

## THE REFUGE – A TRAGIC SUFFERING AND DESPAIR\*

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**Abstract:** *The years of 1940-1941 and 1944-1945 were notable for the massive refuge of the Northern Bukovina population, in the vast majority Romanians, from the wars and the establishment of an aggressive regime of denationalization, collectivization, dispossession of material goods, artificial famine, etc. During this period, there had been fraudulent crossings of the newly installed Romanian-Soviet borders by Romanians from the Northern Bukovina. Comparing the above information taken from the Suceava and Cernăuți archives with the history of Bukovina, written or rewritten during the Soviet and Ukrainian periods, depending on the political interests of the new scientific institutions, we discover an essential discrepancy in the treatment of events. We learn from the testimonies and publications of the time, for example, about the aggressive measures of the new Soviet administration instituted against the Romanian population wishing to take refuge in Romania, similar to the German population, who was allowed to do so. The reasons that the refugees declared have been also recorded in the documents from the Suceava archive. In the State Archive in Cernăuți, there are documents containing the findings of Soviet officials about the fraudulent crossings of the border and the drastic measures applied to the population of the Romanian villages on the border and the organizers of these crossings.*

*"History teaches us to understand the course of things today and tomorrow. We just have to lean into it. History is not a "story", nor a creation of the "imaginary", it is a science based on the research of documents, of all the testimonies provided by the inexhaustible wealth of archives and which reveal facts, phenomena, events in their political, economic, social, diplomatic. History must be understood and assumed with all that was good and bad - if we want to arrive at the objective knowledge of realities in their natural evolution". (PhD Viorica MOISUC)*

History does not repeat itself, history continues. "Death-bringing" weapons, as prince Dimitrie Cantemir of Moldavia wrote in Hieroglyphic History, are being modernized, the destructions are becoming more global, the massacres more horrifying. People are looking for shelters, taking

refuge leaving behind all the agony of a lifetime. They flee in ignorance from the wrath of wars in unknown places, saving their family, hoping that they will return someday... To better understand the present, we need to know the past. But we have a unique experience for the history of Bucovina. The official history that is taught in school is written differently than the one lived in reality. The testimonies of Romanians from northern Bucovina, survivors of the tragic events they went through in the 1940s, 1945-1947, provide us with authentic information in which things are seen more clearly. It is the "small history", but true, that is not written about in the official history. In reality, in war there are no winners or losers, there is only human suffering, the harsh truth of devastating realities, the consequences of irreparable changes. History cannot record them all, it reproduces the events in the sea. Microhistory retains testimonies of some communities that reflect realities that allow us to know the events in depth, to know the true destiny of our ancestors. For the north of Bucovina we have at least four histories, written from different political positions and national interests - by German and Austrian, Soviet, Ukrainian and Romanian historians. In the 90s of the last century, the possibility of writing a single history of Bucovina was discussed for a long time, but without any perspective, which turned out to be impossible, the vision of the two ethnic groups, Ukrainian and Romanian, on the history of Bucovina being different.

In the history of the Upper Country of Moldavia, called by the Austrians after 1775 - Bucovina, we distinguish five periods in which the way of life of the population changed suddenly and essentially, imposing a break with national traditions, language and history: 1) 1359-1774 (415 years) – is part of Moldova; 2) 1775-1918 (143 years), Bucovina was under the rule of the Habsburg Empire; 3) 1918-1940 and 1941-1944 (almost 25 years), Bucovina is a component part of Romania; 4) 1940-1941 and 1944-1991 (almost 48 years), the north of Bucovina together with the Herța county and the former Hotin county is incorporated into the Soviet Union, thus constituting the current Chernivtsi region; 5) since 1991, the Chernivtsi region, together with the Herța county and the former Hotin county, is part of Ukraine, as is southern Bessarabia, which is included in the Odesa region; as well as the Romanian localities in the Transcarpathian region. We recall this periodization of the history of Bucovina with the aim of demolishing the widely publicized periodization proposed by Ukrainian historians who claim that Bucovina "is Ukrainian (Slavic) land since the beginning of the ages" without proposing an authentic documentary

support. A periodization of this kind is proposed by the authors Valentina Bogatâreț and Liubov Melniciuc in the article Place of monuments in Bucovina as a factor in the formation of identity<sup>1</sup>. In Ukrainian historiography, a different periodization of the history of Bukovina is proposed. We note that only in the 20th century, four official languages were established in the north of Bucovina: German, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian. Thus, every 11th generation had to learn a new official language, but at the same time it kept its mother tongue in communication, for native Romanians perpetuating the struggle to preserve their identity over time. The assimilation of a minority ethnicity through the language it speaks is the first step towards denationalization and loss of identity. Even keeping only the popular traditions - singing, dancing, wearing the national costumes, keeping including the ethnographic customs, if the population, at a certain moment, loses its mother tongue and does not know its history, it will no longer think and feel Romanian, qualities that it is perpetuated through language, faith and history.

There is a risk of becoming "citizens of the universe", or as some German and Ukrainian historians say today, of declaring themselves to be of Bukovina origin, which is also comparable to the well-known phrase "homo sovieticus" instituted by the Soviets, that is, "national in form and communist in content", speaking Russian, today - Ukrainian. The recent Law on the functioning of the Ukrainian language as a state language and the status of regional languages is being applied with difficulty in Ukraine. In Chernivtsi, the Romanian language does not have the status of a regional language at the regional level. The old problem of division into Romanians and Moldovans, respectively the Romanian language/Moldovan language, continues to disturb the community. The false phrase - "Southeast European population or language" is also circulated. The frequent attacks against the Romanian language are manifested, first of all, by the continuous reduction of the teaching hours of the Romanian language and literature in schools. It is also worrying that some parents today transfer their children to schools with Ukrainian language teaching in neighboring villages, thinking that they will ensure a stable career in life. For this purpose, the local administrations have made school buses available to them. Through this, they contribute to the acceleration of the denationalization process of villages with a majority Romanian population. In fact, officially, Bucovina no longer exists. Its fragments, perhaps slightly amplified, have acquired names in Ukraine and Romania related to the

cities that have become the capitals of these parts of the country. For this name given to the northwestern part of medieval Moldavia, Joseph II bribed the Turkish viziers and the supreme commander of the retreating Russian troops after the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 in order to form a link territorial between the recently annexed region of Galicia (1772) and the Grand Duchy of Transylvania.

As for the myth about Bucovina, it has faded in the consciousness of contemporaries. The young generations whose parents and grandparents lived in Bucovina until the Second World War, especially Germans and Austrians, less Poles and Jews, talk about Bucovina nostalgically, as a myth, as a real miracle. For the first time the Romanians from Bukovina experienced the ordeal of the refuge in the years after the Russian-Turkish war (1768-1774). The historian from Suceava, Prof. Dr. Ștefan Purici, found in his well-documented study, *Emigration of the Bucovina population (1775-1848)*: "The Habsburg policy in the period 1775-1847, the attitude of the new administration towards the Romanian population stirred up the heart of all social strata deep dissatisfaction that manifested itself through various petitions, protests, disturbances, desertions and, above all, through massive emigration to Moldova. This mass displacement of the Bukovinians under the authority of the new masters of their land will include practically all social classes: boyars, priests, mazilis, *razesi* – peasants. So, for example, the great boyars like: lordache and Lupul Balș, Ion Cantacuzino, Gheorghe Beldiman, Lupul Nacu, Alecu 12 Neculca, Nicolae Russet, Lupul Costache, Ioniță Sturza et al. they had left the territory after 1775, retreating to Moldova. Of the 22 boyars that General Spleny indicates as living in Bucovina as early as 1776, four years later only one remained (V. Balș). Even in the first half of the 19th century, some Romanian landowners from the Aulic Council immigrated illegally to Moldova, as was the case of Ion Brâncian from Sinăuți, in 1820. Out of the total of 164 noble families recorded in Bucovina in 1815, 30 families would emigrate to Moldova, of which 25 from Carapciu on Ceremus. But the most numerous category of emigrants was obviously the peasantry, which made up the overwhelming majority of the population of the land. The peasants did not want to remain under their foreign rule through language, religion, customs, etc., to be subjected to contributions and persecution, as happened to their brothers from Transylvania.

On May 1, 1776, Artillery General Siskowicz reported to the Aulic Council of War on the massive emigration from Bucovina". The theme of

the refuge was also the object of research by the historian from Suceava, Prof. Dr. Mihai Iacobescu<sup>3</sup>. For Bucovina, the 20th century was marked by the two world wars that resulted in essential territorial and political changes, which changed the way of life of the population. The refuge from the wars to Romania was the only hope of salvation, but also facing unbearable difficulties - death, hunger, the loss of a stable life. The fate of the Filip Țopa family, described in the Story of Bucovina, who took refuge from Chernivtsi during both wars: in the First World War, when the author of the work was a child, and in the Second World War, when the author was already officer in the Romanian army<sup>4</sup>. The years 1940-1941 and 1944-1945 were notable for the massive refuge of the North Bucovina population, in the vast majority Romanians, from the wars and the establishment of an aggressive regime of denationalization, collectivization, dispossession of material goods, artificial starvation, etc. During this period, there were fraudulent crossings of the newly installed Romanian-Soviet borders by Romanians from North Bucovina. The confrontation of archival documents, historical works and the testimonies of contemporaries of the event allow the reconstruction of the historical truth. Archivist Petru Grior, graduate of the Department of Romanian Philology of the University of Chernivtsi, founder of the "Golgotha" Society from Chernivtsi which was inaugurated in Chernivtsi on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Fântâna Albă massacre (1991), has dedicated himself in recent years researching the archives, proposing to reconstruct the truth about the Lunca and Fântâna Albă massacres, deportations, about the fate of Romanians from other localities in the region during the installation of Soviet power in the current Chernivtsi region. He is the founder of the Historical and Cultural Research Center in Chernivtsi. He worked for a while as deputy director at the State Archives in Chernivtsi. Like his colleague, Dragoș Olaru, they had the opportunity to access documents, which were forbidden to "ordinary" historians for research. They collected and published information that only today allows us to fully understand the tragedy that our nation of martyrs went through. The research results were published in the Book of Pain. Martyrs of Romania, in 6 volumes in Chernivtsi in the years 2011-2016 and in other works. The studies carried out on the basis of official documents recall the cruel truth about the first years of the Stalinist dictatorship, a tragic period for Romanians in the Chernivtsi region: between June 28 and August 31, 1940, 200 "enemies of the 13 people" of origin were arrested, investigated and sent to Siberia Romanian, and out of the total number of

deportees from the Chernivtsi region in 1941, Romanians constituted 6,031 people. The biggest wave of deportees from Bessarabia and northern Bucovina took place on June 12-13, 1941, the most tragic day of the first year of Stalinist rule, archivist Petru Grior informs us, when during the night "22,147 people were deported from different nationalities, ages and professions", of which "6,532 women and 5,240 children... From Herța district – 1,373; from the Hliboca river – 2,290; from Noua Sulita r. – 1,961; from Mahala commune – 700; from Hotin r. – 1,412; from the city Chernivtsi - 6,036". In the last three years, Petru Grior released three more books in which he reconstructs the first period of the installation of Soviet power, marked by reprisals, arrests, deportations, destruction, famine, prisons. In June 1940, when Romania was forced to evacuate the north of Bucovina, Bessarabia and the land of Herța, and in September 1940 and the north of Transylvania, two Romanian universities took refuge, the one from Cernăuți and the one from Cluj. The University of Cluj took refuge in Sibiu and Timișoara.

Only the Faculty of Theology remained from the University of Chernivtsi, which took refuge in Suceava. In the fall of 1941, after the recapture of Chernivtsi, Ion Nistor returned to Chernivtsi in the desire to "take stock of the situation of the University and especially of his personal library, which contained about 20,000 volumes, mostly on the history of the Romanians. The University no longer existed in Chernivtsi, it was replaced by a Polytechnic, which functioned until its withdrawal in 1944". The Faculty of Theology of the University of Chernivtsi was established in Suceava, and after the reunification of 1941 the University was not reopened. On June 13, 1940, after the retirement of Metropolitan Visarion Puiu from the metropolitan see of Chernivtsi, Tit Simețrea, the Bishop of Hotin, was elected as Archbishop of Chernivtsi and Metropolitan of Bucovina. In these circumstances, Tit Simețrea was appointed deputy metropolitan of Bucovina, and his residence during the occupation of Chernivtsi was in Suceava. The historian from Chernivtsi Dumitru Covalciuc writes about the fate of the church and the Metropolis of Chernivtsi: "If after the evacuation of the Romanian civil and military authorities on the reoccupied territory, organs of a new political rule were created, the Orthodox Church of Bucovina was left without its legitimate hierarch. The last archpastor of the Orthodox Church in Bucovina, Tit Simețrea, installed in the metropolitan see of Chernivtsi on June 13, 1940 and returned after the start of the war, returned to Suceava, where he led this administrative unit of the Romanian

Orthodox Church under the title of the Archdiocese of Suceava and Maramureş . In Cernăuți, then, there was no ecclesiastical authority left, in whose care the organization of the activity of the parishes would fall under the new political conditions, i.e. under the atheist-communist regime. The priests, as is well known, left their parishes at the end of March 1944 and took refuge in Romania, and the few remaining in the parishes, old or sick, began to be subjected to persecution". We learn new data about the refuge of the priests from the north of Bucovina from the memories of archpriest Cassian Bohatyreţ, who recorded that "Even before the establishment of Soviet power, 112 Orthodox priests, mainly Romanians, together with the metropolitan consistory, evacuated to Romania.

However, at the time of the establishment of Soviet power, 132 priests remained to serve in their parishes. Later, 90 of them, mainly Ukrainians, as well as some Romanians, who did not manage to take refuge in Romania, took advantage of the action to relocate the German population and 14 went abroad"<sup>8</sup>. After the liberation of Chernivtsi, ÎPS Tit Simedrea, on July 25, 1941, took over the Metropolitan Residence. Church activity began. The first call was to priests to take over the 182 vacated parishes, many of them in a damaged state. The Cathedral and part of the Metropolitan buildings were in a deplorable condition. By the end of 1943, they were all back in service. Metropolitan Tit Simedrea, whose activity is too little known, organized priestly conferences during that period, visited churches in the diocese. In a report from April 12, 1942, we read about the situation of the Metropolis, which included: 10 deaneries, 335 parishes and 58 branches, 31 chapels. Another 15 churches were under reconstruction. There were 429 priests, 58 of whom were Ukrainian. ÎPS Tit Simedrea also solved the problems of the Religious Fund composed at that time of thousands of hectares of forest, agricultural land, stone quarries, ponds, etc. It is known that patronage activities were carried out from the funds of the Metropolis and the churches: helping the families of soldiers on the front, a military hospital was organized at Vatra Dornei, scholarships were granted for students and other charitable activities. According to some materials from the archive and letters kept in personal archives, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea during the war saved many Jewish families in Chernivtsi by sheltering them in the basements of the Metropolitan Palace. Tit Simedrea intervened with the state authorities with proposals to stop the deportation of Jews from Chernivtsi to Transnistria. When Metropolitan Tit

Simedrea returned to Chernivtsi in the period 1941-1944, the Faculty of Theology played an important role in the revival of higher education:

"Thus, writes the Romanian researcher Mircea Grigoroviță, on 5.XII.1942, the constituent meeting of the Institute of History at the Faculty of Theology took place, which had a very rich activity in the few years of its existence". Also in this period, a nucleus was created in Chernivtsi for the creation of a Faculty of Sciences, which included Leca Morariu and Alexandru Ieșan, former professors at the Faculty of Letters, who worked at the Faculty of Theology during this period, later refugees in Romania . Important personalities of cultural, scientific and religious life took refuge from Chernivtsi. Whole volumes can be written about their fate. In March 1944, when the front was approaching Chernivtsi, the evacuation of the Metropolis began in Suceava, then in Vatra Dornei. On January 31, 1945, Tit Simedrea submitted his resignation. "The last archpastor of the Orthodox Church in Bucovina, Tit Simedrea, writes D. Covalciuc, installed in the metropolitan see of Chernivtsi on June 13, 1940 and returned after the start of the war, returned to Suceava, where he led this administrative unit of the Romanian Orthodox Church under the title of the Archbishopric of Suceava and Maramureș". In the spring of the year of the second "liberation", the Orthodox Church in Bucovina was left without a master. But this situation did not last long. Through the circular dated May 28, 1944, the patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Alexie forced the metropolitan of Kiev and Galicia Ioan to proceed without hesitation with the reorganization of the Orthodox Church in Bukovina, passing it under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Metropolitan of Kiev, at the head of the Exarchate of Ukraine, did not immediately find the right man to lead the Eparchy of Chernivtsi and Bukovina, because no representative of the higher clergy remained in the territory annexed by the Soviets. Only on July 19, 1944, Eutimii Pavlovici Kaverninski, a priest who knew neither the local tradition nor the Romanian language, was sent to Chernivtsi to initially occupy the position of eparchial deacon of the Orthodox parishes in northern Bukovina, Herța and northern Bessarabia.

The Putna Monastery - Bucovinian Destiny project proposes another vision of history - the one seen and written from the perspective of the testimonies, the memories of those who survived the events or their descendants, confronting them with the archive documents located in Cernăuți, Suceava and Rădăuți that contain information about the situation created at the newly established Soviet-Romanian border. We discover in



the Soviet documents from the archive in Chernivtsi and those in the Suceava archive contradictory assessments by their content. In the Archives of Suceava I discovered official documents regarding the refuge of Poles in Romania through the Bucovina border. In various crossing points of the newly established Soviet-Romanian border, real bloody massacres took place, provoked by the Soviet border guards and cavalymen, who organized places for ambushes in forests, at river crossings, etc. Pierced by the bullets of the border guards' machine guns, they were thrown into mass graves, dug in advance, the few survivors of the massacres were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan and died because of the inhumane conditions in the Soviet camps. Comparing this information from the Sucevan and Chernivtsi archives with the history of Bukovina, written or rewritten during the Soviet and Ukrainian periods, depending on the political interests of the new scientific institutions, we discover an essential discrepancy in the treatment of events. We learn from the testimonies and publications of the time, for example, about the aggressive measures of the new Soviet administration instituted against the Romanian population wishing to take refuge in Romania, as the Germans were allowed to do.

The reasons that the refugees declared are also recorded in the documents from the Suceava Archive. In the State Archive in Chernivtsi there are documents containing the findings of Soviet officials about the fraudulent crossing of the border and the drastic measures applied to the population of the Romanian villages on the border and the organizers of these crossings. (see Document Archive at the end of the article). The first three volumes of the Putna Monastery – Bucovinean Destiny project are based in particular on the testimonies of the survivors of these events: *Fântâna albă. Calvary of the nation*, (two editions, the last in 2022); *The drama of the Romanians from the Chernivtsi region. Massacres. Deportations. Famines in the years 1940-1941, 1944-1947* (2019); *The fate of the Romanian church in the north of Bucovina during the Soviet period. Faith. Language. Identity* (two editions, the last in 2022). Volume four is dedicated to a theme less researched by historians – *Refuge*. The years pass, the official documents remain, the newspapers containing testimonies reflecting some (sometimes insincere) events. Memoirs are written less and each confessor, when he travels to the world of the righteous, takes with him precious information about the times he lived in, about the destinies of his contemporaries, facts and events. Most of them do not manage to write their memories, either for fear of the oppressions they went through, or

because they have no one to tell stories to or are not understood, today's young people, in the vast majority, no longer want or have time to listen to "stories" about events that happened a long time ago, that their parents or grandparents went through. The official history, written and rewritten under the influence of contradictory political trends, does not fully represent the truth or the memory of a time passed through suffering and death, does not reflect the consciousness and state of mind of the North-Bukovinian Romanians, so that their descendants can assimilate the experience historical, to learn, to enlighten.

The years that followed the two world wars, marked by the Soviet occupation (1940-1941 and 1944-1945), caused the refuge of the Bukovinians, in their vast majority Romanians. It is a time that has been very little talked about. The archives keep documents that record the disinformation that the Soviet authorities spread in the occupied territories. "I had to be strong at that time - Queen Maria wrote in her memoirs, when the Royal Court had to take refuge in Iași during the First World War, when Bucharest was occupied - not to shout, to show the way of simple exile, quiet, that the panic may be removed, and that no one may be terrified, when the enemy has struck at the very heart of our land." The shelter significantly changed the fate of people, for better or for worse. Many of the refugees from the north of Bucovina were important personalities of Romanian science and culture: priests, professors, scholars, professors including: Metropolitan Tit Simedrea, Ion Nistor, rector of the University of Chernivtsi, Leca Morariu, Constantin Longhin, poets from Junimea, Claudiu Ștefanelli, professors Vasile Grecu, Filip Țopa, Ovid Țopa and many, many others. I'm looking for that magic word that could capture the state of mind of a man faced with a choice: to stay at home or to flee in haste from the path of war. In both situations he faced the unknown. Those who left, taking with them only the strictly necessary, did not know where they would spend the night and what they would feed their children. He was thinking about the abandoned house, built with so much effort, about the cattle that remained in the yard without anyone to feed them, about the unharvested fruit, about the plot of land separated by an unnatural border between two countries, about the fate of the loved ones left at home. Those who remained faced a new reality - hunger, deportations, prisons... For a long time, it was not known what was happening "beyond", in the places abandoned so hastily. Those in the second refuge, from 1944, had already faced the barbarities of the Soviet power, they knew what awaited them. Fear had taken root deep in their souls, and silence became their "defense shield".

They didn't really talk about the details of what they had experienced, the children were also encouraged to keep quiet. I have always thought that wars hit hard on the innocent population, who mourn their children, parents, brothers and sisters. What was their fate in the end? With this question, we set out together with father Gerasim from Putna Monastery, on May 10, through the villages near the border with northern Bucovina, Ukraine - Straja, Vicovul de Jos and Gura Putnei, Romania - in search of survivors or descendants refugees from the north of Bucovina towards the Homeland, hoping to be protected, to find a shelter. Many hoped that they would someday return to their home. We were aware that we would only meet their descendants who still know something from the stories of their parents and grandparents. I made the first stop at Straja. I knew that here was the strongest resistance to the Soviet invasion. The so-called "black sumanas" made up of Colonel Constantinescu's prisoner platoon and other partisan groups took refuge in the Strajei mountains. In 1940, part of the commune's territories - forests, meadows and hayfields - remained in the USSR. The peasants of Straja also revolted in 1945, confronting the Soviets with pitchforks and axes. It is believed that if it had not revolted, Straja would have gone over to the USSR. History is written differently and the strangers are cautious, they don't talk much about the past, they live a quiet life, rich in popular traditions as in fact in all of Bucovina. Their neighbors: Crasna-Ilschi (Ukraine), Putna and Gura Putnei communes, 17 Vicovul de Sus and Brodina (Romania). In Straja we stayed at the house of Mrs. Zâna Cârciu, from Pâslaru, the second wife of Cârciu Constantin from Straja, born in 1922. He was deported in 1941, to Siberia, Novorosiisk: "Many were deported before, but few returned... They were deported from the territory of Romania after the border was closed, they were caught and taken to the camps, but I don't know how... The husband was in the war and he was caught and taken to the camp, I don't know exactly where he was caught. I know that he spent two years in the camp (according to the documents that were the basis of his wife's pension). He was a sergeant in the army (according to the military book)". They met after the war, in 1971, and she doesn't remember much. He knows that he was tortured: "he told us that the death camp was there, to exterminate them. Those who were strong and resisted returned, but many also died. There were about 300 Romanians in the camp, but around 40 returned, the rest died in these two years... He used to tell, especially when we went to parties/weddings, what it was like in the camps, how troubled they were, the story was that they

also hunted mice to catch and eat them. They kept the dead among them in order to take their portion of bread and theirs, they died especially during the night, they kept them as long as they could, several days". A grandson also intervenes in the discussion: "There are no more people like him. The story is that they walked to the camp. After the armistice they were allowed to go wherever they wanted. Many stayed, married there in those areas, and the rest returned. He returned in 1947: they walked a lot because they arrived late after liberation, they went to people's houses and were given food, they slept wherever they could and he also told stories about what happened in the camp when people came for holidays... A used to be in the village Grigore Leșe, he came and filmed him telling the story of the war. He asked him about the war and the camp. It is a report made, which he gave on TV as he was telling the story here in the house. With Doruț Baimăcean and the major Târnoaga. Let it be about 12 years".

We also talk with Ioan Ursulean Țugui from Straja, who tells us about his parents who were deported and refugees. The father was sentenced to Dej in 1944 with deportation to Russia, in northern Siberia where he stayed for 9 years and 11 months. He returned home after Stalin's death. He was in several camps in the USSR: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Chechnya. The last place was in Kamceatka, on the border with China, between the Lena and Onisei rivers, an area where there were gold mines, a place from which there was no escape. The work at the gold mines was very hard, you went in and you didn't know if you would come out again, the interlocutor tells us. He was deported "because he fought with the Romanians and the Germans and when the switch was made to the side of the Russians he refused to switch, remaining with the Germans in the future. Dad was a partisan on Matinciuc's side, fighting between information fronts. Matinciuc was from the 1st battalion, North Bucovina, Rădăuți, he did the recruiting. Dad was arrested by the Russians, he was betrayed by his best friend, from here in Straja, by Cafleriu. He had come from the forest to be home for Easter and one morning 12 Russians came and wanted to arrest his parents, his grandfather and grandmother. Dad was sleeping in the attic with the automatic pistol under his head and when he saw what was happening he fired a burst and surrendered, saying why should his parents die. From here to Dej they took them on foot, and there they were tried by a military tribunal (there were several), and they were sentenced to 10 and others to 15 years. They started serving the sentence in Moscow and they took them to Siberia after 5-6 years, they were also all over Russia where they had

camps (2000-3000 people slept on concrete in a hall and ate rats) worse like a former Hitler in Poland were the Russians. Dad also told us about a Bessarabian who had escaped and who had managed to reach the Dniester where he was caught by a wolf dog from customs and was returned to the camp, where for 3 days he dug his hole and on the 4th they shot him and buried him. There were those who died in the mine and buried them in mass graves.

My dad died in 2006, aged 85. He was a neutral and faithful man. He left an Orthodox home and returned as a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses cult, baptized Pentecostal, meeting Jehovahists in the camp. He was a bathroom chief to the officers, he ironed their clothes, and in recent years he was a camp chief left by his best friend at the time. The story was that in the camp there happened to be conflicts like between mafia clans. At one point there was a conflict between the Cossacks and the Chechens, where 80 were killed, and because he was neutral he suffered nothing. He had a good friend named Vanea who left him in his place as head of the camp after he was released. Upon his release, he came by train, which he traveled approximately 10-12 thousand km to Bucharest, where he was investigated by the communist authorities who wanted to convince him to adhere to the communist ideology and become a member through which he could find out information, but he refused and this fact also had consequences - 6 months in prison in Jilava. He refused because he was a member of the legionary party that had a different way of thinking". Knowing from archive documents that Russian border guards used to enter Romanian villages to commit crimes and rob Romanian peasants even after 1945, after the border was drawn, I asked him if there were such cases in the village . Mr. Ursachi answered us: "Yes. They robbed them, took the best they had, and even if they saw a more beautiful woman, they took her and dishonored her. There were women who had children with Russians... The old story was that there were women who went with Russians and they did it better because if they didn't, they dishonored them and it was even possible to shoot them.

The Russians were poor compared to the Germans, who had luxury, they were supplied, my father was with the Germans until the Ascension. A detachment of which he was a part when Romania switched sides to fight refused to submit and stick. When he came back, his mother recognized him by a white lock of hair, a birthmark, because they thought he was dead as they had been told." Mr. Ursulean also tells us about the fate of Donciuc

Alexei (1921-1998) originally from Seletin. "His grandparents, who raised me, were refugees. He was married the first time to Ana with whom he had a boy named Vasile, he remarried his grandmother Ileana 1920-1999, a refugee in Dorohoi, from Brodina with whom he had 4 children, 3 boys and a girl. They went through the post-war famine when they ate sorrel and potato skins demanded from the wealthy. We keep the nickname of Țugui from him, a nickname given to the family from Vasile-Vasilică-Tilică-Țugui". He told us how the grandparents met: "they met in the refuge when the border was established at Ulma, both were employed by a rich man (boyar), he by horses and the grandmother took care of the children. They said that they ended up in the war because they ate each other, butchered the horses and ate them...". Gura Putnei (Karlsberg in German) is located not far from Straja, along the Suceava river and Obcinei mountain, and has a special history. It was established by German settlers. Bucovina Germans represented a population that lived in Bucovina between 1780 and 1940, when they took refuge in Germany. Mitric Floarea, whose house we stayed at, is 90 years old, she was born on January 21, 1933, in Ciudei (today Ukraine), parents - Gheorghe and Aurora: "We were 8 children with our parents, 6 boys and 2 girls, 7 born in the refuge in Ciudei. I went to the refuge with my parents in 1944, I left on foot with several others, with two shirts on, I left everything there: the house, the animals. Dad locked the house, because maybe they will come back. He put the key above the door. The house is no longer there, the Russians destroyed it... We left with nothing. Boundary 19 had already been set. The world was filled with us, many left, others, remaining at home, were deported. In the refuge we first settled in Ciocănești and Fratrăuții Noi, but the first house was in Bivolărie, up to the ramp on the right... In 1954 I married Alexandru, also a refugee from Crasna, he also stayed through Vicov. He died in 2018. The Germans left Gura Putnei and some moved to their houses, others built their own houses. They took care of their households. We had nothing, we walked barefoot to weed, to gather hay... We were fed by the people we worked for. After the war there was famine. The husband was a shoemaker. Today when you tell the young people what you went through, they don't believe you. I have two children, the son is at home, the girl - in Germany. I was in Crasna in 1991, at the consecration of the new church. There were a lot of people." Mrs. Mitric also tells us about the situation created in the village after the arrival of the Soviets: "many were put on the train and taken to the camps, it was very difficult. We came on foot when the border was set. I

don't remember how I got through... Each with his own cross. You have to be a man in your place, keep your faith". In Gura Putnei live several families with the name Mitric, characteristic especially for the Crasnei area. In Cernăuți, I met Mr. Ștefan Mitric, a native of Crasna, the director of the school in Ropcea, Storojineț district. He tells us about his family: "Father Ion with two uncles and another family, Mitric Vasile, father's brother, left in 1944. They left for Gura Putnei, there were four brothers. They forgot one at home. The older brother, Pamphilus, returned, but could not find him. Father's cousins also went to Gura Putnei. Those who remained at home were deported by the Russians to Kazakhstan, Finland, Siberia... Some died there. The Mitric family, my father's cousins, stayed in Romania, became sculptors, doctors or worked the land in the villages where they took refuge, founded new households. Dad died in 1995. Our village went through several powers: the Austrians, the Romanians, the Russians and the Ukrainians. But we remained Romanians. Each time, the attitude towards us also changed. We resisted as Romanians". The testimonies of the refugees from the north of Bucovina confirm the fact that the population was taken by surprise by the news of the occupation, put in a situation to decide to remain under occupation or to take refuge in Romania. Many choose refuge: how and with what they could. On March 8, 1941, citizenship of the USSR was imposed on those who remained. Many refugees were still children. After 1989, the Romanian authorities adopted laws on the basis of which compensations were granted (Law 6/1998 – for refugees from Cadrilater and 290/2003 – for citizens who lost their properties in Bessarabia, northern Bucovina and Herța land). Today, requests from refugees from northern Bucovina are submitted to the State Archives in Chernivtsi to confirm the fact that during the war they left material goods: houses, land, etc., in order to receive rewards. Only in 2005, in May, 10,000 applications were submitted, of which only 115 were rejected. More requests also came from America and Israel. At the State Archive in Chernivtsi, where these requests are being researched, their statistics have not yet been completed.

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**Document from the State Archive in Chernivtsi,  
B – 13/45 December 13, 1940**

**About the emigration mood of the Romanian population from some  
villages in the border districts**

The disposition of the Office of the Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party in Chernivtsi dated November 18, 1940 given to the Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party in Chernivtsi (KP(b)) of Ukraine mentions, regarding some villages in the Chernivtsi region, Sadagura, Hliboca, Herța districts, that among among their inhabitants of Romanian nationality there is an emigrationist state of mind, counter-revolutionary elements, members of some bourgeois political parties, and groups that intensify their influence on the population of Romanian nationality, using all kinds of slander and inventions regarding the Soviet Power. They are especially used in cases of insufficient supply of workers with primary goods in some districts due to an inappropriate attitude of commercial organizations/districts of Hliboca, Herța. The main causes, which facilitate the counter-revolutionary agitation, consist in the fact that in these districts the political agitation among the population of these localities is poorly organized, the education of activists is not organized at the proper level and the involvement of the broad masses of workers in the active struggle with the leaders of the 21 nationalist parties bourgeois and other malevolent elements. The events that took place on the night of November 16 to 17 of this year, when a group of Romanians provoked by counter-revolutionary elements, crossed the border, is also explained by the fact that the head of the border garrison, comrade Královski, did not take the necessary measures to prevent such border violations by groups of emigrants. The Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party from Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine also mentions, "that from the side of tov. Martânov, the agitation work that would prevent such border violations is not organized at the proper level". The Chernivtsi Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party (CP(b)) of Ukraine decides: 1) To instruct the Propaganda Department of the Chernivtsi Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party (CP(b)) of Ukraine to select up to 50 additional men among the local activists, who know the Romanian language, with whom to organize brigades, to be sent



through the villages to clarify the party's policy to the local population of Romanian nationality, at the head of which should be placed responsible communists from among the active regional party. 2) To instruct the secretaries of the local and district Committees of the Bolshevik Communist Party of Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine, to intensify the work of agitation of the population, to correctly explain the policy of the Bolshevik Party in the national question. 3) To instruct the head of the Regional Trade Department, Comrade. Klitchenikov, the chairman of the regional department of consumption, Gubenko, to urgently control the way in which the rational departments of consumption select from the commodity funds and distribute them to the villages. 4) To draw the attention of the secretaries of the District Committees of the Bolshevik Communist Party of Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine in the border districts to the fact of the insufficient supply of workers with essential commodities (salt, matches, gas, flour, footwear, manufacturing ) for which they are personally responsible to the Party Committee. 5) Comrade Grušetki was given the task of writing an information to the Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party in Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine about the emigration of Romanians to Romania.

Secretary of the Chernivtsi Regional Committee  
of the Bolshevik Communist Party (CP(b)) of Ukraine  
Grusetki I.

Kiev, to the Bolshevik Communist Committee, to Comrade Khrushchev N. S.

## **RAPORT**

The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party of Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine) informs you about the cases that took place in our region of border crossings by groups of residents of Romanian nationality to Romania. In the night from November 16 to 17 this year, former members of the Iron Guard from the village of Ostrița, Cernăuți district, Tcaciuc, Țurcan, Soprovici organized the illegal border crossing of up to 150 people, the majority of Romanian nationality, from wealthy peasants, who lived before in the villages: Ostrița, Mahala, Boian, 22 Kotogotin, Mamornița, Lucovița and others. Organizers walked through the villages named above and agitated the inhabitants to go to Romania, promising them a better life there. The preparation lasted for several days.

They gathered in the field near the village of Mamornița, at night the criminals set off through the ravines towards the border and at 6 o'clock in the morning on 17/XI, in Herța district, at guard post no. 2 broke through the wire barrier and crossed the border. The necessary measures were not received at the guard post. One of the criminals of illegal border crossing, Berga G.I. of Romanian nationality, from wealthy peasants, he belonged to the party (?) he was the president of the selpo from the village of Ostrita. At the interrogation he declared that he does not want to live here, and at the service he had to write the documentation in Ukrainian and he has to learn the Ukrainian language which he hates, and if he will be offered to live here and return to his family, better hang a stone around his neck, "I will not stay here, I rather drown in the Prut river". All this happened because of the provocations of the remnants of the counter-revolutionary parties and political groups, which carry out hostile activity among the population of Romanian nationality, using invented slanders about the Soviet current affairs. The hostile elements have lost their credibility in the villages near the border, because the peasants have become convinced of how the people live in Romania, and are trying to find support in the Romanian villages further from the border. The favorable conditions for counter-revolutionary propaganda were created due to insufficient concrete political activity in these Romanian villages. In the party organizations in the region there are only 7 communists who know the Romanian and Moldovan languages. They all work, in general, with the Romanian population in the Herța district. A newspaper in Moldovan language is also printed here. In this district, Ukrainian activists who know the Romanian language work as presidents of village soviets and secretaries. A total of 40 people are sent to work since September. After the case of crossing the border, the regional committee of the party co-opted additional 4 agitator brigades of 12 people each from among the local activists that they sent to the Romanian villages. 70 people from the regional active were also sent to help the district Party Committees of the Bolshevik Communist Party of Ukraine throughout the election campaign. Taking into account the shortcomings in the work in the western regions, in accordance with the decision of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party (CP(b)) of Ukraine, the problems of the struggle with the offenders of the revolutionary legislation were put in the center of attention. These issues were discussed at the party office of the Regional Committee, the secretaries of the District Committees of the Chernivtsi Bolshevik Communist Party (CP(b)) Regional Committee of

Ukraine were consulted, party meetings were organized. If initially (in August) there were shortcomings in commercial achievements, now, following the measures received, especially in the border towns, these abnormal situations have been removed. In the farthest border district of Putila, salt, flour, sugar, matches, tobacco and other essential goods were brought in sufficient quantities almost throughout the winter period (period without roads). In all border districts more goods were taken by 20-30%. In the village shops of these districts there have always been goods of first necessity, such as lamp gas, and only recently - from 10/XI, 1940 to 18/XI, 1940 there were 23 cases of lack of lamp gas (in connection with changing railway tracks). Gas lamps are now commercially available. At the same time, in order to improve the situation at the border, the regional committee considers it necessary: a) To carry out the evacuation of the population in areas 800 meters away from the border. b) To evacuate 7.5 km from the border of the former members of the counter-revolutionary parties and the gangs.

Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party from  
Chernivtsi (CP(b)) of Ukraine Grushetki I.  
24/XI.1940

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\* Courtesy of the publication *Glasul Bucovinei (Voice of Bukovina)*, Chernivtsi.

