tourism sector.”¹⁰ In the 1960s, during the last years of Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej’s regime, the Romanian state began viewing tourism as a source of revenue and concentrated its efforts on bringing foreign tourists into the country to raise hard currency which in turn could be used to import Western technology and machinery. Tourism also served to convince international audiences of the good life ordinary citizens led under socialism.¹¹

⁸ Adelina Ștefan, “De la oamenii muncii’ la ‘cetățeni’: turism individual, turism la alegere. Politicile turistice în România anilor 1960-1970” [From ‘Working People’ to ‘Citizens’: Individual Tourism, Tourism of Choice. Tourism Policies in Romania of the 1960s and 1970s], in *Vederi încântătoare. Urbanism și arhitectură în turismul românesc de la Marea Neagră în anii ‘60–’70* [Enchanting Views. Romanian Black Sea Tourism Planning and Architecture of the 1960s and 70s], eds. Alina Șerban, Kalioppi Dimou, and Sorin Istudor (Bucharest: Asociația Pepluspatru, 2015), 129

⁹ Juliana Maxim, “Vederi încântătoare. Politici ale seducției la începuturile turismului de litoral din România socialistă” [Enchanting Views. The Politics of Seduction in Early Romanian Socialist Resorts], in *Vederi încântătoare* [Enchanting Views], 71-72.

¹⁰ Decree no. 32 of 27 January 1967 on the establishment, organization and operation of the National Office for Tourism of the Socialist Republic of Romania, *Buletinul Oficial* [Official Gazette], no. 11, February 2, 1967, <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/21163>.

¹¹ Duncan Light, “A Medium of Revolutionary Propaganda: The State and Tourism Policy in the Romanian People’s Republic, 1947-1965,” *Journal of Tourism History*, 5, no. 2 (2013): 187.

Tourism was mostly a summer activity concentrated along the Black Sea coast, in the mountainous region, and in Romania's largest cities. In the 1970s, the Romanian shores of the Black Sea became a popular destination for small contingents of foreign tourists from Western Europe (German, Scandinavian, French, Dutch, and Italian), as well as for those from friendly socialist countries (Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, Slovaks, and East Germans).¹² Facing competition from neighboring socialist countries like Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, which also offered access to the sea but better services, higher quality hotels, and better local infrastructure, Romania specialized in attracting foreign tourists with lower incomes and purchasing power.¹³ Tourists from Western countries spent less money in Romanian resorts than those arriving from the socialist bloc, yet the income from tourism rose from 132 million dollars in 1975 to 324 million in 1980.¹⁴ That same year, a record number of 7 million foreign tourists visited the country.¹⁵ The number of domestic tourists also rose from 1.24 million in 1965 to 12 million in 1987.¹⁶ Subsidized vacations for workers continued to be offered, but the number of packages available through the General Union of Trade Associations was smaller than those made available to O.N.T. customers who paid full price for lodging services.¹⁷

To make accommodation available to a larger segment of the population and meet the ever-increasing demand, starting in 1967 Romanian citizens were allowed to rent rooms to

¹² Ibid. 170.

¹³ For the Bulgarian Riviera, see Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). For the Yugoslav case, see Hannes Grandits, Karin Taylor, *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Derek Hall, ed., *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Belhaven Press, 1991), 102.

¹⁵ *Anuarul statistic al României 1990* [Statistical Yearbook of Romania for 1990] (Bucharest: Institutul National de Statistica, 1990), 726.

¹⁶ David Turnock, *The Economy of East Central Europe, 1815–1989: Stages of Transformation in a Peripheral Region* (London: Routledge, 2006), 386.

¹⁷ Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010)* [Romania and Europe. The Accumulation of Economic Gaps (1500–2010)], 373; Ștefan, “De la oamenii muncii la ‘cetățeni’” [From ‘Working People’ to ‘Citizens’], 145.

tourists, provided they received authorization from the O.N.T. The hosts who took advantage of this rental opportunity were required to pay the state a 5 percent tax on the income derived from rental activity. This way, the state regulated a practice that had already been in place for some time, especially in seashore localities such as 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The O.N.T. also signed contracts with hosts in 2 Mai and brought groups of foreign tourists to the village, while, from 1962 to 1993, the labor union of Babeş Bolyai University rented all of the accommodation space available in Vama Veche for its employees' annual summer camp.¹⁸ The legal framework allowed for an increase in the number of tourists and accommodation spaces, the development of amenities and infrastructure.

Flexible regulations concerning accommodation generated extra revenue for ordinary citizens and allowed for longer, more affordable vacations. According to ethnologist Paul Drogeanu, the types of vacation provided by the state were limited in number and of rather poor quality. Moreover, they were available only to a select few party members and top ranking union members and offered little possibility for personal affirmation and creativity. The financial means of young people and families were also modest. Therefore, this way of traveling to the seaside or the mountains based on lodging with the locals became increasingly attractive. The ensuing personal relationship between the host and the tourist created a friendlier form of tourism which contrasted to mainstream, state monitored hotels and vacation lodges. In smaller, more familiar milieus of private residences, tourists were considered personal guests, sharing a certain degree of familiarity with the host with whom they lived under the same roof. By contrast, hotels and state-owned accommodation employed specialized personnel and advertised long lists of rules that tourists needed to abide by. In addition, at a time when geographical

¹⁸ "Am găsit veche tabără a UBB de la Vama Veche" [We Found the Old UBB Summer Camp in Vama Veche], *Cluj Cultural* (Cluj), May 8, 2014, <https://www.clujcultural.ro/am-gasit-vechea-tabara-a-ubb-de-la-vama-veche>.

mobility itself and newcomers were regarded with suspicion, lodging with private citizens was based on trust.¹⁹ Usually, the choice of hosts was based on recommendation from friends and relatives. One rarely traveled alone to a new lodging. Vacationing to the seaside in rural settings was not a solitary endeavour and someone in the group had visited the premises and established good relations with the host before recommending the location to other people. Hosts, too, to this day are reluctant to offer accommodation to strangers and often claim that they are fully booked so as to avoid bluntly refusing clients.

Gradually, the state's need for capital, coupled with a socialist consumerist rhetoric that emphasized leisure as part of the promise of a better future and state-sponsored educational activities conceived to undermine bourgeois social practices and construct "the new socialist man," led to the controlled liberalization of tourism of the 1960s and the 1970s. Travel restrictions for foreign tourists were also eased in the 1960s, although foreign tourists continued to be surveilled by the Securitate until 1989.²⁰ At the same time, the law requiring Romanians who travelled to destinations inside the country without using the O.N.T.'s services to register at the nearest police station if their stay exceeded three days remained in place.²¹ Travelling outside of Romania, especially to Western countries, remained strictly regulated and limited until the end of the communist regime. In the 1980s, Romanian tourists were allowed to travel to the country's seaside resorts without special permits. Access to the border localities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche

¹⁹ Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Miruna Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai. O istorie orală a zonei* [Stories from 2 Mai. An Oral History Account of the Area] (Pucioasa: Antet, 2004), 11.

²⁰ Between 1960 and 1967, Romania signed bilateral border agreements with the Soviet Union (1965), Bulgaria, and the Hungary. The purpose of these agreements was to eliminate visas and encourage the movement of tourists among socialist countries. In 1967, the Romanian state eliminated the need for visa formalities for all tourists entering the country pursuant to contracts signed with foreign tourism agencies if those tourists entered the country in organized groups.

²¹ H.C.M. nr. 840/1964 privind aplicarea regimului de evidență a populației [Decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 840/1964 regarding population registration rules], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 49, 4 November 1964.

continued to be restricted, but regulations were not enforced regularly and people found ways to circumvent them.

The late 1960s brought an easing of censorship practices and increased artistic freedom.²² After 1968 and Ceaușescu's condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Romania's leader became known as a communist maverick and the Western European countries were quick to befriend him. For its part, the Romanian communist regime was keen to attract foreign investment which brought in the hard currency that the regime needed to continue the country's industrialization process. The tourism industry was part of this mechanism. In an effort to attract foreign tourists and cater to their needs, Radio Vacanța, the summer seaside radio station in Mamaia, played international music in addition to Romanian songs, a Pepsi Cola bottling plant opened in Constanța, and a dance floor was built in the youth resort of Costinești.²³ Hotels and open-air theatres "functioned like the antechamber of the ideal socialist city," in which private, domestic spaces were standardized, and collective spaces multiplied.²⁴ Summer vacation dislocated traditional holidays based on religious celebrations; family gatherings in which individuals indulged in over eating and drinking were replaced by healthier leisure practices. These elements combined to lure the young generation away from habits and references of the past into a new world and made seaside resorts an important locus of socialist culture.

In 1975, Romania started to experience the effects of the oil crisis. In addition, major floods affected most of country during the summer of that year and line-ups begun to form in front of grocery stores. The Romanian socialist state tried to bring in extra foreign currency and

²² Musicians were allowed to perform at seaside resorts, sing in foreign languages, and choose their own repertoires.

²³ Radio Vacanța, which began broadcasting in 1967, was initially designed as a propaganda instrument for foreign tourists; it remained a propaganda tool during the late 1980s. The Pepsi Cola bottling plant opened in Constanța in 1968. In his book, *Romania under Communism, Paradox and Degeneration* (2019), historian Dennis Deletant claims that the plant symbolized "the ultimate symbol of concessions to Western capitalism," 251.

²⁴ Maxim, "Vederi încântătoare" [Enchanting Views], 84-85.

introduced new measures designed to control the flow of foreign tourists: the “obligation to use state-owned accommodation,” and the “compulsory currency exchange regulation”, which required tourists to exchange a certain amount of currency, calculated in US dollars, each day of their stay.²⁵ These requirements had the opposite effect: they slowed down tourism and greatly reduced the number of foreigners visiting Romania. In the 1970s, locals were advised to inform the police if they had clients coming from the West. During the 1980s, pressure increased and the advice became a hard requirement: local people could lose their jobs if they rented rooms to citizens of other countries without the knowledge of the authorities.²⁶ By law, contact with foreigners had to be disclosed to the police and was monitored by the Securitate. The interdiction applied to tourists visiting from socialist countries as well. Locals in 2 Mai, however, helped foreign tourists to circumvent the limitation. The campsite manager registered their stays in the village’s campground and even erected tents which, in reality, remained unoccupied. Foreign tourists continued to rent rooms from the locals at least in part because conditions in the campground were quite dire: there were no showers and power cuts happened frequently.²⁷

During the 1980s, the number of foreign tourists to Romania continued to decrease. The Romanian economy was in crisis, supplying resorts with food and other items became problematic and the number of complaints and disgruntled customers grew. The socialist vacation routine was marred by problems stemming from the planned economy, the obsession with paying off the country’s debt as fast as possible, and national-communist ideology. These included: frequent shortages of food, heating and electricity, overcrowding, widespread secret

²⁵ David Turnock, “Rumania and the Geography of Tourism,” *Geoforum*, 8, no. 1 (1977): 54.

²⁶ Ion Alexoiu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27.

²⁷ Iuliana Dumitru, “Camping 2 Mai, povești de familie” [2 Mai Campground, Family Stories], in *Moduri de apropiere și rezistență socială* [Modes of Appropriation and Social Resistance], eds. Gabriel Troc and Bogdan Iancu (Bucharest : Tritonic, 2015), 151.

surveillance, limited access to TV and radio programs, and increased control of leisure time. The Ceaușescu regime tightened ideological control over the Romanian population during that decade. As the country's ruler focused on paying off the international debt, investments in upgrading the tourism sector stopped, shortages of all kinds became acute, and practices of state surveillance increased. These changes in state policy were felt in 2 Mai as well. Vava, one of the most sought after hosts in 2 Mai was reminiscent about the old, socialist days of the 1970s when the village and the entire sea coast area was full with foreign tourists.²⁸ The situation took a change for the worse between 1980 and 1990 as even guests from neighboring socialist countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland stopped coming to Romania.

Alternative Socialist Vacation Spaces

The beginnings of host tourism in 2 Mai date back to the 1930s, but the effects of war and the border militarization of Mangalia delayed the development of the village as a tourist destination until after 1989.²⁹ Echoing the view that the village offered an escape for the artists who had found inspiration in Balcic before the Second World War, the writer, professor and former anti-communist dissident from Iași, Luca Pițu, recalled meeting Alexandru Paleologu and Mihai Sora, in 2 Mai, in 1975.³⁰ The two had been well-known intellectual figures familiar with the beaches of Balcic before 1941.³¹ Paleologu, writer, literary critic, and diplomat, and his friends,

²⁸ Vava, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 26.

²⁹ Ion Corbeanu, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 12.

³⁰ Luca Pițu, *Însem(î)nările magistrului din Cajvana* [Notes and Inseminations of Cajvana Magister] (Iași: Institutul European, 1992), 59.

³¹ Alexandru Paleologu (1919-2005) was a Romanian literary critic and politician. A diplomat during pre-communist times, Paleologu went into hiding when the communists seized power in 1948, and lived under a false name in Campulung Muscel until 1956. In 1959, Paleologu was arrested and sentenced to 14 years of forced labor. Freed in 1964, he became a member of the Romanian Writers' Union in 1967. After the 1989 Revolution, he was named ambassador to France but lost the post after supporting the anti-government protests of the summer of 1991. Paleologu served as a senator from 1992 to 2004, but was discredited after admitting he collaborated with the *Securitate*. Mihai Sora (1916), a philosopher and actively engaged public figure, served as minister of education in Petre Roman's cabinet from 1990 to 1991.

actor Dorin Dron, writer Nicolae Steinhardt, and medical doctor Sergiu Al. George, were among the first tourists to vacation at 2 Mai, in the late 1940s.³² Paleologu claimed that in his youth he was very shy and refused to travel to Balcic for fear that he was too much of a conformist and would not fit into the particular emancipated universe of the Bulgarian town. Instead, he and his friends spent their vacations first in the village of Costinești, then in the city of Mangalia, and eventually they moved to 2 Mai when construction and development of the future youth resort begun.³³ Pițu also mentioned the case of an engineer named Pătrăulea, who told Pițu that he and his friends, all born around the 1910s, used to go to Balcic but after 1941 moved to 2 Mai and Vama Veche instead.³⁴

In his memoirs, former political prisoner turned Radio Free Europe anchor, Ion Ioanid, recalled that one of his friends, George Lahovary, had discovered the large beach of 2 Mai during his vacation in Mangalia, in 1950 or 1951.³⁵ Starting the following year, Ioanid's friends met in 2 Mai every summer, renting accommodation from a local host. Ioanid was unable to join them, being imprisoned from 1952 to 1964. His memoirs mention the village of 2 Mai in connection with the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.³⁶ That year, Ioanid spent his last vacation in 2 Mai with his friends. A keen observer and a sharp analyst of socialist life,

³² Dan Ciachir, "Amintiri despre Paleologu" [Souvenirs about Paleologu], *Ziua* (Bucharest), May 13, 2006.

³³ Alexandru Paleologu and Filip Lucian Iorga, *Breviar pentru păstrarea clipei. Filip Lucian Iorga în dialog cu Alexandru Paleologu* [Breviary for the Preservation of Moments, Filip Lucian Iorga in a Dialogue with Alexandru Paleologu] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 159-160.

³⁴ Luca Pițu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 9.

³⁵ Similar to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, Ion Ioanid's book, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison], constitutes a treatise on the Romanian Gulag. The son of a cabinet minister, Tilica Ioanid, Ion Ioanid was arrested and sentenced to twenty years of hard labor for espionage in 1952. After a short stay in Jilava and Oradea prisons, Ioanid was sent with a large group of political prisoners to the Căvnic lead mine, from where he escaped in 1953 with several other inmates. He was apprehended in 1953 and sent back to prison. He spent the next eleven years in six prisons and one working colony: Satu-Mare, Oradea, Aiud, Jilava, Pitești, Timișoara, Ostrov. He was released in 1964, left for the Federal Republic of Germany in 1969, and worked as anchor for Radio Free Europe in Munich for twenty-four years.

³⁶ Ion Ioanid, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison] (Bucharest: Albatros, 1991-1996), vol. 5, 227-233.

Ioanid described the village's atmosphere and the seasonal population, complaining that, by 1968, the village had already lost its earlier charm that attracted him and his friends in the early 1950s.

But now, after more than a decade, the village had lost much of its former patriarchal charm and tranquility. In the summer months, the beach was bustling with people all day long, and in the evening, at dusk, the lights in the houses did not go out and the noise on the streets did not stop, as it used to, before the invasion of Bucharest holidaymakers. Silence only fell on the village late after midnight.³⁷

Indeed, by the early 1970s the Romanian press began to report about the summer destinations of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. In an interview from 1972, Radu Beligan, general manager of the "Ion Luca Caragiale" National Theatre Bucharest, confessed that he had been spending his summer vacations in 2 Mai for a couple of years and described the village as the ideal location for poetic souls.³⁸ Beligan echoed the view of other artists and intellectuals who saw the village of 2 Mai as a summer getaway whose yet unspoiled scenery provided relaxation and inspiration for artistic creation. Ioanid, who had first come to the village almost two decades earlier than Beligan, lamented that the village's increase in popularity risked turning 2 Mai into a mainstream summer vacation destination with all the perks associated with this status, including increased surveillance and alteration of physical space, social norms and village life. If such

³⁷ Ioanid, 229.

³⁸ "La 2 Mai soare și umbră [In 2 Mai sunshine and shadow]," *Litoral*, (Constanta), August 20, 1971.

developments were to continue, free spirits such as himself and his entourage needed to find another summer retreat.

Local residents such as Ion Alexoiu also placed the beginning of tourism at 2 Mai in the early 1950s. In 1952, two French girls had visited the village and stayed at his mother's house. Alexoiu remembers the girls for three reasons: the gifts and clothing he and his family received in the post-war period of extreme scarcity, the small number of tourists who visited the village at the time, and the fact that the French tourists practiced nudism.³⁹ Another local, Victorița Petrescu, remembered that she finished building her house in 1955 and that same year she had her first lodger, a former colonel, Nicolae Tăutu. To arrive in the village, Tăutu had to walk the five kilometer distance separating Mangalia from 2 Mai. Petrescu pointed out that in those years, 2 Mai was not an accessible seaside destination. The beach still contained mines, and a special authorization for travel was required: one needed to apply at least three months in advance to obtain it, and only Mihnea Gheorghiu and Nina Cassian--high-ranking members of the *nomenklatura*- visited regularly. It took a couple of more years to clean the beach--not before several mines exploded and killed children and cows. Other locals, too, confirmed that the tourists started to arrive in 1956, after the mines were cleared out. As the nearby beaches of Mangalia were transformed by city planners, resorts developed, and the shipyard expanded, tourists found the wild, large, quiet and now safe-to-use beach in 2 Mai more appealing than the old seashore city of Mangalia.

Some of the first vacationers to the pristine beach of 2 Mai – author Nina Cassian, her husband Al. I. Ștefănescu, and their friend Vasile Dumitrescu - had been involved in the Romanian Communist Party's underground resistance movement during the Second World War.

³⁹ Ion Alexoiu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 12.

They were intellectuals committed to radical left-wing views from the early 1930s, in an attempt to oppose fascism, who had been persecuted during the war.⁴⁰ As the socialist state was consolidated, all three were assigned privileged positions in the top leadership of the Romanian Worker's Party.⁴¹ In 1954, the three friends visited 2 Mai for the first time, as part of an excursion to unexplored sites on the Romanian Black Sea coast. It was Vasile who procured the first permit for the group to spend time in 2 Mai.⁴² In search of inspiration and tranquility, they set out to familiarize themselves with the secluded sites around Mangalia, a town that Cassian loved. In her journal notes written in the early 1960s but published half a century later, the poet described the newly found shelter in 2 Mai as an escape into a paradise-like garden that fostered innocent play while sentiments such as shame, guilt, and fear lost their meaning.⁴³ The absence of newspapers, mail, or telephones restricted communication with the outside world and ensured a complete disconnect from the stressful ideological milieu the three were part of. However, all her life Nina Cassian was surrounded by a large and colourful entourage and so it did not take long for her other friends from Bucharest to join her in 2 Mai and alter the setting. News about this new-found vacation spot populated by artists and writers started to circulate by word of mouth, attracting more tourists each passing year.

⁴⁰ Nina Cassian came from a Jewish family and therefore experienced the effects of the antisemitic legislation introduced in 1940. Vasile Dumitrescu was a member of the Communist Party when the party was outlawed, a crime for which he served time in prison. Alexandru Ștefănescu was a communist sympathizer during the party's underground years.

⁴¹ In 1948, Vasile Dumitrescu became head of the Romanian Press Agency (Ager Press). Alexandru Ștefănescu was a member of the post-armistice commission in charge of purging libraries of fascist writings. He retained a high position in the General Direction for Press and Printing, the institution in charge of censorship until 1965. Nina Cassian was a party cadre at the Writer's Union, but she did not hold significant decision making positions. For details, see Vladimir Tismăneanu and Vasile Dobrinu et al., *Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România. Raport Final* [The Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania. Final Report] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 309-311.

⁴² Nina Cassian, quoted in Liviu Vasile, *Un fel de piua: 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [A Sort of Break: 2 Mai and Vama Veche], 234.

⁴³ Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. 1 (Bucharest: Cartile Tango, 2010), 56.

Emblematic Figures: Nina Cassian

Annie Renee Cassian-Matasaru was born into a Jewish family in Galati on November 27, 1924. She joined the underground Communist Party during the Second World War and continued her party membership after Romania became a communist country. During the early socialist years, she became known as the Stalinist poetess of Romania. Cassian, a brilliant woman, was considered one of the most seductive figures in Romanian literary circles, being loved by and in love with many artists. Romanian literary critic Alex Ștefănescu described her as having “led a libertine life, having numerous affairs with the era’s most important writers” and labelled her as “the most attractive ugly woman from Romanian literature.”⁴⁴ Her literary career blossomed from the 1960s on as she published over 50 volumes of writings, translated into Romanian the works of Bertold Becht, Paul Celan, Molière, and William Shakespeare (amongst others), wrote children’s literature, illustrated books, composed classical music, and even invented her own language which she called *spargă*. She left Romania when she was 60, in 1985, and lived thereafter for almost three decades in the United States where she wrote and published poetry in English.⁴⁵

At the beginning of her career, from 1940 to 1948, Cassian wrote in the modernist fashion, but state literary critics disapproved of her experimental writings, calling her poetry decadent. For the next eight years, Cassian attempted to avoid writing poetry but when she did write, she used the *proletkultist* and social-realist jargon. From 1955 on, she decided to return to

⁴⁴ Alex. Ștefănescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane 1941-2000* [The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature 1941-2000] (Bucharest: Mașina de scris, 2005), 914.

⁴⁵ Nina Cassian, *Life Sentence: Selected Poems* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), *Take My Word for It. Poems* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), and *Something Old, Something New: Poems and Drawings* (Tuscaloosa: Fameorshame Press, 2002).

“real poetry” and focused on writing children’s literature.⁴⁶ A friend of the famous Romanian dissident Gheorghe Ursu, who died at the hands of his jailors in 1985, her poems were found in the diary he wrote and for which he was arrested. At the time, Cassian was in New York. Upon hearing that her house had been subjected to a thorough search and all her possessions confiscated, she asked for political asylum in the United States. She returned to Romania after the fall of the communist regime and even went to the CNSAS to read her personal Securitate file but did not have the patience to go through the more than 4,000 pages of reports, correspondence, and detailed observations. She also felt unwelcome in post-socialist Romania as leading intellectuals reproached her for supporting the communist regime during the Stalinist years, her coddled life, and the fact she was able to flee the country during the regime’s worst years.⁴⁷

Cassian started visiting 2 Mai in 1954 and did so for at least a month every year until she left for the United States in 1985. Her memoirs contain many references to summers in 2 Mai but are mostly self-reflexive. In the first volume of her memoirs containing journal entries written from the late 1950s until the early 1970s, Cassian introduces the reader to her favorite village, explaining her attraction to the place:

2 Mai, a fishermen’s village, situated five kilometers from the Bulgarian border, was, for more than two decades, the décor of my summer vacations. After the transformation of Mangalia, the painters’ favorite place in a military reservation,

⁴⁶ For an extensive explanation of Cassian’s creations and her proletkultist period in her own words, see *Distanta dintre mine si mine* [The Distance between Me and Me], a documentary dedicated to Cassian, directed by Mona Nicoara and Dana Bunescu, Bucharest: HI Film Productions, Romanian Television, Sat Mic Film, 2018.

⁴⁷ Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. III, 140-170.

and later on in a submarine base or something like that, the bohemia [artists] moved to 2 Mai. (Just like Mangalia had followed Balcic...). At the beginning, because a special authorization was required, we were but a few on the immense beach (Vasile Dumitrescu to whom we owed our presence, Jebeleanu, Mihnea Gheorghiu). Naked and happy we were, Ali and myself polished by the bliss of our growing love.

The most picturesque segment of the population of 2 Mai were Lipovans who came on this blessed land, if I am not mistaken, following the religious persecutions in Ukraine. (...) [These are] Red headed and bearded men, huge consumers of vodka, and even medicinal alcohol, their spectacular presence, ways, and colourful speech belonged, together with the sand, the sea, and the fish, to the magnetism of this village, which lacked comfort, but also the conventionality of regular spa resorts.

It was here that, in 1956, after years of deformation and poetic thirst owed to devastating dogmatism, I was able to re-enter poetry in an effort to try to regain the energy of inspiration of my debut, that enthusiasm of self-finding that continued for around seventeen years. (...) ⁴⁸

Most recollections about socialist vacations in 2 Mai include some sort of reference to Cassian. Her friendship and presumed love affair with a local fisherman named Vania was a favored subject of gossip among vacationers. Beneath the thick layer of rumours and tattle, at stake was the sexual image of the socialist intellectual woman who broke the taboo of proletarian

⁴⁸ Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. I, 87-88.

morals, something that even Ioanid recognized as an “act of courage,”⁴⁹ in spite of his bitter critique of the new socialist elites to which Cassian belonged. Cassian was not the only woman who walked the streets of 2 Mai wearing only a swimming suit, sunbathed naked, and experienced passionate affairs on the sandy beaches of 2 Mai, but her notoriety enhanced the visibility of all these behaviors. The extensive file that the secret police compiled on her contains detailed reports about all aspects of her life, including her vacation routine in 2 Mai, which will be detailed in the last chapter.

Other Tourists

From the onset of niche tourism in 2 Mai and Vama Veche, the villages catered to the needs of young families in search of a more permissive and affordable vacation space. Romanian tourists travelled to 2 Mai and Vama Veche in groups organized along social, professional, ethnic, or familial ties. The villages’ popularity as escapist socialist milieus rose, attracting an ever increasing number of visitors as writers, actors, painters, architects and members of the intelligentsia began to spend their vacations there. The landscape attracted actors and film directors, and, as a consequence, numerous films were shot entirely or partially on the village premises and the long stretch of beach from Mangalia to Vama Veche.⁵⁰ White collar workers

⁴⁹ Ioanid, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison], 229.

⁵⁰ Some of the films filmed here in descending chronological order include: Alexandru Tocilescu, *Bani de dus, bani de întors* [Get Away Money], Bucharest: TVR, 2005; Dan Pița, *Faleze de nisip* [Cliff Sands], Bucharest: Casa de filme 1, 1982; Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Osânda* [The Doom], Bucharest: Casa de filme 5, 1976; Mircea Muresan, *Toate pânzele sus!* [Sail on!], Bucharest: TVR Film Studio, 1974; Nicolae Corjos, *Pirații din Pacific* [The Pirates of the Pacific], Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București,” Casa de filme 5, 1975; Nicolae Corjos, *Insula Comorilor* [Treasure Island], Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București,” Casa de filme 5, 1975; Maria Callas Dinescu, *De bună voie și nesilit de nimeni* [Of Your Own Free Will], Bucharest: Casa de Filme 5, 1974; Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Nemuritorii* [Immortals], Bucharest: Casa de filme 5, 1974; Gilles Grangier, Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Doi ani de vacanță* [Two Years Holliday], Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București” and Româniafilm, 1973; Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Răzbunarea* [The Revenge], Bucharest, Munchen: Studioul cinematografic „București,” Tele-München, 1972; Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupul Mărilor* [The Seawolf], Bucharest, Munchen: Studioul cinematografic „București,” Tele-München, 1972; Mircea Dragan, *B.D. la munte și la mare*

such as engineers also began to spend their vacations at 2 Mai on a regular basis. The Bohemian campers portrayed themselves as “high class” intellectuals, artists, and writers. They came each year during the same period and stayed with the same host families in the village. This facilitated the formation of friendship networks; people from different parts of the country, who would not have otherwise met, came together once a year to discuss the latest news, cultural trends, politics, or a banned book which they had somehow managed to acquire.

In his journal, Luca Pițu made a note of his 1981 conversation with Paleologu, in which the latter shared his memories about the clandestine years during which he lived under a false identity, hiding from the Securitate in Câmpulung Muscel.⁵¹ Pițu’s personal notes contain numerous references to the books he was reading at the time and the dissemination channels involved in procuring them. For example, we find out that his friend, Tereza Culianu, “passed” onto him George Orwell’s *1984*, in 2 Mai, in 1979, or that while there, in 1985, he managed to lay his hands on the French version of Milan Kundera’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.⁵² A report included in Nina Cassian’s Securitate file indicated that she and writer Laurențiu Fulga participated in a soiree organized by the Babeș Bolyai University summer camp in Vama Veche, in 1975.⁵³ Details about the party were not included in the report since it was not a first hand account of the event. In fact, the Securitate became aware of the meeting through a report from a military officer who had met an interior designer from Cluj who recalled the event with great pride. Though Cassian spent most of her time in 2 Mai, she loved to swim on the seashores of

[B.D. in the Mountains and at the Seaside], Bucharest: Studioul cinematografic „București,” 1971; Manole Mărcus, *Zodia Fecioarei* [Virgo], Bucharest: Studioul cinematografic „București,” 1966.

⁵¹ Luca Pițu, *Însemnările magistrului din Cajvana* [Notes and Insemination of Cajvana Magister], 59.

⁵² Ibid, 42, 83. Tereza Culianu was the sister of Ion Petru Culianu, an eminent student and disciple of Mircea Eliade, a Romanian historian of religion, fiction writer, philosopher, and professor at the University of Chicago. Culianu, himself a professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago, was assassinated in the bathroom of the divinity school, at the university, in 1991. The killer and the motivation for the crime considered by most Romanians to be of political nature, remain a mystery. Both writings were included on the list of banned books.

⁵³ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. I, 170.

Vama Veche and it is highly probable that on at least one such occasion she became connected to the Cluj cultural milieu.

The presence of so many cultural and political figures in 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the last three decades of socialist rule suggests that these places were real bastions of non-conformity where many of those who were critical or at least not supportive of the regime met and intermingled regularly. During the summer, artists and writers from Cluj, Iași, Bucharest, Timișoara, and other cities visited the villages in search of the miraculous cure of the beach that would fortify them for the rest of the year.⁵⁴ Most of them practiced nudism. The young academics, writers, and artists from Iași, who spent their summer vacations in 2 Mai during the late 1970s and the 1980s, discovered that they were on the regime's watch list in 1983, when the house of Dan Petrescu, Tereza Culianu's husband, was searched by the Securitate. The Iași Dissident Group included people with a strong connection to 2 Mai such as Luca Pițu, Dan Petrescu, Tereza Culianu, Liviu Cangeopol, Liviu Antonesei, and Dan Alexe. Dissident Mihai Botez also spent some vacations in 2 Mai, but he preferred the quieter atmosphere of early autumn.⁵⁵ Dissident Ursu and his son, Andrei, also vacationed in 2 Mai.⁵⁶

Cristian Pepino was 16 years old when he first went to 2 Mai with his "spoiled and privileged" classmates from Bucharest's elite high schools.⁵⁷ It was trendy to go to 2 Mai during the late 1960s and the 1970s, Pepino stated, because it was a place that regular tourists did not go. Members of state-sponsored socialist unions preferred state sponsored vacations, crowded spaces such as regular resorts, and popular activities such as spa treatments. Pepino exuded a

⁵⁴ Nichita Danilov, "Altădată la 2 Mai" [2 Mai in a Different Time], *Ziarul de Iași* (Iasi), October 22, 2008.

⁵⁵ Luca Pițu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 48.

⁵⁶ Armand Gosu, "Andrei Ursu: Cazul Gheorghe Ursu. SRI a ascuns crimele Securității" [Andrei Ursu: Gheorghe Ursu's Case. Romanian Intelligence Service Hid the Crimes of the Securitate], *Revista 22* (Bucharest), July 7, 2006.

⁵⁷ Cristian Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015), 11, 25.

certain form of elitism when he identified a second category of tourists who were not welcomed in 2 Mai, members of the educated middle class aspiring to a different life style and craving the company of the cultural elites. Finally, officials wearing the marks of their social position, formal attire and perfectly styled hair mirroring Ceaușescu's haircut, were also to be avoided as they probably were spies on an official mission to observe and report to the authorities.⁵⁸ In the 1980s, as 2 Mai became too crowded, Pepino migrated to Vama Veche.

In a similar vein, writer and translator Nora Iuga divided the seasonal population of 2 Mai into three distinct social categories:

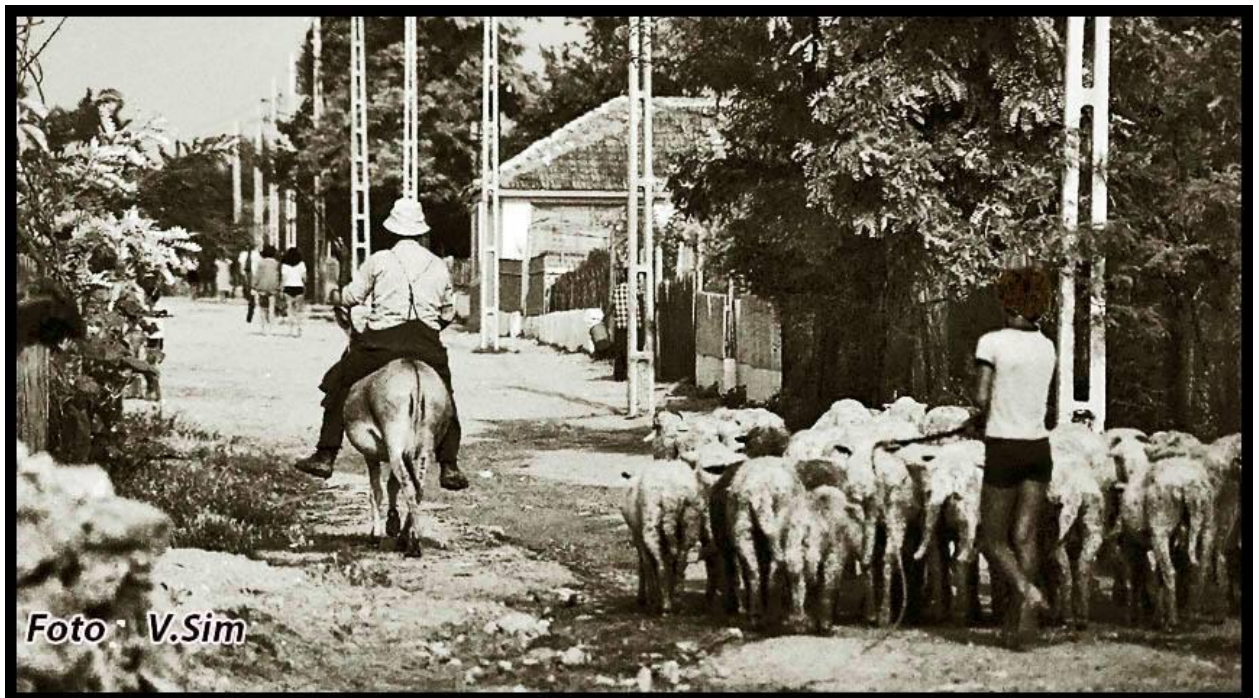
a) Doimăienii, were the locals, who were also divided according to their ethnic origin: Turks, Tatars, Lipovans, Bulgarians, and Romanians. b) Doimaiștii – nouveau-riche and snobs who came from the city with their own cars to gaze at artists and photograph themselves with them. c) Doimaioții – the old, real and faithful visitors of the place who still pray from who knows where in the skies to that church that remained unfinished for years because the local priest drank all the money; those who carry 2 Mai with them in the next world, they were and forever remain Doimaioții. I for one am not included in the History of Romanian Literature, but I hear a voice inside me that tells me that I will be mentioned in the unwritten history of 2 Mai. What higher distinction could I ask for?⁵⁹

Aurelian Trișcu, an architect, explained that conditions were a little rough and comfort almost non-existent, and that was something greatly appreciated by the vacationers because it

⁵⁸ Ibid., 12-14.

⁵⁹ Liviu Vasile, "Un Saint-Tropez fără jandarmi, interviu cu Nora Iuga" [A Saint-Tropez Without Gendarmes, Interview with Nora Iuga], *Cultura*, no. 344, October 12, 2011.

meant fewer rules and less supervision. In state sponsored hotels, leisure time was highly regulated, the influx of tourists mandated multiple shifts in restaurants and communal spaces such as pools, and every second waiter was an informer of the Securitate. In 2 Mai, too, tourists lodging with hosts had to wait in line to brush their teeth in the morning or take a shower in the afternoon, but the other guests with whom they shared the grounds were their friends.⁶⁰



*Figure 2.1: The streets of 2 Mai in the 1980s photographed by Viorel Simionescu.*⁶¹

Vacationers were attracted by the good company, cheap prices, unspoiled scenery, and the proximity to the city of Mangalia. Ethnologist Ioana Popescu remembers travelling to 2 Mai with her husband, two children, and Roco, their boxer. In addition, their small, iconic car, a Trabant, was fully packed with a tent, beach and kitchen equipment, and food. Ioana loved 2 Mai

⁶⁰ Aurelian Trișcu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Kind of Break], 13.

⁶¹ Used with permission of the author.

because she was able to camp on the beach, enjoy the sunny, long June days, and the taste of *garizi*, a species of shrimp that the sea waves washed to the shore during the summer months.⁶² Drogeanu also remembered that one would pack for vacation two or three months in advance, shopping and storing items that would be taken to 2 Mai.⁶³

If you had a good pair of jeans you went with them to 2 Mai. If you had a good detective story, you took the book to 2 Mai. If you had a recording with good music, you took it to 2 Mai. If you were able to acquire some Russian vodka in the '80s, you took it to 2 Mai. (...) And because a lot of people were doing this kind of thing, it was something really...an island, an oasis. The rest of the days [in the year] remained grey.⁶⁴

Holiday time in 2 Mai and Vama Veche had a certain rhythm to it. During the day most vacationers spent time at the beach, where some would swim, sunbathe, gather shells or stones, read, fish, play cards or chess, nap, hike, cook, tell jokes, or discuss openly the latest political and cultural news. In the afternoon, those who stayed in 2 Mai walked to Vama Veche by road or by following the shoreline. The four kilometer walk passed swiftly since the vacationers travelled in groups and chatted with each other.⁶⁵ Creative endeavors in the villages included painting, writing, or reading, sculpting or impromptu performances. Some tourists took the instruments of their profession to the beach. Graphic designer Anamaria Smigelschi, who lodged

⁶² Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Kind of Break], 42.

⁶³ Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Kind of Break], 109.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 133.

⁶⁵ Aurelian Trișcu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua*, [A Kind of Break], 15.

in Vama Veche, took with her brushes, pencils, watercolor paints and a paper case, alongside bed sheets and an umbrella. Her artistic endeavors were interrupted by long swimming sessions.⁶⁶

Camping

Those who came to 2 Mai could choose to rent rooms from the locals or set up tents in their gardens or on the beach. Separate sections for regular beachgoers and nudists divided the local beach. Liviu Papadima claimed that those camped in the nudist section of the beach were completely separated from the village life, “a sort of community that lived inside its own circle.”⁶⁷ Șerban Anghelescu remembered that the places inside the nudist section were so thoroughly designated that if someone wanted to set up a tent in a particular spot, the others would immediately prevent him or her from doing so, explaining that someone else who had been camping there for years was expected to arrive.⁶⁸ Contact between the two sections did exist, as Papadima remembered. People regularly crossing to the other side, especially in the evening for drinks and conversation, but occasional tensions arose.⁶⁹ Most of the beach campers had friends staying with the locals. Drogeanu explained that those renting rooms were very important because they benefitted from large, beautiful yards, which were highly prized by all 2 Mai vacationers.⁷⁰ Those staying on the beach would visit their friends in the village and vice-versa.⁷¹

Sometime in the 1970s an official campground was established to cater mostly to foreign tourists, especially Czechs and Poles. As the number of tourists grew, the state became closely

⁶⁶ Ana Maria Smigelschi, *Gustul, mirosul și amintirea* [Taste, Smell and Memory] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 180.

⁶⁷ Liviu Papadima, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 56.

⁶⁸ Șerban Anghelescu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 57.

⁶⁹ Liviu Papadima, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 44.

⁷⁰ Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 56.

⁷¹ Ileana Lucaciu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 56.

involved in managing the camping area, and the beach came under the management of the local state company, Mangalia Enterprises, Hotels, and Restaurants. State intervention meant that material conditions improved: showers were installed on the beach and public lighting was introduced in the camping sites. Tourists now had to pay for camping, and the staff at the local Dobrogeanu Restaurant was responsible for collecting fees from the campers. In the 1980s, as a result of scarcity and hardships resulting from Ceaușescu's disastrous economic policy, the number of people opting for camping increased.⁷² By 1989, 2 Mai campground had 500 campsites.⁷³

Emblematic Figures: Dan Constantinescu

The husband of Ella Zeller, Romania's most famous table tennis player, himself a former professional water polo and rugby player, Constantinescu was a well-known figure in 2 Mai.⁷⁴ For over fifty years, he came by himself to the village around July 15, and stayed until August 15 when he left for his annual three-week Delta Danube trip. Before "moving" to the campground in the 1970s, he stayed with a local family. According to Iuliana Dumitru, the daughter of the present day campground manager, who grew up on the premises, "Uncle" [Nenea] Dan was 2 Mai's archetypical tourist. In time, he had become a symbolic presence of the campground and everyone inquired about him. His tent was always positioned in the front line facing the sea and functioned as a meeting place inside the camp site. Locals and vacationers gathered around him for a glass of vodka or cold beer from the "cooler," a box buried in the sand and filled with ice

⁷² Dumitru, "Camping 2 Mai, povești de familie" [2 Mai Campground, Family Stories], 148-150.

⁷³ Gheorghe Andronic, Marin Neațu, Adrian Rădulescu, Adrian, Stoica Lascu, *Litoralul românesc al Mării Negre* [The Romanian Coast of the Black Sea], Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1989, 123.

⁷⁴ Ella Zeller won 13 medals at World Championships from 1952 to 1964.

brought from Mangalia's pastry shop.⁷⁵ "Uncle" [Nenea] Dan's presence signaled to the other campers that despite the passing of time, their vacations remained the same, believed Dumitru. "Uncle" [Nenea] Dan's stories charmed everyone, and his unchanged routine ensured a degree of comfort for his neighbors. His menu often included fried eggs, noodle soup, and lots of salads, cheese, and watermelon. Once every two days, he bought pretzels that he would hang on the tent's canopy and offer to all who paid him a visit.⁷⁶

Nina Cassian and Dan Constantinescu were two key tourist figures that most tourists in 2 Mai recognized. They both travelled to the village every year for extensive periods of time and their presence did not go unnoticed. Cassian and Constantinescu coalesced their respective communities, the first in the village and the latter on the camping grounds. In addition, they both acted as links between the locals and the tourists. As pillars of two separate, albeit connected, communities of tourists, their company was sought after by all the other guests in their vicinity. Cassian's notoriety and entourage was slightly more elitist, yet it did not imply total disconnection from village life and its inhabitants. Constantinescu's hospitality and storytelling gift catered to all those in need of good company, irrespective of class or cultural proclivities. Lastly, it should be noted that people chose 2 Mai as a vacation destination for the good company that they were sure to find which included characters such as Cassian and Constantinescu.

⁷⁵ Șerban Anghelescu, Ioana Hodoiu, Cosmin Manolache, Anca Manolescu, Vlad Manoliu, Irina Nicolau, Ioana Popescu, Petre Popovăț, Simina Radu-Bucurenci, Ana Vineanu, *Mărturii orale. Anii '80 și bucureștenii* [Oral Testimonies. The 80's and Bucharestians] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 212.

⁷⁶ Iuliana Dumitru, "La mare: Nenea Dan" [At the Seaside. Uncle Dan], *Dilema Veche* (Bucharest), August 24-30, 2017.

Food and Drinks

During the socialist era, the culinary offerings in 2 Mai and Vama Veche were limited. A bar selling drinks and barbecue existed since 1964, but it did not include seating space.⁷⁷ In the 1970s, a group of architects who vacationed in the village drew up plans for a restaurant, and convinced the party secretary for Constanța County of the usefulness of such an establishment. All the work involved in the project was done on a voluntary basis.⁷⁸ Dobrogeanu Restaurant opened in 1970 and quickly became a symbol of several generations of 2 Mai tourists: “it was impossible to stay in 2 Mai and not go to Dobrogeanu. There was always a group of friends you knew who were sitting at a table and you would sit with them whether you ate or not.”⁷⁹ O.N.T. brought groups of foreign tourists to Dobrogeanu for traditional folk dinners. The restaurant catered exclusively to the tourist population and it was off limits for the locals.⁸⁰

Food and drinks were shared. However, many young people on a tight budget could not afford to eat at the newly established restaurant and went instead across the street to Musurete. This buffet offered only a few dishes but the traditional *mici* were available and apparently quite tasty.⁸¹ In addition, the Babeș Bolyai University opened two canteens, one in 2 Mai and another in Vama Veche. The one in 2 Mai closed in 1979. Access to the remaining canteen was restricted to union vacationers from Cluj, but ways around the restriction were found. The Iași academics used their university cards to gain access, while the vacationers from Bucharest faked the accent or simply asked their Cluj friends for help.⁸² The canteen offered decent meals for very low

⁷⁷ Dan Vușdea, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 104.

⁷⁸ Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai*, [Stories from 2 Mai], 58; Costache, “From the Party to the Beach Party,” 135.

⁷⁹ Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 104.

⁸⁰ Vava, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 30.

⁸¹ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 106. *Mici* is a popular Romanian dish consisting in ground, cylindrical meat rolls made from a mixture of beef, lamb, and pork

⁸² Luca Pițu, Paul Drogeanu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 59, 52.

prices and access to food items difficult to get at the local market, such as Pepsi. Babeş Bolyai University brought its own cooks from Cluj to prepare the meals and this offered people from Bucharest and Iasi the opportunity to experience recipes from another region of the country, Transylvania.

Those who rented rooms from the villagers could pay a small fee to the host for cooking or using the cooking stove, or they could prepare the food they brought themselves.⁸³ One would never go hungry in 2 Mai because fish was always available, either for purchase cheaply from local fishermen or by catching directly from the sea. Locals and tourists gathered the shrimp and boiled them. Shellfish was also widely available and required little preparation.⁸⁴ Storage was even less problematic; a hole in the sand and some salt ensured the fish stayed fresh for a few days. Food items were also stored in wells to keep them fresh. In addition, vegetables, melons, and corn from the locals' gardens were available at affordable prices. Such basic amenities made large scale tourism impossible and comfort for those who ventured to spend their vacations in the village problematic since preparation of food required time and resources. However, these difficulties were part of the charm and fascination for the village. Many of the tourists who came to 2 Mai could afford going to mainstream vacation destinations but they preferred locally cooked meals, fresh produce, and the ritual of preparing and sharing food with friends to the more rigid, expensive and often times lower quality food served by restaurants at hotels.⁸⁵ In the 1980s, as socialist economy experienced set backs, the quality of meals in state-owned resorts

⁸³ Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 205.

⁸⁴ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 107.

⁸⁵ The widespread repugnance towards canteens was not limited to Romania. In *Rebellious Cooks and Recipe Writing in Communist Bulgaria* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), Albena Shkodrova explains the reason why Bulgarian women continued cooking at home instead of eating out. Shkodrova characterises this as “rebellion.”

deteriorated and tourists had to bring with them basic items to store and prepare their food at hotels just like they would in 2 Mai.

However, vacationers' main concern was not food, but drinks. Șerban Anghelescu remembered that he and his friends used to go to at Dobrogeanu Restaurant for drinks only.⁸⁶ Vodka was the preferred and the cheapest hard liquor, but Western spirits, when available, were highly appreciated and shared amongst all members of the group. Home distilled spirits such as brandy, *ghebula*, or locally produced drinks such as Covasna gin were also highly prized products. Social drinking also included *Corăbioara*, a famous Murfatlar wine, bottled in two liter containers which could be purchased locally. Hard liquor made out of wormwood was also in high demand.⁸⁷ Imported drinks such as Cuban rum and Polish vodka Wyborowa and Zubrowka were available but, in general, quality spirits were difficult to come by.⁸⁸ Dan Vușdea mentioned one particular habit that involved mixing all the spirits in one half liter bottle.⁸⁹

The food culture in 2 Mai speaks to the inner working of the socialist market, especially in times of scarcity, when people made do with very little. As I will further detail in the next sections, tourists prepared their vacations for almost an entire year going to great lengths to acquire highly prized products such as alcoholic drinks, coffee, canned food, and meat. In contrast to vacation time spent at mainstream venues, such as hotels or union-sponsored villas, the sharing of food and drinks, dining and socializing collectively on a voluntary basis was a key element in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. It was this type of behaviour which erased status

⁸⁶ Șerban Anghelescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 102.

⁸⁷ Stelian Țurlea, "Roman Serial/Trei femei (VII). Întâmplări extraordinare din Vama Veche" [Serialized Novel/Three Women (VII). Extraordinary Happenings from Vama Veche], *Ziarul Financiar* (Bucharest), July 29, 2010, <https://www.zf.ro/ziarul-de-duminica/roman-serial-trei-femei-vii-intamplari-extraordinare-la-vama-veche-6743901>.

⁸⁸ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 109.

⁸⁹ Dan Vușdea, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 109.

discrepancies, prevented segregation, and brought people together that gave rise to the feeling of community that all tourists experienced and treasured.

Parties

Because people knew each other, the evening was the time for socializing. Every courtyard had its own little party. Vacationers danced, played cards, or talked and listened to music until late at night in contrast to regular resorts where restaurants and clubs were required to close at 10 p.m.⁹⁰ The parties in 2 Mai were informal gatherings where each guest brought a little something: a piece of bread, or salami, and a bottle of liquor. A lot of dancing and drinking took place, while food was less important. People walked the main street of 2 Mai and looked into the yards. If they liked the atmosphere, they shouted from the gates, do you have room for more guests? Can we join you?⁹¹ Beach parties were also common.⁹²

Nina Cassian's parties were cultural soirees of sorts, where her friends danced, read their literary creations aloud, and commented on each other's works.⁹³ At times, the audience gathered to listen and talk about Monica Lovinescu's shows, broadcast from Paris on Radio Free Europe.⁹⁴ Film director Alexandru Tocilescu was famous for his large thematic parties that everyone could join, provided that he or she respected the theme's requirements. His pyjama

⁹⁰ Șerban Angheliescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 111.

⁹¹ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 112.

⁹² Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 115.

⁹³ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 251.

⁹⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. IV, 229. Monica Lovinescu was a literary critic who left Romania in 1947 and moved to Paris where she spent most of her life. She was married to Virgil Ierunca, also a literary critic. Both of them worked for decades at the Radio Free Europe (RFE) radio station, in Paris. Lovinescu and Ierunca's programs, Romanian Cultural Actuality, Theses and Antitheses in Paris, and Forgotten Pages, Censored Pages, provided a critical analysis of Romania's cultural life.

parties were notorious.⁹⁵ In an article about his childhood summers in 2 Mai, his son, Alex, remembered:

The most memorable was, in '82 or '83, a masquerade ball with over a hundred people; the yard was full, the people were pouring into the street, they ate spaghetti with tomato sauce from some huge cauldrons. I was dressed as an Arab child, meaning I had a green jacket and a painted mustache; an actor who is now a theater director climbed on the house and sang "cock-a-doodle-doo"; an actress who later played in Mungiu, Puiu and Muntean's films wore an apron and nothing more; someone else was clad in a dress made out of newspapers (*Scînteia* and *Săptămîna*). The music was howling, people were dancing, and the cases of vodka were emptying fast. By 5 [a.m.] I went to bed, so I do not know when it was over.⁹⁶

Anthropologist Vintilă Mihăilescu also organized a masquerade ball every year, but attendance was limited to his friends. The *Myrobalan-iad*, named after the trees in the yard, required ample preparation and involved several activities, amongst which there was a Miss Myrobalan Pageant, which always created drama among the participants, even if it was conceived as a playful and fun activity.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Șerban Anghelescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 110.

⁹⁶ Alex Tocilescu, "La mare. Ce-am avut și ce-am pierdut" [At the Seaside. What I Had and What I've Lost], *Dilema Veche* (Bucharest), August 24-30, 2017.

⁹⁷ Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 55.



Figure 2.2: Vama Veche, veche (The Old Vama Veche) painting by Anamaria Smigelschi and a photograph with the artist at work on the beach.⁹⁸

Nudism

Nudism was another manifestation of the emblematic freedom described by virtually all those who spent their summer vacations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The beginnings of nudism on the shoreline between 2 Mai and Vama Veche dates back to 1948.⁹⁹ Alexandru Paleologu, who used to practice nudism on the side of the beach closer to Vama Veche, recalled that in 1949 or 1950,

⁹⁸ Photo and painting by Anamaria Smigelschi published in the author's memoirs, *Gustul, mirosul și amintirea (Taste, Smell and Memory)* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013) as additional material.

⁹⁹ Dan Ciachir, *Când moare o epocă* [When an Era Dies] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005), 10.

an official dressed in formal attire and carrying a folio case under his arm was tasked by the local authorities with lecturing tourists and explaining that nudism contravened socialist mores.

Paleologu stood up and wearing nothing but “Adam’s suit,” explained the health benefits of nudism, using quotes from Aristotle. The official relinquished his task, and that was the last time the authorities bothered the sunbathers.¹⁰⁰

It should be noted that, although nudism had long been associated with 2 Mai and Vama Veche, this activity was not practiced by everyone. Moreover, it took place in special, segregated, spaces, which denoted a common knowledge and acceptance of the spatial delimitation of the areas, mutual respect for everyone’s intimacy and personal boundaries, and a particular level of tolerance by tourists and local hosts. The first series of Cluj tourists to Vama Veche remember two huge pits in the sand, probably traces of exploded bombs, in which women and men sunbathed naked, separately.¹⁰¹ In Vama Veche there was also a small stream that separated nudists from regular beachgoers. In 2 Mai the beach had always been divided between *textiliști*, people clothed in textiles, and nudists.¹⁰²

At first, the 2 Mai summer community of nudists consisted of no more than a few dozen people, most of whom were part of the same networks of friendship and artistic collaboration. As summers went by, the nudist community grew in number to reach over a thousand people vacationing there by the end of the 1970s. As Julian Hale mentions in his travelogue of socialist Romania, the reputation of this particular seaside destination was well established by that time and invoked with appreciation by everyone in the Bucharest cultural milieu.¹⁰³ Nina Cassian described her daily routine in the village, including how she swam and sun-bathed naked along

¹⁰⁰ Dan Ciachir, “Amintiri despre Paleologu” [Souvenirs about Paleologu], *Ziua* (Bucharest), May 13, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Ciachir, *Când moare o epocă*, 9.

¹⁰² Miruna Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 37; Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 30, 81-85.

¹⁰³ Julian Hale, *Ceaușescu’s Romania: A Political Documentary* (London: George G. Harrap, 1971), 75-76.

with her lifelong companions Ali and Vasile.¹⁰⁴ In time, the number of nudists outgrew that of the *textiliști*.¹⁰⁵ A sign posted by the local authorities in front of their favorite beach area containing an interdiction to bathe expressed in four languages was completely ignored. Almost all vacationers remember the daughter of the Securitate general and deputy chief of the Romanian foreign intelligence service, Ion Mihai Pacepa, sunbathing in the nude under the watchful eyes of her bodyguards fully dressed in suits and wearing ties.¹⁰⁶

Historian Irina Costache argues that such practices show how “prominent supporters of the communist party and its ideology tried to escape the very system which they had eagerly and earnestly helped to erect.”¹⁰⁷ Costache’s assessment should be taken with a grain of salt. Left wing intellectuals such as Cassian could not predict in the 1950s Ceaușescu’s rise to power in the late 1960s, nor the extent to which his reign would impoverish Romanian society in the 1980s. As the state apparatus tightened its control over the arts, the Romanian intelligentsia and party luminaries used the resources at hand to generate alternative lifestyles and different forms of expression, of which nudism was a part, to stimulate creativity. Engaged in non-productive and controversial leisure practices such as nudism, yoga, or artistic performances, or playing bridge, a card game that was banned in 1983, they did not directly challenge official state politics. However, “these acts of non-conformity had a lasting impact in that they shifted socialist norms and thus rendered acceptable certain acts, certain behaviors and certain forms of escape from daily routine.”¹⁰⁸ Leisure practices such as nudism contradicted socialist norms of behaviour which promoted modesty and saw nudism as reminiscent of a decadent bourgeois life style and

¹⁰⁴ Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. 1, 87.

¹⁰⁵ Nichita Danilov, “Altadata la 2 Mai” [2 Mai in a Different Time], *Ziarul de Iasi* (Iasi), October 22, 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 222, and Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 50.

¹⁰⁷ Irina Costache, “From the Party to the Beach Party: Nudism and Artistic Expression in the People’s Republic of Romania,” in *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*, eds. Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum and Alexander Vari (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 128.

sexual promiscuity.¹⁰⁹ However, in Romania, nudism was permitted in certain designated areas in spa resorts at the Black Sea, such as Constanța, Mangalia, or Eforie Nord. In their quest to attract hard currency through tourism, the Romanian authorities even considered establishing a naturist village near Tatlageac to cater to West German tourists.¹¹⁰ In 2 Mai and Vama Veche, formal interdictions were not strictly enforced but the practice never reached the same levels of popularity as in East Germany where it amounted to regime defiance.¹¹¹ For the most part, Romanian socialist society remained prudish.¹¹² Nude photographs never made their way to mainstream media as they had in Hungary, while depictions of nudity in Romania remained connected to the private sphere and the black market devoted to VHS film circulation.¹¹³

State-Sponsored and Individual Tourism in Vama Veche

In 1962, the labor union of Babeș Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania's second largest city, made available to its employees vacation packages of 18 days in Vama Veche between 15 June and 15 September every year, by renting all available rooms from the locals.¹¹⁴ In 1973, the same university purchased a property in the village and opened a canteen. Access to the canteen was limited to the tourists from Cluj, but occasionally other vacationers who arrived in 2 Mai and Vama Veche took advantage of the low prices of the canteen and otherwise scarce items

¹⁰⁹ Josie McLellan, "State Socialist Bodies: East German Nudism from Ban to Boom," *The Journal of Modern History*, 79, no. 1 (March 2007): 55.

¹¹⁰ ANIC, Fond 3432, file no. 10/1985, 87.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 58-63.

¹¹² Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum, Alexander Vari, eds., *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 10.

¹¹³ Ivan Volgyes, Nancy Volgyes, *The Liberated Female: Life, Work, and Sex in Socialist Hungary* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

¹¹⁴ The packages were part of the subsidized vacations for workers made available through the General Union of Trade Associations. Maria Gheorghe, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 13.

such as mineral water, Pepsi, and beer.¹¹⁵ Beer, which was rarely available because it needed to be transported a long distance from factories and the lack of gasoline and cooling storage facilities made the process challenging during the summer months, tasted like detergent but drinking it was a ritual obligation according to Anghelescu and Papadima.¹¹⁶ Cluj tourists also brought illegally distilled spirits such as *ghebula*, an alcoholic beverage developed by chemists at the Napochim plastic materials factory that resembled the taste of whiskey.¹¹⁷

The opening of the Babeş Bolyai University summer camp in Vama Veche and the state's concern with border protection delayed the development of the village as an escapist summer destination. Vama Veche was smaller than 2 Mai and had a larger beach, but because accommodation was contracted by the university, very few rooms remained available for rent to independent tourists. For these reasons, few people were able to spend their summers in Vama Veche. Those who did, however, claimed a wild beach with dunes and briars, large spaces, more intimacy, and even fewer amenities than in 2 Mai.¹¹⁸

In 1973, according to journalist Stelian Țurlea, the village of Vama Veche looked like:

It had been frozen at the beginning of the century. Those who ventured there needed to give up all the benefits of civilization: the loo was at the end of the backyard, the warm water was found in the sun-heated barrel, there was no discotheque, not even small shops, or a tobacco shop. It was a village forgotten by the world, which the authorities stubbornly kept alive, two kilometers from the

¹¹⁵ Pepino, *A doua Carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016, 102-103; Mircea Toma in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 23-24.

¹¹⁶ Șerban Anghelescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 103; Liviu Papadima, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 58.

¹¹⁷ Pepino, *A doua Carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 103. *Ghebula* became fairly popular in the 1980s. The name referred to home distilled spirits which contained alcohol mixed with various aromas.

¹¹⁸ Mircea Toma, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 22.

border, to avoid issues with defectors. Not even 30 houses, no one was allowed to settle there, no one was allowed to construct a new house. Scenographer Oni Oroveanu built a two-story house, made of brick, for the filming of *Virgo* in 1966, and then destroyed it with his own hands, so that no one would squat there.¹¹⁹

In the 1980s as the number of tourists in 2 Mai grew and the construction of the Mangalia shipyard absorbed a large portion of the beach there, people drove or walked the four kilometers separating the two villages to access the beach in Vama Veche. The walk between the villages became a leisure routine for those staying in 2 Mai and a necessity for the others, when provisions ran out or the need of communication with the outside world arose. Șerban Anghelescu remembered that in the 1980s scenographer Francois Pamfil complained that 2 Mai became too crowded and Vama Veche represented the true wilderness. Real people, Pamfil claimed, went to Vama Veche.¹²⁰

Graphic designer Smigelschi explained the difference between those who preferred the wilderness of Vama Veche to the more convivial atmosphere of 2 Mai: “those who came to Vama Veche were not the snobs who used cars to get to the beach in 2 Mai (...) They were steadfast people who were happy to eat canned soup and meat preserves from jars, some fish, and local vegetables.”¹²¹ In her memoirs, Smigelschi, who first went to Vama Veche in 1963, provided a list of those who stayed regularly in the village and pointed out that by contrast to 2 Mai even basic items such as salt or matches were not available in the village.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Țurlea, “Roman Serial/Trei femei (VII). *Virgo* (1966) was a film directed by Manole Marcus and filmed in its entirety in Vama Veche.

¹²⁰ Șerban Anghelescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 21.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Smigelschi, *Gustul, mirosul și amintirea* [Taste, Smell and Memory], 177.

There had always been a distinction between those who stayed in 2 Mai and in Vama Veche, some believed. The later was considered to be mostly populated by the Cluj tourists, who were not perceived as independent tourists. “The Cluj people ate at the canteen, seated at long tables, side by side with strangers. There was a certain form of regimentation. It was another world, there was a border, an imperceptible and sensitive one,” explained Popescu.¹²³ Nevertheless, as more vacationers took the habit of lodging in 2 Mai and sunbathing in Vama Veche, the later came to be regarded as a district of 2 Mai.¹²⁴ Mihăilescu partially disagreed. In his view, before the fall of communism the only perceived difference between the two villages was a regional one. *Vamaiot* and *doimaiot* carried the same symbolic meaning yet pointed to two of Romania’s historical provinces. Tourists from Transylvania lodged in Vama Veche, while those from Wallachia stayed in 2 Mai.¹²⁵

The difference between the two villages will be further detailed in the next chapter. In short, different physical layout meant that the urban planning norms followed a different pattern in Vama Veche than in 2 Mai and this, in turn created conditions for two different varieties of tourism. In Vama Veche the beach had always been at the centre of village life while in 2 Mai tourism has and remained centered on community, courtyard, and the relationship between hosts and guests. During the socialist era when Vama Veche was just a small village and could only host a small number of tourists, the discussion about tourism focused on the degree of freedom afforded to the two villages. A larger village meant increased surveillance which people faced and perceived in different manners, while in a small village, touristic activities were structured in a way that did not require Securitate or *miliția* presence. Surveillance of the one connecting

¹²³ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 73.

¹²⁴ Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 62.

¹²⁵ Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 190

element, the beach, remained elusive and continued to pose problems for the Securitate irrespective of the number of tourists and their lodgings.

Hippies

By the late 1960s, the generation escaping to 2 Mai donned long hair and jeans. The new identification mark of “hippie” found its justification in the adoption of certain music, clothing and poetry. Popescu explained that clothing was different in 2 Mai than in other places; boys and girls wore wide things, fluttering, nothing shaping the body.¹²⁶

There were long gipsy style skirts and two types of shirts. One was part of the traditional costume and strictly worn in 2 May, and the other type of shirt was inspired by African models. The girls wore their hair loose in the back, more or less combed, flowers in the hair, shells around their necks and on their arms, rings carved of stone on their fingers. (...) And for the boys, apart from the shirts, many wore beards and long hair. Everyone wore very hilarious sun hats. The girls walked with turbans and the boys restyled and transformed old felt hats with buttons, buckles, shells. It was a mixture of craft, arts, and fun as there was a strong sense of humour in one’s dress code.

Similar to their counterparts in the West, Romanian socialist youth frequently felt alienated from the world in which they lived and identified with an international hippie attitude mostly recognizable in clothing, poetry, and musical tastes:

¹²⁶ Ioana Popescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 77.

We, the young people, wore our hair long, and jeans. As soon as our parents received a package from relatives living abroad, we put on the jeans and entered the bathtub where we rubbed them with a brick to enhance discoloration. (...) We also wore floral shirts and some of us painted our cheeks and arms with sharpie markers, because at the time there were no tattoo parlors.¹²⁷

Most of them rejected both a political scene which failed to speak to their generation and the materialistic values of a socialist consumer market expressed by the acquisition of a TV set, a Dacia car, and an apartment in the newly constructed blocks. Socialist propaganda used the pacifist component of the hippie movement and used it as a form of class conflict. Drug consumption, the sexual revolution, and rock music were presented as the damaging effects of capitalism on mankind, but even an extremely harsh regime like the Romanian one was unable to prevent the spread of such a large-scale phenomenon. The Romanian equivalent of Woodstock was the village of 2 Mai, where hippies assembled every year during the summer months. From a Western perspective, such a parallel may seem farfetched. After all, the authoritarian regime allowed only for an imitation of some benign aspects such as dress and folk music in a limited way. The Romanian hippies wanted to escape the cultural and political rigidity of the socialist system but political activism was not part of the equation. The clothes and physical appearance were a way of asserting individuality and rejecting “the image of the uniform, clean-cut, productive socialist citizen.”¹²⁸ In an attempt to fool the censors, at a time when even the use of the word “rock band” was forbidden and replaced with “electric guitar group,” Romanian

¹²⁷ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 16.

¹²⁸ Madigan Fichter, “Rock’n’Roll Nation: Counterculture and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1975,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 39, no. 4 (July 2011): 570.

musicians found inspiration in psychedelic, progressive and hard rock and bands such as *Jethro Tull*, *Pink Floyd*, *Led Zeppelin*, *Deep Purple*, *Emerson, Lake and Palmer*, *The Doors*, *Moody Blues* and *The Animals*. In addition, they translated international hits, used the lyrics of famous national and international poets, and incorporated traditional Romanian instruments into the beat. However, the parallel finds echoes in many of the hearts of those who spent their summer holidays in 2 Mai and Vama Veche in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.¹²⁹ The term “hippie” needs to be positioned in the particular Romanian socialist context. While not all those who spent their summers in 2 Mai adopted this term, most agree that vacationers in 2 Mai and Vama Veche shared a more pronounced form of individuality.¹³⁰

Artistic Creation and Acts of Resistance

Romanian hippies did not restrict themselves to playing and translating Western music, but also cultivated their own styles. In so doing, they drew inspiration from local heritage. One such example is the psychedelic rock band Ceata Melopeică, which held several ad hoc performances in some of the house gardens of 2 Mai in the 1970s.¹³¹ The band’s lyrics were infused with metaphors and hidden meanings inspired by traditional Romanian folklore and contemporary politics, making their music rich, intellectually stimulating, and subversive. Furthermore, the band’s sound came from a mixture of traditional instruments such as sitars or pan flutes with

¹²⁹ Steliu Lambru, “The Beginnings of the Hippie Movement in Romania,” *Radio România Internațional*, 21 December 2013.

¹³⁰ Paul Drogeanu, Vintilă Mihăilescu, Ioana Popescu, Aurelian Trișcu and Dan Vușdea, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 76-81.

¹³¹ *Ceata* means “gang” in English, while the term “Melopeica” is derived from *melos* (music) and *poesis* (poetry) which together convey the concept of musical poetry.

electric guitars. Their improvisational concerts were literally unique, since they performed “unrepeatable” acts.¹³²

Poetess Nora Iuga, recalled such similar choreographic, even less formal moments:

In the evening at eight, we heard infernal motorcycle noises coming from the beach. We rushed on the street, like children eager to see gypsies parading the bear. On the stretch of sand, we saw a great fire; the flares danced in the blue air and around it a circle of young men, boys and girls, in white clothes with blossoms, lying one on the knees of the other, sang accompanied by a guitar, for hours and hours in a row. What a liturgy that was! Or another scene: we returned after having spent the evening in Vama Veche along the beach of 2 May. There was a tiny, poor, patched tent. A 17-year-old boy, pale and very thin, was singing on the harmonica in front of the tent, while a tiny, androgynous, young girl, was washing a pan and a few spoons in the waves.¹³³

In Vama Veche, Nina Cassian, playwright Radu F. Alexandru, ballerina Irinel Liciu and her husband writer Ștefan Augustin Doinaș staged avant-garde theatre performances in the shed of one of their friends’ house.¹³⁴ The noise of the typewriter from Bujor Nedelcovici’s room in Vama Veche could be heard all day.¹³⁵ There is a high probability that his novel *Days of Sand*, which served as the base for Dan Pița’s film, *Faleze de nisip* [Sand Cliffs], was written in that

¹³² Doru Ionescu, *Timpul chitarelor electrice: jurnal de călătorie în arhiva TVR* [The Time of Electric Guitars: Travel Journey in the TVR Archives] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 336.

¹³³ Liviu Vasile, “Un Saint-Tropez fără jandarmi, interviu cu Nora Iuga” [A Saint-Tropez Without Gendarmes, Interview with Nora Iuga], *Cultura*, no. 344, 12 October 2011.

¹³⁴ Smigelschi, *Gustul, mirosul și amintirea*, 177.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 178.

room.¹³⁶ Pița's film, which premiered in 1982, was considered an act of resistance to Romania's authoritarian communist regime by film critics, artists and intellectuals. Withdrawn from cinemas days after its release, the film was officially erased from Pița's filmography and became available for viewers only after the fall of the communist regime.¹³⁷ Filmed in its entirety on the beaches of 2 Mai and Vama Veche, the film told the story of the conflict between an influential surgeon and a carpenter wrongfully accused of having stolen the doctor's personal belongings from the beach. As a result of the prolonged enquiry, the carpenter loses his job before finally being sent to prison. The surgeon, a neurotic character, was not satisfied with the conviction because the young man never confessed to his crime. Years after the original events, the doctor went back to look for the carpenter hoping to extract a confession. The film ends with the young man losing his temper and stabbing the doctor.

In 1983, during a conference in Mangalia, Ceaușescu rebuked Pița's film.¹³⁸ In his speech, he explained that films needed to present a "proper" model for work and life.¹³⁹ Without mentioning the title of the film or book, Ceaușescu stated that neither the director nor the screenwriter had understood Romanian youth, their work ethic, love of Party, and devotion to the socialist system.¹⁴⁰ The leader further stated that production of such movies should not be

¹³⁶ Bujor Nedelcovici, *Zile de nisip* [Days of Sand] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1979). The novel was well received by the literary critics. The Writers Union awarded Nedelcovici the prize for the best work of prose that year.

¹³⁷ *Faleze de nisip* [Cliff Sands]. Directed by Dan Pița. Bucharest: Casa de filme 1, 1982.

¹³⁸ Following the speech in Mangalia, open censorship resurfaced, cultural exchanges were reduced, and the country's public broadcasting corporation's program, TVR1, was reduced to 2 hrs. per day. For a detailed explanation, see Magda Cârneci, *Artele plastice în România, 1945-1989* [The Plastic Arts in Romania, 1945-1989] (Iași: Polirom, 2013), 111-141.

¹³⁹ Nicolae Ceaușescu, "Expunere la Conferința asupra problemelor din activitatea organizatorică și politico-educativă, 2-3 august 1983 [Presentation at the Conference on the problems in the organizational and politico-educational activity, 2-3 August 1983]," *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* [Romania on the Way of Building up the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society], vol. 26 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1984), 183-186.

¹⁴⁰ Excerpts from Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech delivered on the occasion of the Working Meeting on Organizational and Political-Educational Work Issues held in Mangalia in 1983, published in Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Opere alese* (Selected Works), Vol. 4, 1981-1985 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1986), and quoted in Andrei Popa, "Filmul Faleze

encouraged; instead, artistic creation should focus on the “new socialist man.” Reality should not be embellished, but neither should one focus on its negative aspects, explained Ceaușescu. *Sand Cliffs* carried a strong message about corruption and power that the regime could not accept. Ceaușescu guessed the symbolism Nedelcovici later claimed: “a worker revolted against a medical practitioner who represented power, who unjustly accused him of theft. That worker killed the doctor. Ceaușescu did not admit that a representative of the working class could kill a representative of the political power.”¹⁴¹ These were the limits of socialist democracy.

Ceaușescu’s strong reaction to the film further showcased his neo-Stalinist stance that demanded strict ideological conformity, no internal dissent, and absolute subordination to the Party.

Painter Silvia Radu and her husband, sculptor Vasile Gorduz, also found inspiration on the seafront between 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Radu painted the landscape from different angles while her husband was constantly looking for the right stones to carve. A deeply religious artist and strong believer in the Orthodox faith, Silvia Radu gathered her works, parts of which were created in Vama Veche, into an exhibit titled the Garden of Angels. The first exhibit took place in 1989, but the religious symbols embodied in her art were only revealed after the fall of the communist regime.¹⁴²

Nina Cassian also wrote extensively at the seaside. Her journals contained entries about her time in 2 Mai, personal reflections, and notes about her literary activity, mainly translations and poetry.¹⁴³ Unknown to Cassian, her journals were also read by the Securitate, which feared that disenchantment with the communist regime she so strongly supported during her youth

de nisip sfidează comunismul” [The Film Cliff Sands Challenges Communism], *Historia*, accessed 3 February 2021, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/filmul-faleze-de-nisip-sfideaza-comunismul>.

¹⁴¹ Ovidiu Simonca, “În literatură las o porțiță de salvare, interviu cu Bujor Nedelcovici” [Literature as a Loophole, interview with Bujor Nedelcovici], *Observatorul Cultural* (București), June 28, 2007.

¹⁴² Alexandru Vasile, “Expoziție de arte vizuale, Grădina cu îngeri a Silviei Radu” [Visual Arts Exhibit, Silvia Radu’s Garden of Angels], *Telegraf* (Constanța), October 4, 2017.

¹⁴³ Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. I, 87-89, vol. II, 87, 104-105, 141, 157, 202, 209.

would translate into acts of formal opposition and open dissent.¹⁴⁴ The secret police closely monitored her literary career and social life, carefully noting her conversations and contacts, in order to prevent the publication of “the journal of journals,” Cassian’s diary.¹⁴⁵ Some of Cassian’s friends read parts of the diary, but the final, edited product did not appear until more than a decade after the Romanian Revolution, in 2003 and 2004. Cassian’s handwritten notebooks photographed by the Securitate contained a more colorful and detailed description of her life and artistic struggle during the communist regime, although inflammatory criticisms of Ceaușescu’s regime with its vicious censorship practices occur throughout all three volumes.

Labels, Brands, and Definitions

Most vacationers were aware of the special character of their vacations in one of the most rural and poorly developed villages on the Black Sea shore. What attracted them was precisely this pristine atmosphere: wild, long, deep beaches, the lack of technology and commodities in general, and a sense of liberation from the pressure of daily socialist routine and the constraints imposed by life in a big city. The only communication with the outside world was a public phone in 2 Mai which was used mainly when tourists from both villages ran out of money and needed to ask their families to send more. The only source of drinkable water was a well at the edge of the village, because the water in people’s wells could not be used for cooking even if it was boiled. There was little visible police presence in these villages, although a small police station employing three agents existed. A more visible presence were the border patrols, but they, too, interfered only occasionally with the tourists’ routine. Overall, vacationers described having

¹⁴⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no 256690, vol. II, 180-309, and III, 3-293.

¹⁴⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no 256690, vol. II, 158, 160.

experienced a degree of freedom that they had not encountered or lived elsewhere in Romania, though most of them suspected they were being watched.

It was an elitist culture, open to everyone who enjoyed the music of Leonard Cohen, or Elvis Presley, a “hippie a la roumaine”¹⁴⁶—an island of freedom, which was perhaps under surveillance, claimed Vintilă Mihăilescu. He further argued that the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were a playground where games were permitted by the regime, under the watchful eye of the state. The Romanian anthropologist believed that this apparent freedom, which was felt like a real freedom by comparison with conditions in the rest of the country, was the point of departure for the myth of freedom associated by Romanian media with the name of Vama Veche. For many, to this day, “Vama Veche means freedom.”¹⁴⁷

Sites of Cultural Opposition

During the socialist era, the border villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche became known as oases of individual freedom. Memoirs, media reports from the socialist era but mostly from the post-socialist period and word of mouth contributed to their fame. Starting from the 1960s, the villages attracted an increasing number of public figures from the cultural milieu who made no secret of their preferences for these villages. Reports about the presence of Nina Cassian and other famous actors and directors in the village of 2 Mai appeared regularly in the socialist media.¹⁴⁸ By the 1980s, the capital’s middle class looked to 2 Mai and Vama Veche as an

¹⁴⁶ Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 216.

¹⁴⁷ After the fall of the socialist state, Vama Veche continued to be described as a place of ultimate freedom. “Vama Veche means freedom” has become a popular saying, both a catchphrase and a slogan.

¹⁴⁸ Arcadie Strahilevici, “Dialog cu Nina Cassian: « La 2 Mai voi fi pe 5 iulie »” [Dialogue with Nina Cassian: “I will be in 2 Mai from 5 of July”], *Litoral* (Constanta), June 7, 1975; “La 2 Mai soare și umbră [In 2 Mai sunshine and shadow],” *Litoral* (Constanta), August 20, 1971.

alternative summer retreat where they could brush shoulders with famous actors, artists, and writers.

Far from the prying eyes of the dictatorial socialist state, Romanian cultural figures, students, professionals, and even communist party luminaries chose these sites as an escape from the burdens and limitations of city life. Some stayed in tents on the beach; others rented rooms from peasants in the tiny villages. They dozed, swam, or sun-bathed naked, did yoga, performed sketches, folk and rock and roll songs, updated their collection of jokes, exchanged smuggled books, wrote, and discussed philosophy or their latest manuscripts on the sandy beach, under reed umbrellas. Categories of otherwise mutually exclusive types of behaviour overlapped, while social and gender norms dispersed as even famous members of the Romanian Communist Party departed from party prescriptions of acceptable behavior and thinking. In so doing, vacationers rejected the socialist model of consumerism and infringed the socialist norms of tourism which emphasized collective rather than individual leisure activities.¹⁴⁹

The study of Vama Veche and 2 Mai as sites of behaviour tolerated, but not fully controlled, by the communist regime suggests that here individuals interacted with each other and with the state authorities in ways different from their interactions in other spaces or localities. As scholars studying everyday life under authoritarian, communist regimes point out, dissent was not limited to a particular space mostly characterized by the slightly overworn metaphor of the “underground.” Kitchen tables, café corners, beaches, monuments, and public spaces could also become spaces of dissent.¹⁵⁰ Luca Pițu, a former dissident from Iași, described meeting French writer Michel Rouan in 2 Mai in 1980, and spending the entire night discussing

¹⁴⁹ Diane Koenker, *Club Red, Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 276.

¹⁵⁰ David Crowley and Susan Reid, ed., *Socialist Spaces, Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Block* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002), 16.

international politics in the courtyard of his host.¹⁵¹ The study of 2 Mai and Vama Veche suggests that in these border communities, in correlation with the ever-increasing limitations imposed by Ceaușescu's regime, leisure acquired political dimensions. Yet, towards the end of the 1980s, the regime's paranoia and the policing of leisure activities reached record highs. Yoga, bridge, capitalist influences in the arts, western music, transcendental meditation, or contact with foreigners even from friendly socialist countries--were banned, censored, and strictly surveilled. Inside city walls, Romanians were always on the lookout, carefully monitoring even their own private conversations, but in the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche most talked openly since they were amongst friends. Leisure activities that required detailed planning and concealing in urban centers took place openly in the two villages.

Controversies over the cultural identity of these emblematic sites, their social universe, trans-generational character, and the nature of the activities that took place there are a recurring theme in the Romanian mass-media. Some of post-socialist Romania's most prominent figures in cultural and political life were part of the 2 Mai and Vama Veche communities in their youth.¹⁵² What is significant about the two villages is the spirit of community built around them that provided a sense of freedom to members of the intelligentsia and ordinary citizens alike. Coming from different generations and cultural milieus, the long-term vacationers of 2 Mai represented either the very gatekeepers entrusted to build and reinforce "real existing socialism" or, worse still, at least from the state's perspective, the youth who were the future of Romanian socialist

¹⁵¹ Pițu, *Însem(i)nările magistrului din Cajvana* [Notes and Insemination of Cajvana Magister], 51.

¹⁵² A list of these cultural and political figures followed by short descriptions would far exceed the content of this dissertation. Monica Macovei, member of the European Parliament and former justice minister is one such example. Another is Mircea Toma, a journalist and president of the Active Watch Romanian Agency for Press Monitoring, a non-governmental organization that campaigns for freedom of speech and human rights. Toma was also president of the Association for Conservation of Bio-Cultural Protected Areas which is actively involved in protecting the areas of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Petre Roman, the chief of the first democratic Romanian government also spent his vacations in 2 Mai, and so did many of his ministers: Alexandru Paleologu, Mihai Sora, Andrei Pleșu.

society. To be sure, banned folk songs performed on the beach were not in themselves forms of political opposition, but such communities as the ones in 2 Mai and Vama Veche served as a cultural escapist milieu where one could discover new strategies for opposing the regime whether directly, or symbolically. The subversive activities of some of the vacationers were well-known to the authorities, while others merely enjoyed participating in an alternative cultural life, or in a moment of what was perceived as equivalent to “total personal freedom,” in select company.

Terms such as dissent, dissident, and dissidence assume various meanings and “dissidence” does not mean “being a dissident.” In its restricted understanding, dissidence assumes membership in the communist party; people cannot manifest themselves in ideological opposition to the regime if they have not been formally involved in its structures. From a larger perspective, it is the regime itself that dictates the rules of dissent: dissent is, thereby, defined as any form of opposition contradicting the established norm. However, if it is not consecrated and recognized as such by the regime itself--most often through its *Securitate* apparatus--it goes unnoticed. In Romania, especially during the 1980s, Ceaușescu decided that there would be no dissident voices and no prosecutions on political charges. Those who voiced discontent towards the regime were either shipped out of the country, committed to psychiatric institutions, or prosecuted and sentenced to jail on trumped up, criminal law charges. Not surprisingly, the country only had a small number of officially recognized dissident voices.

Instead, the alternative concept of “resistance through culture” was employed after the fall of communism, by some Romanian intellectuals in an effort to explain the country’s complex context and the apparent lack of opposition to communist rule. Andrei Pleșu, one of the proponents of the “resistance through culture” concept, broadened the category of resistance to

include small acts such as humour or the stocking of scarcely available food, the so-called “samizdat of clandestine food,” and thus raised quotidian activities pursued by millions of Romanians during the economically challenging 1980s to the level of regime defiance.¹⁵³ In this context, “resistance through culture” is a manifestation of freedom not necessarily conceived in opposition to the regime, while “cultural resistance” implies an intentional attitude. What may be at stake is the capitalization of dissidence in a post-socialist society by leading intellectuals who, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, attempted to market themselves as opponents to the regime in order to legitimate and consolidate their positions. Historian Cristina Petrescu explains that “resistance through culture” represents a post-socialist discourse that is mostly supported by the public prestige of those cultural figures who articulated it rather than material or digital evidence of socialist-era opposition. In addition, the concept refers to high culture and assumes a fixed position that avoids any reference to collaboration with the Securitate.

The use of cultural opposition instead of “resistance through culture” or the more strictly defined “dissent” allows for a more dynamic, fluid, and nuanced approach which “acknowledges that individuals living under a dictatorship crossed borders more often than not. Individuals who suffered repression in early life and youth could become tolerated and even turn into a protégé of the regime, in later years; just as easily, people who initially enjoyed support of the regime could fall into disgrace at any time.”¹⁵⁴ Seen within the definition of culture as a system of shared meanings and everyday practices and juxtaposed with the idea that opposition to the communist regime varied in time, 2 Mai and Vama Veche fit the analytical category of sites of cultural

¹⁵³ Andrei Pleșu, “Păcatele și inocența intelectualilor” [Intellectuals’ Innocence and Sins] in *Obscenitatea publică* [Public Obscenity] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 104.

¹⁵⁴ Cristina Petrescu, “Romania”, in *The Handbook of COURAGE. Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe*, eds. Balázs Apór, Péter Apór, and Sándor Horváth (Budapest: Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 152-153.

opposition. Oral history interviews, memoirs, photographs, films, poems, and even urban plans of houses and their internal division of space constitute collections that provide supporting evidence for this argument. As per strict labels and categories that apply to particular individuals or situations, this study does not embrace either one of the two definitions because of their political implications. This dissertation employs “transgression” and “non-conformity” when referencing benign activities that at a certain point, the regime deemed dangerous. Furthermore, it argues for a more inclusive definition of dissent, one that acknowledges the contribution of ordinary people and their mostly silent voices and everyday activities to contestation of the regime.

Conclusion

Whether 2 Mai and Vama Veche were safety valves allowed to exist by the communist regime in order to provide a feeling of freedom and a safe space for transgression that the regime could easily control is a point of contention for the author of this dissertation. As the last chapter will detail, surveillance of individuals, both locals and tourists did exist. However, the Securitate and *miliția* apparatus was small when compared to the high volume of people and vehicles transiting these villages, seasonal migration, and economic activity. The popularity of these summer getaways continued to increase throughout the socialist period bringing together people from all regions in Romania. The networks established here posed a risk to the regime far greater than the nature of the activities that took place. The regime tried to control access to information, but in 2 Mai and Vama Veche it proved impossible because of the constant influx of tourists and cultural figures from all over the country and abroad. For example, books such as George Orwell’s *1984* and *Animal Farm* though placed on the censorship list were acquired and circulated in 2 Mai. For

ordinary people without the necessary connections to the literary milieu, these books were out of reach but the 1954 cartoon was widely circulated on VHS tapes.¹⁵⁵ A book, a film, a piece of music, or the actions of one individual taken separately rarely amounted to regime defiance but in conjunction they eroded its legitimacy and made people question socialist state policies and the decision of the leaders, as well as prepared the terrain for popular revolts and the Revolution of 1989.

Other places on the Black Sea coast such as Costinești, Mamaia village, and Sfântu Gheorghe in the Danube Delta offered respite from the constraints of socialist life but nowhere in Romania was there such a wide variety and concentration of people and activities transgressing socialist norms as in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The regime's decision to erase the village of Vama Veche in 1989 further testifies to its malaise vis-à-vis these places. Had socialism survived for another year, the landscape would have been forever altered, since aside from tearing down the last Romanian village before the border with Bulgaria, plans for the urbanization of 2 Mai and the building of blocks of flats to replace the houses and gardens were also under way in the late 1980s. As the next chapter will show, landscape in both physical and human geographical form coupled with urban planning norms and in the case of Vama Veche, the lack thereof, was one of the critical elements that ushered in the particular feeling of freedom associated with the two villages that most socialist visitors agreed was difficult to experience elsewhere in Romania.

¹⁵⁵ John Halas, Joy Batchelor, dir., *Animal Farm*, United Kingdom, United States: Halas & Batchelor, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 1954.

Chapter 3

Locality and Community: Landscape, Temporality, and Transformation

Introduction

This chapter uses the concepts of “community” and “space” to explore the relationship between tourists, locals, and the socialist state. It illuminates how 2 Mai and Varma Veche functioned as alternative cultural spaces during the socialist era and as sites of intersection where various communities met and coexisted. I analyze the various elements that came together in the building of a unique socialist space: kinship, hospitality, leisure practices, and landscape alteration over time and seek to answer several questions: How did the host communities respond to change over time? In what way did locality, gender, language, and ethnicity shape community and space? In which ways did physical geography and landscape intervention, or lack thereof, influence community life? I will also explore specific activities that brought villagers and guests together such as cooking, the feminine figure of the host and the gendered character of hospitality, the courtyard as a social institution, and the stories circulated by villagers and tourists.

While the Revolution of 1989 brought a sudden halt to certain developments such as the demolition works in the village of Varma Veche, it also allowed for a different kind of landscape intervention than during the socialist era, such as the erection of churches. However, the large scale transformation of community life in the two villages would take another decade. For this reason, in order to unpack the social and historical processes, occasionally, the chapter’s

narrative extends to the post-socialist era. On rare occasions, recent events and current developments are also factored into the narrative.

Analyzing the relationship between community and space poses certain limitations. On the one hand, research is based on a limited number of oral history interviews with both locals and visitors; certain landmarks have vanished and archives were lost or destroyed. As older generations of tourists and hosts passed away so did the traces they left on the landscape. The relationship between socialist power, its central and local administration and the effects it had on everyday life of the inhabitants is now part of a fragmented collective memory of a few elders and a small collection of documents that stops in 1964.¹ Moreover, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were subject to a rapid process of transformation, urbanization, and migration during the late post-socialist period of the 2000s. At least half of those offering accommodation to tourists today settled in the villages during the late 1990s and most of the old buildings were renovated, expanded or demolished. The discussion of the physical lay-out and spatial intervention will highlight the differences between the two villages and illuminate further the nature of communal ties.

My preference for the use of the term “community” stems from two concerns: first, tourists rarely travelled alone to these villages, and, if they did, it was because they were sure to meet familiar faces at their destination, and secondly, because part of the attraction for these places was the rural atmosphere and the experience of certain communal ties absent from the urban milieu. The term “local community” includes various social groups built around ethnic, gender, and professional lines: the purveyors of hospitality, the hosts, who were mostly women,

¹ The archives of Constanța County hold the official documents pertaining to the township of Limanu, from the late 1880's and until 1964. The archives lack space and cannot receive additional documents. Most of the documents of the socialist period relating to 2 Mai and Vama Veche were kept stored locally and lost to a flood.

their husbands, farmers, fishermen, shepherders, and famous characters who acted as links between the villagers and urban visitors. As various groups of people of different ages and professions spent their vacations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the socialist era, usually around the same time, with the same host and within a particular group of friends, they too formed particular communities. As detailed in the second chapter, the Babeş Bolyai university camp in Vama Veche formed a community of tourists that functioned differently from the one made up by the urban dwellers who chose 2 Mai as destination for their summer vacations.

Village life, however, consisted of more than hospitality, and various communities met and overlapped but remained distinct because of their goals, position, and composition. This study focuses on tourism, but it is important to note that only about one quarter of the village's households offered some form of accommodation to tourists. Farmers, fishermen, seasonal or industrial workers interacted only occasionally with the guests. Tourists travelled to 2 Mai in groups and stayed with the same family every year. Groups were formed along social or professional lines and interaction between them was rare and took place mostly at the individual level. A certain degree of separation did not mean that famous characters of the era - writers, actors, or musicians - went unnoticed or that tourists left no mark on their surroundings. Vacationing in the two villages was fashionable because one could observe the latest fashion, hear the most popular rock songs, read the newest bestseller, and find out about the latest gossip, social trends, and politics. Hosts, too, participated in the conversation and became influenced by their guests because hospitality was built around extended family ties and not around professional norms of conduct as was the case in the tourist industry. The second chapter identified various communities of tourists, while this chapter points to some formed by local

inhabitants. The testimonials presented here showcase the degree of mutual influence, collaboration, and intersection between the two.

Kinship and Tourism

Social relations are influenced by the physical and cultural arrangement of space, and are in fact means through which spaces and places are produced and reproduced through time.² The making of place is embedded in the processes of community, but the two are not the same, and the meaning and identities attached to place are the product of inter-communal relationships and struggles.³ Moreover, at the level of community, individuals and local cultures express various forms of resistance and accommodation to dominant cultures and political regimes. This resistance may be overt and obvious, but it is more often subtle and embedded in symbols produced by and through the practices of everyday life.⁴ Listening to Radio Free Europe or mocking the regime through jokes and stories, both common occurrences, openly and widely practised in 2 Mai and Vama Veche, are a case in point. According to historian Lynne Viola, in the context of the Eastern bloc, resistance to dominant culture involved various “forms of opposition – active, passive, artfully disguised, attributed, and even inferred.”⁵ The domain of hospitality with its web of complex interactions is a venue that provided a favorable context for the manifestation of “artfully disguised,” everyday forms of resistance to socialist power.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 258.

³ Ibid, 266.

⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁵ Lynne Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism, Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 18-20. For Viola rebellions, mutinies, and riots, demonstrations and protest meetings, strikes and work stoppages, arson, assaults, and assassinations, foot-dragging, negligence, sabotage, theft, and flight as well as “everyday forms of resistance” [such as] popular discourse, ritual, feigned ignorance, dissimulation, and false compliance were all forms of active or passive resistance to socialist power.

Long-term tourism in 2 Mai initially began on the main street and in time it extended to the adjacent streets. Visitors preferred the houses that were located closer to the sea and in the socialist period some of the gardens of these main street houses extended to the beach. Over time, tourists started to look for lodgings located outside the main area.



Figure 3.1: View of 2 Mai from Google Maps in 2021.⁶

Some tourists preferred tranquility and wanted to be away from the noise and congestion of the main road.⁷ For the locals, the sea had long been just “some water,” and the villagers did not necessarily think about the economic potential of seaside tourism when they built their houses.⁸ As a consequence, tourist infrastructure and amenities such as running water, shower facilities, bathrooms or refrigerators were added later on. Victorița Petrescu, a famous host best known for her cooking skills, explained that had she anticipated the high demand for renting out rooms, she would have built her house differently and would have even installed a W.C. inside

⁶ Source: Google Maps, 2021.

⁷ Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

the house.⁹ After the socialist era, Victorița renovated her house to better suit the needs of her guests. However, she did not build a full bathroom inside the house because she believed placing a W.C. inside would spoil the house.¹⁰ Victorița's thinking was not uncommon; older generations of Romanians accepted only partially and reluctantly the comfort of modern amenities. While running water or central heating was desirable as a mark of modernity and sanitation, a W.C. near the sleeping, eating, or common area of a house symbolized the opposite.

The two villages offered amenities that were basic even by socialist standards, but displayed a rustic charm that most tourists found appealing. Running water, bathrooms, hot water, showers, and a modern kitchen that included a stove and refrigerator became the norm only after 1989. Under communism rooms were small, crowded, and contained only a few pieces of furniture; as such they were not suited for the conviviality of larger groups. Psychologist Aurora Liiceanu described her room in Vama Veche as small and adorned with a gauze curtain at the door to keep the flies away. There was no electricity, and often when her family returned from the beach, they would find an egg on the bed, because in winter the hosts lived in that room and so did their hens.¹¹ Small living spaces facilitated interactions as guests became partially integrated into the households of their hosts. Children of tourists played together under the supervision of an adult who was not always their parent.¹² The doors were left open at all times to ensure a pleasant temperature, and no one thought about locking up when leaving the room.

⁹ Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, December/March, 2003-2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 14.

¹⁰ Victorița Petrescu, *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹ Aurora Liiceanu, *Prin perdele* [Through the Curtain] (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 142.

¹² Elena Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27, and Vava, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, 2003, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai*, [Stories from 2 Mai], 42.

John C. Walsh and Steven High define community according to three elements: community as imagined reality, community as social interaction, and community as process.¹³ The relationship between hosts and tourists involved exchanges, visits, and transfers of knowledge as some of the landscape interventions in 2 Mai and Vama Veche originated in suggestions received from tourists. Curator Iuliana Dumitru, a native of 2 Mai, believed that the relationship had always involved exchanges at both material and spiritual levels.¹⁴ Most memoirs describing the 2 Mai and Vama Veche atmosphere provided some sort of detail about local characters and noted the fascination of the tourists for the spiritual and pastoral rhythm of village life and human interaction in this context. At times, the exchange took a specific form and entailed a particular action and direct intervention.¹⁵ Victorița Petrescu explained how a tourist helped her redecorate her house in order to attract more clients. Chairs, tables, and fresh linens were the most important elements.¹⁶ Architect Aurelian Trișcu also spoke about the transfer of knowledge. Tourists offered counselling and aided the locals in making their households more comfortable for guests; some lent a hand in adjusting existing installations, others suggested remodeling the rooms or re-arrangement of the courtyards.¹⁷ The rooms were typically decorated with paintings or hand-crafted objects left behind by dilettante painters and artists who had found

¹³ John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Histoire sociale / Social History*, 32, no. 64 (1999): 255, 261. Social network theory, explain historians Steven High and John C. Walsh, offers three main advantages for the historians: it recognizes community as a social process predicated on relationships and therefore susceptible to change over time; does not assume that community exists based on place; it encourages historians to see community boundaries as social constructions, products of social interactions, and subjective rather than objective elements of everyday life.

¹⁴ Dumitru, "Camping 2 Mai, povesti de familie" [2 Mai Campground, Family Stories], 154.

¹⁵ Detailed examples of typical home and garden decorations, the transfer of knowledge, influences, and artistic creation can be found in the Appendix which provides a description of the exhibit "From Near to Far. Visual Cartographies of 2 Mai and Vama Veche Spaces."

¹⁶ Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, December/March 2003-2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 17.

¹⁷ Aurelian Trișcu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 48.

inspiration on the shores and unsuccessfully tried to gain a small profit from their newly discovered talents by selling their art.¹⁸

The Dobrogeanu Restaurant in 2 Mai was also the result of tourists' initiative, and, after the fall of the communist regime, some of the long-term summer residents of 2 Mai decided to build a church in Vama Veche. After 1989, for the newly liberated Romanians, freedom of worship signaled the end of a long series of prohibitions and a connection to a past the communist regime had tried to dissolve. Moreover, as Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu argued, "religion, alongside nationalism, stepped in to fill the ideological void left behind when Marxist-Leninism was discredited, and churches assumed new roles in shaping the eastern European democracy."¹⁹ Vama Veche had never had a church; the project of building one soon after the fall of the regime that had attempted to erase the village showcased a desire to secure the continuity of the community, cement the relationship between tourists and place, and proclaim national identity. In Romania, the fall of communism witnessed a resurgence of religious expression and a sharp rise in the construction of churches. In the last village on the most southern point in Romania, inhabited by a tiny, ethnically diverse, and seasonal community, the existence of a church ensured the survival of the community and strengthened the bond between visitors and village. The construction was funded by donations from tourists. One of the first pub owners in 2 Mai organized raffles and various events to raise money for the project, architect Aurelian Trișcu developed the plans, while painter Silvia Radu and her husband, sculptor Vasile Gorduz, helped to decorate the new building entirely free of charge.²⁰

¹⁸ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 143.

¹⁹ Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

²⁰ Paul Drogeanu and Aurelian Trișcu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 16-17.

Sociologists define community as a primordial type of social organization situated between family and kinship and society-at-large and associated with a particular place.²¹ Social researchers and community members use place as a social construct; the setting, be it an urban neighborhood or a village mattered little.²² The special flare of 2 Mai and Vama Veche stemmed from a particular kind of atmosphere, based on a shared sense of community invoked by all my respondents, in both written or oral form. Age was irrelevant in terms of participation; what mattered was the exchange of cultural information and a particular type of behaviour: “we learned to live and think in a way that was completely different from the societal model of those times.”²³ As the communist system imposed new vacation routines in carefully shaped, mostly urban spaces, some, like the tourists of 2 Mai and Vama Veche, chose to return to pre-war, traditional models of tourism centered on nature and family ties. One of the long term effects of this form of alternative tourism described by memoirs and oral history interviews was cohabitation. It was the shared experience of living together along redefined family ties and mutually agreed upon norms of behaviour that made tourists and hosts feel part of a community. During socialism, when people lived in fear that even the slightest transgression could be reported to the Securitate and the communist party and could bring terrible consequences, these types of communal relations thus reassured people that normal life was still possible.

Ethnologist Paul Drogeanu explained that, at times, the relationship between host and tourist consolidated to such an extent that it turned into kinship. Nina Cassian professed love for

²¹ David Lee and Howard Newby, *The Problem of Sociology: An Introduction to the Discipline* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1983); Ruth Liepins, “Exploring Rurality through 'Community': Discourses, Practices and Spaces Shaping Australian and New Zealand Rural 'Communities,’” *Journal of Rural Studies* 16, no. 3 (July 2000): 325-341.

²² Keith H. Halfacree, “Talking about rurality: Social representations of the rural as expressed by residents of six English parishes,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 11, no. 1 (1995): 1-20; Melinda Milligan, “Displacement and Identity Discontinuity: The Role of Nostalgia in Establishing New Identity Categories,” *Symbolic Interaction* 26, no. 3 (2003): 381-403.

²³ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 10.

her second host, Agafia Grigore. In her memoirs she recounted that someone mistakenly informed Agafia that she was amongst the victims of the 1977 earthquake, and, upon hearing the news, Agafia “mourned and pulled her hair out. She loved me and I loved her,” stated Cassian.²⁴ The symbolic connection developed into a home-like feeling for those who rented rooms with the same host every year.²⁵ “We could not wait for the summer to come and meet up, as if we were family. We grew accustomed to them and, when they left, we all cried,” testified Victorița Petrescu.²⁶ Another local resident, Fenia, corroborated Victorița’s testimony: “Those who come for a long time now, and I have some families like that, come as if it were their own house. They call me first to announce their visit, and, even if I am not home, they can come, check in, everything is ready for them.”²⁷ Niculina Tutan also shared this view: “from tourists we became friends. They come to us, they pay for the stay, we party together, they organize all sorts of activities, I give them permission to do what they want, and they feel united with us.”²⁸ Despite the monetary exchange, tourists and hosts felt like they were visiting and receiving friends or relatives. The conviviality erased class, ethnic and gender boundaries.

At times, the villagers visited their most loyal lodgers, as well. “I was ten in ’61 when a film director took me to his place in Bucharest for a few days,” remembered Maura Mihailov.²⁹ The Sodium family sent their children to study in Iasi, a city from where a number of their clients originated.³⁰ In time, the relationship between the villagers and their guests consolidated

²⁴ Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre*, vol. III, 61.

²⁵ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 15.

²⁶ Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, December/March 2003-2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 15.

²⁷ Fenia, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, 2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 15.

²⁸ Niculina Tutan, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, 2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 16.

²⁹ Maura Mihailov, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, 2003, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 16.

³⁰ Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 24.

through reciprocal visits, phone calls, greeting cards. In fact, tourists and hosts shared what Henri Lefebvre termed sociological space, an active space containing “a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information.”³¹ Former tourists who had turned into old friends visited their hosts off season, or over the winter holidays, as well, or simply paid them calls when they happened to be in the region. During the socialist era, a good relationship with the host was important because it guaranteed continuity; as groups of friends became well acquainted with the place, and the host family, they wanted to be able to return the following years and enjoy the same benefits in terms of scenery, nutrition, and good company.

The house in 2 Mai became a home away from home, a second home, and a place of evasion from everyday life.³² This evasion did not center on leisure alone, but it could be regarded as a step “back to nature.”³³ Some tourists adapted the surroundings of the second home to their imagination, a situation illustrated by artists, writers, and film directors for whom the place became a source of inspiration. Ceramics artist Lucia Maftai used to ship home snails, shells, and other treasures she found on the beach in 2 Mai.³⁴ Maftai, who spent a month in the village every summer lodging with the Tatar family of Saide Velişa, practiced her art in her host’s courtyard. Shipping rocky objects from the beach ensured Maftai that her inspiration

³¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 77. Lefebvre classified space in three parts -- physical, mental, and sociological -- and suggested that people and structural forces interact to produce social space.

³² Dieter K. Muller, “Mobility, Tourism, and Second Homes,” in *A Companion to Tourism*, ed. by Alan A. Lew, C. Michael Hall and Allan M. Williams, Malden (US: Blackwell, 2004), 389.

³³ Reiner Jaakson, “Second-Home Domestic Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 13, no. 3 (1986): 376-378; Daniel R. Williams and Bjorn P. Kaltenborn, “Leisure Places and Modernity: The Use and Meaning of Recreational Cottages in Norway and the USA,” in *Leisure/ Tourism Geographies: Practices and Geographical Knowledge*, ed. by David Crouch (London: Routledge, 1999), 214-230.

³⁴ Iuliana Dumitru, “De la aproape către departe: Un tur vizual prin 2 Mai și Vama Veche” [From Near to Far: A Visual Tour through 2 Mai and Vama Veche], *Scena 9* (Bucharest), October 23, 2020, accessed 3 July 2021, De la aproape către departe: Un tur vizual prin 2 Mai și Vama Veche - Scena 9.

would last long after the vacation ended. Other tourists looked for an idealized and simple rustic lifestyle as an escape from the constraints of urban routine.³⁵

Some tourists chose to hold their weddings in 2 Mai since multiple generations of their families and friends regularly spent vacations here.³⁶ Gelu Dumitru and his wife Elena, the managers of the 2 Mai campsite, were asked to serve as godparents for the marriages of two couples who met and continued to vacation at the campground annually.³⁷ At times, tourists also became godparents, having been asked to participate in the christening of the children of their hosts, and thus formalizing the relation of kinship between lodgers and proprietors.³⁸ One such example caught the eyes of the Securitate agents because it involved a foreign citizen employed by the Embassy of Indonesia.³⁹ A long time guest of the household, Nano and his Romanian wife accepted to serve as godparents for the wedding of their host's daughter. So strong was the connection that some guests wished for 2 Mai to be their final resting place. Ethnologist Șerban Anghelescu recalled that a trained medical practitioner who never practiced, nicknamed Fram, asked to be buried in 2 Mai.⁴⁰ Artist Andrei Negulescu also wished to be buried in Vama Veche, the village he called home during the summer season.⁴¹ Nina Cassian's commemoration list, which contained the names of those dear to her who passed away, began with her 2 Mai host,

³⁵ Jaakson, "Second-Home Domestic Tourism," 377, and Dieter K. Muller, *German Second Home Owners in the Swedish Countryside: On the Internationalization of the Leisure Space* (Umea: Department of Social and Economic Geography, Umea University, Sweden, 1999), 35.

³⁶ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 20.

³⁷ Dumitru, "Camping 2 Mai, povesti de familie" [2 Mai Campground, Family Stories], 154.

³⁸ For an explanation of kinship and godparenting practices in Romania see, Monica Vasile, "The Gift of the Godfather: Money and Reciprocity in Spiritual Kinship Relations in Transylvania," *Journal of Family History*, 43, no. 1 (2018): 30-50.

³⁹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, file no. 788408, 1-10.

⁴⁰ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 30.

⁴¹ Sinziana Ionescu, "Scandal la mormântul unui artist din Vama Veche. Andrei și-a dorit să fie îngropat la malul mării" [Fight over the grave of an artist in Vama Veche. Andrei wanted to be buried by the seashore], *Adevărul* (Bucharest), February 8, 2018, https://adevarul.ro/locale/constantia/scandal-mormantul-unui-artist-vama-veche-andrei-si-a-dorit-ingropat-malul-marii-1_5a7c17c4df52022f75511092/index.html.

Agafia Grigore, or Babușca, as she affectionately called her.⁴² Choosing the village of 2 Mai to host a marriage or a burial ritual underscores the strong connection that visitors developed with the site over the years.

Gender, Agency, and Hospitality

The propagandists of the Soviet Union and communist Central and Eastern Europe regimes encouraged women to become part of the work force, but at the same time household and family responsibilities continued to be mostly a woman's job thus imposing a double, even triple burden – home, work and party.⁴³ State socialism combined the rhetoric of gender equality that supposedly set them aside from the West with a dependence on scarcity and an intrusion into the most private spheres of everyday life.⁴⁴ Communist regimes never adequately addressed the “gender problem,” and some scholars even claimed that historians of women's movements were too keen to find agency in systems that denied action to most women.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, historian Jill Massino demonstrates that, although they had not been struggling for liberal political ideals, women who held Marxist-Leninist beliefs in socialist Romania still exercised agency and were motivated to improve their lives, often using strategies and communist rhetoric to secure certain resources and benefits.⁴⁶ The case study sections referenced below, feature the voices of local

⁴² Alice Năstase Buciuta, interview with Nina Cassian, “Nina Cassian: Suntem atat de imperfecti, de limitati, de salbatici...” [Nina Cassian: We Are So Flawed, So Limited, So Wild...], *Revista Tango* (Bucharest), April 23, 2009, <http://revistatango.ro/nina-cassian-suntem-atat-de-imperfecti-de-limitati-de-salbatici-353>.

⁴³ Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu, eds., *Lexicon feminist* [Feminist Lexikon] (Iasi: Polirom, 2002), 289-291.

⁴⁴ Maria Bucur, “An Archipelago of Stories: Gender History in Eastern Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1379.

⁴⁵ Nanette Funk, “A Very Tangled Knot: Official State Socialist Women's Organizations, Women's Agency and Feminism in Eastern European State Socialism,” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21, no. 4 (2014): 344–360.

⁴⁶ Jill Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions, Gender, the State, and Everyday Life in Socialist and Postsocialist Romania*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018). Other secondary sources of critical importance in the conceptualization of this dissertation include anthropologist Katherine Verdery's works *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (1994), *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next* (1996), and *My Life as a Spy* (2018), historian Maria Bucur's extensive forays in gender studies, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship: Women and Power in Modern Romania* (with Mihaela Miroiu, 2018), *The Century of Women: How Women Have*

women as recorded by myself and other researchers, as well as the information from the Securitate files. These sources further detail the ways in which women and men adapted to the challenges of socialist life and used the resources they had at hand, whether poems or recipes to better their present.

During the socialist era, hospitality was the preserve of women. Most hosts worked at home or in the village, while their husbands toiled outside the village in agriculture, fishing, at the nearby naval shipyard, in Mangalia, or in neighboring resorts. Some women also had full time jobs. During the summer, when the opportunity for additional income from touristic activities arose, they found themselves working three jobs: formal employment, domestic labour, and hospitality. The women of 2 Mai and Vama Veche who did not have full-time jobs outside the house were fully employed in the agricultural sector, either formally, working full time or part-time for the local collective farm, or taking care of their own gardens and small private plots of land, and raising animals. In the economy of village life under socialism, household chores carried a more complex meaning than housework in urban areas and included a higher number of domestic activities than those associated with an urban environment.

Case Study: Tudorița Palelica

Tudorița Palelica was one of the most popular hosts in 2 Mai. She lived on the main street and was married to the village's shepherd, Ilie, a religious man of Gagauz ethnicity. According to

Transformed the World since 1900 (2017), *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (2006), political scientist Lavinia Stan's research on memory and transitional justice in socialist and post-socialist Romania, *Justice, Memory and Redress: New Insights from Romania* (with Lucian Turcescu, 2017), *Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from 25 Years of Experience* (with Nadya Nedelsky, 2015), *Post-Communist Romania at 25: Linking Past, Present and Future* (with Diana Vancea, 2015), and historian Lucian Boia's various analyses of Romania's past, *Balcic, micul paradis al Romaniei Mari* [Balchik, the Little Paradise of Greater Romania, 2014], *România - țară de frontieră a Europei* [Romania the Borderland of Europe, 2002], and *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, (2001).

ethnologist Ioana Popescu, Tudorița was a very active, terribly dirty, and slightly dizzy woman.⁴⁷ Tudorița used to drink and tell awful stories about murders and neglected children. Her cooking skills were not the best, and tourists often found flies in their food. Like many countryside households of the time, Tudorița's house was inhabited by mice.

Tudorița was employed full time in the agricultural sector and tended to her large garden which ensured the family's subsistence, aside from catering to her summer guests. At the time, farm work was a labour intensive process and the effort intensified as the cultivated area increased. Aside from the garden and collective farm obligations, because of her husband's occupation, Palelica's household included a higher than usual number of animals. Therefore, maintaining a high standard of cleanliness would have been close to impossible. In addition to hens which could be found in most village households of that time, sheep and donkeys also populated her courtyard.⁴⁸ Ilie, Tudorița's husband, mockingly called his two donkeys *Comunista* and *Utecistul*, enjoyed shouting their names on the village roads.⁴⁹ Guests who lodged with Tudorița had to carry water from a pump located on an adjacent street, but the house had a lovely open, rustic porch and a beautiful garden adorned with big, red tomatoes that tourists craved and occasionally stole during the night.⁵⁰ While staying with them, one day Ioana Popescu realized that Ilie fertilized the tomatoes early in the morning with remains taken directly from the outhouse, a fact that explained the constant stench in the yard.⁵¹ Despite her numerous

⁴⁷ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 49.

⁴⁸ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 22.

⁴⁹ *Comunista* is the feminine form of the Romanian word for communist, while *Utecistul* is the masculine form for the standard abbreviation of the Romanian Communist Party Youth Organization, UTC. Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 49-50.

⁵⁰ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 11.

⁵¹ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 50.

flaws, Tudorița was a reliable person, and her household was imbued with a certain charm and familiarity that guests appreciated.

Tudorița's courtyard was not the only one affected by foul smells. Matriona's house in Vama Veche faced a similar situation, partially because of the rotten outhouse, but mostly due to the animals living in her household. Occasionally former tourists recalled the negative aspects, such as the lack of cleanliness or the bad odours at their residences, but they did so mostly in a candid manner, always referencing the overall picture and the positive aspects that made them choose or stick to a particular location despite its well-known disadvantages. Matriona's house located at the end of Vama Veche village, directly facing the sea, was one such location⁵² The house had no electricity but its old architecture, coupled with an open veranda from where one could see and hear the waves, imbued it with a particular charm.

Cooking

Cooking was one of the main activities that linked tourists and hosts. Cooking facilitated the integration of tourists into village life and mediated their relationship to space. As restaurants were scarce and expensive, offering only a limited selection of dishes and restricted access, tourists brought with them cooking utensils and provisions from home. As vacation destinations, 2 Mai and Vama Veche offered extensive stays at the seaside for rather low cost. As the previous chapter showed, the amenities available in other resorts were missing in the two villages. At times, cooking was regarded as a leisure activity, but for women, it was an extension of everyday domestic duties. In this respect, traditional gender roles were maintained and women, be it hosts or tourists, continued to be responsible for the preparation of meals, a process made difficult by

⁵² Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 120.

the scarcity of resources particularly in the 1980s. Romanians had to master “the art of making do,” with what the system provides and this “making do” became “a true art form eliciting women’s imagination” to cook meals from whatever was available.⁵³ In order to fully enjoy their vacations, tourists began to ask their hosts to prepare their meals as a separate service and for an extra fee. Tourists paid 25 lei for a room and 7 lei for meals per day which amounted to a hundredth part of a net, average salary. If they brought their own provisions, the cost of meals was even lower, and stood at 5 lei per day, explains Vava.⁵⁴ For larger groups, the price was lower and could be as cheap as 2 lei for lunch and dinner, recalled host Elena Petrescu.⁵⁵ By contrast, the price for a hotel room was double; in addition, tourists needed to book and pay for meals at the hotel’s restaurant which did not include a la carte options, and whose taste, quality, and variety left much to be desired.

For hosts, the preparation of food was a ritual and at times, a dreaded chore. Hospitality was just another activity pertaining to household management, and, as such, it was mostly women who took care of tourists’ needs. Some hosts were reluctant to add cooking to their list of offerings. “I had so much work to do as it was, animals to take care of, but in the end I had to cook...I used to wake up at 5 in the morning and toil until 1 o’clock at night, and the fish took so much time to prepare, but my husband helped out; he would peel potatoes at night and leave them on the counter ready for me to find in the morning,” recalled Victorița Petrescu.⁵⁶ Another host, Nuți Călin, was also praised for her ability to cook fast and delicious food.⁵⁷ In her case as

⁵³ Michel de Certeau quoted in Jill Massino, “From Black Caviar to Blackouts: Gender, Consumption and Lifestyle in Ceaușescu’s Romania,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 242.

⁵⁴ Vava, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, 2003, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 18.

⁵⁵ Elena Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 18.

⁵⁶ Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, 2 Mai, December/March, 2003-2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 18.

⁵⁷ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 37.

well, potatoes were the basic food ingredient, and tourists recalled her endlessly peeling that vegetable.

Agafia Grigore also used lots of potatoes when cooking for her guests. After ten days of various potato dishes, Nina Cassian asked for a dietary change to poultry.⁵⁸ Agafia asked Cassian if her husband would be joining her, since he sometimes came to 2 Mai from Bucharest. The poet said that her partner would visit the following week, to which Agafia replied, so why are you in a hurry to eat chicken? A long term summer lodger of Agafia, Cassian had become integrated in her host's household. Meat consumption was reserved for special occasions, in this case, the visits of Cassian's partner, who could not afford to spend months by the seaside and only visited his wife for a couple of days every several weeks.

Fish was another popular dish offered to 2 Mai tourists. Journalist Dragoș Bucurenci recalls that as a child, he could not stand small, fried fish. In 2 Mai, he was forced to change his attitude. Tanti Cuța, the host where he and his parents lodged and ate in the 1980s, got drunk one day and did not prepare any food for them. However, she had been frying gobies for hours and the other members of her household were not able to persuade her to put an end to the activity. Therefore, there were plenty of small, fried fish to eat but nothing else. To this day, Bucurenci is grateful to Tanti Cuța and her drunkenness for having helped him discover a new dish.⁵⁹

Tourists, too, introduced new dishes to their hosts. Cristian Pepino recalled that in 1987 a strong storm in Vama Veche caused an abundance of mussels on the shores.⁶⁰ He gathered them in buckets and brought them for preparation to his host, Coana Manda. The woman was horrified that her clients planned to eat such filthy, stinking creatures. Coana Manda allowed Pepino to

⁵⁸ Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre* [Memory as Dowry], vol. III, 61.

⁵⁹ Dragoș Bucurenci, "Tanti Cuța și guvidele" [Auntie Cuța and the Goby], *bucurenci.ro*, 14 July 2010, <http://bucurenci.ro/2010/07/14/tanti-cuta-si-guvidele>.

⁶⁰ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 71-72.

cook the mussels when he explained that her kitchen and utensils would not be touched; Pepino boiled the mussels in the bucket, on a camp-fire, in the courtyard instead. The host's husband, Nea Panaite, also soothed her fears, recalling that in his youth, he had tried a similar dish and found it tasty. In fact, Pepino himself had been introduced to the taste and recipe of mussels by some French tourists during the 1970s, when he was lodging in 2 Mai; locals there manifested similar reservations about the dish, but people working at the Babeş Bolyai University canteen in Vama Veche, having heard of the new dish, showed up at Pepino's host and asked if he would sell them some.⁶¹

Coana Manda and Pepino's negotiation point out the boundaries of hospitality and exchange. Eating shellfish was inconceivable for Pepino's host yet she allowed him to cook the dish under certain limitations. The host and the guest reached a comfortable middle ground which allowed for experimentation and transfer of knowledge in one of the most secluded and conservative environments. Coana Manda's reluctance should also be juxtaposed over the regular Romanian diet of the time. Consumption of shellfish became fashionable only in the late 1990s. The interest of the cooks working at the Babeş Bolyai University canteen was most probably based on curiosity and the desire to escape the routine of traditional dishes, but it also illustrates the formation of networks and circulation of information.

Different varieties of marine life might not have been everyone's cup of tea, but most tourists enjoyed the freshness of naturally grown fruits and vegetables and the special flavour they brought to the food. Most of them also appreciated the cooking skills of their hosts. In turn, local women took pride in their work. Victorița Petrescu recalled that she spent at least half of

⁶¹ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 45-48.

her time in the kitchen; she even composed a poem that she recited to her clients, who at the time were a famous actor and his film crew.⁶²

[From the kitchen/ I am writing a poem/ with no coma or full stop/ since I don't have time/ the potatoes are frying/ the pancakes are burning/ and I am in a hurry/ to serve my lodgers/ cause they are working hard/ as they sunbathe/ I wish you long life/ and happy returns to 2 Mai/ we will be waiting for you/ to have a glass of wine/ and some fish brine/ and after that to drink some more/ cause that's how it is at the seaside/ we drink a glass or two/ and after that you go to the nudists/ and you look at the sky in sadness/ the sun entered the clouds/ and I finished everything!]⁶³

Victorița's poem translated into verse the everyday life in 2 Mai during the summertime. The poem included notes of irony as the author juxtaposed her busy routine to the leisure activities of her guests. Drinking, sunbathing, nudism, and the tourists' favorite dishes were all mentioned in a funny manner. Though there appeared to be a clear distinction between the activities of the poet and those of her guests, they came together over a glass of wine, a gesture that implied sharing the common space, dissolution of gender and social hierarchies, and storytelling. Furthermore, Victorița's cooking skills were famous and in high demand. News of her poem circulated and she was asked to recite it several times to different audiences.⁶⁴ Some tourists wanted to learn her recipes and she taught them how to cook fish soup, a skill they

⁶² Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, December/March, 2003-2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 19.

⁶³ The poem's rhythm and rhyme are lost in the English translation.

⁶⁴ Victorița Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, December/March, 2003-2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 19.

carried over in their diasporic lives. The postcards she received from the United States from former lodgers always end with a quote from the recipe, a detail that does not fail to bring tears to Victorița's eyes.⁶⁵ Community ties were forged along everyday rituals such as preparation and sharing of food. They were not dissolved by distance or the passage of time but instead took new forms and cemented their meaning. For the former lodgers now living in the United States, 2 Mai and Victorița stood for the cherished memory of one of the most beloved places in their country of origin.

The dynamics of power were not unilateral, and hosts could end suddenly the relationship with their guests. Victorița recalled asking some clients to leave at once when they took the liberty to raid her garden and mistakenly picked the vegetables she had kept for seeds.⁶⁶ In Victorița's view, such a gesture equaled theft because it jeopardized future crops. She freely offered her clients vegetables, but it was she who decided which ones. In this case, through an apparent benign gesture of walking in the garden and picking up vegetables, tourists transgressed property lines, the limits of hospitality, and challenged Victorița's role as provider and household manager. Coana Manda of Vama Veche also managed her household with a strong hand, openly manifesting her preference for those tourists who paid more.⁶⁷ Coana Manda's house was rented to vacationers from Babeș Bolyai University, but her best rooms were allocated to the paying guests from Bucharest, such as Pepino who spent more time and money, while tourists from Cluj were given lower quality rooms and she imposed stricter discipline rules on them. The attitudes of Babușca, Tanti Cuța, Victorița, or Coana Manda spoke to the role of local women as gatekeepers and purveyors of this type of rural hospitality that served as a bridge between

⁶⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁷ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 112-113, and *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 71-75.

different worlds. Local male villagers, too, though in smaller numbers and different ways, participated in the process by peeling potatoes, cooking and serving their guests when their partners were indisposed, procuring basic items and fish, or by entertaining and providing a relaxed atmosphere which their guests could safely enjoy.

Stories and Storytellers

Vania, a handsome, athletic Lipovan fisherman captured the imagination and, allegedly, the hearts of many female tourists who visited 2 Mai.⁶⁸ Nina Cassian's special relationship with Vania has been detailed earlier in this chapter. Vania's notoriety stemmed from his connections with tourists from Bucharest. Popular with actors, artists, and writers, Vania procured fish for them and spent his nights partying alongside them.⁶⁹ The image of poet Virgil Mazilescu, dressed in a suit, with his trousers rolled up, wearing a tie and a briefcase, and holding a bottle of vodka in his hand, drinking together with Vania on one hot summer morning, made writer Călin Mihăilescu think that the two were so well-suited together that they could have been blood brothers.⁷⁰ Well positioned amongst the locals, Vania had grown up amongst the first tourists to 2 Mai, as his mother Irina Crontov was one of the first local residents to rent rooms in the early 1960s. Having been exposed to urban lifestyle etiquette and a great variety of people from a young age, it was not surprising that Vania acted as a link between tourists and villagers. He was not the only one.

⁶⁸ Ion Ioanid, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison] (Bucharest: Albatros, 1991-1996), vol. 5, 228.

⁶⁹ Vania is the name of a character, a fisherman, in Bujor Nedelcovici's novel, *Days of Sand*, published in 1979. The book was turned into a film, *Cliff Sands* (1983) in which Vania's character also appears. Since the book was set up and partially written in 2 Mai and the movie was filmed in the village, chances were that Vania's character was inspired by the villager.

⁷⁰ Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu, "Zarea Vămii la Doi Mai" [Vama Horizon at 2 Mai], in *Cum era? Cam așa...Amintiri din anii comunismului românesc* [How Was it? It Was Something Like This...Recollections from the Years of Romanian Communism], ed. Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2006).

An ethnic Tatar known as the black sheep of his family, Samir Soium was a lovely host for the Iași group of intellectuals. As a child, Samir had grown up surrounded by writers and academics. When some time later Luca Pițu encountered him, he noticed his transformation from an adolescent into a young adult. Samir confessed to Pițu that he had become a sort of a personality in 2 Mai and that nothing happened in the village without him knowing about it.⁷¹ The young Tatar had read and memorized Omar Khayam's poems which he quoted often; he had fallen in love with a young student in the philology department at the University of Bucharest whom he visited. Samir was friendly and well-liked by everyone. Șerban Anghelescu described him as a strange creature, intelligent, self-taught, who knew and flattered everybody.⁷² Anghelescu also explained that Samir was well versed in genealogy, knew the history of every family in the village, and often mediated relationships between the villagers.⁷³ Luca Pițu's wife, Ani, also portrayed Samir as a "hybrid" who had come into contact with a particular kind of society that could not assimilate him.⁷⁴ Some villagers also described Samir as a link between various communities; he kept tourists informed on village life and connected visitors from Bucharest and Iasi to one another. Many former tourists, who in time became his friends, attended his funeral in the winter of 2002.

Another famous character in 2 Mai well-known to the tourists was a former local Lipovan priest, nicknamed Father Garide.⁷⁵ He earned his moniker from fishing, frying, and selling *garizi*, a Black Sea variety of shrimp. Father Garide spent the little money he gathered this way

⁷¹ Pițu, *Însem(i)nările magistrului din Cajvana*, 92.

⁷² Șerban Anghelescu, interviewd by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 51.

⁷³ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewd by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 29.

⁷⁴ Ani Pițu, interviewd by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 51.

⁷⁵ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 51-52, and *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 15.

at the local pub, buying vodka. When there were no *garizi* to fish, he picked wild flowers and sold them to tourists. Father Garide took offense if offered charity; people who wanted to help him had to buy his flowers and offer them to their loved ones on the spot, or else he would not accept the donation. Many stories circulated about Father Garide. Some said that he had served the local Lipovan congregation but drank the money his parishioners collected for building a church.⁷⁶ The community forgave him and for a while Father Garide continued to perform religious services in a private residence, dressed in civilian clothes, since he had sold his religious dress as well. Perhaps Father Garide would have continued carrying out his canonical duties, had it not been for his selling of the handmade towels which the Lipovans used to adorn their icons.⁷⁷ As the story goes, a woman from 2 Mai saw the priest selling the towels at the market in Mangalia and notified the village which complained to the religious authorities about this horrendous deed, but not his spending of the money for building the church. In the closely knit Lipovan community, money carried little symbolic value, whereas each of the handmade towels carried a legacy of its own. For example, some could have originated in an old dowry chest and been bequeathed to the church. At a time when materials, colouring, and sewing was all handmade, the final product required months to be completed. Lastly, the fact that these items were meant to adorn the church and please divine forces imbued them with a sacred meaning which made them priceless.

News, events, gossip, and rumours circulated in 2 Mai and Vama Veche by word of mouth. The hosts gathered together and recounted cheerfully what their guests had done during

⁷⁶ In her recollections about 2 Mai, “Un Saint-Tropez fara jandarmi, interviu cu Nora Iuga” [A Saint-Tropez Without Gendarmes, Interview with Nora Iuga], *Cultura*, no 344, 12 October 2011; Nora Iuga also mentions the priest who drank the money for the construction of the church. The ruins of the unfinished church were still visible in the 1980s.

⁷⁷ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 51

the previous day.⁷⁸ Since most tourists were long term clients, they enquired about the host's family, and received daily updates on village life.⁷⁹ Certain local institutions such as the barber shop were known as epicentres of local gossip. Information about future arrivals and the private lives of the tourists circulated fast, mediated by the skilful hairdresser, whom people visited not only for haircuts but also to receive the latest community news.⁸⁰ In an era when the most popular media --radio--was highly censored and regulated, and in a locality with only one public telephone post, orality remained at the heart of village life.⁸¹ Who did what was a source of amusement for both villagers and tourists whose lives were intertwined during the summer season: hosts participated in their guests' parties, listened to the stories they told, and shared their own memories and experiences.⁸² The story of Volodea recounted by Francois Pamfil to his friend Cristian Pepino and shared by the latter in his memoirs, illustrates this dynamic of shared life experiences.⁸³ One day, Pamfil was sitting on the beach at the fishery in 2 Mai when a Lipovan fisherman named Volodea approached him and offered, in exchange for a cigarette, to tell the story of the accident in which he had lost his fingers. According to his version of events, a fish goddess was caught in his net and when he tried to liberate it, the fish bit off his fingers. Doubting the story, Pamfil asked another fisherman about the incident. Vasia laughed and explained that one winter Volodea had travelled to the market in Mangalia to sell some smoked fish and spent all his money getting drunk. On his way back, the horse wagon overturned, and Volodea fell into a ditch full of snow. The smart horse went home, but Volodea slept in the snow, and believing he was in bed, placed his hand in the snow as if holding the pillow. When he

⁷⁸ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 48.

⁷⁹ Liiceanu, *Prin perdeaua* [Through the Curtain], 129.

⁸⁰ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 40-41.

⁸¹ Paul Drogeanu interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 30.

⁸² Vintilă Mihăilescu, interviewed by Miruna Tircă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 54.

⁸³ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 155-156.

awoke, he realized that both horse and wagon were gone and slapped his hands in desperation. At that moment, his frozen fingers were severed from the hand. Fantastic elements were a familiar trope in cautionary tales told by fishermen. In both stories, the weather is a dangerous element not to be messed with. Human frailties aside, these stories conveyed to the listener another side of village life and spoke about the harsh conditions that most tourists were unaware of.

Storytelling was a highly appreciated skill that turned the storyteller into a performer, similar to a musician.⁸⁴ Stories, jokes, anecdotes, pieces of memories, and histories about older times were everyone's favorite pastime, thus further strengthening community ties between locals and guests. For the tourists, the stories provided a way into the local community life, rituals and challenges. Accounts told by tourists connected hosts and the village to the world. This was a mutual exchange of knowledge and a way of making sense of the past and facing the present through the use of cultural references and idioms that could easily slip by the regime's vigilance. In the story of the fisherman with severed fingers, the central element is the dangerous combination of winter and alcohol consumption. The illegal practice of selling fish directly at the public market and not at the local cooperative as regulations imposed, goes unnoticed. Irrespective of content, stories speak about agency and how various groups and individuals negotiated their position within the community and vis-a-vis an ever more restrictive political regime. Paul Drogeanu believed that there were so many legends and stories about the villagers and tourists of 2 Mai that they could easily fill a book.⁸⁵ That no one wrote such a book, argues Drogeanu, spoke to the fact that people never theorized 2 Mai and Vama Veche as a phenomenon, but simply lived the experience of being there, acknowledging its differences,

⁸⁴ Aurelian Trișcu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 78.

⁸⁵ Paul Drogeanu interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 83.

particularities, and charm but stopping short of further analysis. Such an analysis would have been problematic during the socialist era. After the fall of the communist regime, the rapid pace of development, construction, urbanization, and gentrification altered the social fabric of the village and community life and switched the focus of the discourse to environmental preservation.

In his second volume of souvenirs about Vama Veche, Cristian Pepino included a section about the stories that were told and that he heard in Vama Veche.⁸⁶ Some were first-hand accounts recounting events from the narrator's life; others were anecdotes, jokes, or tales heard from various people. An example of an entertaining and popular story of the time regarded the performance of *Cenacul Flacăra* in Constanța.⁸⁷ According to Pepino who claimed to have witnessed the event, the presenter, poet Adrian Păunescu, asked a member of the audience to translate the name of the show into Turkish. The person replied using a foul Turkish word, and Păunescu and the audience started to shout.⁸⁸ Completely ignorant of its meaning, the socialist press reported on the event and quoted the word.⁸⁹ Versions of the story claimed that Ceaușescu's name was also used in association with the Turkish word.⁹⁰ The exact succession of events is difficult to trace but the joke played by the spectator on Păunescu and the communist

⁸⁶ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 133-181.

⁸⁷ *Cenacul Flacăra* was a cultural movement patronized by the Romanian socialist state between 1973 and 1985. Led by poet Adrian Păunescu, it organized shows and concerts which, although considered non-conformist by comparison to the official entertainment, promoted Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality and the ideology of national communism.

⁸⁸ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 161-163. The Turkish words used were "benim boc," and translate into "my shit."

⁸⁹ Nicolae Constantin Munteanu, dissident, anchor and editor at Radio Free Europe remembers reading the Romanian communist press attentively to gather content for his radio show, *Actualitatea românească* [Romanian Actuality]. He, too, quoted the Turkish words as he read them in *Flacăra* [The Flame], a weekly, literary magazine. See his reflections, "Spinoasa problemă a surselor" [The Troublesome Issue of Sources], *Dilema Veche*, no. 212, 9 March 2008, <https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/articol/spinoasa-problema-a-surselor-537i-a>.

⁹⁰ "Păunescu-Boc, un incident uitat. Ce l-a făcut pe Ceaușescu să închidă Cenacul Flacăra" [Păunescu-Boc, a Forgotten Incident. What Made Ceausescu Shut Down Cenacul Flacăra], *DC News*, 9 November 2010, https://www.dcnews.ro/paunescu-boc-un-incident-uitat-ce-l-a-facut-pe-ceausescu-sa-inchida-cenacul-flacara_19655.html.

regime was real. A closer reading of the stories presented by Pepino finds that their common trait was humour. Some of them included direct critical references to the communist regime, while others only alluded to particular aspects, such as language.⁹¹ The storytellers coagulated communities and their stories can be seen as an exercise in power, of authority, legitimacy, and resistance.⁹² Irrespective of their set-up, location, historical period, narrator, and participants, the stories included in a separate section of Pepino's memoirs attest to the widespread critique of the communist regime, and testified to the great variety of strategies used to voice it.⁹³

Radio Waves

Pepino's recollections about the village of Vama Veche mentioned Matriona, an ethnic Lipovan, who listened to Radio Free Europe (RFE) broadcasts. Matriona's house in Vama Veche was not connected to the electricity grid of the village, but she had a radio with batteries which she used only to listen to RFE transmissions.⁹⁴ Matriona switched on her radio every evening, and when Noel Bernard addressed the audience with "Good evening, esteemed listeners!" she stopped her work, bowed, and answered: "Good evening, mister Noel Bernard!" Radio waves carried Matriona away, from her remote village in isolated Romania, into the Western world. Her personal greeting addressed to the voice of Noel Bernard underlined Matriona's consideration for

⁹¹ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 141-145, 157-157.

⁹² Ibid, 262.

⁹³ One story speaks about the strategies used to subvert official economical resources for the manufacture of consumer goods which were then sold on the black market (133-135). Another story is set up in Bolshevik Russia at the time of the Civil War (1918-1921) (137-141). One of Pepino's personal memories talks about the communist regime's investment in the arts, more specifically about the effort of bringing theatre to the rural environment and staging amateur performances with workers and peasants (146-154). Another recollection talks about the challenges of organizing a New Years' party which culminated with the imitation of Ceaușescu's discourses (163-168). One story exemplifies the subversion of the official discourse in a successful attempt to fend off the socialist police, the *miliția* (174-177). Another memory describes the disillusionment of a French socialist when Pepino detailed the difficult life of Romanians in 1985 (177-178). The last tale is about the challenging times of the twentieth century in Romanian and their impact on individual destinies (178-181).

⁹⁴ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 119-120.

the radio station as an entity, since Bernard was known mainly as the director of RFE's Romanian Department and only had one regular weekly show, the Week's Editorial.

Similar to cooking or storytelling, the virtual radio waves created a space of connectivity and multiplicity. The silent voices of ordinary listeners of all backgrounds and émigré anchors from Western Europe, writers, historians, analysts, and dissidents, who dared to speak truth to power, came together in a continuous flow of information that kept Romania connected to the world even in its darker moments, while exposing its people to a different set of ideas and values than the ones propagated by the country's socialist press.⁹⁵ Pepino did not witness Matriona's devotion to RFE directly, but was told about it by his friend, Francois Pamfil, who lodged in Matriona's house.⁹⁶ Listening to foreign radio broadcasts was a widespread practice during late communism in Romania. Andrei Ursu also remembered abandoning beach activities to listen to RFE's news bulletins with his father.⁹⁷ Ion Ioanid, who lodged with the Iordan family in 2 Mai, recounted how, following the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, his host wanted to take out an old Telefunken radio that he failed to declare to the authorities, install it in the courtyard and tune in to RFE frequencies to listen to the news bulletin.⁹⁸ Only the persistent voices of his wife and guest, who feared denunciation and prosecution, convinced him to install the radio set inside Ioanid's room and thus limit exposure. However, the explosive situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was everyone's concern, and people came together on the village's streets to comment on the events openly, out-loud, and without fear. This example illustrates that at times, the rural set-up allowed for more freedom, a different lifestyle, and more permissive norms of social

⁹⁵ Ruxandra Petrinca, "Radio waves, memories, and the politics of everyday life in socialist Romania: The case of Radio Free Europe," *Centaurus*, 61, no. 3 (2019): 178-199.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁹⁷ Armand Gosu, "Andrei Ursu: Cazul Gheorghe Ursu. SRI a ascuns crimele Securității" [Andrei Ursu: Gheorghe Ursu's Case. Romanian Intelligence Service Hid the Crimes of the Securitate], *Revista 22* (Bucharest), July 7, 2006. <https://revista22.ro/interviu/andrei-ursu-cazul-gheorghe-ursu-sri-a-ascuns-crimele-securitatii>.

⁹⁸ Ioanid, *Inchisoarea noastra cea de toate zilele* [Our Daily Prison], vol. V, 230.

cohabitation than urban locations. This is not to say that the socialist state relinquished control over the countryside, but simply that state intervention and coercion were manifested differently than they would have been in an urban setting.

Urbanization

In the 1980s, Romania's communist regime embarked on an urbanization campaign that saw the large-scale construction of apartment buildings and the systematization of urban and rural areas.⁹⁹ As a result, the policy of modernization - directed towards the well-being of the masses, but also towards social and economic control and planning - altered the landscape and transformed social norms. Smaller villages deemed economically inefficient were to be demolished, their inhabitants moved to apartment buildings closer to factories and collective farms, and their former settlements turned into farmland.¹⁰⁰ The systematization program, which encompassed all these reforms, intensified during the last years of Ceaușescu's rule, yet cultural references from the previous "bourgeois" times persisted, as far as leisure activities were concerned. The old habit of visiting the countryside or vacationing in villages, which was initially based on lack of financial resources and insufficient tourist infrastructure to cover demand, turned into a quest to enjoy the increasingly threatened and fast dissolving pastoral landscape and a communal way of life for which there was little room in the newly erected

⁹⁹ For an overview of Ceaușescu's systematization policy, see Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule* (Bucharest: Civic Academy Foundation, 1998), 208-220, and Georgeta Stoian Connor, "Rural Systematization: A Radical Campaign of Rural Planning under Ceausescu Regime in Romania," *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 8, no. 2 (February 2017): 15-20.

¹⁰⁰ Mamaia Village, another alternative seaside vacation destination for those with little appeal for organized forms of tourism, managed to survive the expansion of the famous Romanian resort with the same name. In 1989, allegedly following a personal order from Ceaușescu himself, the village was bulldozed and its inhabitants moved to the nearby industrial city of Năvodari. Post-socialist attempts to rebuild the village encountered little success as the resort continued to expand at an even more aggressive pace.

industrial, modern cities.¹⁰¹ Community life became fragmented as young village inhabitants craved the comfort of the modern cities. Caught between worlds, villagers and urban dwellers crossed paths in the summer on the dusty, unpaved roads of the villages in which life, for the most part, continued unsullied by the perks of modernity.

As construction sites mushroomed in the country during the entire socialist period, people felt the need to escape the urban setting and reconnect with nature and the rural environment. Two aspects need to be considered here. First, the quick pace of industrialization and factory building pushed village inhabitants to move to cities where working and living conditions were better but private space was smaller. However, most of them had grown up in villages, still had relatives or family there, and visited regularly. Secondly, urban dwellers, too, found their landscape altered by the new buildings which were often erected in lieu of former house neighborhoods. Thus, many found themselves relocated in apartment buildings after their old houses had been bulldozed. In this context, 2 Mai and Vama Veche offered a way out from the urban world, showcased the rustic, and connected people not only with nature but with an older way of life that they themselves had experienced or heard about from accounts of older generations. Aurora Liiceanu summoned up the experience: “we simply lived the difference.”¹⁰²

2 Mai, and Vama Veche, even more than other localities, retained their rustic character until well into the post-socialist era despite their large dimensions. In 1977, the township of Limanu had a surface of 6,175 hectares and a population of 4,321 inhabitants.¹⁰³ Most of the villages’ population was employed in agriculture, while some worked in tourism, or at the

¹⁰¹ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Miruna Țircă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Țircă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 52.

¹⁰² Liiceanu, *Prin perdeaua* [Through the Curtain], 130.

¹⁰³ Institutul Național de Statistică din România (INS), Direcția județeană de Statistică Constanța [The Romanian National Institute for Statistics, Constanta County Statistics Directorate], *Anuarul statistic al Județului Constanța 2009* [Statistical Yearbook 2009], “2.3 Populația pe localități, la recensămintele din 1966, 1977, 1992 și 2002” [Population by Localities at the 1966, 1977, 1992 and 2002 Censuses], 12

shipyard in Mangalia.¹⁰⁴ On its territory, the commune had one state farm belonging to I.A.S Mangalia, two collective farms, three tractor brigades, and one consumer cooperative containing 19 divisions, such as, stores, two postal offices, bars, and a barber shop.¹⁰⁵

The lure of the sea persisted in all its forms, including fisheries. Fishing, though practiced in an organized form and under the authority of the collective farm, was not a large scale activity in which many people participated. Despite its romantic evocation as a fishermen's village, most inhabitants of Vama Veche worked the land of the collective farms or their own gardens, and only a handful ventured out to sea.¹⁰⁶ Life at sea was perilous, a fact that even the sentimentalized description of a fisherman's life evoked by the socialist press could not hide.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to the agricultural sector, fishing did not guarantee a fixed return and the extra income that could be derived from the socialist black market where fish was sometimes sold came with its own set of dangers, as the following chapter will explain.

During the socialist period, tourism, too, could be a risky endeavour. Though only a seasonal activity meant to supplement the villagers' income, tourism came under the intense scrutiny of communist authorities who feared that association outside official networks and registered associations, as well as the concentration of luminaries in a small geographic area, could disrupt the well-being of socialist society. Details about state supervision of tourism-related activities will be provided in the following chapter, but in order to understand the

¹⁰⁴ Miroslav Tașcu-Stavre, *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste. O analiză a transformărilor din 2 Mai și Vama Veche* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition. An Analysis of the Transformations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche] (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2017), 142.

¹⁰⁵ National Archives of Romania, County Bureau of Constanta (DJCAN), Fond Limanu, File no. 307, 1968, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Gabriel Dobre, "Vama Veche nu mai e ce-a fost. Cum a devenit un sat de 15 case una dintre cele mai căutate stațiuni de pe litoralul românesc" [Vama Veche Is No Longer What It Used to Be. How a Village With 15 Houses Became One of the Most Popular Resorts on the Romanian Litoral], *DoR*, 8 July 2011, <https://www.dor.ro/vama-veche-dor3>.

¹⁰⁷ Gabriela Melinescu, Sânziana Pop, "Mergere pe apă. Reportaj" [Walking on Water. Reportage], *Luceafărul*, no. 25, 23 June 1973, 4-5.

methods and the particular set of challenges supervision of 2 Mai and Vama Veche posed, additional explanation of the physical organization of the dwellings forming the villages is necessary.

The Physical Organization of Space, Dwellings, and Community Life: Courtyards, Porches, Gardens and Orchards

The village of 2 Mai had a semi-urban structure due to the narrow fronts of the lots.¹⁰⁸ Most houses had a long garden. During the socialist era, some of these long gardens ended on the beach. The houses in 2 Mai faced the street on their short side. Courtyards were typically long and contained an arbour which connected the house to the entry gate. The neighboring houses also had their windows facing the yard, and this small architectural detail created an intimate space. The courtyard was divided between the space that was paved with earth or concrete and the adjacent spaces of the flower and vegetable gardens. The courtyard served as an extension of the house connecting adjacent, seasonal spaces that came to life during the summer: summer kitchen, barns, the fenced area for animals, the front garden, and the back garden. The yard was in fact the space where during the summer the villagers carried out most of their domestic and social activities. This type of household arrangement and layout facilitated the growth of rural tourism. By contrast, in Vama Veche, courtyard spaces were not at the centre of community life.¹⁰⁹

The difference between the two villages originated in the zoning regulations: the houses in Vama Veche were not allotted regular plots of land, and in time, the original lots were further

¹⁰⁸ Planwerk, *Comuna Limanu: Analiza tipologica si morfologica* [The Township of Limanu: A Typological and Morphological Analysis], 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9.

subdivided.¹¹⁰ Courtyards in Vama Veche were not homogenous as they grew around the house which did not always occupy a central position. The importance of the common area that was originally the courtyard was taken over in Vama Veche by the public beach which became the centre of social life especially during the post-socialist era. Concern for border security, coupled with Ceaușescu's increased paranoia and his obsession with the urban planning schemes designed to turn villages into smaller, urban industrial centres, led to the decision to demolish the villages of Hagieni and Vama Veche, in 1989.¹¹¹ Their inhabitants were to be relocated to new apartment buildings to be built in 2 Mai and Limanu.¹¹² When the decision was reached, in 1987, Vama Veche had 32 households and no restaurants, pubs, cafes, or stores.¹¹³ In contrast, 2 Mai had 360 households. Had it not been for the Revolution of 1989, the village of Vama Veche would have been erased, as the demolition works started in December that year.¹¹⁴ The decision to erase the village had been in the works for several years since, after 1985, the socialist state refused to issue any kind of construction permits to Vama Veche villagers in what can retrospectively be seen as the first phase for the destruction of the village.¹¹⁵ The interdiction to build permanent structures or develop existing structures had been in place for decades on account of safeguarding the border, but the villagers found ways to get around it by erecting temporary structures, like summer kitchens and sheds. During the 1970s, the local police, the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

¹¹¹ Gheorghe Vecerde, "Evoluția istorică a teritoriului și localităților" [The Historical Evolution of the Territory and Localities] *P.U.G. Limanu* (Planwerk, 2004), 4.

¹¹² Nota Cancelariei [Chancellery Note] C.C. al P.C.R. no. 125/4221 of 23 January 1987.

¹¹³ Feri, interviewed by Simina Guga, Vama Veche, 2005, quoted by Miroslav Tașcu-Stavre, in *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition], 161.

¹¹⁴ Ringier România, "Istoria incredibilă a celor mai populare stațiuni de pe litoralul românesc" [The Incredible History of the Most Popular Resorts of the Romanian Seashore], *Libertatea* (Bucharest), April 25, 2015, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/istoria-incredibila-a-celor-mai-populare-statiuni-de-pe-litoralul-romanesc-2-mai-a-fost-sat-de-castrati-iar-vama-veche-serparie-1141385>.

¹¹⁵ Siderii, interviewed by Simina Guga, Vama Veche, 2005, quoted by Miroslav Tașcu-Stavre, in *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition], 141.

miliția, turned a blind eye on smaller renovations, and the minimal furnished adobes became supplementary summer accommodation for tourists.¹¹⁶

Zoning, architecture, urban planning, and security regulations caused the two villages to evolve differently. Evolution entailed the creation of different forms of socializing, in different spaces (courtyards in 2 Mai and the beach in Vama Veche), which in turn shaped community life differently in both the socialist and the post-socialist periods. The extension of the Mangalia shipyard to the south towards the village of 2 Mai, which begun in 1974 and was completed in 1980, ate away a large part of the village's beach. The shrinking of the shores in 2 Mai resulted from the systematization of Mangalia during the 1970s, a project which entailed the construction of piers to flood the beach.¹¹⁷ Moreover, a large quantity of sand was taken from the beaches in 2 Mai and Vama Veche and transported to other construction sites in the county of Constanța. The road from Mangalia to 2 Mai also suffered several modifications, making access increasingly difficult. Initially, the two localities had been connected by a mobile bridge, but once construction works began, a detour of 15 km through the township of Limanu was put in place.¹¹⁸

Restricted access and deterioration of the beach did not translate into a decrease in the number of tourists; in fact, it had the opposite effect. In 1989, aware of the touristic potential of 2 Mai village, the National Institute for Research and Development of Tourism estimated that at least 3,100 accommodation spaces – single beds- could be made available for tourists.¹¹⁹ This is the highest official number on record since 1973 when the Institute proposed that 2 Mai be

¹¹⁶ Stelian Țurlea, "Roman Serial/Trei femei (VII).

¹¹⁷ Ion Alexoiu interviewed by Miruna Țîrcă, 2 Mai, 2003, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 10.

¹¹⁸ Liviu Papadima interviewed by Miruna Țîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 47.

¹¹⁹ ANIC, Fond 3432, file no. 10/1989, 41.

declared a touristic village alongside other 74 Romanian villages.¹²⁰ For security reasons the Ministry of Interior Affairs opposed the initiative but the Institute continued to monitor the influx of tourists to 2 Mai and the authorities' concern grew.

Rumors even began to circulate in the 1980s that 2 Mai, too, was scheduled for demolition.¹²¹ This was not merely idle gossip since the first blocks of flats were erected in the centre of Limanu and in 2 Mai village during the same period. In their quest for tranquility, wilderness, and desire to reclaim the lost shores, 2 Mai tourists developed the routine of frequenting the beach in Vama Veche.¹²² In the post-socialist period, as the beach in 2 Mai shrank even more, there was little space for the erection of new beach facilities such as bars. Some courtyards in the village were turned into restaurants. Landowners in Vama Veche - mostly newcomers, since most of the original inhabitants left the village in the late 1980s fearing its demolition - were eager to capitalize on the increase in the number of tourists and some transformed their households and yards into mini-campground structures and small hotels. The beach suffered a certain degree of erosion as constructions arose on the old, barren fields in its vicinity, the land plots were further subdivided, and the old gardens pushed slowly closer to the shore. However, since no industrial development affected the area, the process was slow, and the beach retained some of its wilderness. Restaurants and bars were built on the beach; they remained at the center of community life, even if stores and cafes opened and functioned around the clock on the village's main road. To date, Vama Veche's main street is not the national road that connects the village to the neighboring country of Bulgaria or the village of 2 Mai, but a short, narrow street leading to the seashore, perpendicular to the national road.¹²³ By contrast, in

¹²⁰ ANIC, Fond 3432, file no. 31/1973, 53.

¹²¹ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 93

¹²² Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 41.

¹²³ Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 69.

2 Mai the main street runs parallel to the shore and coincides with the national road which had always been and remains the centre of village life.

The courtyard in 2 Mai attained and retained the status of an institution. It was a communal space where different groups met, shared food and enjoyed each other's company on the basis of mutual and at times tacit understanding. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey argued that the specificity of place derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations; she defined space as the product of interrelations, a sphere in which different individual and group trajectories coexist, and a continuous process.¹²⁴ Some yards had their own population, as several families of tourists travelled in groups during the same period every year and chose to stay with the same host, renting all available rooms for the time of their stay.¹²⁵ In this way, the courtyard was protected and tourists enjoyed a degree of freedom that was difficult to achieve in their usual domiciles where the fear of state supervision made most Romanians paranoid and especially careful in their daily interactions with neighbors and work colleagues.¹²⁶ Moreover, legal formalities in place at hotels, which required the presentation of identification documents and forbade the use of a room by couples who were not married, did not apply in 2 Mai and Vama Veche.¹²⁷

Friendship networks consolidated as tourists got the opportunity to meet new people but they did so mostly through recommendations from friends and acquaintances, because they knew

¹²⁴ Massey, *For Space*, 10,

¹²⁵ Liviu Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 89.

¹²⁶ Their fears had a solid base since in 1989 the Securitate employed 15,000 full-time officers and 150,000 active part-time informers in a population of 23 million. Impressive as they are, these numbers represented a fraction of all secret agents who operated during the socialist period, from 1945 to 1989, whose total exceeded 500,000. See Lavinia Stan, *Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Romania: The Politics of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lavinia Stan, "Moral Cleansing Romania Style," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 49, no. 4 (2002): 52-62.

¹²⁷ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 40; Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 53.

each other by sight from high school, or simply because they encountered the same familiar faces every year.¹²⁸ The courtyard was the place where guests ate, drank coffee, played cards, visited friends, gossiped, told stories, and organized parties. In the 1980s, the courtyard was also the place where, on special occasions such as an important football event, the hosts took out the TV set so that everyone could watch the game. It was also the place where those who did not want to pay for full accommodation installed their tents for a modest fee.¹²⁹ Alternatively, tourists who camped on the beach or in the campground would pay to have a number of meals cooked by hosts.¹³⁰ Up to 20 people could get together in a yard at peak times. At night, the courtyard turned into a place of socializing for those who lodged with the same host but did not know each other. Party invitations were also circulated by courtyards, as groups that stayed in a particular location invited over friends who lodged with a different host and vice-versa.

The villagers relinquished the use of most of their yards to the tourists for leisure activities while they retired to smaller spaces reserved for their exclusive, private use. The courtyard was thus kept clean for tourists to congregate, and animals were no longer allowed in to roam free everywhere.¹³¹ The courtyard contained several areas: the front yard, the main yard, and the back yard or the orchard, which in some parts of the village ended on the beach. Vegetation, consisting mostly of trees and flowers, was the most treasured element since it provided shade during the hot summer days, as well as a certain degree of privacy. At night the courtyard was lit by candles, flashlights, and gas lanterns. Illuminating the courtyard was not done for decoration or romantic intention but served the practical purpose of facilitating the

¹²⁸ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 22; Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 56.

¹²⁹ Aurelian Trișcu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 4.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹³¹ Ibid, 13.

guests' access to the outhouse. Ethnologist Irina Nicolau offered a colourful and ironic depiction of the discomfort created by the use of outhouses:

Imagine twenty seasonal lodgers, forty sheep, two donkeys and the owners living jointly. There could be no rules and the situation was best exemplified by the outhouse. You would only go there when you had no other choice, and you wanted to get out as soon as possible. On one occasion I spent three quarters of an hour in there. It was pouring cats and dogs...I left for the outhouse when it seemed the rain had abated, but it started to pour again and I had no choice but to remain inside. After five minutes, it occurred to me that I was paying for this...meaning I was paying to live in such [miserable] conditions.¹³²

Another element present in most yards was the well. Over time, villagers installed pumps and water reservoirs initially in the form of black painted metal barrels. Heated by the sun, these installations allowed tourists to take warm showers, a step forward from using a basin and mostly cold water for the purpose. A trough full of water in the garden served as sink and was designed for collective use.¹³³ To this day, some guest houses in 2 Mai and Vama Veche include these types of facilities even if most now have running water and inside bathrooms.

¹³² Irina Nicolau, *Talmeș balmes de etnologie și multe altele* [Mish Mash of Ethnology and Much More] (Bucharest: Ars Docendi, 2001), 99-100.

¹³³ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 26.



Figure 3.2: Typical old house from 2 Mai in the 1980s photographed by Viorel Simionescu.¹³⁴

The porch was a transitional space that connected the house with the yard.¹³⁵ Most traditional houses in 2 Mai included this architectural element which was very much appreciated by the tourists. The porch was populated by flowers and grapevines and ensured a degree of thermal comfort.¹³⁶ In time, in order to enlarge their house, most villagers closed their porches,

¹³⁴ Used with permission from the author.

¹³⁵ For an overview of traditional architectural elements of the region, see Ordinului Arhitecților din România, *Ghid de arhitectură pentru încadrarea în specificul local din mediul rural. Zona Dobrogea de Sud* [Architectural Guide for Respecting Local Specificity in Rural Environments. Southern Dobrogea Region], 2016, file:///C:/Users/ROXI/Downloads/ghid_de_arhitectura_zona_dobrogea_de_sud_pdf_1510848334.pdf.

¹³⁶ Camelia Pârjol, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 40-41.

much to the chagrin of their guests, some of whom decided to remain loyal to those hosts who did not follow the trend.¹³⁷ Ethnologist Ioana Popescu explained the appeal:

Tudorița [our first host] had the advantage of a very large garden as well as a deep and large porch. Generally, people [hosts] began to close their porches and even dismantle them. They began to store various things [on the porch], [in which case] the porches became sheds, and you had to sneak through all those things to enter your room. Tudorița had preserved it [the porch], and that was something wonderful, because you gained access to the three rooms from the porch, so you would have three families or three groups of friends each with its table placed on the porch. And it was as if we had the entire house for us; with the porch sheltering us from rain, we felt outside and inside the house at the same time.¹³⁸

Equally important for the urban dweller used to life in crowded, concrete apartment buildings were gardens and orchards. These spaces had multiple roles. They ensured a connection with nature and acted as a transitory space linking the seashore with rural life, providing refuge from the heat, and ensuring a flow of fresh produce of critical importance for the economic survival of the household. During the socialist era, Romanian agriculture was mostly collectivized but peasants were allowed to retain ownership over the plots of land surrounding their households, cultivate it, and sell the surplus if they so chose. For this reason, most rural residences had large gardens and orchards; inhabitants used every inch of land to

¹³⁷ Ioana Popescu interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in Tîrcă, *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 41.

¹³⁸ Ioana Popescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 22.

grow various small crops and plants, and also raised poultry and a small number of farm animals. Rural household surplus proved extremely valuable during the last years of the Ceaușescu regime when most food stores remained empty and people spent much of their spare time chasing food and waiting for hours in long lines to acquire even the most basic products such as milk or toilet paper. Inhabitants of 2 Mai who rented rooms to tourists and cooked for their guests used the resources at hand, mostly their own crops. In the post-socialist era, the villagers extended their accommodation facilities, and did so at the expense of their yards, gardens, and orchards. The principles of the post-socialist era of laissez faire economics and a void in legislation coupled with the fiscal authorities' disinterest in knowing the exact number of tourists, dictated that it was more lucrative to build an extra small room and rent it during the summer, than to cultivate and sell a small quantity of tomatoes.¹³⁹

During the socialist era, camping on the beach in Vama Veche was forbidden and the interdiction was strictly enforced. In the 1970s, the Babeș Bolyai University started renting most of the available rooms in the village to lodge its personnel. Tourists looking to spend time in the village did so by placing tents in the locals' yards, gardens, and orchards.

Families with children preferred to stay with a host and enjoy basic amenities, while young people and students found camping more suited to their needs. Staying in the tent was cheaper and for some provided a degree of freedom and privacy that staying with a host could not offer. Norms, limitations, and a certain degree of interference existed both on the beach and in the villagers' homes, but overall lodging with a host implied a degree of crowdedness that some wanted to avoid.¹⁴⁰ That 2 Mai became too crowded was often cited by some as the reason

¹³⁹ Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 51-52.

¹⁴⁰ Liviu Papadima and Șerban Angheliescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 14-15.

for their moving to the even wilder setting of Vama Veche.¹⁴¹ As early as 1975, Nina Cassian complained about the influx of tourists to 2 Mai, and feared that they came to see the celebrities vacationing there rather than to appreciate the beauty of the landscape.¹⁴² Cassian explained that for this reason she preferred the company of the locals to that of other tourists. In the short interview she gave to *Litoral* magazine in 1975, Cassian expressed appreciation for the hospitality offered by her host, whom she describes as an “old and wise country woman.” To this day, 2 Mai caters to the needs of families with children offering a more tranquil environment in which people congregate in the courtyards, children have more space to play, expenses are generally lower, and tourists spend more time at the seaside than those lodging in the neighboring Vama Veche.¹⁴³ From one of the remotest and poorest villages in Romania, from the late 1990s onward, Vama Veche became a hub for night life and weekend parties, as well as one of the most expensive seaside “resorts” in Romania.

¹⁴¹ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 68.

¹⁴² Arcadie Strahilevici, “Dialog cu Nina Cassian: « La 2 Mai voi fi pe 5 iulie »” [Dialogue with Nina Cassian: “I will be in 2 Mai from 5 of July”], *Litoral* (Constanta), June 7, 1975.

¹⁴³ Vintilă Mihăilescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 24.



Figure 3.3: Typical old house in Vama Veche.¹⁴⁴

Politics of Landscape - Spatiality, State Intervention, Temporality

Three elements explain the different development of the two villages, their respective communities, and distinctive forms of tourism: spatiality, state intervention, and temporality. Historians Thomas Bender and Craig Calhoun, who regard community as a socio-historical process, have employed the sociological concept of communal social networks to explain the dynamics of change over time.¹⁴⁵ Community, some argued, was based on an interactional

¹⁴⁴ Photo taken by Planwerk Cluj in 2005 and published in Viorica Buică, “Vama Veche: Un nou Pug” [Vama Veche: A New General Urban Plan], Igloo, 30 June 2005, <https://www.igloo.ro/vama-veche-un-nou-pug>.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 58-59, Craig Calhoun, “Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research,” *Social History*, 5, no. 1 (1980): 105-129.

foundation that sprang from certain specifiable conditions associated with place: propinquity, population stability, and continuous interaction patterns.¹⁴⁶ A high frequency of interaction fomented a density of acquaintanceship characterized by depth of knowing, shared memories, and intergenerational attachments.¹⁴⁷ Vintilă Mihăilescu used the term “courtyard tourism” to describe hospitality in 2 Mai.¹⁴⁸ At its core, courtyard tourism was based on the trust between the host and loyal customers, a relationship that was strengthened by the courtyard, which was a space of socializing where people’s daily interactions developed into friendships.

In contrast, tourism in Vama Veche centered on the beach, as tourists from the neighboring village flowed to the shores here, especially during the 1980s when the beach in 2 Mai narrowed. State intervention manifested aggressively in Vama Veche through regulations concerning Romania’s border, and the decision to wipe out the settlement.¹⁴⁹ The Decree no. 678 of 1969 regarding the security of the national frontier essentially blocked the emergence and development of a form of tourism similar to the one in 2 Mai, and the small number of existing accommodations was taken over by the Babeş Bolyai University employees’ summer camp. While 2 Mai was also subject to legal restrictions on account of the border’s proximity, tourists were allowed access and short-time residence in the village, and the communist state permitted and encouraged the development of infrastructure. Access to Vama Veche remained restricted for most of the socialist era and the village also lacked any kind of municipal infrastructure such as a sewage system or stores. In addition, anticipating the village’s dissolution, the local

¹⁴⁶Paul J. Lavrakas and Stephanie Riger, “Community Ties: Patterns of Attachment and Social Interaction in Urban Neighborhoods,” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9, no.1 (1981): 55-66; William F. Stinner, Mollie Van Loon, Seh-Woong Chung and Yongchan Byun, “Community Size, Individual Social Position, and Community Attachment,” *Rural Sociology*, 55, no. 4 (1990): 494-521; Graham Gay and Jonathan Murdoch, “Locality and Community: Coming to Terms with Place,” *Sociological Review* 41, no. 1 (1993): 82 – 111.

¹⁴⁷William R. Freudenburg, “Social Impact Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 12, no. 1 (1986): 451-478.

¹⁴⁸ Vintilă Mihăilescu, ed, *Societatea Reală* [Real Society], vol. III (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005), 73.

¹⁴⁹ Decree no. 678/1969 on the security of the state frontier of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and Communist Party of Romania, Central Committee Chancellery Note, No 125/4221 of 23 January 1987.

population began to leave the settlement voluntarily; in 1989 only a small number of households were still permanently inhabited.¹⁵⁰ During the 1990s, inhabitants of Vama Veche still lacked touristic infrastructure and were unprepared for the ever increasing number of tourists. Camping directly on the beach became the norm. Tourists traveled in groups, relied on self-management of resources, and were generally self-sufficient. The beach thus became the central location around which further development of the village took place chaotically and in the absence of urban planning norms.

State intervention translated into different economic and security policies developing a basic level of touristic infrastructure in 2 Mai while curtailing and almost demolishing Vama Veche. Because of its geographical position, Vama Veche had been a frontier hamlet. Over time, during the twentieth century, the original inhabitants of Gagauz ethnicity moved out voluntarily, were forcefully displaced, or passed away. The communist state limited the movement of people into the village, as well as its economic development.¹⁵¹ In the early 1990s, villagers in Vama Veche still relied on subsistence agriculture and only marginally on income derived from seasonal touristic activities.¹⁵² In contrast, the village of 2 Mai benefited from its proximity to the city of Mangalia, the legacy of Balçic and Mangalia interwar niche tourism, and a steady rise in the number of tourists due to the return of Balçic to Bulgaria in 1940, and the massive urbanization campaign which transformed the city of Mangalia and its surrounding beach

¹⁵⁰ Miroslav Taşcu-Stavre, Cristian Bănică, “Old and New in Vama Veche and 2 Mai,” *Urbanism. Architecture. Constructions* 5, no. 3 (2014): 77.

¹⁵¹ The census of 1936 indicated that at the time, Vama Veche had 187 inhabitants. It is its greatest population during the twentieth century, one that was not surpassed until 2011. The census of 2002 still showed a slightly lower figure of 178 inhabitants. The population of 2 Mai was tenfold higher. According to the Census of 1982, 1,881 people lived in the village. Census data showed a significant decrease, of more than 10 percent, in the number of inhabitants from the previous census which took place five years earlier. The census of 1977 indicated that the village of 2 Mai had 2100 inhabitants.

¹⁵² Miroslav Taşcu-Stavre, *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition], 149-169.

completely, from 1959 until the late 1970s. Communist authorities and city planners linked 2 Mai to Mangalia by expanding the shipyard from the city's outskirts to the limits of the village and by establishing two large collective farms whose role was to supply Mangalia and its newly built resorts with fresh produce. Development of 2 Mai started in the early 1960s.¹⁵³ The village benefitted from investments in local infrastructure which saw the construction of a restaurant, a campground, a summer camp for pioneers with a capacity of 105 places, a local market, a post office, and even a barber shop.¹⁵⁴ By 1985 the socialist press noted that there was room for improvement, calling for the opening of new facilities that were badly needed on account of the rising number of tourists: a pharmacy, a newsstand, and a fresh produce store.¹⁵⁵

Continuity, steady development, population increase, and more lax regulations in 2 Mai allowed for the emergence of a communal relationship between hosts and tourists. For many, 2 Mai became a second home during the summer, and multiple generations continued to visit the same host family and its descendants for decades. The twentieth century brought several waves of population movements to 2 Mai, but by the 1960s the population had stabilized. By contrast, Vama Veche renewed its population almost completely in the 1990s. In the first years after the Revolution, when camping on the beach was no longer restricted, tourists formed a different type of community in Vama Veche, one based on the hippie model, since living on a beach with restrictive access to basic commodities, water, or wood, required active group cooperation.¹⁵⁶ The tourists in Vama Veche were young, single, 20-30 year olds while those who stayed in 2 Mai were married, older, and often travelled with their extensive families. Both communities

¹⁵³ The township's archive indicates that the summer camp for pioneers functioned in 2 Mai in 1965. Fond Limanu, File no. 274, 1965, 44.

¹⁵⁴ The Pioneer Organization was a social structure for children operated by the communist party. Typically children entered into the organization in elementary school and continued until adolescence.

¹⁵⁵ Mihai Macarie, "Actul turistic, calitate si eficienta. Revalorificarea unor sollicitate locuri de popas" [Tourism: Quality and Efficacy. Revaluation of Popular Tourist Stops], *Litoral* (Constanta), August 14, 1985.

¹⁵⁶ Taşcu-Stavre, *Abordări instituționale* [Institutional Approaches], 167-168.

continued their established practices, based on their main constituting element, the courtyard versus the beach. However, while development in 2 Mai centered on the existing infrastructure, in the late 1990s Vama Veche saw an explosion in the number of tourist and beach-related activities. Cohesion, urban planning, and the adoption of regulations emerged slowly at the beginning of the twenty-first century.¹⁵⁷ The label of freedom that had been associated with Vama Veche since the 1970s stemmed from lack of infrastructure, minimal regulations, and living in immediate proximity to the sea. Cristian Pepino explained the fascination of socialist-raised generations for Vama Veche: “it was a place of freedom, a wild space, on the fringe of society; this was its charm. There were people singing on the beach, which was officially prohibited.”¹⁵⁸ The benchmark of socialization, and ultimately the essence of Vama Veche, to this day is still to be found on the beach.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ In his compelling analysis of the transformations in 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the post-communist transition, *Abordări instituționale în studiul tranziției postcomuniste* [Institutional Approaches for the Study of Post-Communist Transition], Miroslav Tașcu-Stavre divides the evolution of Vama Veche into three stages: relative stagnation during 1990-1996, radical transformation in 1996-2003, and regulation after 2003.

¹⁵⁸ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 21.

¹⁵⁹ Mihăilescu, ed., *Societatea Reală* [Real Society], vol. III, 73.



Figure 3.4: The beach in Vama Veche during the 1980s.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

Though located at the edge of Romania, in its southern part, 2 Mai and Vama Veche were the crossroad where various communities of artists, writers, painters, musicians, actors, and white-collar workers alongside their hosts of Romanian, Lipovan and Turkish-Tatar ethnicities coexisted for the duration of the summer season. Tourists and their hosts shared space and resources, and engaged in cultural exchanges. In time, as the same tourists lodged with the same

¹⁶⁰ Image published in the Foto Center section of *Adevărul* (Bucharest), February 25, 2015, and credited to Michael Toma Facebook, accessed 3 May 2021, https://adevarul.ro/locale/constant/vama-veche-farmecul-altadata-prezentul-zgomotos-7_54edfac8448e03c0fdb80d4/index.html.

host families, 2 Mai or Vama Veche became a second home, and the local owners, a second family. Villagers, too, integrated their long-term guests into their family structure. Activities such as cooking and storytelling connected locals and tourists while hospitality expanded to include a degree of familiarity difficult to find in other places. State intervention led to different evolutions of the two villages. In this chapter, the physical elements of space and architecture served as pillars for analyzing the various layers that make “community.” While this chapter described general forms of state intervention, mainly regulations, urban planning, infrastructure, and their impact on different communities and distinct forms of tourism in 2 Mai and Vama Veche, the next chapter will detail particular, individual forms of state intervention. Communist authorities actively engaged in supervising locals and tourists, inadvertently strengthening the ties between them. Both categories responded differently to various layers of regulations and levels of supervision, and herein lies part of the explanation for the freedom associated with these villages.

Chapter 4

Supervision, Transgression, and Co-Habitation: The Secret Lives of Liminal Spaces¹

Introduction

This chapter expands the analysis of village life to include the voice of state agents and aspects of everyday life in other domains, such as economic exchanges, agriculture and the collective farms. The files of the former secret police preserved at and The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) offer a “state view” insight into the everyday life of the tourists and local inhabitants of 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the socialist period. As a border zone with touristic potential, these villages were targeted by the Securitate for collective surveillance. As a result, the villages had their own “institutional file,” which comprised analyses and informers’ reports related to the sites relevant to Securitate work such as the collective farms, school, pre-communist political organizations, ethnic communities, and last but not least, tourism. Information about village life, lists of secret informers and reports on their activity, and records of local mischief and incidents that Securitate agents believed could pose a threat to national security were also included in the file.

Exploring critical elements of the local economy of the villages, other than but in close connection to tourism, provides a multilayered understanding as to why the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were able to foster a particular kind of freedom, difficult to experience elsewhere. Located in close proximity to Mangalia and various seaside resorts (Saturn, Venus) the workforce in the villages of the township of Limanu left the agricultural sector in search of better

¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “liminal” signifies: “characterized by being on a boundary or threshold, especially by being transitional or intermediate between two states, situations, etc.”

paid jobs in the tourist industry or at the shipyard, in Mangalia. The large collective farms in the township of Limanu were thus forced to import workers from other counties and their stability was precarious. In addition, as the villages were also on the border, they faced a flow of traffic to and from Bulgaria and further on, Turkey. Moreover, the summer brought an influx of tourists either as visitors, or in transit to other parts of the country. All of these elements posed challenges to the work of the Securitate, and it is not surprising that state agents claimed they lacked personnel to keep up with the constant movements of people.

This chapter also examines the relationship between the state and its agents: the police known at the time as *miliția*, the Securitate, the border patrol, and the population of the area, both permanent and seasonal. For the most part, the narrative follows the voice of the “authority,” and its various representatives actively engaged in supervising the local inhabitants and their seasonal guests. I explore surveillance and its multiple layers: the locals’ dealings with the Securitate through the local police, those who were working with and for the secret police, and those who were under surveillance and could not be trusted by the socialist state and why. I also look at tourists who were supervised by the secret police, the border patrol and its interference with tourists’ routines, and the occasional control activities undertaken by the revenue agency which pursued locals engaged in the hospitality industry for tax evasion. I define surveillance broadly, as an activity that “involves the collection and analysis of information about populations in order to govern their activities.”¹

Lastly, this chapter discusses the working mechanisms and limitations of Securitate work, the various surveillance practices, socialist realities such as consumerism and the black market,

¹ Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 11.

as well as particular examples labelled as case studies which recount individual transgressions of villagers and occasionally of their guests, as recorded in the Securitate file.

The Department of State Security (Securitate), the Secret Police of the Socialist Republic of Romania

Established in 1948, *Securitatea*, the Romanian political police closely mirrored its Soviet counterpart, the KGB. The institution's official aim was to defend "the democratic achievements, the guarantee of the security of the Romanian People's Republic, against the machinations of enemies from within and without."¹ In 1951, internal memos of the Romanian secret police ordered that whole categories of people be automatically placed under surveillance and personal files be kept on them; these potentially dangerous individuals ranged from members of pre-communist political parties and state dignitaries to people with relatives abroad.² From 1964 to 1989 psychological terror replaced, for the most part, physical violence which was used only in exceptional cases. Psychological terror entailed the organization of a formidable network of informers, the development of a system of mass distraction and disinformation, as well as threats and blackmail.³

This chapter uses as a primary source the three volumes of the Limanu file, personal (informative) Securitate files of people cited in it, files of writers known to have frequented 2 Mai and Vama Veche, Securitate documentary files referring to the Romanian-Bulgarian

¹ Decretul nr. 221 din 28.08.1948 pentru înființarea și organizarea Direcției Generale a Securității Poporului [Decree no. 221 of 28 August 1948 for the establishment and organization of the General Directorate of People's Security].

² Cristina Anisescu, Silviu B. Moldovan, Mirela Matiu eds., *Partiturile Securității: directive, ordine, instrucțiuni (1947-1987)* [The "Scores" of the Informer Network: Directives, Orders and Instructions, 1947–1987] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2007), 238–41.

³ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrinu, and Cristian Vasile, eds., *Raportul Final al Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România*, [The Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 158, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf.

frontier, files from the archive of the Ministry of Interior (also found in the CNSAS archive), and public record testimonials from the locals. The Limanu file contains over 500 pages of informers' notes, Securitate produced summaries, action plans, statistics, databases with local people's former political affiliation, wealth, and relatives abroad, reports of the local police station that included transgressions, breaches of the law, and the measures taken to deal with such issues.

The file offers insight into Securitate work in the township of Limanu from 1961 to 1989. The Documentary File provided a starting point for research into the individual files of some of those mentioned in it as former legionaries, collaborators, or persons of interest connected to larger themes on the Securitate's agenda, such as Turkish espionage, yoga, or relations with foreign citizens.¹ The individual files of the local inhabitants mentioned in the Limanu file are thinner and stretch over a well-established time frame. They begin with an official document, usually typed, issued by the Regional, Constanța Department of the Securitate and bearing the signatures of the high-commanding officer that indicates the reason for surveillance, and they end once the problem is solved. Resolution came in various ways: either the target was positively influenced to give up his or her hostile activities, or was no longer of use as an informer. In some cases the target no longer posed a threat on account of sickness and old age, and other times the person moved to another country or locality.

All Securitate files contain fragments of people's lives and they all tell parts of the story of a life, or various lives, connected to an event from a particular political and bureaucratic perspective. At times, the accounts were written by witnesses, under duress; other times, the pressure was on the Securitate officer who needed to fulfil certain tasks and gather a particular

¹ Legion of the Archangel Michael also known as the Iron Guard was a fascist political and paramilitary organization established by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927. Its members were known as legionaries.

amount of intelligence. As such, distinguishing between an original account and added content becomes impossible. Writer and literary scholar Cristina Vătulescu explains that “like any biography, a personal file tells the story of a life; unlike most biographies, the secret police file also has enormous power to radically alter the course of that life, and even to put a full stop to it.”¹ For the researcher, assembling these fragments is an arduous task, and oftentimes filling all the gaps of a file without other sources is impossible. Retracing the life story of an individual from his or her Securitate file is difficult and the narrative is bound to be incomplete. Securitate files follow a particular structure but certain documents have been misfiled, lost or destroyed. Moreover, an individual file typically focuses on one particular event or person, uses specific, mostly legal jargon from the era, and mentions other connecting events in passing and usually only to provide brief explanations of potential motives for rebellion. Literary scholar Valentina Glăjar suggests the term “file stories” to describe the complex network that connects fragmented pieces of information collected from informers, victims and officers and stored in the secret file.² The following pages will present such “file stories” in an effort to showcase the complexities of everyday life under socialism and the troubled relation between accommodation and dissent.

Individual Files

The personal files used in this section cover a wide area of transgressions. Some people were placed under surveillance for their political past, others for their ethnicity, or jobs, some for

¹ Cristina Vătulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 13. Coining the term “arresting biographies,” Vătulescu focuses mainly on victim surveillance files and how the secret police managed to translate lives into texts. These texts were assembled from a chorus of incriminating narrative voices that belonged to sources (informers), officers, interrogators, and to the victims themselves, whose letters were intercepted and private conversations tapped.

² Valentina Glăjar, “‘You’ll Never Make a Spy Out of Me’: The File Story of ‘Fink Susanne’” in *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc Between Surveillance and Life Writing*, Corina L. Petrescu, Valentina Glăjar and Alison Lewis, eds. (Rochester, USA: Camden House, 2016), 57.

having relatives abroad, and others still for having hobbies such as bridge, martial arts, or yoga, deemed dangerous by the communist regime.¹ A handbook about ordinary citizens under surveillance during the last two decades of socialist rule published by CNSAS detailed at least eleven reasons that could trigger informative surveillance; assessing “population mood,” praising the West or the quality of life in neighboring states, or listening to forbidden radio stations such as Radio Free Europe and disseminating information or even music were just a few of them.² The Securitate organized surveillance around all the targets, places and areas of interest deemed instrumental for defending state security, a vague concept which was never defined and could mean actually everything and anything.

Along these lines, reports about individual acts of potentially dangerous behaviour were included in the Limanu file but not all warranted close, individual, informative surveillance or the opening of a personal, informer, or institutional (operational) file.³ Not all individuals mentioned in the Limanu file had an individual information file opened on their name.⁴ The opening of such a file entailed the identification of a potential danger posed by the respective individual based on alerts coming from the agency and reports from operative agents, and

¹ The names used in this dissertation are the ones from CNSAS files.

² Other categories of individuals and actions warranting Securitate surveillance were: intellectuals and descendants of former legionnaires and former members of historical parties; former political detainees, former members of the Iron Guard, masons; belonging or participating to the creation of parties and illegal organizations; activities considered illegal based on spiritual beliefs which included people who had been part of religious groups, sects, missionaries, practitioners of martial arts, yoga, transcendental meditation; consistent contact abroad; ethnic reasons which would turn into nationalist-irredentist acts in larger Hungarian circles; attempts to elope; surveillance of target institution or socio-professional categories whose activities could endanger the socialist order, such as gynecologists who performed illegal abortions. The list is by no means exhaustive. Virgil Tarau, ed., *Learning History through Past Experiences: Ordinary Citizens under the Surveillance of Securitate During the 1970s-1980s* (Bucharest: CNSAS Publishing House, 2009), 17-19.

³ A personal or network file includes all materials relating to a person included in an information network, regardless of the role for which it was recruited (collaborator, informant). The materials provided by the source (information notes) were originally archived in the folder and copies of them were usually exploited in the files of targets.

⁴ The “individual informative file” is the informative follow-up file (DUI). Individuals were first surveilled for 6 months with the documents being collected into a *mapa de verificare*. It was only at the end of 6 months that a decision was made to upgrade their case to continuous surveillance with a DUI. Technically, only those with DUI were considered enemies of the state and having engaged in enough activity, or having expressed enough critical opinions about the regime, to be considered dissidents, opposants or trespassers.

required approval from superior intelligence officers. Once the file was opened, it involved the creation of a plan of actions that would research the alleged state security-endangering acts. Using the network of informers and technical equipment such as listening devices and the opening of personal correspondence, the officers would record any information that could prove the hateful actions as well as very personal information that could be used to blackmail the victim, if need be.¹

2 Mai and Vama Veche experienced a particular blend of factors that allowed tourists a taste of freedom in ways which would have been unconceivable in other Romanian localities. As far as state supervision was concerned, Securitate efforts focused on tourism and contact with foreign citizens and singled out individuals with a political past while making sure to also include in their reports various types of information on village life in order to showcase the complexity of surveillance work and the agents' abilities in performing the tasks. Although at times the Securitate files reveal the personal challenges that various officers experienced in their work, the transgressions of the various individuals they surveilled did not constitute their main focus.

The Securitate was mostly interested in the mood of the population, the reasons for discontent, and any and all political thoughts and actions that had the potential to disrupt and challenge the regime. For this reason, at times transgressions were singled out as major political stands, when in fact they were not. The fact that a local girl befriended a foreign national, as we will see later on in this chapter, was a serious transgression since it ran contrary to socialist law that forbade any contact with foreign citizens outside official purposes and in a specifically

¹ Once the surveillance was put in place, it would target the subjects, their entourage and all those who could be of operative interest. Information about their close relatives and friends was thus collected. However, not everyone from the target's entourage would be placed under surveillance.

defined, state-supervised environment. Proletarian morality was equally challenged: the girl was unemployed, not married, and was caught in a hotel room, alone with the foreign national. For this and other similar reasons, such as listening to foreign radio stations like Radio Free Europe, or the writing of a letter, which I refer to as transgressions, individuals and sometimes even teenagers had files opened under their names. At times, a formal investigation ensued but in most cases such behaviour was discouraged without the formal opening of an investigation and merely through preventive measures like the positive influence of relatives, friends, or colleagues, notices, warnings, or public debates at the person's workplace.¹

The Limanu File

The Securitate was present in the two villages but it lacked the resources for tight supervision. A detailed examination of the Limanu file, which contains information about 2 Mai and Vama Veche, presents fragments of Securitate, at times, sloppy work and offers a “from the point of view” of the state insight into village life. Created in 1969 by the Constanța Securitate branch, the Limanu file contains three volumes and over 500 pages. Most of its content refers to the last years of socialist rule, from 1982 to 1989.² The file started with only six lists of names compiled by the local police at the Securitate's request; they constituted the bases of Securitate surveillance and monitoring work.³ In 1981, the file was extended to include information on

¹ Anisescu et al, “*Partiturile*” *Securității*, 64-66.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. 1789640, 1-33.

³ The lists include the names of: 1) informers in the village, 2) former members of the Iron Guard, Romania's fascist movement, 3) former kulaks, farmers who owned more than 5 hectares of land, 4) village residents with relatives abroad, 5) local “trouble makers” who publicly voiced discontent towards the regime, and 6) people with no prior criminal or political record, but whose behaviour was “susceptible to harm state security. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 40-41.

institutions, such as the collective farm, schools, and individuals who held privileged positions in the community, such as the priest of the Lipovan community.¹

The Limanu file contains information on individuals and institutions whose activities involved elements relevant for Securitate work.² The file included only scattered references about the hospitality industry and O.N.T. hosts. The lack of documents is relevant, for it showed that Securitate could better control organized tourism and hence its concern for those catering to individual tourists, the hosts. The institution made an effort to continuously monitor people and institutions in Limanu. Whether this effort was successful is questionable but Securitate interference in the everyday life of the villagers did affect the social fabric of the township. Locals suspected one another of collaboration with the secret police, and rivalries between neighbors were not uncommon. The larger village of 2 Mai in which inhabitants had more social mobility, being employed in tourism or in the Mangalia shipyard was less affected than the smaller village of Vama Veche, which ended up deserted as a result of the planned full demolition campaign. Vama Veche had less farm land than 2 Mai and its population was mostly employed in the fishing industry. State regulations that restricted construction and development of private households and infrastructure were enforced more strictly in Vama Veche, and as a result its villagers were more isolated than their neighbors.

The Securitate was particularly rigorous in tracking the movements of former legionaries since the fascist Iron Guard had been a keenly anti-communist paramilitary political

¹ The first detailed notes and reports detailing plans for the Securitate work and specific areas of interest date from 1982, the year when the first food shortages started and rationing was introduced. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 16.

² The first volume -- the largest one -- includes various sections: working plans detailing tasks for the local branch Securitate, general reports on the Securitate work in the villages, lists of persons of interest, and even a map highlighting the township's main landmarks. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 2, 6-22.

organization, and it extended its surveillance to their immediate families and descendants.¹ Sons and daughters of former political prisoners and members of political parties, kulaks and landlords would carry the label of “unhealthy social origins” for a large part of their lives. This label entailed social discrimination, limited access to education and jobs, and warranted the attention of the secret police. The mention of a parent’s occupation and political activity was the first line that appeared in an autobiography, a document resembling a detailed C.V. that was required of each individual by state authorities for employment or educational purposes. In order not to raise suspicion and lead a relatively normal life, those with “unhealthy origins” constructed fictional autobiographies in which they avoided, omitted, or lied about their close relatives, parents, siblings, and, at times, even children. Once a suitable autobiography was crafted, the person needed to learn it by heart, since it was common procedure at the time for an individual to be called upon to offer a detailed explanation of his or her life in the workplace or when having to deal with the public administration. People whose family loyalties had come into question continued to be regarded with suspicion even after their parents and relatives passed away. For example, Securitate reports instruct that none of the descendants of former legionaries should be granted a permit for small-scale cross-border commerce. This document entailed permission to cross the border to Bulgaria and come back on a regular basis.²

The Limanu file has one section deficiently titled “tourism” which includes informers’ notes on topics ranging from mismanagement of the collective farm and labor disputes to the presence of foreign tourists and measures taken by Securitate agents to verify, counter and solve

¹ A detailed list presents the names and occupations of the 181 descendants of the initial 94 members of the local Iron Guard. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 71. Limanu file also includes a detailed diagram of the structure and membership of the interwar, local fascist legionary organization. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 68-86. By 1975, of the 94 people on the list, only 32 were still alive but all of them were still under surveillance: 50 were deceased, 9 had moved to other localities, two were registered in other Securitate files, and one had become a member of the Communist Party.

²ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 81.

the issues raised by the informers.¹ Informers were instructed to pay particular attention to reasons for discontent, political opinions, foreign visitors, and relations with locals of “unhealthy social origin.” Informer notes notified the local *miliția* about the presence of cars with foreign license plates, or about the visit of foreign guests and the countries they came from.² The largest amount of information in the file came from those notes who informed on people who had relatives abroad since most praised the quality of life in other countries, including Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Czechoslovakia.³

The Limanu file contains a list of 55 foreign citizens who registered as temporary residents in the township of Limanu, from 1981 until 1989.⁴ As the informers’ notes show, many foreigners did not fulfill legal requirements of registration, hence Securitate’s concern with insufficient resources to track everyone who came in and out. As summer vacation destinations and border localities, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche registered a high volume of traffic. Tourists who came to the villages to spend the weekend or visit friends, as well as foreign tourists who travelled independently, entered the country from Bulgaria, and stopped in the villages of Vama Veche or 2 Mai on their way to other destinations did not bother to announce their presence to the local police station and neither did their hosts. The only way for the police to keep track of those who entered the village was if neighbors, friends, or other locals informed on them, but the number of informers and collaborators in the villages was small when compared to the general population.

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 157-372.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 148, 167, 170.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 258, 260-274, 275, 303, 320-341.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. II, 1-15.

Data from a *Report* in 1987 showed that information was supplied by 16 sources (7 informers and 9 collaborators), out of a population of 4,321.¹ The number was considered insufficient both by local officers, who acknowledged the limitations of their work, and by their superiors. Another *Report*, compiled by the Constanța Securitate bureau and dated 8 October 1986, stated that the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche lagged behind in terms of supervision of local and foreign tourists, their contacts, and the relationship between the vacationers and their hosts.² The *Report* recommended that a network of informers amongst the hosts and restaurant and shop personnel be created urgently in order to quickly advise the local *miliția* about the presence of foreigners. The document further stated that these measures were motivated by “the presence of highly educated people who had access to artistic and cultural secrets” during the high summer season, the presence of foreign tourists, the potential for the emergence of a network between the two and hence the risk of betrayal. Therefore, the document concluded that residents who were hosting tourists had to be thoroughly checked by the Securitate.

Aside from former legionaries, former members of political parties, and foreigners, ethnic Lipovans, as Old Believers and Russian speakers, were looked upon with suspicion by the socialist state. Romanian national communism could not tolerate autonomy for ethnic minorities, and religious minorities were considered a danger to the state. The Lipovans were a religious and ethnic minority, and the Soviet authorities had relied on them for the establishment of communism in Romania. Though they were later regarded with suspicion, their Russian ethnicity saved the community from persecution. Their allegiance was called into question because their native language was Russian. Romanian communist authorities believed that in case of open

¹ The population of the township of Limanu. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 6-8.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 17.

conflict, Lipovans would ally themselves with the Soviet Union and refuse to fight for or defend Romanian territory. As such, any tensions inside the Lipovan community could or “were considered to” threaten national security and thus came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Securitate. When Lipovan parishioners complained about their priest, the Securitate promptly intervened by reprimanding the cleric and keeping the peace.¹

Case Study: Dionisie Alexandru

An ethnic Russian born in Tiraspol, USSR in 1917, Dionisie Alexandru served as an Old Believer Orthodox priest for the Lipovan community of 2 Mai from 1960 until 1989. Dionisie came to Romania in 1944 as a war refugee and settled in Braila.² Not a learned man, he only went through the first four years of elementary school before moving to Romania.³ He first worked as a fisherman and found his calling later in life, at the age of 34, in 1951, while he was living in the county of Tulcea. After being ordained, that same year, he took up residence in the village of Borduşani, in the county of Ialomiţa. Dionisie did not get along with his parishioners and requested a transfer. He was posted to 2 Mai in 1960, but his troubles with parishioners continued.

In 2 Mai Dionisie’s ecclesiastical career was not without troubles. During the 1970s, a number of ethnic Lipovans complained about him to the local police and Securitate officers. In fact, most of Dionisie’s Securitate file, which contains more than 100 pages, consists of a large

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 1.

² Tiraspol and the Region of Transnistria were under a brief yet bloody Romanian occupation, from 1941 to 1944. ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 38.

³ This is not an exceptional situation. The files pertaining to the Old Believers faith currently held by the National Archives of Romania in Bucharest show that the leaders of the faith, one metropolitan and two bishops had also gone only through four years of primary education.

number of complaints from parishioners.¹ The local Lipovan population complained that Dionisie disapproved of mixed marriages between ethnic Russians and ethnic Romanians. The priest refused to perform religious ceremonies for those who had married outside the faith, by taking ethnic Romanians as spouses, as well as their immediate families. Dionisie also deprived them of burial and baptism services and often refused to perform regular Sunday service in their presence.² The Lipovans who had incurred the wrath of their priest went to neighboring villages for their spiritual needs, to the local Orthodox priest, and at the same time some filed complaints at the police station in 2 Mai.³ Dionisie was officially warned by the police in 1977, but his behaviour did not change and complaints continued to pile up. Aside from allegations of nationalistic behaviour, Dionisie came under the radar of the Securitate for contact with foreign tourists and U.S. clergy.⁴ One informer's note reported that a group of 12 American tourists of the Old-Believers Russian Orthodox faith spent one night at Dionisie's house, in 2 Mai, in 1983.⁵ The handwritten indications of the Securitate officer were written on the margins of the informer's note. The informer was directed to enquire about what was discussed, and, more importantly, to find out if the tourists brought any goods or valuables to Romania and if they were interested in purchasing old icons.

Dionisie's Securitate file included 36 informers' notes which amount to approximately two thirds of the materials in his file, but none of them mention the selling or purchase of icons or other valuables. Parishioners denounced Dionisie for having complained about common issues such as the lack of food in socialist stores and bad management of the agricultural sector, and for

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 1, 8- 11, 13-17, 21-24, 26,28-29, 32, 34-35, 38, 42-44, 46-47, 51, 53, 57-59, 62-63.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 21, 26, 34.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 24, 29.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 3, 35, 50.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 32.

claiming that the red colour worn by the communists was a sign of the antichrist, and even for holding a special midnight prayer for the death of the party leadership.¹ In sum, any real or imaginary deed or hearsay was a good reason for parishioners to report on their priest.

As late as 1986, Old-Believer local parishioners continued to log complaints with the police against their priest. One inhabitant, Pahom Ivan, claimed that the priest effectively hindered the exercise of his faith and stated that this was the reason for writing a formal complaint.² Ivan was appealing to state authorities and in doing so he made use of the official tone and ideological jargon by citing the instructions provided by Ceaușescu and the communist party's tenets on natalist policy.³ Ivan also provided a lengthy description of the priest's improper behaviour of denying any and all religious services - Sunday Mass, confession, Eucharist, marriage, baptism, and burial - to those Lipovans who had social relations with Romanians. In the long run, Dionisie's behaviour could jeopardize the very existence of the Lipovan community. For this reason, Ivan called the priest's actions "apartheid," a popular term used frequently in the news bulletins of the era that reported regularly on the negative aspects of capitalist societies.⁴ Dionisie would refuse, Ivan claimed, any and all forms of religious service to those Lipovans who socialized with ethnic Romanians outside of the church. Even eating or drinking from the same bowl with someone outside the faith was a sinful action, Ivan claimed that the priest had stated, since Romanians were impure.

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 46, 49, 54.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 47.

³ In order to counter the declining birth rate, the Communist Party decided that the country's population should be increased from 23 to 30,000,000 inhabitants. In October 1966, Ceaușescu signed Decree 770 which banned abortion and contraception. The pro-natalist policy encouraged women to have at least three children. For details, about Ceaușescu's pro-natalist policy, see: Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 48.

Another ethnic Lipovan, Alexandra, whose son married one of Dionisie's daughters, filed a complaint at the local police station in 1986. She had been denied access to the religious service after the children had separated and the priest's daughter no longer lived under her roof. In her complaint, Alexandra claimed that while the children had been married and living with her, she was allowed to receive Romanian guests only on rare occasions. Immediately after the guests left, her daughter-in-law would throw away any cups or plates that they had touched. Alexandra's statement also touched on socialist sensitivities.¹ The priest, she claimed, had told her that he was performing nightly ceremonies in which he prayed for the death of the Romanian communist party leadership. It is important to note that the documents signed by Alexandra and Ivan are formal complaints and not informer notes.

Though at first sight, these seem to be complaints of some citizens against others, they speak to ordinary people's agency, the mechanisms they used to solve community issues, as well as to the Securitate's paternalistic role as a last resort means of appeal representing the secular state. Alexandra and Ivan went to the village's *miliția* post, perhaps not entirely aware that it served as a liaison to the Securitate. Locals could have logged their complaints to the Securitate office in Constanța, but none of them did. To report somebody to the Securitate was a revengeful act, since that reporting came with the risk of great persecution of the target. Some of the notes Securitate received concerning the Lipovan priest denounced trivial aspects, such as the selling of liturgy wine.² In this case, the Securitate officer handling the case recommended the issue to be brought before the ecclesiastical leadership of the Lipovan church. Frustrated by the attitude of their priest, the local parishioners added more allegations to the mix, some of which, such as the priest's alleged nightly prayers against the Party's leadership, were at least hilarious if not

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 54.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 42.

impossible to prove. Some of the allegations could have been fuelled by personal disputes, but the majority, coupled with the more conciliatory attitude of Old-Believers' clergy from other villages, proved that the issue was a community and to a lesser degree, a political one.

Concerned for the main pillar of their community life, the church, Lipovans mostly used the resources at hand, complaints and denunciations to appeal to higher authorities who could fix the attitude problem their priest had. Sensitive to the religious and ethnic component involved in the case of Dionisie, the Securitate finally referred the problem to the Department of Religious Denominations, which was a state agency tasked to coordinate relations between the state and all denominations, and asked that the leaders of the Old-Believers' clergy pressure Dionisie to change his behaviour.

In 1985 the Department of Religious Denominations also decided who was allowed to perform rites as a priest recommended the monitoring of Dionisie's behaviour. Should his attitudes remain unchanged, the priest would not be promoted as a delegate to the *Soborul Mic*, the general assembly of the Old-Believers Russian Orthodox Faith in Romania.¹ Furthermore, Dionisie should be excluded from all other promotions inside the church hierarchy. In 1987, the Department of Religious Affairs went a step further and warned Dionisie that if he did not change, his son would not be permitted to join the clergy.² It was this last warning that finally made Dionisie bend to Securitate pressure. Dionisie's Securitate file only includes one later document, a report from a 1988 religious gathering at which the Metropolitan of the Old-Believers Church, who was the head in Romania, publicly criticized Dionisie for his attitude

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 38.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I794725, 62.

toward ethnically mixed families. We can assume that he moderated his discourse, since he was finally promoted inside the church hierarchy, in September 1990.¹

Mostly engaged in prevention and containment rather than punishment and prosecution as it had been under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1952-1965), the Securitate increasingly became a didactic institution during late socialism.² The case of Nicolae Alexa, who taught French at Limanu School in the 1980s, illustrates this point.³ Alexa's case is described in the Limanu file, in the section titled "school." The French teacher had practiced yoga for eight years when he caught the eye of the Securitate, in 1980. Yoga was not approved as a practice in Romania and was officially discouraged; the Securitate feared any spiritual activity that contradicted the principles of official state ideology based on Karl Marx's dialectical materialism.⁴ Detailed informers' notes provide a thorough portrait of Alexa's family life and preoccupations. The teacher was not a religious person and did not hold political views. He had practiced yoga since university, for eight years, and then stopped. Alexa became depressed when his only son was born disabled and blamed his own ailing health and mood on the insufficient practice of meditation, which he therefore decided to resume. In his case, the Securitate did not intervene directly and the teacher was not called to the local police station or summoned by Securitate agents to a secret meeting in a safe house, as was customary at the time. A long conversation with a friend whose secret code name was Colea convinced Alexa to abandon yoga again and resume a harmonious family life. Follow-up reports dated 15 February 1982 noted that Alexa

¹ The Presidential Decree no. 75/1990 acknowledged that Dionisie Alexandru attained the rank of vicar bishop within the Metropolitanate of the Old-Believers Christian Church of Romania.

² Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truth*, 17.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 133-141.

⁴ For a detailed account, see Gabriel Andreescu, *Reprimarea mișcării yoga în anii '80* [Repression of the Yoga Movement in the '80s] (Iași: Polirom, 2008) and Irina Costache, "The Biography of a Scandal: Experimenting with Yoga during Romanian Late Socialism," in *Dropping out of Socialism. The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc*, eds. Juliane Furst and Josie McLellan (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2017).

had been positively influenced, had shown good behaviour and even met the criteria to become a secret informer. The CNSAS file does not provide more information and the reader does not know if Alexa ultimately signed a collaboration agreement with the Securitate or even if he was approached, since not all individuals who met the criteria were recruited. In addition, no personal secret file warranting close, individual surveillance was opened for Alexa and he continued to teach.

Most Securitate reports compiled by officers and submitted to their superiors were concerned with the general mood of the population; they paid close attention to the reasons of discontent and the motives that could stir up unrest. Petty crime and gossip were especially dangerous in 2 Mai and Vama Veche where even the smallest of talks or rumor needed to be recorded and warranted a course of action, on account of the two localities' proximity to the border. In socialist times, the border and the tourist presence ensured the circulation of ideas and the constant infusion of novelty, whether taking physical (objects) or abstract form (ideas, books, information). The authorities' concern with the mood of the general population becomes visible in the lengthy reports about the situation of the collective farms, the relationship between the Lipovan priest and his parishioners, and the relationship between locals and their guests and relatives. What was at stake here was prevention of social tensions no matter where they might arise. Informers in Limanu were instructed to pay special attention to various categories of problematic individuals. These categories included:

People who display hostile attitudes towards the regime, utter insults and slander Party politics, protest against violation of rights and freedoms, show discontent towards internal and external political events, or complain about shortcomings of supplies and lodging facilities, especially tourists and seasonal laborers; People who listen to and

comment on foreign radio stations; Romanian and foreign temporary residents who display improper attitudes towards the regime.¹

The instruction notes from the officers of the secret police also stipulated that informers be instructed to signal negative moods and tendencies, identify instances of unrest, instigators, and causes of discontent.² Informers who received monetary compensation or social advantages such as promotions, permission to travel abroad, or better housing, were also directed to identify those who intended to cross the border illegally, the comings and goings of foreign citizens and their relationships with the locals, the behaviour of those possessing permits for small-scale cross-border commerce, former legionaries still expounding fascist ideas, as well as any negative aspects they came across in the agricultural and livestock sector. Fully accomplished surveillance that would keep a close eye on all aspects relevant for Securitate work remained elusive. Moreover, no major tensions, disruptions, and acts of civil unrest took place in the villages, so the Securitate was successful in accomplishing what it set out to do: prevent social unrest against the regime. The network of informers and collaborators within the villages was small, and looking at the Limanu file and the individual files of those mentioned in it, one gets a sense of lack rather than plenitude. Many documents recommended a follow through of the situation described, yet this was rarely accomplished, and when it was, it took a long time. For example, we know that informer “Miclos Constantin” was recruited in 1986 to notify Securitate about the tourists he lodged during summer.³ An instruction note about him signed by the chief of the local police station and one line in a table are the only two documents about him in the file.⁴ The

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 194.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 197, 207, 210, 212, 214, 216.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 216.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 217.

information in the table explains that in 1986 he provided to the Securitate only one information note, which was not located in the Limanu file. Two years later, in 1988, Securitate officers reviewing the Limanu file wrote a note asking for clarification regarding Miclos and wondered if he was still active. Apparently, the request went unanswered because no other information on the matter appeared in the file. Moreover, the documentary file contained mostly documents from the 1980s, the oldest one being an updated list of former members of the Liberal Party, dated 21 March 1975.¹

Though the file has over 500 pages, they are hardly enough to cover 14 years. Even if we were to consider that other files in the CNSAS archives contain relevant information, the overall impression is one of incompleteness. The Limanu File and the individual files of the locals offer mere samples of the surveillance activities carried out by the Securitate and the local police in these villages. On a speculative level, scarcity of information in this particular file could point to the lack of serious cases of unrest in the villages. However, taking into account the fact that the file stretched over several decades, it could signal that relevant information was archived in various personal files, lost or destroyed. By contrast, the personal file of poetess Nina Cassian, a person of notoriety and a Communist Party insider, offers an abundance of information. The researcher immersed in the study of Cassian's file feels like a voyeur, at times privy, and other times ashamed to bear witness to the most intimate details of the writer's life.

Surveillance targeted individuals susceptible of influencing others, but as Cristina Vătulescu argued, "before the secret police had knowledge of any particular crime, it typically had the name and some basic incriminating description of the subject."² Anthropologist Katherine Verdery further explained that the Securitate worked on the postmodern assumption

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 424.

²Vătulescu, *Police Aesthetics*, 35.

that people's identities were unstable and that surface appearances were deceiving and reality must be sought beneath them.¹ Securitate used this assumption but not as part of a postmodern discursive stance. Instead, it was an assumption based on the institution's particularly suspicious way of seeing the world. For this reason, the officers were always on the lookout for any signs of a hidden truth in the form of an allusion or other literary devices by the person under surveillance used to conceal public speech or personal opinions, secret contacts or correspondence, personal preferences, hobbies, cultural exchanges, or community ties. At a more basic level, they opened the correspondence because they knew that some people at least were writing down what they could not speak aloud. When perusing a Securitate file on a particular person, the reader needs to make a similar distinction as in literary studies, between the writer, usually a Securitate officer, and the characters, in this case, the targets of supervision. The Securitate officer was writing down information and interpreting it according to a political lens and an overall need to justify his/her surveillance work. In *My Life as a Spy*, Verdery uses the concept of doppelganger, "a secret double, or an alter ego" to explain her own transition in the eyes of the Romanian communist regime from researcher to spy.² The Securitate often fabricated enemies, distorted information, and tailored its research to fit particular interests. In 2 Mai, Cadir Izet, a farmer of Turkish ethnicity, was made to fit the profile of a spy. His ethnicity, beliefs, and family ties made him suspicious to communist authorities, who placed him under surveillance under the label of "espionage for Turkey."³

¹ Verdery, *My Life as a Spy*, 7.

² Verdery, *My Life as a Spy*, 4-8.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I-III.

Case Study: Cadir Izet

The operational surveillance of Cadir Izet started in 1954.¹ His uncle, cousin, and brother-in-law left Romania for Turkey in the late 1930s, and the Securitate attempted to recruit Cadir as an informer in order to establish a presence inside the Turkish-Tatar community of Limanu, some of whose members had relatives in Turkey.² Cadir was a farmer turned construction worker who moved from his native Hagieni village to 2 Mai.³ He was not involved in politics, but corresponded regularly with his relatives abroad. In 1964, Cadir voiced his desire to leave Romania and join them in Turkey. The exchange of letters that were always opened by the Securitate, his passport and visa requests, and his high praise of the living standard in Turkey prompted the Romanian authorities to label his activity as Turkish espionage.⁴ Cadir talked openly about how good life was in capitalist countries, including Turkey. In 1972, his comments about how workers in Turkey enjoyed better pay and living conditions compared to the poverty they faced in Romania warranted Cadir a warning from the Securitate.⁵ Cadir's wife applied three times for a visa to visit Turkey, but her requests were denied for fear that she would not return to Romania.⁶ In 1978, Cadir applied for permission to leave Romania and settle in Turkey permanently, but his request, too, was denied.⁷ By that time, Cadir's four children were grown up and had their own families. One of his daughters had even married a foreign citizen and was living in Turkey.⁸ Yet, communist authorities continued to deny Cadir's visa requests for another

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 4.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 1-3.

³ Hagieni and Limanu were the other two villages that formed the administrative unit of the township of Limanu. The four villages are situated in the same area and the distance between them ranged from four to nine kilometers. ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 26.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 1, 6-11.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. II, 3.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 20.

⁷ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 23.

⁸ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 27.

six years, until 1984, when his long-term dream came true.¹ Upon his return from Turkey, Cadir voiced regret over not having been able to leave Romania earlier. According to Securitate informer notes, he continued to dream about immigration to Turkey despite his old age and against the advice of his daughter who told him that life in Turkey was not easy.² However, Cadir expressed regret over his return from Turkey as a result of family pressure, and in 1988 unsuccessfully requested a temporary visa.³ His repeated requests for a pilgrimage permit to Mecca were denied by the Muslim religious authorities in Romania.⁴ In the last report on Cadir's file, dated 12 December 1989, the Securitate officers expressed concern over his request for a trip to Turkey. If permission were granted, Cadir would most certainly not return to Romania. Therefore, the Securitate again recommended against issuing an exit visa, but unlike previous occasions, directed its collaborators to convince Cadir to give up his plans.⁵ The operational surveillance of Cadir which lasted for 35 years and bore little fruit, showcased the regime's attitude towards emigration.

Alongside former members of pre-communist parties, perceived class enemies, and suspected felons, people with relatives abroad were also regarded with suspicion and formed another category closely watched by the authorities. Whether a relative was located in a friendly, neighboring, socialist country, or in the capitalist world, was of lesser importance. What mattered most was that those left behind not be influenced by accounts praising higher living conditions in other countries and critiquing Romania's communist regime. Petre Angheloiu's son, Ion, lived in socialist Czechoslovakia. Ion Angheloiu had travelled to Czechoslovakia as a

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. III., 1-2.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol.III, 7, 11.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol.III, 13.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol.I, 46.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol.III, 3.

tourist in 1970 and did not return to Romania.¹ He found a job in Prague, rented a nice apartment, got married, and had children. Ion came to visit his parents with his family every year during the summer, and his parents received permission to go to Czechoslovakia.² However, the father was kept under surveillance by the Securitate because of his relations with other foreign citizens, his appreciation of the living standard in Czechoslovakia and his assertion that the citizens of that country enjoyed more freedom.³

Petre Chiosea's son resided in Poland, another socialist country.⁴ The son visited Romania regularly, and his parents received permission to go to Poland. Chiosea, too, was kept under operational surveillance because he had relatives abroad. He, too, praised living conditions in Poland but in his case, family drama took precedence over politics.⁵ All informers' notes and Securitate reports mention the son's divorce and second marriage. Chiosea spoke less of Polish realities and more about his son's family issues but his attitude did not take him off the Securitate's list.

Dumitra Bajaliu's daughter was married and lived in Italy.⁶ The daughter visited her in 2 Mai every year but stayed at a hotel in Neptun. Bajaliu, an elderly woman, never expressed a wish to live in Italy. She visited her daughter there once but declined a second visit saying that the effort was too tiring for her. Informer notes point out that the daughter always brought a large number of presents to the mother. One informer even noted that the old lady received a box of chewing gum that she sold to the neighbors' kids.⁷ The contents of the packages and the small

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 335.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 320-341.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I790478, vol. I, 341.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 241-258.

⁵ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 247.

⁶ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 259-273.

⁷ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 269.

trafficking of goods were of little concern to the Securitate whose main interest consisted in documenting Bajaliu's relations with foreign citizens.¹

Foreign Tourists

The pressure was harsher when the guests were tourists from Western countries. In the 1970s, the locals were advised to inform the police if they had any clients coming from the West.²

Decree 225 of 1974 which regulated housing for foreigners who were temporarily residing or visiting in Romania prohibited the renting, sub-leasing, hosting, as well as making available plots of land for the installation of tents for the use of foreign citizens by private Romanian citizens.³

The decree provided only one exception: Romanian citizens were allowed to host foreigners in their living areas if those who came to visit were close relatives - children, parents, brothers, sisters, spouses and their children. Niculina Tutan did not comply with the regulation and continued to provide accommodation to foreign tourists. She was forced to stop after the police ransacked the room of a French couple she had lodged. "Someone must have ratted on us," she concluded, "and the authorities came to check."⁴ Tutan's comment showcases the limits of trust.

While the particular kind of freedom many tourists claimed to have experienced at the time in 2 Mai and Vama Veche was based, at least in part, on a relation of trust between the hosts and their

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 265.

²Previous legislation, H.C.M. nr. 862/1967 privind închirierea spațiilor locative deținute de cetățeni, pentru cazarea turistilor [Decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 862/1967 regarding accommodation of tourists] and Legea nr. 25/1969 privind regimul străinilor în Republica Socialistă România [Law no. 25/1969 regarding the legal regime applied to foreigners in the Socialist Republic of Romania] included provisions that facilitated the access of foreign nationals to Romania. At the time, the communist regime was concerned with developing the tourism industry and acknowledged its potential for producing the much needed foreign currency that Romania and other socialist states badly needed.

³ Decret nr. 225/1974 din 6 decembrie 1974 privind asigurarea suprafețelor locative necesare străinilor care se afla temporar în România [Decree no. 225/1974 regarding the provision of necessary housing areas for foreigners who are temporarily residing in Romania], *Buletinul Oficial* [Official Gazette], no. 154, 9 December 1974, art. 2.

⁴ Tutan Niculina, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 May 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27.

guests, such attitudes did not imply that there was no supervision or no informers. Neighbors, tourists, and at times even family members, as was the case with Cassian's husband and the daughter of her host in 2 Mai, could work as informers for the Securitate. Alternatively, the police could have found out about Tutan's French guests themselves since 2 Mai was a small village and the French language was not heard very often on Romanian streets.

After the Prague Spring of 1968 the interdiction of receiving guests from the West was applied to Czechoslovaks as well, despite Ceaușescu's official condemnation of the invasion of that country by the USSR in his public address of 21 August 1968.¹ Ceaușescu's condemnation was interpreted as an act of defiance toward the Soviet power. As a consequence, he was regarded as the new Tito of the region and invited to visit both China and the United States. The speech increased Ceaușescu's popularity amongst Romanians as well, although he rejected the Czechoslovak reforms and emphasized the Romanian road to socialism which entailed a return to the country's glorious past through mass mobilization and regulation of national culture. The ideological reconstruction was curtailed by Ceaușescu's visit to China and North Korea and the resulting *July Theses of 1971*, which led to the cult of personality and marked the country's plunge into "dynastic communism."² Alexoiu Ion summoned up in laymen's terms the impact that historical events had on ordinary people in his village.³ As he said:

¹ See Petrescu, "Legitimacy, Nation-Building, and Closure," 237-261, and Monica Ciobanu, "Commentary on Legitimacy, nation-building, and closure : meanings and consequences of the Romanian August of 1968," in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968 Forty Years Later*, ed. Mark Stolarik, (Mundelein: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2010), 261-269.

² Historian, writer, professor, and political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu coined the concept of "dynastic communism" in his "Ceaușescu's Socialism," in *Problems of Communism*, 23 (January-February 1985): 50-66, and "Byzantine Rites, Stalinist Follies: The Twilight of Dynastic Socialism in Romania," in *Orbis* (Spring 1986): 65-90.

³ Alexoiu Ion, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai 2003, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27.

we were asked to inform the authorities if we rented rooms to foreigners... they [the communist authorities] made it such that we were not allowed to rent rooms to foreigners or we risked losing our jobs. This was in the 1980s. They didn't tell you that it was forbidden, but they threatened us. There was an invasion back then with the Czechoslovak Revolution of 1968, and after that we were not allowed to receive Czechoslovak tourists, even if they were still socialist people just like us.

Paraschiva Davidov remembered the golden years when villagers were not pressured into turning down foreign tourists. In 1974, she received Czechoslovak tourists in her home in 2 Mai for the first time. That year, her street which was made up entirely of newly wed Lipovan households, was fully booked by foreign citizens. When she moved to another street in 1984 she stopped receiving foreign guests, because communist authorities had decided to enforce the ban.¹ Elena Petrescu proudly recalled her transgression of receiving foreign citizens for lunch: "the Czechs continued to come [to 2 Mai] and stayed in tents [in the campground], and came to see me and eat soup. They had girls, I had girls, and the children played together."²

The Limanu file contains a series of declarations and informers' reports explaining and advising state authorities of the presence of foreign citizens in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. At times, the declarations are personal confessions; they describe the circumstances surrounding the meeting, the failure to report it, the admission of error, and include a commitment to remedy the fault, usually by giving up the incriminating activity.³ In March 1987, Constantina Ciocârlan confessed to having met a Libyan national in Mangalia who took her shopping. The Libyan told

¹ Davidov Paraschiva, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, Decembrer/March 2003-2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 26-27.

² Elena Petrescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 54-56.

her that he was travelling with friends and that he had a wife and a child back home.

Nevertheless, Constantina had hopes of marriage. The Romanian police caught Constantina in the hotel room with the Libyan citizen, retained her and fined her 500 Lei, which was a small fortune at the time. In her declaration, Constantina carefully pointed out that she did not receive anything from the Libyan, and that theirs was a regular, long-term relationship, from her point of view. Constantina even took care of her foreign boyfriend while he was in hospital in Romania, visiting him daily. These details proved to the authorities that Constantina was not a prostitute, but a simple girl with only a basic formal education and therefore with few job prospects, as she herself admitted, who dreamed about travelling abroad. Constantina confessed to the police that she had made a “terrible and very difficult to forgive mistake,” expressed remorse and promised to cut ties with her boyfriend.¹

The Limanu file does not include a similar report, but Constantina’s case was far from being a rare occurrence. In her book of narrative non-fiction, *Border, A Journey to the Edge of Europe* (2017), Kapka Kassabova surveys Bulgaria’s borders, including the sandy beaches of the Black Sea. Kassabova was eleven when she travelled to Tsarevo, a small city on the Red Riviera, “the shop window of the communist bloc” which included the Bulgarian, Soviet, and Romanian Black Sea resorts.² Just like in Romania, the tourist industry was an important source of revenue for the Bulgarian state, which encouraged Westerners to visit the Golden Sands and Sunny Beach resorts. Kassabova and her family rented a room in a local’s house, an illegal practice in Bulgaria where surveillance of tourists was a Warsaw Pact affair. As the author explains: “this was a place where every second barman was in the service of the Bulgarian State Security, while a specially trained ‘operational group’ of KGB, Czech and Stasi agents, disguised as

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 54.

²Kapka Kassabova, *Border. A Journey to The Edge of Europe* (Minneapolis, USA: Graywolf Press, 2017), 9.

holidaymakers, kept an eye on the hedonists.”¹ Ceaușescu never allowed foreign security state agencies to develop activities in Romania and carry out surveillance operations on their respective citizens who vacationed in Romania, like Hungary or Bulgaria did.² However, the longing to escape communist dictatorship and the quest for freedom were equally present among Bulgarians. As Kassabova wrote:

I missed my German crush, unaware that my longing was replicated by other bodies on the beach in search of mates – for one-night stands, for trade, for exchange, for marriage. For a way to cross the border. Since its beginnings in the 1960s, the Red Riviera had been a human market where the highest bid was not for love, but for freedom. And the highest price you could pay was your life. Many did.³

Constantina, too, was searching for a way out. The Securitate file does not indicate whether she was in love or looked to acquire a passport and secure a plane or boat ticket out of the country through marriage, or simply sought to gain access to goods that were totally absent from Romanian stores. The Securitate file included only Constantina’s declarations and no formal accusations or official recommendations for continued surveillance. A search with her name in the CNSAS database did not turn up any informative, penal, or network files on her

¹ Ibid., 10.

² For a detailed presentation of the collaboration between state security agencies of Hungary and East Germany, see, Krisztina Slachta, *Megfigyelt szabadság - A keletnémet és a magyar állambiztonsági szervek együttműködése a Kádár-kori Magyarországon 1956-1990* [Cooperation between the State Security Services of Hungary and the German Democratic Republic between 1964 and 1990] (Pécs, Hungary: Virágmandula Kft. - Kronosz Kiadó, 2016); Krisztina Slachta, “Unofficial Collaborators in the Tourism Sector (GDR and Hungary),” in *Secret Agents and the Memory of Everyday Collaboration in Communist Eastern Europe*, Peter Apor, Sandor Horvath and James Mark, eds. (London: Anthem Press, 2017). For the collaboration between STASI and other intelligence agencies and the Securitate, see Stejarel Olaru and Georg Herbstrit, *STASI si Securitatea* [STASI and the Securitate] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005); Radu Ioanid, *Securitatea si vanzarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre Romania si Israel* [Securitatea and the Trading of Jews. The History of the Secret Pacts between Romania and Israel] (Iasi: Polirom, 2015).

³ Kassabova, *Border*, 10.

name. Undoubtedly, she paid a stiff price for her transgression even if the punishment consisted only in a 500 lei fine and did not translate in any recorded indictment.¹ The anguish that being harassed by the Securitate entailed was famously described by Herta Muller in *The Appointment*.² Muller's heroine had been summoned for an interview with the Securitate for having sewed notes inside the clothes she made for the Italian market in the garment factory where she worked. The notes read "Marry me!" and contained her contact information. The novel follows the heroine on her way to the meeting with the Securitate officer.

Romanian law forbade any contact with foreign nationals unless the appropriate state authorities, in this case the local police, were notified in advance and had granted their approval.³ Some citizens did provide written statements when they hosted foreign tourists, usually after the fact, but most of the time it was neighbors, informers and collaborators, who kept the police informed about population movements.⁴ The Limanu file includes various notes informing Securitate of the presence of foreign citizens and cars with foreign license plates in 2 Mai and Vama Veche from 1981 until 1989.⁵

Gheorghe Gheorghe was also reported for having hosted a foreign, Indonesian citizen, in 1985.⁶ The note was signed with a code name. A Securitate document dated 1987 noted that Gheorghe had first lodged the Indonesian national in 1984 and his relationship with his guest became so close that the Indonesian national agreed to serve as godfather at the marriage of

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 55.

² Several of Muller's novels such as *The Appointment* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001) and *The Land of Green Plums* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996) deal with dissent and political persecution.

³ LEGE nr. 23/1971 privind apărarea secretului de stat în Republica Socialistă România [Law no. 23/1971 regarding the safe guarding of state secrets in the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 157, 17 December 1971.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 53.

⁵ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 1, 377, 409-410, 434.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I788408, 4.

Gheorghe's daughter.¹ Since the foreign guest was a diplomat working at the Indonesian embassy in Bucharest, the Securitate asked for the secret installation of microphones in Gheorghe's house.² In addition, Gheorghe also hosted the daughter of the Securitate general and deputy chief of the Romanian foreign intelligence service and the most famous Romanian defector, Ion Mihai Pacepa, another reason for which the Securitate wanted to know the content of the conversations that took place inside Gheorghe's house.³

A report from 1984 mentioned that Pacepa's daughter was indeed under the surveillance of Securitate and that a group of officers had accompanied her to 2 Mai.⁴ By this time, Pacepa had left the country and close surveillance of his daughter was necessary in order to prevent any contact between father and daughter which could lead, in Securitate's eyes, to further betrayal of state secrets and other defections. Moreover, the visible presence of the Securitate surveillance team had an intimidation purpose. It signaled danger and posed a silent warning to those around Pacepa's daughter. In 1984 and 1985, the stay of the Indonesian national and Pacepa's daughter overlapped and their families partied together.⁵ The operational surveillance file for Gheorghe contains only 14 pages and it is clearly incomplete. Upon going through the documents, the reader immediately notes that most of its content is missing. Pacepa's daughter was kept under strict surveillance after her father's defection to the United States; diplomatic personnel were also closely watched. I did not see the file of Pacepa's daughter or the one of the Indonesian diplomat.⁶ There is a strong possibility that part of the recordings and transcripts of private

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I788408, 1.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I788408, 2.

³ Ion Mihai Pacepa, a three star Securitate general and deputy chief of the Romanian foreign intelligence service was socialist Romania's most famous defector. He left the country for the United States in 1978 and claimed political asylum.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I788408, 3.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I788408, 9.

⁶ The files were not available for consultation at the CNSAS archive.

conversations that took place inside Gheorghe's house may be located inside other participants' files, could have been destroyed, or may have not been transferred to the CNSAS for reasons of national security. Gheorghe's operational surveillance file makes specific reference to the installation of microphones and special Securitate personnel coming from Bucharest for closer, additional supervision; such a laborious undertaking would have been subject to the appropriate administrative procedure which required various approvals and registration of documents. In Nina Cassian's file, the bureaucratic steps necessary for Securitate to install microphones are detailed several times.¹ A special unit of technicians were involved, and additional agents needed to be deployed to transcribe the recordings. Gheorghe's file provides no such information.

The fact that Pacepa's daughter was spending her vacations in 2 Mai even after her father's defection and the close surveillance she was subjected to in the village was common knowledge to tourists and locals alike.² In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the number of cars in Romania was considerably fewer than today. In a small village like 2 Mai, the Securitate car drew attention through its white colour, plates, and the figures of the two agents sitting inside. In his memoirs, Pepino notes that when Pacepa's daughter came to 2 Mai, the houses situated in the immediate proximity of the house where she was lodging were suddenly fully booked, a consequence of the large surveillance team that followed her.³ A car was always parked opposite her house. The car followed Pacepa's daughter everywhere she went, and on one occasion, when her car broke down on the road to Mangalia, it was the Securitate agents who closely followed

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 123, 172-179, 145-149, 158-170, 229-234, 245-248.

² Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 79.

³ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 34.

behind that who lent her a hand to fix it.¹ Yet, even this detailed surveillance was not foolproof and Pacepa's daughter continued to meet and talk with foreign diplomats.

Surveillance of Tourists – Nina Cassian

The personal file, code name “Mira,” of the celebrated socialist intellectual Nina Cassian, born Renée Annie Cassian-Mătășaru, contains detailed references to various surveillance field operations that she was subjected to while vacationing in 2 Mai.² The Securitate opened a file on Cassian on 11 December 1973, after the Communist Party granted its formal approval.³ Mostly compiled in Bucharest, Cassian's file includes informer's notes, transcription of phone and verbal conversations she had at her host's house, excerpts from her diaries, reports from Securitate agents who were sent from Bucharest to 2 Mai to supervise her, as well official correspondence between various Securitate departments. In a hand-written report of a Securitate major with an indecipherable signature, dated 27 July 1976 and approved by the Ministry of Interior, the Securitate Bucharest Department asked for the reimbursement of 198 Lei, the equivalent of 220 Euros, out of a special fund without supporting documents. The officer had used money out of his own pocket for the search carried out two days prior, on the premises of the house where Cassian was residing in 2 Mai.⁴ The report mentioned that on that occasion, the officer had made photocopies of materials whose content was deemed “hostile” to the regime by the Securitate, more specifically, Cassian's diary. Another document from July 1974 listed expenses incurred by Securitate agents such as travelling from Mangalia to 2 Mai by train and

¹ Pepino, *A doua carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 35.

² ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, p. 123, 172-179.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. I, 28.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 123.

accommodation in the village for four nights.¹ The note also lists the sum of 200 Lei as expenses for the deployment of an informer, code name “Cornel,” who was sent to the seaside from Bucharest with the unique purpose of supervising Cassian. The note does not specify who Cornel was and why he was chosen for this mission, but we can speculate that he was someone from Cassian’s entourage whom she trusted. In 1973, a Securitate agent paid 250 Lei for five nights, to lodge at Agafia Grigore’s house where Cassian was also residing.²

“Vacationing” on the same premises as the writer offered Securitate agents access to her entourage, private conversations about politics, and the possibility of recording negative comments about the regime made by the writer and her friends.³ Cassian often travelled to 2 Mai with friends, mostly artists, actors, directors, journalists, musicians, and writers and they, too became persons of interest for the Securitate, by association.⁴ In fact, as explained in the previous chapter, it was her friendship with dissident Gheorghe Ursu whom she met in 2 Mai, their correspondence, and his arrest, torture and death at the hands of the Securitate that led to Cassian choosing exile in the United States in 1985. Cassian’s Securitate file includes statements provided by Ursu describing their friendship which started in 2 Mai, in 1965, as well as excerpts from his diary and the entries written in 2 Mai by Ursu.⁵

A report dated 12 June 1976 made the case for the continuation of surveillance of Cassian in 2 Mai.⁶ This document was handwritten and signed by three superior officers of the Securitate Bucharest Department, a captain, a major, and a colonel. The report described the listening

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 145.

² ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 147.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 158-166.

⁴ Several names appear often in Nina Cassian’s file: her husband’s, writer Alexandru Ștefănescu, actor Jorj Voicu, writer Eugen Jebeleanu, director Matty Aslan, TV editor Marina Spalas, poet Grigore Cojan, journalist Tita Chiper and her husband, writer Alexandru Ivăsiuc, writer Rodica Sfintescu and her husband, Claudiu.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. IV, 229-234, 245-248.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 167.

devices installed in Grigore's house during the previous two years and requested support from the Constanța county office to verify that the installation was working ahead of Cassian's visit, as well as making the necessary arrangements to update it. The report further specified that entry into the house would be provided, as it had previously been the case, by Grigore's daughter, who was working as a Securitate informer. To this end, the report recommended that two officers from Bucharest be sent to 2 Mai to pose as tourists and take up residence in the same room that Cassian usually occupied at Grigore's house. The Securitate paid close attention to details and recommended that at least one of the officers should be fluent in Russian to ensure smooth communication with Cassian's host, whose native language was Russian.¹ A similar report from the previous year detailed the installation process as well as the script to be used by the Securitate officers and technicians so as to avoid suspicion from neighbors and residents.² A total of three microphones were installed in Cassian's rooms.³ Both documents mentioned that Grigore's daughter worked as a Securitate informer under the code name "Maria Tănase."

Included in Cassian's file, transcripts of the recorded conversations took up hundreds of pages.⁴ The bands were not transcribed verbatim: written by hand, they provide a summary of what was discussed. Only passages deemed relevant to Securitate work were transcribed *ad litteram* once the transcriber specified it.⁵ Small talks were not included in the Securitate transcripts..⁶ A note in the text mentioned that sometimes discussions ended abruptly, most often because Cassian and her guests moved to the courtyard or to a room which lacked monitoring

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 178.

² ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 173-174.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 175.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VII and VIII contain 252 pages and 350 pages, respectively. With the exception of several typed explanatory notes, the files contain transcripts of phone or microphone recorded conversations.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 301.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 305.

equipment.¹ Transcriptions were then sent to the Securitate Bucharest Department, for analysis.² Passages deemed important were then underlined by higher-up officers who read them and occasionally wrote notes on the margins of the document, asking for further information on particular persons of interest whose names appeared in the conversation, or calling for further surveillance in other places where Cassian would travel in the near future.³ Some transcripts bear the marks of two interventions, one written in red, or green, the other one in blue with notes and marks on the margins in different handwritings.⁴

Cassian's Securitate file is large and was quite costly, judging by the number of human and technical resources involved in producing it. She had been a member of the communist party since 1945 and a powerful voice of the socialist realist literary current which glorified the achievements of the Romanian Communist Party. A prolific author, she published poems, children's literature and musical compositions and was one of the most popular female figures of socialist realism and later on surrealism current in Romania. The Securitate acknowledged Cassian as "a leading figure of the cultural-artistic life" and a highly sociable individual who liked to be kept informed about current political and cultural affairs and cultivated relations with a great number of fellow writers, musicians and intellectuals.⁵ Her surveillance started in 1973 on account of her hostile comments about the regime and her relationship with foreign intellectuals, including exiled Romanians whom she met during her trip to Paris, or through friends.⁶ As a Party member, the surveillance of Cassian required the approval of the Party, involved a large entourage of friends, and even her husband, writer Al. I. Ștefănescu. The

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 311.

² ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 299.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 280, 282-284, 298, 325.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. VIII, 326-330.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. I, 302-304.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. I, 28, 154, 302.

process lasted, with a brief intermezzo, from 1980 until 1985, when she left the country for good. A Securitate report from 9 February 1980 recommended putting an end to active surveillance because Cassian's attitude towards the regime had improved.¹ Her comments about the regime were no longer negative; she changed circles as she began to be interested in music more than in literature and stopped visiting people who encouraged her to express a critical attitude toward the regime, and even stopped drinking, a habit that the Securitate believed encouraged her transgressions. The document credited Cassian's husband for the change in her attitude and praised his influence: he had isolated her for medical reasons, and discouraged her from spending time with certain people on the grounds that it was a waste of time. The report noted that her old acquaintances, too, had been "positively influenced," meaning that Securitate persuaded them through direct meetings or family and close friends to stop talking to Cassian.

Nina Cassian's file contains a large volume of literary works, poems, prose, journal entries, and even photocopies of first drafts of unpublished books written in her youth, in 1950 and 1951, and later in life, in 1972.² The Securitate was particularly concerned with individuals such as Cassian because of their public standing: had they voiced their discontent with the regime openly and gathered a larger group of supporters, they might have ignited the spark of internal dissent within the Party and created the push for reform that would have ended Ceaușescu's dictatorship. The Securitate was skillful in dismantling, isolating, supervising and containing political opposition from its inception. At the same time, Cassian never recanted her youthful, communist convictions but mainly disapproved of the course the communist creed had taken in Romania and of the communist party leadership in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 302, 303.

² For instance, the second and third volumes of Cassian's Securitate file contain, for the most part, the unpublished manuscript of her diary. A photocopy of the manuscript, in the author's handwriting is included in the file in its entirety. ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Nina Cassian, file no. 256690, vol. II, 180-309, and vol. III, 3-293.

Case Study: Virgil Mazilescu

Cassian was an emblematic figure of the 2 Mai and Vama Veche communities. Her profession and social status allowed her to take up residence in various artistic colonies for creative writing purposes. Having retired from the Writers' Union in 1975 with a very good pension, she could afford to spend extended periods of time in 2 Mai. However, she was not the only individual to have been closely monitored while on vacation. The Securitate file of another well-known writer from Bucharest, Virgil Mazilescu (1942-1984), who also spent his summer vacations in 2 Mai and had his telephoned tapped, contained references about Securitate surveillance in 2 Mai. At the top of one such document, there is a handwritten recommendation by a seemingly higher-up officer whose signature is indecipherable that stated: "Organize surveillance measures for Basil (Mazilescu's code name) in 2 Mai."¹ Mazilescu was a frequent visitor to Cassian's house in 2 Mai since both shared a passion for lyricism.² A famous Romanian poet associated with both the Estetic Onirism [Oneiric Aesthetic] Group and the 1980s generation of writers, Mazilescu's tragic end had its origin in 2 Mai.³ It was in this village that he first consummated his affair with Rodica, the great love of his life.⁴ Mazilescu's love story was not a happy one and his romantic trials and tribulations were the talk of all those who knew him, in Bucharest and 2 Mai.⁵

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Virgil Mazilescu, file no.160190, vol. III, 267.

² ACNSAS, Informative Collection, Virgil Mazilescu, file no.160190, vol. I, 38-40.

³ The term "onirism" appeared in 1959 and it was defined as a hybrid between Fantastic Romanticism and Surrealism. It rejected Proletkult, a cultural movement of early Soviet influence very influential in Romania during the 1950s, in which arts and literature served an ideological purpose, mostly to inoculate workers with communist values, and any interference of politics in the arts. Oneiric Group was at first tolerated by the communist regime, between 1964 and 1973. In 1965 the members of the Group were Leonid Dimov, Dumitru Țepeneag, Virgil Mazilescu, Vintilă Ivănceanu, Iulian Neacșu, Sânziana Pop. Daniel Turcea, Florin Gabrea and Emil Brumar, Sorin Titel and Virgil Tănase also joined the Group. For a detailed overview of the aesthetics of the Oneiric current, see Alina Ioana Bako, *Dinamica imaginarului poetic: grupul oniric românesc* [The Dynamics of Poetic Imaginary. The Romanian Oneiric Group] (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2012).

⁴ Nichita Danilov, "Altădată la 2 Mai" [2 Mai in a Different Time], *Ziarul de Iași* (Iasi), October 22, 2008.

⁵ According to fellow writer Florin Iaru, after Mazilescu invested everything he had in purchasing a flat for Rodica, she left him. The poet ended up consuming large quantities of alcohol which gradually, yet shortly led to his death at the age of 42. He proclaimed his desperation to everyone orally and in writing. The short journal that he wrote from 1983 until his death, in August 1984 is full with invocations of Rodica and laments for her unrequited love. See

supplement *Povestea vorbei* [The Story of the Word] directed by Paraschivescu which published the works of the oneiric poets that no other literary magazine accepted, came to an end.¹ The Oneiric poets published several volumes between 1966 and 1971, when they were disbanded after Ceaușescu issued his July Theses. The members of the group continued to meet discreetly, in smaller groups, in cafes or on the beaches of 2 Mai.² Țepeneag was forced into exile when Ceaușescu signed a decree withdrawing Țepeneag's citizenship while he was on a trip to Paris in 1975.³ By that time, Țepeneag had already declared his support for another well-known Romanian dissident, Paul Goma, and published critical articles in *Le Monde* and *The New York Times*.⁴ Oneirism had acquired a political dimension, as its members at the time rejected claims that their purpose was entirely esthetic and not political.⁵ The group was labelled at least poetic dissidence and at most "the first notable literary dissident movement in full expansion during the Ceaușescu regime."⁶ There were two reasons behind such powerful statements: first, the poets openly criticized the official socialist-realist vision that the Romanian communist party following its Soviet counterpart prescribed for Romanian literature and art, and secondly,

able to get away with criticizing the regime. In the strictest sense of the dissent definition, in which a dissenter is someone who opposes the organization from the interior, he could be considered a dissident as he voiced his disapproval openly, through the writing of signed letters to communist leaders such as Paul Niculescu Mizil.

¹ Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (London: Hurst, 1995), 189.

² Nichita Danilov, "Altădată la 2 Mai" [2 Mai in a Different Time], *Ziarul de Iași*, 22 October 2008.

³ Decretul nr. 69 privind retragerea cetățeniei române lui Țepeneag Dumitru [Presidential Decree no. 69 regarding withdrawal of Romanian citizenship to Tepeneag Dumitru, and H.C.M. nr. 215/1975 [Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 215/1975], both never published.

⁴ Farcas Jenő, "Dialog între Farcas Jenő și D.Țepeneag" [Dialogue between Farcas Jenő and D. Tepeneag], *România literară*, 31, 17-23 June 1998, 31.

⁵ Catherine Durandin, *Istoria Românilor* [The History of Romanians], Trans. Liliana Buruiana-Popovici (Iași: Institutul European, 1998), 327-329.

⁶ Valery Oisteanu, "Ochi despicați de brici. Disidentă poetică a anilor '60 și '70: Onirism și suprarealism – "curenți subversivi" [Eye Split by Razor. The Poetic Dissidence of the '60s and '70s: Oneirism and Surrealism as Subversive Currents], *Grupul celor 7 – Arte, filosofie, poezie, fotografie, critica literară* [The Group of 7 – Arts, Philosophy, Poetry, Photography, Literary Critique], no. 3, September 2012, and Laurențiu Ulici, *Literatura română contemporană* [Contemporary Romanian Literature], vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1995), 37. Valeriy Oisteanu (1943) is a Romanian-American poet and art critic. Laurențiu Ulici (1943-2000) was a literary critic.

Scântea [The Spark] newspaper, the official voice of Romania's Communist Party, had criticized the group and the word "oneiric" was banned from the printed press.¹

Initially, Securitate's approach seemed to have been successful, but in the long run it proved disastrous since it helped rally Romanian dissidents into organized groups outside the country. The group's most brilliant representative, Mazilescu, saw his literary achievements trumped by personal drama and failed romance, during the last years of his life, in the early 80s. The group's leader, Țepeneag was swiftly expedited abroad. However, in doing so, the Securitate recognized Romanian dissidence as a dangerous phenomenon that needed to be dealt with, at all costs. Țepeneag's exile trajectory was a successful one. Together with another famous Romanian émigré, historian Mihnea Berindei who had left Romania in 1970, Țepeneag formed the French Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania in 1977 which later, in 1980, was renamed the League for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania.² For the next 22 years, until the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the committee publicized human rights' violations, collected signatures in defense of the victims of the regime in Bucharest, gathered and published information about the situation in Romania, and organized protests against the abuses of the political police in the country.

Long term vacationers to 2 Mai such as ethnologist Șerban Anghelescu claimed that the place was very well surveilled by the police. This was not surprising since many who would later, after the Revolution, become influential intellectuals and politicians such as Petre Roman,

¹ Farcas, "Dialog între Farcas Jenö și D.Țepeneag," 32.

² Mihnea Berindei (1948-2016) was an important figure of the Romanian exile in Paris. A historian of the Ottoman period, he left the country in 1970 and pursued an academic career at École de hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS). A founding member of operation *Villages roumaines* who lobbied public opinion in the West to stop Ceaușescu's plan of demolishing Romanian villages, he collaborated with Radio Free Europe to gather information and inform the Romanian public and the West about the disastrous policies of the Ceaușescu regime. After the Revolution of 1989, he was a member of the Presidential Commission for the Investigation of Communist Dictatorship, and the general manager of the National Archives of Romania.

Andrei Pleșu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Mihai Șora, Alexandru Paleologu, spent their summers in 2 Mai.¹ Anghelescu believes that communist authorities were aware that almost all those who came to 2 Mai were not friends of the regime: “they were not open protesters either, but anyway, through their way of life and mostly thinking, they were against communism.”² Moreover, Anghelescu is aware that some of his friends may have been informers for the Securitate.³ Paul Drogeanu also noted that in the late 1980s, the Deputy Chief of the Securitate Department for Cultural Activities vacationed in 2 Mai together with his wife and child. Few people knew who he was, but for Drogeanu it was obvious that the man was on a mission there “because it was an exceptional situation, and la crème de la crème of those who could harm the regime at that time gathered there.” In Drogeanu’s view, such presence served as recognition of the fact that in 2 Mai there was a socially articulated phenomenon of dissent.⁴ Mihăilescu also remembered how his friend Drogeanu found out that a common acquaintance who was also vacationing in 2 Mai was working as an informant for the *Securitate*: “He was fun to have around, a very nice person with whom we were on good terms, but who reported everything.”⁵

A close inspection of the Securitate files underlines the weaknesses of even the most laborious surveillance practices. The informers were not always prompt in their rendition of information, indoor technical equipment was useless outside buildings, sophisticated listening devices would not work when the power was cut off, and no matter how closely someone was watched, it was impossible for the Securitate to find out, record, transcribe and analyze all the meetings, conversations, and people that a particular person met. Securitate could not predict the

¹ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 77.

² Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 79.

³ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 33.

⁴ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 33, 80.

⁵ Interview with Vintilă Mihăilescu, in Liviu Vasile, quoted in *Un fel de piua*, [A Sort of Break], 93-94.

degree to which certain spaces, such as, the beach, or the collective farm, could be used to harbour dissent, nor did the institution have enough manpower and resources to follow through any and all threats, or to enforce all existing laws and regulations. Along these lines, Luca Pițu and Vintilă Mihăilescu claimed that 2 Mai was “a space of supervised freedom.”¹ Pițu had a Securitate file but he requested that it be not made available for public consultation. In the 1980s, Pițu was part of the Iași Group of dissidents and aware of the fact that he had been put under surveillance by the Securitate. His Securitate file should have included numerous references about the surveillance he was subjected to, including while vacationing in 2 Mai. However, Mihăilescu is keen to point out the distinction between supervision and prevention: “the idea that everything was supervised is correct. That absolutely everything was prevented is not correct.”²

The following sections discuss surveillance in relation to the economic aspects of the village’s life. The archival material of the Securitate files preserves unique details about the everyday lives of the 2 Mai and Vama Veche’s inhabitants and the social and economic problems these villages faced.

The Permit for Small-Scale Cross-Border Commerce and Socialist Village Black Market Economy

In Limanu, 125 people had permits for small-scale cross-border commerce with Bulgaria but in 1986 only four people made use of them.³ The number seems small especially when juxtaposed

¹ Luca Pițu interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 77.

² Vintilă Mihăilescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 32-33.

³ The permit for small-scale cross-border commerce was a privilege granted to the inhabitants of the villages closer than 20 km to the border. Locals inhabiting border areas were allowed to travel inside the neighboring country for a distance of no more than 30 km and purchase consumer goods which they would bring back as their own and later sell on the black market. They had to report back 24 hours after their departure. For a detailed explanation of the trader-tourist context, see Liviu Chelcea, “The Culture of Shortage during State Socialism: Consumption Practices

with the grim realities of the decade. Ceaușescu had pledged to pay off the country's foreign debt in its entirety while also engaging in megalomaniac construction projects such as the House of People. As a consequence, in 1981, food rationing was introduced for bread, oil, flour, meat and sugar, and buying on the black market, which was supplied from a variety of sources, including this small-scale cross-border commerce, was a must for most families.¹ These developments did not fuel border traffic with Bulgaria in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The following year, the state limited the use of electrical power. Shortages soon followed and citizens were encouraged to refrain from the use of household appliances, elevators, and central heating. For Romanians, the 1980s signaled a return to the post-war scarcity the older generations dreaded. Post-war Romania experienced famine and shortages, while the first years of socialist rule were characterized by abuses and a drive for rapid industrialization which left little room for consumers' desires and needs. In addition, the country experienced only a mild and belated destalinization starting in 1964, almost a decade after the Soviet ruler died, in 1953. It was only in the late 1960s and the early 1970s that ordinary Romanians began to experience a period of ideological relaxation and relative abundance, but it too was short-lived, since shortages, cold and poverty returned once again, in the 1980s. Ceaușescu's policies further decreased living standards and insured that only poorer quality consumer goods were available domestically.

An improved standard of living had been and remained the communist regime's strongest commitment to the people as well as its main source of legitimacy. In socialist societies consumption practices were tied to socialist notions of modernity and progress, as well as to the

in a Romanian Village in the 1980s," *Cultural Studies*, 16, no.1 (2002): 16-43. ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 15, 25-33, 63-65.

¹ Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), 117-118.

making of the modern socialist citizen.¹ Memories of war, collectivization, political repression, and paucity were still very much present in the recollections of the older generations.

Consequently, as Jill Massino explained: “consumerism was the basis on which some people constituted their identity, as well as their memories of life under communism. These memories reveal that, in Romania, the socialist past evokes more than just vivid recollections of blackouts during the harsh conditions of the 1980s but also nostalgia for black caviar and the Black Sea coast vacations.”² For many, life under socialism meant better living conditions, affordable housing, paid vacations, access to education and healthcare, job security and decent retirement. Living conditions in the 1980s deteriorated but people built networks to access the black market and enjoy luxury goods such as coffee, chocolate, or oranges that were only rarely available in stores. Travelling to the seaside often meant access to fish species that never made it to the local markets of the big cities.

At a time when most Romanian stores remained empty, locals in Limanu made little use of the legal opportunity to trade with neighboring Bulgaria. Socialist Romanians in the 1980s dreamed of Western products more than the basic items that were available, albeit at times scarcely, in other socialist economies. The socialist block had its own internal hierarchy in which the quality of life in Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania was lower than in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Yugoslavia. Tourism on Romania’s sea coast, for example, was a lot cheaper than

¹ Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5; David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Bloc*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 7. For broader discussions of socialism and modernity, see Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Culture and Politics*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Cathleen Giustino, Catherine Plum, and Alexander Vari, eds., *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Daniela Koleva, ed., *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

² Jill Massino, “From Black Caviar to Blackouts: Gender, Consumption, and Lifestyle in Ceausescu’s Romania,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, ed. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 228.

the Bulgarian one. The reason behind the limited use of permits for small-scale cross-border commerce is not clear. The file contains only five informer's notes and presents a list of 12 names with people who were questioned after their visits to Bulgaria.¹ In the late 1980s, ethnic Tatars and Turks from Romania who had a permit were denied entry into Bulgaria on account of a change in Bulgarian policy regarding national minorities.² One can assume that when products of higher quality were available across the border, they were expensive and introducing them into the black market circuit required resources that locals in 2 Mai did not possess and risks they were unwilling to assume. One of the few informer notes on the subject of small-scale cross-border commerce operations supports this claim.³ In March 1987, Grigore Irimia complained to an informer, code named "Popescu," that he was unable to use his permit for two reasons: he had relatives in a nearby Tatar village and thus the Bulgarian border guards treated him as an ethnic Tatar, and he lacked access to Bulgarian currency.⁴ Until 1986, Grigore used to go to Bulgaria on a weekly basis carrying 200 lei, money that he exchanged into leva the Bulgarian currency, after he entered the country. The rules had changed, claimed Grigore, and now he was required to present Bulgarian currency at the border before crossing it, something he could not do since he did not have access to Bulgarian currency in Romania.

Another reason for which few inhabitants of Limanu engaged in small-scale cross-border commerce was because the seasonal tourist activities ensured a steady flow of foreign tourists during the 1970s and 1980s. There was no need for the locals to look for consumer goods that were unavailable in Romanian stores in Bulgaria; the merchandise was brought to them.

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 150-151.

² Bulgaria carried out a forced assimilation process against its Turkish minority known as the Revival Process. The campaign started in 1984 and led to the expulsion of 360,000 Bulgarian Turks and Muslims to Turkey, in 1989. This was the last grand-scale ethnic persecution in the communist bloc.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 150-155.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 150.

Speaking about the summer vacations he spent in the campground of 2 Mai, Alexandru Munteanu remembers the site being crowded by Czech and Polish tourists: “the campground was full with foreign tourists...The Czechs came for surfing...The Poles came to trade as they did in other Romanian resorts as well.”¹ Another tourist, Nicolae Oancea remembered the caravan of a Dutch tourist who sold second-hand clothes and shoes at cheap prices: “as soon as the caravan appeared we would all line up, money in hand. The flying Dutchman we used to call him.”² The two examples cited above support Alexei Yurchak’s contention that Western imports such as art, clothing, literature, music, or styles were constitutive of Soviet life, since most people in socialist countries were able to integrate Western forms and goods into their everyday lives without contradicting the communist ethos.³

Because of its geographical position and the constant influx of tourists, people in transit, and laborers, 2 Mai was not an ordinary village. Aside from the surplus that locals were able to produce on their private plots and the large gardens around their houses, the fishing industry, and the extra income derived from seasonal work in the tourist industry both in their own village and outside of it, border traffic ensured additional commercial exchanges. Tourists from other socialist countries, such as Poland or Czechoslovakia on route to the larger Romanian seaside resorts of Mamaia or Eforie Sud often stopped to 2 Mai to sell products such as soap, shampoo, or clothes that were difficult to find in Romanian stores. The economic life of the village consisted of multiple layers and tourism impacted even those inhabitants that were not directly

¹ Iuliana Dumitru, “Camping 2 Mai, povești de familie” [2 Mai Campground, Family Stories], in *Moduri de apropiere și rezistență socială* [Modes of appropriation and social resistance], Gabriel Troc and Bogdan Iancu, eds. (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2015), 148-149.

² Ibid, 149.

³ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 158-206.

involved in hospitality. Furthermore, a more flexible economic environment created conditions for a less restrictive political atmosphere that fostered transgression, non-conformity, and dissent.

Surveillance of the Collective Farms

2 Mai's labour force had a dual structure based on farming and industry. During the summer, inhabitants traveled to work in the neighboring city of Mangalia or the other seaside resorts for seasonal jobs in the tourism industry. For this reason, the villagers of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were not entirely dependant on agriculture. According to data compiled by the chief of the local police station for the Ministry of Interior in 1986, out of 5,213 inhabitants that the township of Limanu had at the time, only 15 percent were fully engaged in the agricultural sector.¹ There are no official records showing how many local residents were working outside the village, at Mangalia's shipyard or in the tourism sector. One note handwritten in pencil listed the township's main organizations and estimated the number of the residents who travelled to work in Mangalia and other locations at 200.² A Securitate colonel who checked the database wrote a note on the margins, on 15 June 1988, asking for the information to be updated. In 1989, in 2 Mai there were 1,020 accommodation spaces available for rent from private citizens; Vama Veche had only 200.³ Those who rented rooms to tourists had signed contracts with O.N.T. but after 1989 that institution went bankrupt and its records were lost.⁴

CNSAS records showed that the villages lacked local workers and were relying on seasonal workers from other regions for the harvest season at the collective farm. In 1982, 120

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 18.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 64.

³ Gheorghe Andronic, Marin Neațu, Adrian Rădulescu, Adrian, Stoica Lascu, *Litoralul românesc al Mării Negre* [The Romanian Coast of the Black Sea], Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1989, 123-124.

⁴ For this reason, some information is missing. For example, we know how many accommodation spaces were available but not how many households or individuals signed contracts with O.N.T. and were granted permits to rent rooms to tourists.

people were brought in from the country's most remote northern counties, Suceava and Botoșani. The influx of outside farm hands posed the risk of social unrest, especially when the collective farm did not abide by the initial agreement. The workers were promised 500 kilograms of grain individually as part of their pay, but upon completion of the harvest, local authorities reconsidered and resolved to offer the workers money instead of produce. Such a development led to dissatisfaction. Store shelves lay empty and ordinary people, including the seasonal workers, found themselves in a paradoxical situation wherein they had jobs and received regular paychecks but had few options for spending it. The locals who worked on the collective farm were equally upset. At the beginning of the year they had been promised a bonus if they exceeded the plan quota, which they did, but the management of the collective farm withdrew its pledge.¹

The management of the collective farm was of critical importance for the economy of the village and the neighboring town of Mangalia and its resorts, since bad crops risked affecting the supply chain management during the tourist season. In fact, the Limanu collective farm was one of the wealthiest in the country.² A local police report from 1987, compiled for the Constanța county Securitate Bureau, noted that work during the harvesting season at Limanu collective farm was carried out using seasonal workers, mostly ethnic Romani from Bacău, Ialomița and Sibiu counties, workers from the neighboring shipyard in Mangalia, as well as students from the local elementary and high-schools from Mangalia and Limanu.³ The report noted that living conditions on the farm were unsafe, the workers were careless, the electrical installation was old,

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 108.

² Vasile Tincu, "Două milioane plus restul. Deficiențe în organizarea producției și a muncii la C.A.P. Limanu [Two Million and the Rest. Deficiencies in Production Management at Limanu Collective Farm]," *Săteanca* (Bucharest), February, 1971.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 90.

and a major accident could occur at any moment. Police reports also point out that the outside work force was notoriously unstable and individuals could not be counted on to show up for work, despite living on the farm's premises.¹ In addition, another similar report from 1989 compiled for the economic department of the *miliția* of Constanța County stated that the collective farm's management team showed little interest in the affairs of the farm.² As a result, animal keepers lacked discipline and the animals' mortality rate was attributed to lack of proper care on their part.³

Aside from pointing to the failures of the socialist planned economic system, the lack of discipline further showcases the various degrees of agency available to the villagers. The 2 Mai livestock farm had 598 bovines and 947 ovines in 1986.⁴ The farm in Limanu had 989 bovine and 3,121 ovine. A report signed by the chief of the township's police station in 1985 noted that, contrary to the rules and regulations governing the collective farm, all the shepherds owned horses.⁵ These noble animals had also experienced the wrath of the communist regime. For the communists who pushed for a quick transition to mechanized agriculture, the horses were the enemies of agriculture and a symbol of backwardness. In 1957, Alexandru Moghioroș, vice-prime minister and head of the Agriculture Department in the Chivu Stoica government, decided that all horses should be killed.⁶ The cows, he complained, lacked enough food because the horses ate the best hay. As a result of these policies, at least 500,000 horses or half of the total

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 106.

² ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 88.

³ Romanian socialist law forbade sacrificing cows and horses for private consumption. If a farmer was caught slaughtering a cow, he risked a one year prison term. Decret nr. 94/1983 cu privire la declararea animalelor, înstrăinarea și taierea bovinelor și cabalinelor [Decree no. 94/1983 regarding registration, alienation, and slaughtering of cattle and horses], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 19/29 March 1983.

⁴ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 92.

⁵ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 97.

⁶ Virgil Lazar, "Lupta comunismului cu caii" [The Communism's Fight with the Horses], *Romania Libera* (Bucharest), June 21, 2012, <https://romanalibera.ro/aldine/history/lupta-comunismului-cu-caii-268299>.

number of horses in Romania at the time were killed. Far from solving the problems of socialist agriculture, the lack of horses created even more since tractors were not suited for all types of soil. Having proved their value once again, horses were categorized as animals of production and by law only collective farms could own them.¹

Contrary to the legally binding articles of incorporation of the collective farm, in Limanu, shepherds who tended to the ovine section of the farm owned horses. This practice was not uncommon since the moving of flocks of sheep continued during socialist times and horses or mules, albeit in very small numbers, were used in this process. The farm management and the township's council did not intervene in the matter and, as a result, the horses as well as all the other animals in the shepherds' household benefitted from the best feed the farm had to offer.² The local police continued to signal mismanagement and irregularities at the collective farms, but lack of specialized personnel such as managers, technicians and veterinarians prevented corrective measures.³ The person in charge of Limanu's livestock farm, an economist, was notorious for his drunkenness; despite various complaints from workers, he could not be replaced because no one else applied for the position. The veterinary in charge of the animals' well-being had been transferred from the neighboring township of Albești as punishment for alcoholism, in 1982.

¹ H.C.M. privind Statutul cooperativei agricole de producție din 28 Septembrie 1977 [Decision of the Council of Ministers regarding the status of the collective farm of 28 September 1977], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 105, 4 October 1977, and H.C.M. privind Statutul cooperativei agricole de producție din 28 Martie 1983 [Decision of the Council of Ministers regarding the status of the collective farm of 28 March 1983], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 18, 30 March 1983.

² According to communist law, members of the collective farms were allowed the private use of their houses and courtyards. In addition, the law allowed for the private use of a small plot of land which could be worked individually and outside farm related activities. Farmers could also own a maximum of 3 cows, 15 sheep, and an unlimited number of pigs, birds, and rabbits, but no horses.

³ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, Limanu County, file no. D018362, vol. I, 104.

In addition to livestock, farming and tractor units, where geographical conditions allowed, the collective farms also included fisheries. Outside the fishing season, fishermen worked as farmers. Fishing in the stormy waters of the Black Sea near 2 Mai was physically demanding and dangerous, a reality that even the socialist press acknowledged in 1973.¹ Fishing, the traditional occupation of the ethnic Lipovans in 2 Mai, many of whom had come to the village from the Danube Delta, was an activity that could bring in additional revenue. Fishermen occasionally engaged in trade with the tourists and sold their fish and caviar to private citizens and not to the collective farm, as the law mandated, an activity which at times caught the eye of the Securitate agents, as happened to Naum Roman.²

Case Study: Naum Roman

In 1961 Naum Roman was caught selling fish to the Babeş Bolyai University Summer Camp in Vama Veche. His life story as told by his secret file illustrates the methods used by the Securitate to monitor former opponents to the regime, apply pressure in order to recruit informers from their ranks, and thus create a network of informers which ensured a tight circle of supervision and information flow. Born in 1924, Roman was recruited as an informer by the Securitate in 1963. The reason for his Securitate file was his political activity prior to 1947, mainly his affiliation between the ages of 13 and 17 with the local legionary organization led by his uncle from 1937 to 1941. Questioned by the Securitate in 1961, Roman admitted that he had enrolled in the local legionary chapter in 1937, at the age of 13.³ He had gone regularly to meetings until the Legionary Rebellion of 1941, an event that led to the abolition of the Iron Guard and the

¹ Gabriela Melinescu, Sânziana Pop, “Mergere pe apă. Reportaj” [Walking on Water. Reportage], *Luceafărul*, XVI, no. 25 (23 June 1973): 4-5.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 10, and file no. R204940, 34.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 9.

dismemberment of all its local organizations. In 1944, he enrolled in the Tudor Vladimirescu Division, a Soviet-organized army division of Romanians that fought against Germany and Hungary during the final year of the Second World War.¹ In 1954, Roman applied for membership in the Communist Party but his request was denied.² An informer's note from 1955 explained that Roman was from a poor family and had been raised in the legionary spirit by his uncle who taught him to sing politically charged hymns.³

A fisherman by trade and a member of the collective farm, Roman was described by another informer as a drunkard and troublemaker who, at times, manifested discontent with the communist regime.⁴ In 1961, he was recruited by the Securitate as an informer under the code name of "Viorel Moga."⁵ According to a Securitate report from 1963, Roman was recruited under duress. The report cited his discontent towards the management of the collective farm as a pressure factor. More specifically, Roman was caught fishing independently and without a permit.⁶ Fishing permits were issued by the border patrol authorities, since the village and its waters were inside the frontier zone. As former members of the legionary movement, Roman's family lacked "healthy social origins" and were profiled by the communist authorities. The socialist state did not consider such individuals trustworthy, kept them under constant surveillance, and permanently questioned their loyalties. Not surprisingly, the border patrol agency denied Roman's request for a fishing permit. However, Roman continued to fish even without a permit and the Securitate decided to use one such incident as a set-up for recruiting him as an informer.⁷ At stake were Roman's connections to other members of the local legionary

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 2-3.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 10.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 2.

⁴ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 3.

⁵ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767944, 11.

⁶ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. R204940, 3.

⁷ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. R204940, 4.

organization. The Securitate agents instructed him how to provide information about illegal activities of the other former Iron Guard members in the village, illegal border crossings, and escapees from neighboring Bulgaria who sought refuge in Romania.¹

Roman's career as an informer was short-lived. In 1963, he was named manager of the state-owned village store in 2 Mai and soon after he was charged with embezzlement. A document dated 29 May 1964 asked for the approval of the head of the regional Securitate directorate of Dobrogea to remove "Agent Viorel Moga" from the 2 Mai informers' network.² The document specified that his conviction to four months in a correctional facility in 1964 rendered him unsuited for collaboration with the Securitate. An appraisal of his activity by the Ministry of the Interior dated 30 December 1963 showed that agent "Viorel Moga" had not been a diligent informer.³ Tasked with informing on three individuals, Moga provided only a single note about one of them. The Securitate officer noted that the material originating from agent Moga was vague and of little importance for the work of the Securitate. In addition, when embezzlement charges were filed, agent Moga notified the Securitate that he was no longer able to focus on surveillance tasks, being too preoccupied with solving his own legal problem. Agent Moga did only one thing right and that was to recommend other people for the task.⁴

Additional Layers of Surveillance: The Revenue Agency and The National Office for Tourism (O.N.T.)

Aside from local police and Securitate, locals who provided accommodation to tourists faced another layer of surveillance from state agencies such as the National Office for Tourism

¹ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. R204940, 20.

² ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. R204940, 25.

³ ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. R204940, 23.

⁴ Ibid.

(O.N.T.). Established in 1933 as a private company, the O.N.T. was nationalized by the communist regime and then re-established in 1955.¹ O.N.T. became responsible for both domestic and international tourism in 1959. Initially, the state-sponsored travel agency was subordinated to the Ministry for Interior Trade. In 1967, O.N.T. became an independent institution that had a role similar to that of a ministry. The locals had to surrender a share of the rent they received from tourists and O.N.T. conducted regular inspections to check if they complied. Hosts such as Paraschiva Davidov and Elena Petrescu remembered how state agents came without prior warning to count the rooms and check the number of guests present in the household at various times.² On those occasions, tourists were asked to hide or to declare that they had just arrived so that the hosts would not face an increase in tax payments or a fine. Tourists also had the legal obligation to register with the local police for the duration of their stay, a requirement that not all of them fulfilled. Long-time vacationer Șerban Anghelescu explained that he never registered as a temporary resident in 2 Mai as the law mandated.³ Romanian law required that all citizens who travelled to other destinations inside the country, outside the O.N.T. structures, needed to register at the nearest police station if their stay exceeded three days.⁴ Starting in 1974 Romanians were forbidden to accommodate foreign tourists in their own homes, and after 1985 the law required citizens to report all conversations

¹ Adelina Ștefan, "Postcards Transfer across the Iron Curtain: Foreign Tourists and Transcultural Exchanges in Socialist Romania during the 1960s and 1980s," *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity (HCM)*, 5, no. 1 (2017): 173.

² Davidov Paraschiva and Elena Petrescu interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, 2 Mai, December/March 2003-2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 27-28.

³ Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 32; Aurelian Trișcu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 32, 80.

⁴ One was registered as a visitor having his temporary residence at the hotel, campground, guest house, etc. H.C.M. nr. 840/1964 privind aplicarea regimului de evidență a populației [Decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 840/1964 regarding population registration rules], *Buletinul Oficial* [The Official Gazette], no. 49, 4 November 1964.

with foreigners to the local police or work place.¹ Failure to immediately report a conversation with a foreigner regardless of his or her country of origin was a serious criminal offense but the law was never strictly enforced. Moreover, hosts did not keep a registry with the names of their guests. As far as the revenue agency was concerned, most guests were unaccounted for and this allowed the hosts some flexibility in dealing with the state by declaring a lower income and occupancy rate. Even in those cases in which tourists registered officially, at the reception to the campground, numbers were often inaccurate since tourists wanted to save money on the per capita tax and declared that their group included fewer people. Often tourists paid a minimum charge for a tent and registered with the local police as temporary residents by providing the campground's address, but in fact, lodged privately with locals.

Additional Layers of Surveillance: The Border Patrol

As a border village, Vama Veche was governed by special rules; vacationers travelling there were required a special permit, and entry into the village was, at times, restricted by the border patrol. The borderland functioned as a place of encounters and ruptures, a zone of danger and fear, and one that provided opportunity for trade and smuggling. The locals perceived the sea and the landscape as a fluid border, while political entities understood it as a matter of national security. No matter how strongly monitored the border was at various times, one could always find ways to get around the patrols:

¹ Decret nr. 225/1974 privind asigurarea suprafețelor locative necesare străinilor care se afla temporar în România [Decree no. 225/1974 regarding the provision of necessary housing areas for foreigners who are temporarily residing in Romania], Buletinul Oficial [The Official Gazette], no. 154, 9 December 1974, and Decret nr.408/1985 privind unele masuri referitoare la apararea secretului de stat si la modul de stabilire a relatiilor cu strainii [Decree no. 408/1985 regarding the safekeeping of state secrets and the rules governing relations with foreigners]. Decree 408 was never published but it was formally annulled on 29 December 1989 through Decree no. 4/1989 on the abrogation and modification of some decrees and other normative acts, *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 7, 30 December 1989.

Between May 2 and Vama Veche there was a border patrol station, a more secluded military unit. And they would stop you and wouldn't let you drive further. "It's not allowed, it's not allowed." "Why isn't it allowed?" "Well, it's not allowed." O.K., it's not allowed." Then one day, I wanted so much to reach Vama Veche, I don't know for what reason, and my host said: "I'll take you there." We went over the fields, on some country roads, and around the main road and got to Vama Veche. And I did my job and when I came back the border guard was taken aback. He asked: "Where did you cross?" I said: "by water." He had no reply.¹

Concern for border patrol sight lines spared the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche the economic development that occurred in other Romanian Black Sea resorts, allowing them to become a hangout for intellectuals fleeing the prying eye of the police state. Accounts of socialist holidaymakers in the area mention the physical presence of the border guards and the military check points on the road between Mangalia and 2 Mai. Until the late 1980s, in order to get to 2 Mai from Mangalia, travelers had to cross a draw bridge.² Tourists who did not possess cars came by train to the nearest city and then took the local bus. Once they reached the bridge, a policeman stopped the bus and asked that all passengers present their identification papers and inscribed all the names on a list.³

¹ Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de*, 80, and Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 63.

² Alexandru Dobre, "Podul de la Mangalia s-a născut dintr-o tragedie" [The Bridge from Mangalia Was Built as a Result of a Tragedy], *Jurnalul.ro*, 2 March 2009, <https://jurnalul.antena3.ro/scinteia/special/podul-de-la-mangalia-s-a-nascut-dintr-o-tragedie-319436.html>.

³ Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 53.

He looked at you, and if he thought you were strange looking, he wouldn't let you pass ... so it was an adventure. [...] You could not cross the bridge without an ID. Usually, nothing happened. But if the officer was in a bad mood, or if he thought that you looked at him in the wrong way, or if he believed he saw something in your eyes, he would take you off the bus. Back in those days, he could take you off the bus simply because he wanted to. There was nothing you could do. You could come back the next day hoping that he would be in a better mood. He was the master of the bridge.¹

Some tourists claimed that, at times, the border guards also checked their luggage.² The roadblocks on the road to 2 Mai and Vama Veche annoyed most vacationers and made them question the logic behind travel restrictions.³ The village of 2 Mai was not physically located on the border, like the neighboring Vama Veche, and tourists could always take the five kilometer walk on the beach to avoid encounters with police and border guards or ask their host to take them by wagon through the fields and farm tracks. The border guards were not concerned about the local population and agricultural roads were never patrolled.⁴ Going to Vama Veche from 2 Mai was part of a routine that most vacationers practiced as a joyride, to visit friends, in search of waves or a larger, more secluded beach, despite the official interdiction. However, most vacationers were aware that the entire seashore line was labelled a border area and that it was forbidden to use it as a route to reach Vama Veche on account of the military unit located

¹ Vintilă Mihăilescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 31, 70.

² Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 31, 69.

³ Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 79-80.

⁴ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 113.

between the two villages, directly above the high coast.¹ Weary tourists used the officially prescribed road since the patrol was not always on duty. If they meet the guards, tourists could claim they were going to see a high ranking Securitate officer who visited Vama Veche.² The mere mention of the name granted safe passage without further inquiries because many Securitate officers enjoyed vacationing here, just like ordinary tourists.³ In one such case, the one lonely tent allowed on the beach in Vama Veche between 1987 and 1989, when the interdiction of camping on the beach was regularly enforced, belonged to the deputy of the Counterintelligence Service of the Securitate, whose identity became known to the other vacationers only after the fall of the communist regime, during a TV show.⁴ In addition, regular tourists were familiar with the name and the person of the chief of the border patrol in Vama Veche so claiming his acquaintance was not entirely false.⁵ However, not all attempts were successful, as Luca Pițu remembered: “they forced us to use the main road, to have IDs on us [...] We went to Vama Veche one time and made a detour through the graveyard; the border patrol came, we did not have IDs, they escorted us back to 2 Mai with the dogs, and fined us.”⁶

Border guards also patrolled the shores and some accounts mention clashes with the nudist community.⁷ Some tourists mentioned having their clothes stolen from the beach and the ropes of their tents cut.⁸ It is in these accounts of one-on-one and close border surveillance that the comic registry is most often used, perhaps as a strategy to deflate the seriousness of the

¹ Liviu Papadima interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 62.

² Ibid.

³ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 110.

⁴ Pepino, *A doua Carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 100.

⁵ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 110, 112, and 136-137.

⁶ Luca Pițu interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 63.

⁷ Liviu Papadima, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 33-34.

⁸ Liviu Papadima interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 63, and Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 63.

situation. Dan Vușdea mentioned two soldiers patrolling the beach in Vama Veche disguised as tourists.¹ Far from being camouflaged, their identity was easily disclosed by their attitude and the German shepherd that accompanied them. The superior officer was lying on the beach, on the towel, naked, and the other came from time to time to offer him a report of what he had seen, standing at attention and saluting. Paul Drogeanu also remembered that in the summer of 1972 the overzealous authorities sent a border guard and a soldier to the beach to check people's identity.

And here it was, the young lieutenant dressed in his uniform, accompanied by a poorly dressed soldier, carrying their Kalashnikovs, and victoriously penetrating the beach from the right side, that is, the nudist section. "Gentlemen, your IDs!" And then, the curviest ladies on the beach gathered around them, and came closer and closer, and in greater numbers. They asked: "Sir, how do you think I have my ID with me? Can't you see that I am naked?" They turned red like crayfish and left.²

Cristian Pepino mentioned a similar happening, when a border guard caught a tourist bathing at night and asked him to present identification papers.³ Other times, the situation was more drastic: Pepino also recalled police patrol cars invading the beach and policemen chasing and roughing up people.⁴ Such unpleasant moments did not deter the tourists from their routines, and the next evening they gathered in the same spot recounting events of the prior evening. Other

¹ Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 79-80, and Dan Vușdea, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 63.

² Paul Drogeanu, interviewed by Miruna Tîrcă, Bucharest, 2004, quoted in *Povești de la 2 Mai* [Stories from 2 Mai], 62-63.

³ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 61.

⁴ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 63.

annoying moments when border guards interfered with the lives of beachgoers involved the closing of the beach on account of festive celebrations for Navy Day or the presence of high-ranking officers who wanted to sunbathe undisturbed by other tourists.¹ Overall, aside from occasionally patrolling the beach usually at night and only rarely during the day, as well as the check points on the road, border guards interfered little with tourists' routine.²

Incidents involving illegal border crossing by land were rare and accidental. The neighboring country of Bulgaria was also a socialist state and not a very progressive one. For the Romanian tourist, desirable destinations inside the socialist block included Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Democratic Republic of Germany. These countries offered access to a variety of consumer products that were totally absent from Romanian shelves including soap, tires, clothes, and coffee. Rumours about smugglers who were unable to reach an understanding with the border guards mentioned abandoned merchandise, and reports about the seizure of gold from Turkish and Syrian citizens or from Romanians visiting those countries occasionally made the local news.³ Legends about the Limanu Cave also mentioned an underground network of tunnels that stretched all the way to Bulgaria and Turkey, tunnels which allegedly were used by smugglers and fugitives.⁴ It is improbable that Turkey could be reached that way, given the long distance. The Limanu file makes only one reference to the illegal border crossing of a local resident, Oprea Petre, caught by the Bulgarian border guards wandering

¹ Pepino, *Cartea de la Vama Veche* [The Book from Vama Veche], 30, 69.

² Șerban Anghelescu, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 31, 69.

³ Pepino, *A doua Carte de la Vama Veche* [The Second Book from Vama Veche], 82. Gold trafficking continues to make the local news in post-socialist Romania. A google search using “captura de aur la Vama Veche (gold seizure at Vama Veche)” turns up multiple attempts at various times to unlawfully introduce gold objects into the country.

⁴ “Prin acest tunel românii ar fi fugit în altă țară, în timpul epocii Ceaușescu [Through this tunnel, Romanians would have run to another country], *Ziarul de Iasi* (Iasi), September 26, 2015, <https://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/stiri/video-prin-acest-tunel-romanii-ar-fi-fugit-in-alta-tara-in-timpul-epocii-ceausescu--107347.html>.

through the fields on their side of the border.¹ Interrogated by the Romanian guards, Oprea claimed he had lost his way home during the night and ended up crossing the border. He was not the only one. In 1950, a high school student, who had fled home in search of adventure and who tried unsuccessfully to gain employment at the Danube Black Sea Canal, reached Mangalia and as the night settled in made his way to the nearest cluster of lights, which turned out to be a village in Bulgaria.² The events seemed taken from an adventure novel but the narrative is plausible since by the current road system, only 15 km separate the two localities; according to the old travel routes, the distance would have been much shorter. Upon further research into the individual files of those listed in the Limanu file, the case of a former Iron Guard member charged with smuggling stood out.³ In 1951, Matei Ioan accepted 15 kilograms of lard and 10 kilograms of soap to help another villager cross into Bulgaria.⁴ According to the Securitate files, Matei had been a smuggler during the interwar period but had stopped crossing into the neighboring country once security of the borderline increased, the 1951 incident being the last one reported in his file.⁵

Crossing the Black Sea into neighboring Greece or Turkey was a long and perilous adventure. In fact, such a hazardous attempt counted on the rescue of the political refugees by Turkish or Greek vessels since the distance was too long for improvised boats or rafts. The Limanu file recorded only one such failed attempt. In 1982, 69-year-old Ionescu Alexandru and a younger man took residence at the 2 Mai campground and tried to swim across the Black Sea.⁶ They were caught by the Mangalia border patrol which blamed their colleagues in Vama Veche

¹ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, 125.

²ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D0016405, 172-173.

³ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, 402

⁴ACNSAS, Informative Fond, file no. I767892, 14.

⁵ACNSAS, R193370, 2-5.

⁶ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, 411.

for their sluggishness in reporting the incident and pursuing the fugitives. The police and border patrol in 2 Mai and Vama Veche paid particular attention to life rafts and, for this reason, sometimes searched the luggage of those travelling to 2 Mai from Mangalia by bus.¹

The similarities between Vama Veche and Strandzha, the Bulgarian village bordering Turkey, which was used by East Germans travelling to Sunny Beach to cross into Turkey and from there to reach the Federal Republic of Germany, are few. The Bulgarian border village located far into the forests of the Balkans was more heavily guarded and patrolled than Vama Veche.² Fugitives, mostly Bulgarian or German nationals, risked being shot dead on the spot. Many such incidents were recorded, but most of the Bulgarian Border Police registers were destroyed. The wilderness of the landscape was different; the contrast between the barren fields and rocky sea line and the dense, hilly forest, in capitalist Turkey and socialist Bulgaria made Strandzha, the neighboring city of Burgas, and the sea resort of Sunny Beach more alluring to those looking for a way out. Despite such differences, the tourism of escape is an analytical category that can be applied to both.³

Vacationers to 2 Mai and Vama Veche, irrespective of their social standing, chose these sites to escape the pressure of organized, highly-structured tourism and the close supervision it entailed in socialist Romania. For Romanian socialist elites, this was a mental escape, though at times, as we have seen, it took the form of a real, corporeal and mental escape. Fear of the border was present in both countries, and despite Romania's laxer border supervision, the country's ruler eventually decided on more drastic measures to secure it. While Bulgaria built walls and

¹ Liviu Papadima, interviewed by Liviu Vasile, Bucharest, 2010, quoted in *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 33-34.

² Kapka Kassabova, *Border. A Journey to The Edge of Europe* (Minneapolis, USA: Graywolf Press, 2017), 81.

³ Ibid., 93. Kassabova uses three metaphorical categories to describe socialist border tourism: ancestral tourism (33) of those forcefully evicted from territories that switched borders after major conflicts and who return to visit their ancestral homes, tourism of exorcism (88) of those who experienced traumatic events and then return to their place of predicament such as East German tourists caught trying to flee from Bulgaria to Turkey, and the tourism of escape (93) of those deliberately choosing border destinations to make their way out of the country.

rows of barbed wire, in 1987 Ceaușescu decided to completely demolish the village of Vama Veche so as to facilitate border supervision and remove all obstructions resulting from the physical presence of buildings or people. The plan was never put in practice but led to the depopulation of the village and chaotic development during the post-socialist period.

Conclusion

Paradoxically, in the border communities of 2 Mai and Vama Veche the visible presence of the police in uniform was reduced. The most visible markers of surveillance were the border patrols and the white Dacia parked outside Pacepa's daughter residence, but they too, interfered only occasionally with the routines of the vacationers who reached their final holiday destination in 2 Mai or Vama Veche. However, because of their proximity to the border and the category of tourists that frequented these villages for long periods of time during the summer, operational surveillance was also used. Artists, writers, party activists, and dissenters experienced a close, at times invisible yet intrusive, surveillance as specialized personnel from Bucharest were posted to 2 Mai specifically for this purpose. In turn, the Securitate agents complained of lack of resources to deal with the numerous tourists who flooded the villages' seashore during the summer months.

There were different layers of surveillance in 2 Mai and Vama Veche and they concerned both locals and their guests. Tourists thought they enjoyed a kind of freedom not seen or experienced in other localities, though most of them suspected they were being watched. The Securitate's actions in 2 Mai and Vama Veche were two-fold. In summer, the secret police deployed additional personnel and equipment to closely watch specific targets. During other seasons, the Securitate carried out routine operations through the local police and secret informers recruited from among the inhabitants, supervising "problematic" local targets and the township's main institutions: the collective farm, the two tractor brigades, the two touristic

points (the campground and the restaurant), the medical clinic, and the school. Securitate reports included data about productivity output, regular maintenance work, and management meetings. Additionally, it carried out individual surveillance targeting former members of pre-communist parties abolished after 1947, their relatives, those who kept in touch with relatives residing abroad, and those who voiced a desire to leave the country or critiqued the regime. Interethnic tensions, like the conflict between the Lipovans seeking alliances outside their own community and their priest, were also reported and dealt with by the Securitate.¹

Despite limitations occasioned by the physical presence of the border, Securitate's efforts of increased surveillance, the development of the tourist industry and the increase in the numbers of resorts, hotels and degree of comfort that socialist Romania had to offer, the popularity of 2 Mai and Vama Veche increased, as did the influx of tourists. The lure of the sea, the wilderness of the landscape, the dangers associated with the frontier, the mix of ethnicities, languages and communities, as well as the cultural and commercial exchanges enticed tourists and locals to enjoy at least moments of mental escape alone or in each other's company, and ultimately translated into a feeling of freedom difficult to experience someplace else.

This chapter showcased insights about the relationship between locals, tourists, and state authorities by relying on Securitate records. Archival material and memoirs painted a colourful picture about the relation between accommodation, transgression, and dissent. Some villagers, like Naum Roman agreed to serve as informers for the Securitate, yet he did not supply the kind of information the institution needed. Other people, such as Dionisie Alexandru constantly bent social norms; his personal beliefs and desperate attempt to ensure the survival of his faith by forbidding any intermingling with members outside his church placed him in conflict with both

¹ ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file no. D018362, vol. I, 235-238, and Informative Fond, file no. I794725.

the state and his parishoners. Ultimately, the pressure was strong enough for Dionisie to change his attitude but it was the Lipovan community and the ways in which it used the resources at hand, official complaints, and the political jargon of the era that influenced him. Over time, some of the tourists like Andrei Ursu and Nina Cassian became famous opponents of the regime. Not being able to conceal their distaste for the regime, Ursu made the ultimate sacrifice and died in prison, while Cassian chose exile cutting ties with her home country in her old age.

While the Securitate made efforts to be aware of any and all transgressions, fabricated enemies, and used a network of informers made up of local inhabitants but also of tourists, complete control and surveillance remained elusive. Collaborators used their working relation with the Securitate for personal advantages, those spied upon made sure that their discontent reached the authorities' ear, and those not directly embroiled with the secret police made use of the available means such as denunciations to solve community problems. As the last socialist decade took its toll on an ever more distressed population, the lines between accommodation, dissent, transgression and collaboration became increasingly blurred.

Conclusions

During the socialist period, 2 Mai and Vama Veche represented an alternative space where vacationers embraced an emblematic freedom not seen or experienced before or elsewhere, far from the boisterous life of other seaside resorts and urban centers. Legacies of empires and war, ethnic and religious diversity, the wilderness as well as the fluidity of the border are all part of the fascination that these communities continue to hold in the Romanian imaginary. The stories about the Second World War that delighted older generations of tourists and locals are rarely heard today, having been replaced by colourful accounts about life during socialist times. The German bunkers built during the Second World War in those two villages to protect the country from Soviet invasion proved too strong for ordinary tools; demolition was deemed expensive and thus they were incorporated into the newly erected structures meant to accommodate the ever - increasing flow of tourists. To this day, Vama Veche means freedom for a large segment of Romanian youth, the solitary hippies from different parts of the world, the bikers, and old timers in search of glimpses of the past.

Since the late 1990s, Vama Veche has experienced development and gentrification, which led to the “Save Vama Veche” campaign that lobbied for the area’s environmental conservation and a halt to development and mass tourism. In 2003 Save Vama Veche Association initiated a music festival, *Stufstock* (*Stuf* - Romanian for reed - and *stock* from Woodstock) in protest against the local authorities’ ban of camping on the beach, bad quality music, and to call for the preservation of Vama Veche from the large-scale development that had overtaken much of Romania’s Black Sea coast. The bands played for free and some 40,000 people participated at the first performance. In 2004, allegedly as a result of the campaign,

legislation was enacted, limiting construction of new housing and roads or paving of existing roads.¹ Ultimately, the campaign served to increase the popularity of Vama Veche and the township of Limanu. Stufstock's last edition took place in 2013 but other festivals took its place. These cultural developments brought about the extinction of the "community" spirit built around Vama Veche during the socialist era. At present, the village is a "brand," and the feeling of "community" now originates in the consumption of and participation in this "brand," argues Mihăilescu.¹

Social and economic stratification increased as did the number of tourists, construction sites mushroomed, and the village became one of the most expensive "resorts" in Romania. The scarcely inhabited frontier hamlet populated during the summer by a handful of young people in search of a permissive environment at the expense of personal comfort is now catering to the needs of the country's most privileged youth categories: highschool students from medium and high income families and corporate employees. Mostly a weekend destination, Vama Veche retains some of its former charm during the week when scattered old hippies venture along its empty streets and deserted beach.

The neighboring 2 Mai village continues to cater to the needs of families renting rooms from the locals, at slightly more affordable prices than in Vama Veche. The large gardens disappeared or were diminished by new buildings and ever expanding accommodation facilities. The village managed to retain part of its former clientele because of its continuous habitation. Old hosts and tourists passed the torch to their children; multiple generations continued to leave their imprint upon the constantly changing landscape of the two villages. On the other side of the

¹ Miroslav Tașcu-Stavre, Cristian Bănică, "Old and New in Vama Veche and 2 Mai," *Urbanism. Architecture. Constructions* 5, no. 3 (2014): 80.

² Vintilă Mihăilescu, quoted in Vasile, *Un fel de piua* [A Sort of Break], 63.

national road that links these villages to each other and the city of Mangalia, a small port for yachts emerged in Limanu providing exclusive entertainment for the upper echelons of the business class. In its proximity lies the last of the four villages that form the township of Limanu, Hagieni. Far from the tumultuous activities associated with the sea, the small village of Hagieni with its mostly Tatar and Turkish population, old oriental houses, and low stone fences seems untouched by the passing of time.

Lamentations over the current state of affairs in these two “resorts” continue to flood the media. Virtually, all those who frequented these places in socialist and post-socialist times argue that these villages have lost their charm. Whether it is music, crowds, zoning regulations, high prices, the quality of entertainment, or the shrinking of the beaches, young and old alike agree that 2 Mai and Vama Veche are not what they used to be. The fact that Vama Veche narrowly escaped demolition is a detail that most are not aware of. Caught in a feeling of nostalgia for their childhood and youth, and less so for the socialist era, few are able to admit that social transformation, development of tourist infrastructure, and increased popularity carry their own set-backs. While some hosts kept the old-style barrel shower in their gardens, none of their clients are willing to use the mechanism other than occasionally, for fun. Nudism has become an isolated practice in both villages and luxurious accommodation has become increasingly prevalent. In 2021 the interdiction to camp on the beach in both 2 Mai and Vama Veche was finally enforced. Yet, certain rituals and local institution survived. Vama Veche remains the only place in Romania where most of the pubs are located directly on the beach, and, pandemic regulations aside, music and dancing occur continuously. Watching the sunrise to the rhythm of the Bolero while sipping a drink on the wooden benches of one of the oldest and better placed beach bars in Romania, remains one of the favorite past-times of all those who still choose Vama

Veche as a summer vacation destination. The feeling of freedom at present differs from the one tourists experienced in socialist times, but it is still the most common word used in connection with Vama Veche.

This dissertation analyzed how spaces of marginality harbored oases of individually and collectively perceived freedom, shaped communities, and stimulated cultural opposition and transgression in spite of the fact that the communist authorities firmly controlled the society and the party until the last days of their reign. This cultural history of 2 Mai and Vama Veche is more than a micro-historical analysis of a specific place: it is an attempt to explore Romanian history during the socialist period differently. To this end, I incorporated a variety of primary sources - aside from official state documents - to argue that on account of their geographical location, ethnic and confessional variety, imperial legacies, industrialization, economic development (or oftentimes lack thereof) tourism and the succession of large historical processes and an influx of various groups of peoples on a small territory over a relatively short period of time, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were spaces of reprieve that harbored transgressions and cultural opposition in ways that would have been inconceivable in other parts of the country. My aim is to challenge the totalitarian narrative about Romania's communist past and showcase the various ways in which ordinary people and the elites used their agency to counter abusive state power.

To be sure, spaces of alternative tourism, understood as individual tourism practiced by renting accommodation from local people, or even monasteries existed in other places of Romania, but these places were mostly landlocked. A similar locality with access to the sea but no international border was the village of Mamaia which was demolished in the 1980s to make room for the resort with the same name. Romanians also travelled independently to the Danube Delta, renting rooms in the villages inhabited by fishermen in which living conditions were a far

cry from modern standards, even less so than in 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Parts of the Danube Delta were also border zones but the neighboring country in that area was Ukraine and access to the Black Sea, where available, was mediated by canals. Though populated by its own, mostly Slavic ethnic mix, the Tatar-Turcic influences in the Danube Delta were not as strong as in Southern Dobrogea, and, with the exception of the small town of Sulina, other ethnicities except for the Lipovans and Ukrainians had left the area by the 1980s. This very particular mix of elements that included access to the sea for individual tourists outside state sponsored structures, a remote enough location from the country's capital and all other major cities yet conveniently located close to the ancient city of Mangalia and other resorts, bordered by land and sea by Bulgaria and further on, by Turkey, populated by a variety of ethnic and confessional groups, and a dynamic population that travelled to work and welcomed a steady influx of tourists and people transiting the villages on their way in and out of the country did not exist elsewhere in Romania. These factors created an "exotic" atmosphere built upon the heritage of country's colonial history from the interwar period and passed on the legacy of niche, cultural tourism that existed in Balic, Mangalia, and Mamaia village with all their eccentric, mostly highly educated tourist population.

Construed as peripheral spaces on account of their geographical position, at the very end of Romania's southern part, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche became centres of an alternative cultural life. These villages attracted a particular populace that chose to vacation outside the norms looking for glimpses of freedom that the state denied them back home, in their urban contexts. Artists, writers, actors and film makers, students, young professionals, members of the *nomenklatura* and even former political detainees sought to escape the gaze of the Party and socialist society by freely enjoying their vacation time. They exchanged books, shared the

latest gossip, read to each other their creations, sang, danced, partied, played cards, drew, painted, staged various performances, and sunbathed in the nude. Taken individually, none of these activities amounted to public opposition to the regime but as a whole, all these apparently benign activities provided them with a feeling of freedom difficult to experience someplace else. Nudism, for instance, had been practiced in Romania individually and in an organized fashion before and during the socialist period, but in 2 Mai and Vama Veche the act of sunbathing in the nude bordered on naturism more than nudism as groups of tourists went through their daily routines, at times for weeks without wearing any clothes.²

This dissertation has made extensive use of archival material and memoirs in order to explore the relationship between state and its citizens as expressed in everyday life by analyzing the social transformations that occurred in the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. These villages were chosen because, by socialist standards, they were associated with a particular kind of freedom many claimed was impossible to experience someplace else in Romania. As detailed in chapter four, freedom did not mean that the state and all its agents were not present in these localities, but that their presence was not as strongly enforced as elsewhere. The influx of people and the economy of the micro region made it impossible for the state agents to supervise and control all aspects of village life. 2 Mai and Vama Veche were one of the entry points into Romania and constant pressure from state authorities would have been noted and popularized abroad, something that the communist regime dreaded. The collective farms of 2 Mai were also responsible for supplying produce to half of Romania's seaside resorts and any disruptions in agricultural production would have had an immediate effect on the neighboring city, resorts, and ultimately, national economy. Tourism was a carefully crafted window for the outside world to

³ A 1935 Van Beuren Corporation documentary titled *Roumania* mentioned the nudist section of the beach in Carmen Sylva Resort, currently known as Eforie Sud.

witness and acknowledge Romania's transformation and its communist regime success. Equally important, the tourist industry was one of the few that brought in the foreign currency that the regime badly needed to continue its large scale industrialization and development projects.

The inhabitants of 2 Mai and Vama Veche and their guests were probably unaware of all these macro-economic implications. They were, however, aware of the unique opportunities of their micro-historical region and took advantage of them. Villagers chose to work in the tourist sector or at the neighboring shipyard over farming, though their village's collective farms were among the largest and wealthiest in the country. As tourism infrastructure gradually developed in 2 Mai, commercial and cultural exchanges between the locals and tourists increased. My thesis portrayed some famous characters that visited 2 Mai and Vama Veche. It did so because these were the people who recorded their experience in writing. While part of socialist Romania's cultural elite chose to spend its vacation in 2 Mai and Vama Veche, it would be a mistake to assume that they were the only ones who visited the villages. Bucharest inhabitants were aware of what these localities had to offer and many went there to brush shoulders with famous actors and writers. A large scale oral history research project would showcase the variety of tourist groups to 2 Mai and Vama Veche, their motivation for vacationing there, their imprint on the landscape and the economic and cultural exchanges which took place between tourists and villagers. Such a project would also shed more light on the inner workings of village life, how tourism altered a traditional economy, and the ways in which additional revenue and cultural exchanges improved the villagers' quality of life during the socialist era.

What are we to make of this micro-history focusing on time, space and place in 2 Mai and Vama Veche? Were these places truly oases of freedom in socialist Romania, were they merely perceived as such by a terrorized and otherwise submissive population, or something in

between? Were they a playground allowed to exist because it was more convenient for the regime to have all its dissenters in one place and supervise them more efficiently? Arguments can be made in favor or against each of these viewpoints but the definite answer remains elusive. Simply put, as was the case with Nina Cassian, over the span of a lifetime, an individual could act both as a collaborator and as a dissenter. Moreover, different behaviour did not always happen years apart. Similar to the last Soviet generation, Romanians born and raised during the last decades of the socialist era held a position that was simultaneously inside and outside the official sphere.³ This ambivalence went beyond the traditional binaries of state and society.⁴ While the Securitate was present in these villages and surveillance of tourists and locals occurred, it would be impossible to associate these places with the concept of repression.

The villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche have been landmarks of the Romanian socialist space. The physical and geographical elements, such as the border and the sea, constructed a space of marginality, populated by a variety of ethnic groups, which served as a place for political, social, and economic experiments in both modern and communist Romania. Situated on the fringe of empires and later, at the very edge of the southern part of the country's territory, the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche were both different micro-experiments within the larger demographic, social, and economic laboratory that the province of Dobrogea became from the moment of its incorporation into the Kingdom of Romania until the fall of the communist regime. The development of tourism infrastructure on the Romanian side of the Black Sea coast was the last of these experiments, but the communist state's concern with border security spared these villages from the development that occurred in other seaside resorts. The sea, the borderland, a multi-ethnic local community, and special state policies were key factors in the

⁴ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 14-16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23-28.

development of niche tourism, a process that started in the early twentieth century, reached its peak during the communist era, and, arguably, continues to this day. Controversy over the cultural identity of these emblematic sites is a constant theme in Romanian media, one that could find a resolution once more materials from the archives of socialist institutions become available.

APPENDIX

From Near to Far

Visual Cartography of 2 Mai and Vama Veche Spaces



The exhibition “From Near to Far. Visual Cartographies of the Spaces 2 Mai-Vama Veche” is an extension of the theme I studied for my PhD research, seen from a different perspective. Through this curatorial endeavour I wish to direct my attention towards the artistic creations of artists from various generations, who through their practice render the universe of the villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The two dwellings became entrenched in the collective imaginary as the favoured places where intellectual bohemians would spend their holidays during the communist period, alternatives to mass tourism, allowing them to benefit from a certain freedom, favourable to artistic creation and self-organised vacations.

The subject of 2 Mai and Vama Veche has been explored in the past 20 years from various perspectives. Novels, biographies, seasonal articles, stories have been written, as well as academic research: dissertations with ethnographic, anthropological, economic and historical nuances. Thus, the two villages have long been more than dwellings on the shore; they have a special character in the landscape of Romanian seaside, difficult to frame, but interesting to research. We tried to look at the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche precisely through the works of art they are mirrored in, to be able to shed light on the artistic production which was inspired and developed in this space.

The title of the exhibition is borrowed from the end of the poem “The Seaside Like a Poem” by Nina Cassian, herself a leading figure of 2 Mai tourism. The poet confesses her wish to arrive to the seaside in September, because it is then, under the soft rays of the sun, that the beauty of the seaside can be observed at leisure. I chose this poem because it speaks about breaking out of norms, about returning to the seaside even when it is no longer calm and hospitable. This is also true of the works of art, for when they are brought together in this context, they reveal a space dedicated not only to the holiday, but creation, too, a space which represents a refuge, an island of freedom.

The National Museum of the Romanian Peasant was in my mind the ideal place for such an exposition and it proved to be the adequate place once I received a positive answer from the director, Virgil Nițulescu. Meeting the supervisor, Ion Blăjan, an inveterate tourist of 2 Mai, was the moment I felt I was on the right track. I think the museum space is allowing the way I wished the stories of the two seaside villages to be displayed. Showing in this museum takes into account the interdisciplinarity of this project, the materials and materialities presented to suggest the atmosphere and attitude of the spaces of 2 Mai and Vama Veche.

When she didn't have a physical space for a studio, the artist Geta Brătescu used the seashore as a space for creation. Her family holidays on the beach of 2 Mai became a refuge, about which she writes in her journals. The works made here explore images of bodies on the beach, using the technique of charcoal drawing.

Nicolae Comănescu paints the sea front between 2 Mai and Vama Veche in his own style, with dust gleaned from the vacations spent in 2 Mai. The work *Hike at the landfill* between 2 Mai and Vama Veche is part of the series *Dust Narrative Analysis*; it shows his friend, Tudor, pushing the baby carriage with the artist's son, and renders the atmosphere of (artistic) exploration of space, a landfill, a place a regular tourist wouldn't spend his holiday time.

The portraits made by Irina Crivăţ, showing her friends, take us to the beaches in Vama Veche and 2 Mai, the shipwreck in Vama Veche, the courtyards of the hosts and Dobrogean restaurant, an iconic place for holidays in the 70s and 80s.

The poetic movie *2 Mai Evening* by Ada-Maria Ichim uses no words to tell the story of a summer night, with campfire and love drama which end with a sea dive at sunrise. The author has been going to 2 Mai all her life, living with the same host, under the same walnut tree and can not conceive of her summers without the shaded courtyard at no. 474.

Meeting the artist Constantin Pacea has been nurturing and revealing. Alongside his very personal works which he offered for the exhibition, *Mother at Vama Veche* and *Nana at Vama Veche*, painted in electrifying colours from a black and white photograph, he filled in the canvas I had in my mind about the area with stories and memories. Together with these portraits, he shows two small works made in his adolescence, in the courtyard of nea Tănase, his host in Vama Veche.

Ion Pacea, in his series *Marina*, inscribes the two villages in the tradition of marine themes. His works, both still lifes and abstract, using oil or gouache, suggest the luminous atmosphere of this place.

Cristian Pepino has published stories from Vama Veche and 2 Mai, and before this, he drew them. His pastel drawings, made on the spot, show the beach with naked people, Francois Pamfil at the well in Matriona's courtyard or the surroundings of the village.

Silvia Radu together with Vasile Gorduz have been regulars of Vama Veche for 40 years. The two artists became attached to the village at the border with Bulgaria and turned their summer vacations into self-imposed and self-managed creation retreats. Together with the teacher and writer Paul Miron they become ktetors of the small stone church in Vama Veche. Silvia Radu chose to paint the sea front and gulf between 2 Mai and Vama Veche, always the same image, only the state of the artist changes, decipherable according to the colours and nuances she used.

Simona Runcan, part of the artists' group who spent their holidays in Vama Veche (George Apostu, Silvia Radu and Vasile Gorduz, Ovidiu and Tana Maitec), captures the playful and creative atmosphere of those vacations through a series of photographs which document the installations she made on the beach in Vama Veche in the 80s. As art historian Cristina Cojocaru states, these installations can be understood as holiday games and, at the same time, as land art or site-specific installations.

Viorel Simionescu illustrates the area 2 Mai and Vama Veche as a junction between the natural and industrial. His photographs contribute to an understanding of the space as a juxtaposition of the holiday time at the seaside with the material reality of the dockyard, mechanical tools and shipbuilding. In the same moment, he superposes the stable source of income of the people living in the area with the seasonal landscape of the vacation.

Anamaria Smigelschi prefers to look closely at everything you might find on the beach, things you notice when you lie down on the sand. Between two long sea dives, she gleans inspiration material from around her linen sheet. Seashells, sea snails, broken or whole rapa whelks, bits of algae, they all recompose in her watercolour and graphics works the landscape of small treasures found on the beach.

Alexandru Maftai has a dialogue with his father, Adrian Maftai; decades later, he remakes the portraits his father made of the locals. Lucia Maftai completes this tableau of the family of artists with a ceramic depiction of a snail, inspired by the seascape where they spent a holiday month together with her family.

Ovidiu Marcu, an artist from Cluj-Napoca, remakes from memory what Vama Veche means to him, and the work he shows in this exhibition is situated somewhere between reality and fiction, its title being the only clue to locate the work.

Constanța Stratulat is known for her paintings of Balcic, and after the surrendering of Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, she directs her gaze towards 2 Mai. Her presence might be a clue to the fact that the space 2 Mai/Vama Veche is a continuation of the tradition represented by the fine arts in Balcic. The artist takes into her work some of the most attractive features of the area, beach camping, and her watercolours represent people hiding from the sun under coloured umbrellas or the loneliness of nature between the sea front and the sea.

The anthropological documentary *Slack Time* by Miruna Tîrcă offers a better understanding of the life of the locals in 2 Mai after the summer season is over. The author is the first researcher to direct her attention to this area, and, in 2004, during her studies at the Ethnography and Folklore Department at the Bucharest University of Letters, she wrote a dissertation about the stories and locals in 2 Mai.

The teacher Romanița Constinescu writes in her work *Steps on the border*. Studies about the Romanian imaginary of the border: "The stories from 2 Mai add a missing page to the memories

of Balcic: that of the hosts. (...) Some hosts end up by falling prey to the seduction of other worlds, of the guests (which must have happened at Balcic, too, where Bulgarian locals, as well as Turkish, turn into eager admirers of the artists on vacation), trying, with courage or shyness, to step inside their world.” I am certainly one of the hosts who fell prey to the seduction of the world of tourists and I admit my endeavour is to infiltrate this world, driven by the desire to know, understand and explain it.

Because the identity of this space changes for three months a year, being placed under a magnifying glass when the others come, the locals become conscious they are being watched, they lose their privacy and step out of their daily routine. The relationships established between the two communities, that of the locals and of the tourists, is one of the characteristic traits of this space, and this relationship has been decisive when we chose to display these two worlds together.

It is a hybrid display, a melange between the everyday life of the villagers and the bohemian life of the tourists who chose these spaces as holiday destinations. The singularity of this exhibition is created by the dialogue between the artists, the space being represented, the host and her/his private universe. The particular traits are the display of decorative objects, home wares, furniture, objects surrounding the tourists during their vacation and which formed the universe associated with this period. Showing these objects belonging to rooms, kitchens or courtyards offers context and understanding of the space which is being mapped, as well as the people who inhabit it. Identifying these objects has been a pleasant adventure which made me regard my village in a different way and pay closer attention to what is hiding in people’s homes and courtyards.

In the past year I rediscovered how the locals in 2 Mai and Vama Veche relate to their own art, found at the very subtle border between the rural tourism aesthetic and their daily life, a fusion which transforms this space into one difficult to capture/explain and place into patterns. The villagers’ works displayed in this exhibition derive from various practices and are made with the aim of embellishing and equipping their own homes and yards. They are objects with clear utility in the domestic space, made out of the need to accommodate many people, and to have more seats at the table or cosy, beautiful, clean rooms. Among the objects they made/DIY-ed we can find: traditional Romanian and Tatar weaving, macramés, Lipovan objects used in church rituals, wooden benches and tables, painted chairs, sculptures and other artifacts which can be framed into the naive or popular art category.

At the beginning of the research I talked with Lenuța Sandu (born Vătăman), who owns a shop in the village center and who offered for the exhibition a blue vase to which she added sand and seashells. The decorated objects are part of her mother’s dowry, now considered old fashioned, but have been transformed and sold as souvenirs to tourists during summer. The gifted vase is the only piece left.

Alexandra Naum offered a string of rosary beads and the pillows used in church for the head and knees when the Lipovan worship ritual is performed. These objects were sewn, woven and used by her grandmother, Olga Naum, from scraps of material left from various stitchings. From Alexandra's neighbours, who left the country, I received three wooden tables which we used as directed: "The tabletops will not be polished or painted over, even if there are signs of wear, it's the patina of time. They can be washed with water and lye and, after they are dried, they can be waxed". We followed their instructions accordingly.

I was sent to Maria Ghelbere by Andreea Berechet-Ionescu who remembered from the holidays spent there a tapestry of the Ghelbere husband and wife on each side and a siren between them. The tapestry was no longer there, as Ms. Ghelbere had gifted it, but the house was packed with others just as beautiful and inventive. I chose to display three works, one of which illustrates the two spouses seated at the table; the second features a couple of pigeons, and the third shows a shepherd and shepherdess in the style of Nicolae Grigorescu.

Tanti Ditița (Rață) had in her gazebo a piece of paper with a fish sewn onto it. When I asked her what it was, she brought out a bag full of such weavings made by her daughter, Florina, in her adolescence. The son of Didița, Marian (Macios), a well appreciated master builder, told me how he gathered millstones he found in the area and used them as decorative elements in his constructions. I left his house with rugs made from material scraps and a table painted by his wife.

Looking for objects to represent the Tatar community present in the village, I asked my neighbour Ainur Velișa, the host of the Maftai family, if by any chance he had something at home or someone he could ask; so he opened the chest with things sewn by his mother, Saide. I was amazed by the subtlety of her work and the models which were very different from everything I have seen.

I couldn't look in my neighbours' yard without looking in my own, especially because my mother, Elena Dumitru, has been painting walls ever since I've known her. They are murals with a purpose, covering cracks or some stain. She did the same to a few exfoliated chairs and now they have become decorative objects, losing their function. Thus our home, especially the space destined for tourists, has become a colourful and playful space. In the yard of my aunt, Maria Feodorof, I found wooden benches DIY-ed by my uncle, Vanea. They are painted in the same colour I've known all my life, the Lipovan blue so often found in the yards in 2 Mai.

Itu Constantin's yard is packed with tens of walnut wood and stone sculptures, works made when he is not climbing some pole to fix high voltage wires. My colleague from gymnasium Doru Lobonț asked his grandfather, the shepherd Toma Nicolae, to borrow his old blade shears.

My French teacher, Liliana Tudose, allowed me to look in her mom's yard for everything I needed. I chose two wooden chairs painted in green and two sewn panels adorning the rooms. Liliana Ivan offered photographs made by Mr. Stancu, the village photographer (himself

photographed by Viorel Simionescu). Two days before I left 2 Mai, tante Silvia Cubaniț came to visit and brought for the exhibition a bag of macrames she made during long winters. She found out from my mother I was looking for objects for the exhibition and didn't falter. I was touched by this desire to participate, to tell stories, to be part of the story. I found this both in the villagers and the tourists, and I like to think this space becomes a visiting card which transforms two separate communities in a functional network, one which is activated when one of the members solicits it.

The exhibition design of the architect Alex Axinte, whom I thank here, centers on the idea of a knot: aknotted place, a place where relationships are knotted, because in the end, no matter how hard we tried to map this place, this exhibition is about people and the relations between them, being a space found at the border between friend and client, hospitality and tourism, time and being out of time, aesthetic and useful. The mere fact that I met Alex Axinte in 2 Mai, long before our paths would intersect in Bucharest, simplified the way we worked and communicated because there was a common ground, the campground in 2 Mai and all its surroundings, little similar experiences or characters which add charm to the place.

The way this space changed is already known not only to people who used to come or still come to the area, but to those who look at it from afar, too. It had a place in public discourse and has been analyzed in multiple academic investigations and through the lens of generating a type of activism of the saviour kind. Oftentimes in public space, people talk, especially during 1 May and during summertime, about the ways this area has changed or "has gotten worse", about how "nothing is what it used to be". The purpose of this exhibition is not to transform itself into a romantic manifestation of the "how beautiful it used to be in 2 Mai/Vama Veche" fashion, because this exhibition takes upon itself the role to reclaim and fill in a chapter in Romanian art history dedicated to some villages at the seaside towards which a large number of artists have directed their gaze. The role of the exhibition is not only one having to do with artistic and aesthetic aspects, but also one which is profoundly human.

At the end of all research, publications and even at the end of this exhibition, the space 2 Mai and Vama Veche remains home, the place I saw then, too: "When the birds leave the festivity, / When nothing is in full swing anymore, / And the sweet slowness of nature predicts the winter's accord...", and this makes me find myself in the middle, at the border between here and there, between season and off-season, between "home" and "at the seaside", between near and far.

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Films (partially or entirely filmed in 2 Mai)

Distanța dintre mine și mine. [The Distance between Me and Me]. Directed by Mona Nicoara, Dana Bunesco. Bucharest: HI Film Productions, Romanian Television, Sat Mic Film, 2018.

Acasă la tata [Back Home]. Directed by Andrei Cohn. Bucharest: Tandem Film Production, 2015.

După sezon [After the Summer Season]. Documentary film independently produced and directed by Miruna Tarca about the life of fishermen in 2 Mai. 2006

Bani de dus, bani de întors [Get Away Money]. Directed by Alexandru Tocilescu. Bucharest: TVR, 2005.

Faleze de nisip [Cliff Sands]. Directed by Dan Pița. Bucharest: Casa de filme 1, 1982.

Osânda [The Doom]. Directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. Bucharest: Casa de filme 5, 1976.

Toate pânzele sus! [Sail on!]. Directed by Mircea Muresan. Bucharest: TVR Film Studio, 1974.

Pirații din Pacific [The Pirates of the Pacific]. Directed by Nicolae Corjos. Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București,” Casa de filme 5, 1975.

Insula Comorilor [Treasure Island]. Directed by Nicolae Corjos. Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București,” Casa de filme 5, 1975.

De bună voie și nesilit de nimeni [Of Your Own Free Will]. Directed by Maria Callas Dinescu. Bucharest: Casa de Filme 5, 1974.

Nemuritorii [Immortals]. Directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. Bucharest: Casa de filme 5, 1974.

Doi ani de vacanță [Two Years Holliday]. Directed by Gilles Grangier, Sergiu Nicolaescu. Bucharest, Paris, Munchen: Technisonor Paris, Tele-München, Studioul cinematografic „București” and Româniafilm, 1973.

Răzbunarea [The Revenge]. Directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. Bucharest, Munchen: Studioul cinematografic „București,” Tele-München, 1972.

Lupul Mărilor [The Seawolf]. Directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. Bucharest, Munchen: Studioul cinematografic „București,” Tele-München, 1972.

360 de grade – Banda de celuloid [360 Degrees – Celluloid Tape]. « Feerie ». Bucharest: TVR1, 12 November 1972.

B.D. la munte și la mare [B.D. in the Mountains and at the Seaside]. Directed by Mircea Dragan. Bucharest: Studioul cinematografic „București,” 1971.

Zodia Fecioarei [Virgo]. Directed by Manole Marcus. Bucharest: Studioul cinematografic „București,” 1966.

Mangalia. Directed by Tudor Posmantir. FIR Film, 1930

Artists (who drew, painted, and photographed landscapes from 2 Mai and Vama Veche during the socialist era)

Anitei, Gabriela (b. 1959)

Bojan, Mariana (b. 1947)

Brătescu, Geta (1926-2018)

Comănescu, Nicolae (b. 1968)

Crivăț, Irina (b. 1953)

Maftai, Adrian (1941-1983)

Maftai, Lucia (b. 1940)

Maftai, Alexandru (b. 1970)

Niculini, Florin (1928-1997)

Ovidiu Marcu (b. 1944)

Pacea, Constantin (b. 1957)

Pacea, Ion (1924-1999)

Pepino, Cristian (b. 1950)

Radu, Silvia (b. 1935)

Runcan, Simona (1942-2007)

Simionescu, Viorel (b. 1937)

Smigelschi, Anamaria (b. 1938)

Stoie Mărginean, Aurelia (b. 1940)

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