

I have not heard of anyone complaining about research that drove prices up, but the reverse is clearly not welcome. If you find proof of hanky-panky, be sure you check on its veracity and then be certain to publish it in the country and language in which the merchandise is 'at home', to give no dealer, expertizer, catalogue editor or collector there the excuse that (s)he could not know about it.

Conclusion

Some writers claim that the greatest pleasure of collectors is the chase and the greatest satisfaction is the act of acquisition of the collectibles. I maintain that roughly equal pleasure can be had from doing research and satisfaction from the fruits of it. Of course, the interaction of collecting and researching ought to square both the amount of pleasure and satisfaction. Similarly, telling others what one has found in the way of treasures (or junk) and knowledge adds even more of both, whether by exhibiting, publishing, or combination of such activities.

Postal history still has many nooks and crannies that are unknown or, if known, relatively unexplored. Better than reading or writing the most imaginative detective story is exploring some of these postal historical realities and writing original contributions to the knowledge about them.

Keeping careful track of sources, in permanently bound, pocket-size notebooks, using original languages in one's notes and noting where some of the rarer sources have been available, will pay off, especially when questions arise. Even books move around, as I found to my astonishment when going back to some libraries a few years later, but usually someone on the staff remembers what happened to the material.

Don't be surprised if years of occasional bits of notes all of a sudden fit together into an unsuspected whole. Don't let 'believers' talk you out of the facts – but be sure they *are* facts.

THE MAIL OF POLITICAL DETAINEES AND DEPORTEES UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA BETWEEN 1949-1964

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The widespread extent of the Soviet Union influence in Europe after the WWII included Romania. Even the Romanian Communist Party was ~~as~~ ^{as} in existence at that time ~~and~~ ^{and} the vast majority of the population ^{being} ~~was~~ waiting for the Americans "to come," ~~the~~ "liberating" Red Army imposed a "democratic" government on the Romanians in March 1945 and finally, King Mihai I was forced to abdicate on December 30, 1947. Through to 1989 Romania became a "real communist paradise." In order to rule "without any problems" caused by real or imaginary opponents the communist regime started a fierce manhunt against all those that were against the new unpopular system: members of other political parties, officers from the army and police, intellectuals, ordinary people, workers, peasants, priests, and even students were all suspect. For Romanians, years of terror followed. To make the things worse, in June 1948 nationalization of the country's industry took place and the so-called collectivization of agriculture was started. Because many within the above groupings opposed to the new rules, thousands and thousands of people were killed or imprisoned for many

When a friend sent me the English translation of a book of letters written by a Prussian diplomat from German headquarters to his wife at Berlin, it opened the way for recognizing other diplomatic channels for sending mail. A visit to the Swiss national archives at Berne helped uncover a relatively rarely used channel by the Swiss ambassador to Paris, who also looked after German interests there, as did the US ambassador. I was fortunate in acquiring some of these covers and have described as much of the diplomatically carried mail as I had learned in my 1995 book on *Ordinary Mail by Diplomatic Means during the Siege of Paris 1870-1871*. It took about a quarter century, but I finally satisfied a request by Professor Vito Salierno, viz., that I write more about diplomatic mail.

As mentioned above, two letters are currently known, entrusted by different writers to the Papal Nuncio near the beginning of the siege of Paris. One letter, dated 5 October, has as its earliest postmark the cds of Rouen 3E/22 Oct., i.e., third mail period. The other, dated 12 October, carries as its earliest mark the cds of Dreux 1E/20 Oct. I am told that these differences provoked heated arguments as to which of the two letters was really mailed by Monsignor Chigi. Of course, they both were, and by reading US Ambassador Washburne's notes, Count Melchior von Hatzfeldt's letters to his wife, the local Tours newspapers, and knowing something about Paris smugglers, we put the story together:

On the 5th of October, Chigi expected permission from both the French and Germans to send a weekly messenger with strictly diplomatic mail through the lines in both directions, for all ambassadors still at Paris. So he immediately told someone about it and accepted a letter, which he gave to the first man already chosen for the job. The Germans turned down that request, but the 'messenger' turned smuggler and took a bunch of letters to Rouen, where he finally arrived and mailed them, some still in collectors hands, on the 22nd.

Meanwhile, Chigi had decided to ask for German permission to go through the lines to Tours, took the letter of the 12th before leaving Paris on the 15th, and then mailed it at Dreux on the 20th, in free France, on his way to Tours, where he arrived the 21st. Both letters are thus quite rare, each in its own way.

French dealers have loved to tell the tale that certain Paris cards, sent to other French places and to Algiers, were put on a manned balloon that left Paris on the afternoon of 7 October. It carried 70 kilograms of mail and landed first between the lines, where the three men got out. Then it took off again, with that mail still firmly attached to its ropes and was never heard of again by the French. That's because it then landed in the German lines, the first manned mail balloon that lost all its Paris-processed mail to the enemy. The Germans were busily reading an estimated 30,000 pieces of mail on the 9th, as noted in the diary of one of their generals stationed at Versailles. Though one package of letters is known to have been given to a reporter of the Viennese *Neue freie Presse*, no identifiable mail from that balloon is known in collectors' hands. Furthermore, all cards sent at specially reduced rates and not mailed on the only official unmanned balloon, shot down by the Germans, were held at the Eastern Railway Station of Paris until 16 October, when the then available cards were put on the balloon *Jean Bart 2*.

Yet some Frenchman invented a handstamp, with which certain cards have been (and are being?) stamped 'Found at [the farm] La Courneuve on 10 October', in French of course. I have published the fact that that is a hoax some years ago in France, but one dealer insists on offering *his* hoax year after year. It has even been listed in the specialized Yvert's latest edition, I am told, but without a price tag. I wonder how much of that stuff was expertized ...

years, most of them without even a trial. Small entrepreneurs and farmers were also put into jail just because they “dared” to run a business or own land.

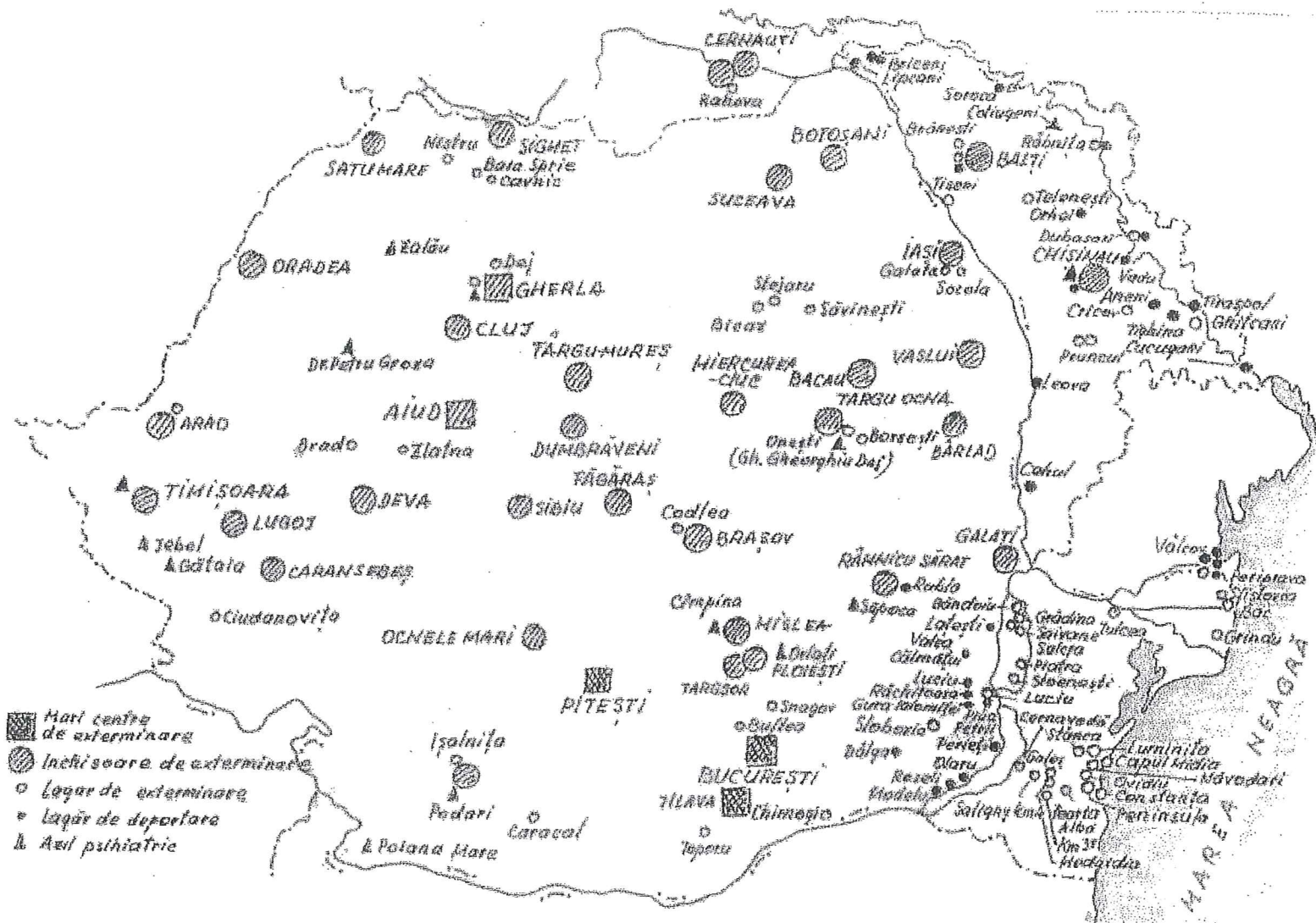


Fig.1 Map of Romania (including the Bessarabia, part of Bukovina, and part of historical Moldova provinces, territories ceded to the former USSR after WWII) showing all known prisons, labor camps, and deportation places for political detainees (hand-drawn by Dr. Monica Matei, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, after an original published in “Memoria” magazine).

Figure 1 illustrates a map of Romania with all known prisons, labor camps, and deportation places where “those who jeopardize the popular democracy regime” were held. The map is reproduced from the original first published in the “Memoria”, an excellent Romanian magazine dedicated to those who had suffered under the communist regime. It illustrates Romania, as it was known between WWI and WWII. The region located between Prut and Nistru rivers (in the eastern part of Romania), known today as The Republic of Moldova, was incorporated into the former Soviet Union following WWII and the prisons, labor camps shown on the map were operated by the Russians under different conditions than the ones described below.

For those imprisoned the contact with their families was lost for many years; most of the correspondence was seized, parcels destroyed, and visits were allowed only on special occasions. It must be noted also that those considered “very dangerous” by the communist regime were imprisoned

in very secure and brutal prisons like the ones from Aiud, Pitesti, Gherla, Jilava (see map) and were kept under total isolation and any contact with family members was strictly forbidden.

Table 1: List of the Working Camps:

Location - County	Area		
1. Bac -	BB		
2. Baia Sprie - MM	M		
3. Baldovinești -			
4. Basarabi - CT	DM		
5. Băneasa - IF			
6. Bicaz - NT	C		
7. Borzești	C		
8. Bragadiru - IF	A ?		
9. C. A. Rosetti - TL	DD		
10. Canara - CT			
11. Cap Midia - CT	DM		
12. Castelu - CT	DM		
13. Cavnice - MM	M		
14. Cazinou - CT	DM		
15. Cernavodă - CT	DM		
16. Chilia Veche - TL	DD		
17. Ciudanovița - CS	M		
18. Ciumbrud - AB			
19. Ciurel			
20. Crângăși - DB			
21. Domnești - IF			
22. Dorobanțu - CT	DM?		
23. Fundulea - IF	A		
24. Gai (Arad) - AR			
25. Galda - AB			
26. Galeșu - CT	DM		
27. Gherla - CJ			
28. Giurgeni - IL			
29. Grădina -	BB ?		
30. Grindu Letea - TL	DD		
31. Hârșova - CT	DM		
32. Ișalnița - DJ			
33. Ițcani - SV			
34. Jegălia - IF	A		
35. Jilava - IF			
36. Km 4 - CT	DM		
37. Km 31 - CT		DM	
38. Luciu - IL		BB ?	
39. Lumina - CT		DM	
40. Luminița - CT		DM	
41. Măcin - TL			
42. Măgurele - IF			
43. Medgidia - CT		DM	
44. Midia - CT		DM	
45. Mogoșoaia - IF			
46. Năvodari - CT		DM	
47. Noua Culme - CT		DM	
48. Onești - BC		C ?	
49. Ovidiu - CT		DM	
50. Peninsula - CT		DM	
51. Periprava - TL		DD	
52. Piatra - CT		DM?	
53. Plătărești - IF			
54. Poarta Albă - CT		DM	
55. Popești-Leordeni - IF		A	
56. Rahova -			
57. Rața - TR			
58. Saivane -		BB	
59. Salcia - BR		BB	
60. Saligny - CT		DM	
61. Sarighiol - TL			
62. Săvinești - NT			
63. Sfiștovca - TL		DD	
64. Stadion Constanța - CT			
65. Stânca (șantier 11) - CT		DM	
66. Stejaru ?			
67. Stoienești - BR		BB	
68. Strachina - TL		DD	
69. Tătarca - CT			
70. Valea Nistrului - MM		M	
71. Valul lui Traian - CT		DM	
72. Vădeni			

Legend (areas):

A - agricultural farms of the Internal Ministry.

BB - 'Balta Brăilei' (= Brăila's Moorland, a marshy area between the 2 Danube's arms which are the eastern limit of Dobroudja);

C - construction sites for different civilian industrial units (dams, plants, etc);

DD - 'Danube's Delta' (reed harvesting);

DM – the Danube-Black Sea channel, a project inspired by Stalin, started in 1949 with primitive technical means (in fact it's utility was strictly to annihilate the communist's political opposition), discontinued in the mid'50, resumed and finished by Ceaușescu in 1985.

M – mines, probably the worse extermination centers through the labour camps (uranium, lead, copper, gold mines, etc)

Counties: AB = Alba, AR = Arad, BR = Brăila, CJ = Cluj, CS = Caraș-Severin, CT = Constanța, DB = Dâmbovița, DJ = Dolj, IF = Ilfov, IL = Ialomița, MM = Maramureș, NT = Neamț, TL = Tulcea, SV = Suceava, BC = Bacău

Table 2:

The 'New Villages' built by deportees in 1951 and used for compulsory domicile until 1964.

'New Village'	Location			DO**		'02
	GAS	Raion*	County	'54	'60	
Brateș			Brăila ?	+	-	?
Bumbăcari	Dudești	Călmățui	Brăila	+	-	+
Bucu ←Bucu 1 Mai	Mărculești		Ialomița	-	-	+
Dâlga Nouă (Ogoru ?)		Lehliu	Călărași	+	-	+
Dropia ← Drăgălina Nouă ←Partizanul	Dragalina	Călărași	Călărași	+	-	?
Ezeru ← Cacomeanca Nouă	Cacomeanca	Călărași	Călărași	+	-	?
Frumușița-Nouă	Frumușița		Galați	-	-	-
Fundata	Perieți	Slobozia	Ialomița	+	+	+
Gura Ialomiței	Luciu- Giurgieni		Ialomița	-	-	+
Lătești	Fetești?	Fetești	Ialomița	+	+	-
Măzăreni	Urleasca	Brăila	Brăila	+	-	?
Modelu	Călărași		Călărași	-	-	+
Movila Gâldăului ←Petroiu Nou	Gâldău, Petroiu	Fetești	Călărași	+	-	?
Olaru ←Roseții-Noi	Roseți	Călărași	Călărași	+	-	?
Pelicani ←Vasilescu Vasia	Călărași?	Călărași	Călărași	+	-	?
Piua Petrii				-	-	?
Răchitoasa	Luciu- Giurgieni	Fetești	Ialomița	+	-	?
Rusca (Galați) - ??				+	-	?
Salcâmi ←Jegălia Nouă	Mărculești, Jegălia	Fetești	Călărași	+	-	?
Schei		Călmățui	Brăila	+	-	?
Valea Călmățuiului (Rubla)	Însurăței	Călmățui	Brăila	+	+	+
Valea Viilor ←Feteștii Noi	Fetești	Fetești	Ialomița	+	-	-
Vădenii Noi	Vădeni		Brăila	-	-	-
Viișoara ←Mărculeștii Noi	Mărculești	Slobozia	Ialomița	+	+	?
Zagna	Baldovinești?	Brăila	Brăila	+	-	?

Note:

'GAS' = means the state's agricultural farms on which lands the *new villages* were built in 1951.

← Means an older name for the same *new village*.

In the last column: + means a village still existing today;
- means a village demolished after 1964.

? means an unknown situation (a village probably demolished).

*the 'Raion' was a smaller division of the 'Regiune' (Soviet-inspired administrative units existing between 1951-1964).

**a + in the column '54' means a village used for compulsory domicile by the law of 1954, a + in the '60' means a village used for compulsory domicile by the law of 1960 (when only four villages remained with this destination).

For those imprisoned for “economical” reasons (they were just too rich compared with the communist standards; small entrepreneurs and farmers were included here!) rather than political ones the detention conditions were still very brutal but at least some of them had the hope of having the opportunity (most of the times only theoretical) to write and receive post cards to and from home. However, all the correspondence was censored and most of the time the authorities destroyed it before it reached the destination. From a postal point of view very few things are known about this and only very little has been published on this subject. What it is known to date is that, with only two exceptions, all the post cards that are known today originated from “working units” or “working colonies” and not from prisons. It must be noted that the detainees were not allowed to write letters, but only post cards.

1. The Working Camps.

The first “working units” were founded in 1949 (Salcia, Cernavoda, Capul Midia), all in Dobrudja, in southeastern Romania, with the declared purpose of that of the “re-education through labor” for those against the communist regime. However, the Decree that established those “units” was issued only on January 14, 1950. The “working units” were first located along the future Danube-Black Sea Channel, or were construction sites and agricultural farms of the M.A.I., the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At that time M.A.I. was responsible for the penitentiary system and the “Securitate” (Secret Police) units. Through the Ministerial Council Decree no.1554 of August 22 1952 the “working units” were transformed into “working colonies”. During that time the number of such “units” increased and soon those were located throughout the whole of Romania (see map and Table 1). On March 11, 1954 the Decree no.1554 is abrogated by the Ministerial Council’s Decree no.337 and the “working colonies” were, theoretically, closed. The M.A.I. was able to establish compulsory residence for those liberated from labor camps who “were not re-educated and were dangerous for state’s security”. In fact, many of the “liberated” people were just transferred to regular prisons. The Decree no.89 issued on February 17, 1958 by the M.A.N. (Ministry of the National Defense) established again “compulsory working places” for all who “jeopardized the state stability” but their acts were not severe enough to deserve a prison penalty. Many of the “compulsory working places” were the same as the ones between 1949-1954. A “Securitate” report from December 14, 1967 gives the figure of 22,077 persons in labor camps between 1950-1954. Another report gives a total of 21,859 persons interned in "working units" between 1950-1963. All those figures were based on official recordings. However, the truth is that many more detainees were kept in the ‘working units’ without any official note (no charge, no trial, no judiciary decision), a situation described by the communist authorities as “administrative imprisonment”. Thus, a more realistic estimate of the number of all who passed through the labor camps could be around (or more than) 50,000 persons. The access to the Securitate archives is still difficult or even impossible. Anyway, note that this is an estimate that does not include the number of political detainees from prisons, deportees, or any other victims of the communist regime. This number was estimated to be around 600,000 people.

In 1964 all (?) political detainees and internees that survived the very brutal imprisonment conditions were released, most of them physically and mentally destroyed for the rest of their lives. Those that did not survive were buried mostly in still unknown graves. After 1964 the communist repression still continued, however, with more sophisticated methods.

There are two periods when mail originating from labor camps can be found: between 1950-1954 and between 1958-1964. As between 1954-1958 the labor camps were dissolved, all political internees were

kept in prisons or compulsory domicile, their mail belongs to the respective categories. For the first period the earliest mail known is dated September 27, 1950 (sent from Poarta Alba) and the latest is dated February 6, 1954 (sent from Poarta Alba too). The postcards used were the common civilian ones in use at the respective time. The detainees had the right to receive 4 post cards from their families and to write 2 each month (from June 1952 only 1 each month). Other sources maintain that after 1952 only 1 post card was allowed every 6 months and that more were allowed only in special cases.

The earliest item known from Poarta Alba (September 1950) bears an open address as follows: "Santierul no.2, Poarta Alba, brigada 94B" (Construction site no.2, Poarta Alba, 94B brigade). Another item from the same year (October 1950) bears the address: "Casuta Postala no.16, Constanta" (P.O.Box no.16, Constanta) and was sent by a detainee that was working on one of the sectors of the Danube-Black Sea Channel.

The addresses between 1951-1954 were differently noted, as "Formatiunea nr." (Formation no.), "Colonia" (Colony), "Unitatea de munca nr." (Working Unit no.) etc., the place where the "unit" was located, and the sender's name.

On items known up to 1950 inclusively, and also from 1954, censor's markings were not applied. It seems that visible signs of censorship on political detainees mail were applied only on items sent between 1951-1953. However, there are a few items from this period that do not bear any censor marking at all. The earliest censored item known today bears the date of May 12, 1951 (Figure 2) and the latest November 18, 1953 (Figure 3). It must be noted that the word "cenzurat" (censored) does not appear on the markings applied by the authorities on political detainees mail. This is because, officially, under a communist regime there is no censorship at all. This was nonsense*. Instead, administrative cachets were used to mark the mail that was in fact censored.

One can find (at least) 3 different administrative cachets used as censorship postmarks: The most frequently seen cachet has a unique design: a square of 28 mm, generally stamped in violet, more rarely in other colors, with the inside text: "DIRECTIUNEA GENERALA A PENITENCIARELOR" (The General Director of Penitentiaries) and in the center "Nr." followed by a number (known up to now: 3 (Fig.4), 7 (Fig.5), 30, 34, 36, 37 (Fig 6), 40 (Fig.7), 41, 43 (Fig.2), 62 (Fig.3). There are cases when more camps were assigned to the same censoring office (example: no. 43 for the Cernavoda complex, including "Cernavoda" and "Saligny-km 4" camps). See also Figure 2. The post card depicted in Figure 4 is not originating from a labor camp, but apparently a detainee sent it from the Securitate prison in Cluj. However, this post card could have been sent from a so-called "external" labor unit of the Penitentiary. Such units are common for Romanian Penitentiaries, even nowadays, those being places where detainees considered not violent are used for various work. The post card shown in Figure 6 was sent in January 1952 by a political detainee interned temporarily in CENTRUL DE TRIERE (Transit Center) located probably at Rahova Prison in Bucharest or Jilava Prison near Bucharest. Before being sent to labor camps by special trains under heavily armed escort political detainees were usually kept for months, or even years, in these two so-called Transit Centers. No other post cards originating from such a place are known today.

1. Another censor marking used is a round one, diameter 24/22 mm, generally stamped in violet, more rarely in red, with the inside text: "M.A.I.-Directia G(enera) la a Penitenciarelor, Coloniilor si Unit(atilor) Munca" (M.A.I.-The General Direction of the Penitentiaries, Working Colonies and Units). In the center of the marking there are the arms of the People's Republic of Romania, and a

number (in this case 216). See Figure 8. This post card was mailed from the Fundulea Working Colony, located not far from Bucharest.

2. A scarce censor marking used is the one shown on the post card from Figure 9, originating from a detainee from the "Unitatea de Munca nr. 5, Bicaz" (Working Unit no.5, Bicaz). A round one, diameter 18/16-mm, stamped in black, bears no inscriptions but five dots. This unit was assigned to the construction of the Bicaz Dam, in Moldova. Note, that part of the historical Moldova province which is part of Romania, do not confuse it with The Republic of Moldova (now an independent Republic, formerly a USSR state, also a Romanian territory). Its shape and form are unusual for a censorship mark and even for an administrative one.

The items from 1958-1964, even less spectacular, are scarcer than those from the 1951-1953 period. No censor markings are known yet from this period and the post cards can be identified only by the sender's address inscribed usually as "C.P. nr." (P.O.Box no.), or "Formatiunea" (Formation).

Only few items originating from families of the detainees and addressed to them are known today. This is probably because the harsh conditions from those camps, where to keep few personal belongings was a real performance. Most of the post cards sent by political detainees from labor camps were lost or destroyed over the years, making the ones that survived scarce and desirable. Such items are less known to collectors, they have an unattractive appearance (most of them have been folded in two since this was the easiest way for the political detainees to keep them) and moreover, Romanian postal history items after 1948 are not very popular among collectors yet.

2. The dislocation and compulsory domicile places.

Less known is the so-called "dislocation" chapter that took place in the 1950's. This is where people were deported from one place to another part of the country. Even though they were not detainees or internees in the strict sense the people that were deported were given compulsory residence. Early cases of deportation inside Romania were noted in July 1949 and July 1950 after the peasant's uprisings in the Western and Southern parts of the country. Apart from these cases, about 3000 persons catalogued as "latifundiarities" were deported in 1949. The Ministry Council's Decree 1154/26.10.1950 (modified by the Decree 344/15.03.1952) stated the conditions for the "compulsory residence" in every Romanian locality. The summer of 1951 brought the huge deportation operation (officially called "dislocation") from the border area with Yugoslavia. The first "Project of evacuation from a 25 km deep zone on the Yugoslavian border of some dangerous elements" was issued on November 14 1950 and on May 14, 1951 orders were given to the frontier guards to "close the border completely" on June 13, 1951. In the night of June 14/15 1951 about 11,000 security troops, frontier guards, and political activists began the "dislocation" of some 10,000 families from the rich zones of Banat and Western Oltenia. With a delay time of 2-3 hours to take "all their belongings" (!) they were carried by railway under military escort to the deserted eastern areas of Romania, the so-called Baragan. Here, landed in the open field, under the open sky, each family received a piece of land of 2500 square meters, where they were forced to build their "houses" from mud and reed. So, the "new villages" were born, their list can be seen in Table 2. Some of the "new villages" were founded near already existing ones, but the majority were located "in the middle of nowhere". It is obvious that in such conditions no postal offices or outlets existed in the so-called "new villages" and all the mail must have been sent from the nearest pre-existing villages, usually bearing other names and usually located many kilometers apart. A "Norm" from 1951 stated the categories of those to be dislocated: the citizens of the "imperialist states" and those of Yugoslavia, the persons that were not born in the border area, the refugees from Bessarabia after June 1, 1940, the colonists from Macedonia, the German SS

members, the leaders of the German Ethnical Group from Romania, “those with Titoist opinions”, the relatives of the “exiled persons”, “the contacts of the liquidated bandits” (this was the term used by the authorities for the anticommunist partisans from the Carpathian Mountains), the rich and diligent peasants, the merchants, “the former latifundiaris and industrialists”, and the frontier guides, as well as the smugglers. Starting in 1956 some of the “dislocated” families were allowed to return to their homes. The access of other Romanians into this border area was strictly prohibited until 1989! Many of the new villages “founded” by the “deportees” were demolished in 1964. It has been estimated that approximately 60,000-70,000 persons were deported from the Yugoslavian border area between 1949-1962.

The mail from or to the “dislocated” (even though not restricted in terms of number per month) is rare or even very rare. No censor markings were seen up to now on deportee’s mail. Therefore, the only way to identify such items is by analyzing both senders and destinees addresses; generally one is from a village from Banat and the other is of a village from Baragan or vice-versa. Figure 10 depicts a post card sent from Checea Romana (a village from Banat, 1 km far away from the Yugoslavian border) on July 22, 1951 (one month after the “dislocation”) to a member of a Serb deportee family in “Satu Nou Frumusita, Nr.8” (The new village Frumusita, no.8, see address on post card). The arrival postmark, dated August 4, 1951, belongs to the pre-existing village Frumusita, since there was no postal office in Frumusita Noua. Generally, the mail originating from the deportees is difficult to identify because apart from the addresses and, eventually the content, there is no other visible postal element to help in locating the origin or destination of these elusive items. However, an interesting item surfaced recently on eBay. It is a 55 bani postal stationery cover mailed in November 1961 by the former Bistrita's Police Chief, now deported to Valea Calmatuiului (in the middle of nowhere, in Baragan) to his family in Bistrita, Transylvania. The departure postmark is from the Insuratei, Galati region, bearing the 26.11.1961 date. On the front of the cover one can also see a scarce rectangular violet cachet that reads “Agentia P.T.T.R. Autorizata/Valea Calmatuiului/Raionul Buzau” (Authorized Post, Telegraph, Telephone, and Radio Agency, Valea Calmatuiului, Buzau county). Apparently, the communists authorized the opening of such an agency (small postal outlet, usually located in improper conditions in the postal agent’s private house) for the deportees. Insuratei was the closest post office to Valea Calmatuiului where the above-discussed cover was handed in before it was sent to its destination in Bistrita. It is not known yet when the Valea Calmatuiului postal agency was open and if other deportation places in Baragan benefited from the services of similar agencies (see fig. 11 for a similar item). New postal items will hopefully appear in the future regarding this aspect of the Romanian postal history.

Still more investigation needs to be carried on in order to fully understand how the postal system in the labor camps and deportation places that were established by the Romanian Communist Regime actually worked. Together with the prisons, those places, all known under the name of the Romanian Gulag effectively contributed to the annihilation of all real or imaginary opponents of communism.

This article is dedicated to the memory of those who died in the Romanian Gulag and to all that have suffered under the communist regime.

** Most of the incoming mail from abroad to Romania was often opened, checked, and sometimes the contents copied to be archived in citizen’s personal files by the Securitate special units. This occurred up until 1989 and apparently even after that year. Ties with foreign countries were not favored and created concern to the communist regime.*

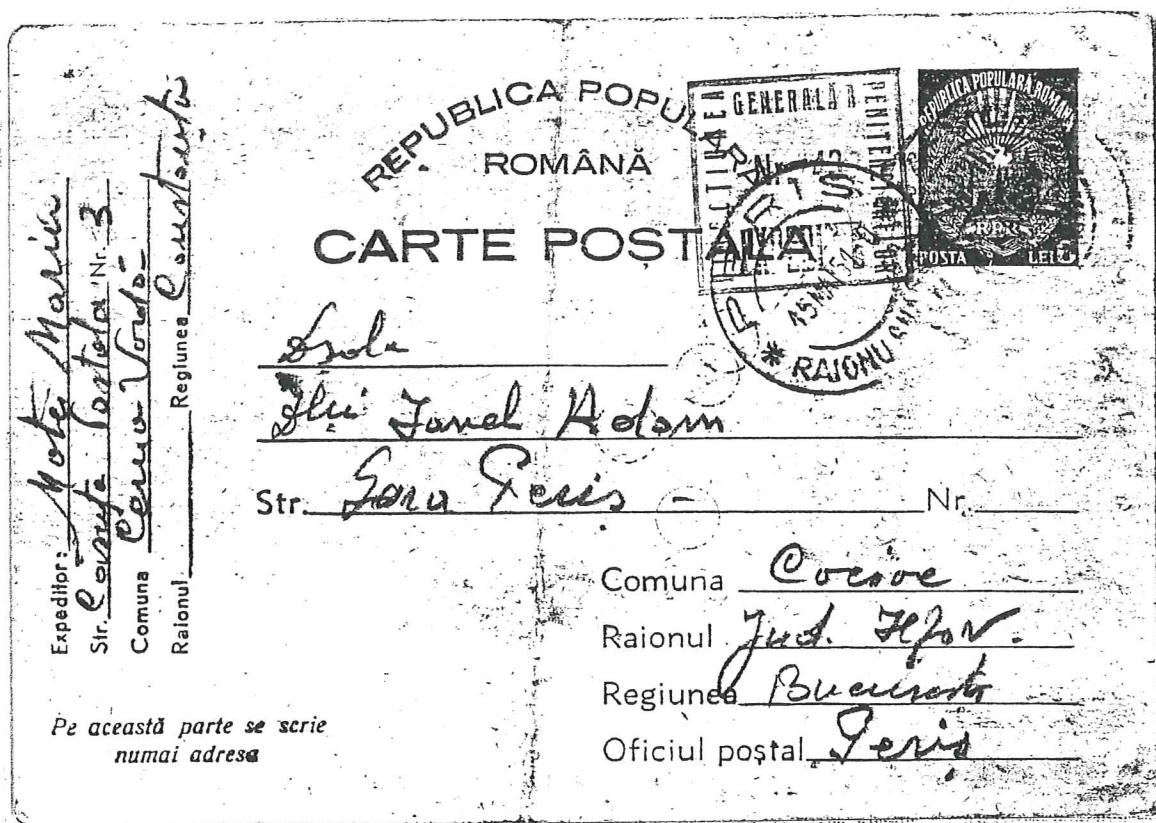


Fig.2 Earliest censored item known originating from a labor camp, located along the future Danube-Black Sea Channel, Cernavoda postmark, May 12, 1951.



Fig.3 Latest censored item known originating from a labor camp, Onesti postmark, November 18, 1953.

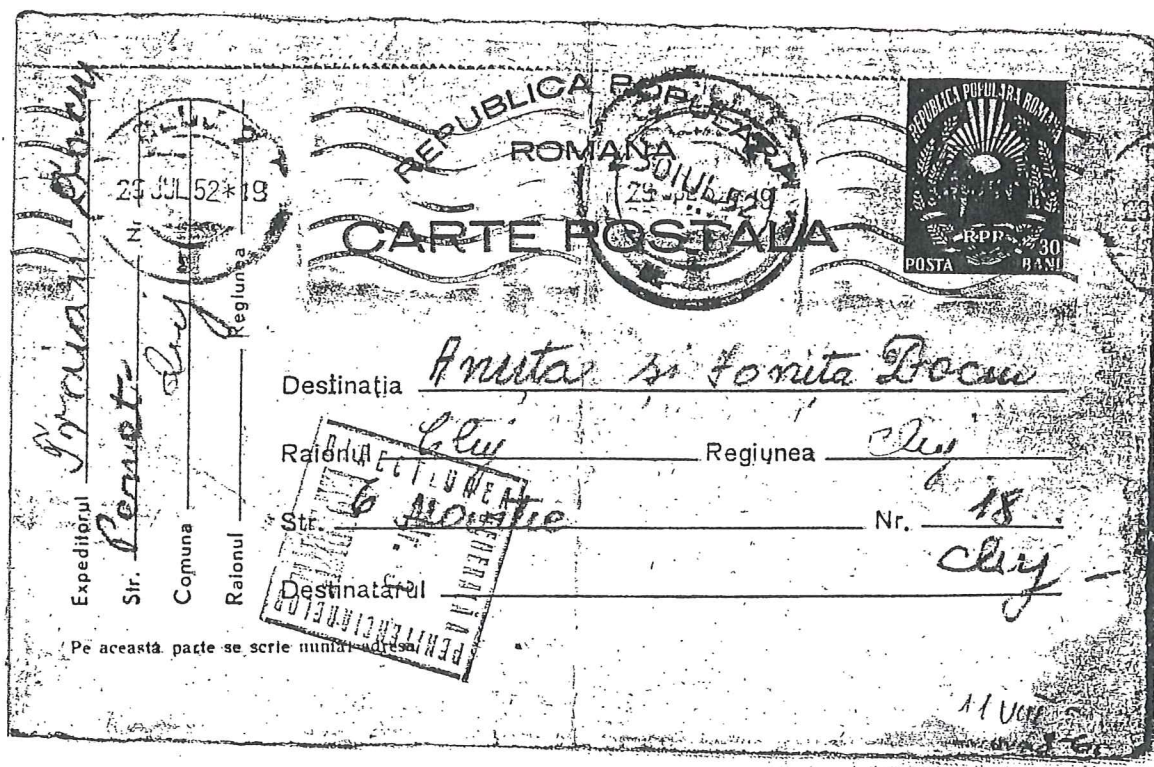


Fig.4 Post card sent in July 1952 from one of the Securitate (Secret Police) detention places. Labor camp, prison?

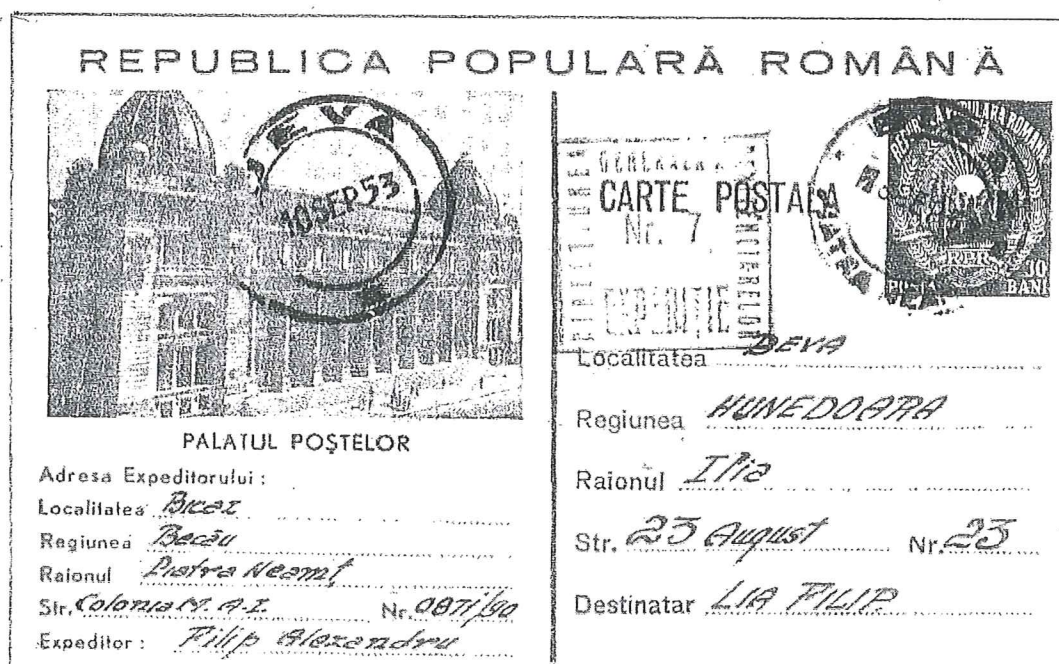


Fig.5 Example of censored detainees mail 1951-1953: Postcard sent by a detainee from "Colonia M.A.I. 0871/90 Bicaș" (a working camp for the building of Bicaș dam), posted BICAZ 8.9.1953, censored with the rectangular marking no. 7, arrived in Deva on 10.9.1953.



Fig.6 Post card sent in January 1952 by political detainee interned temporarily in a "Transit Center" in or near Bucharest (note the sender's address).

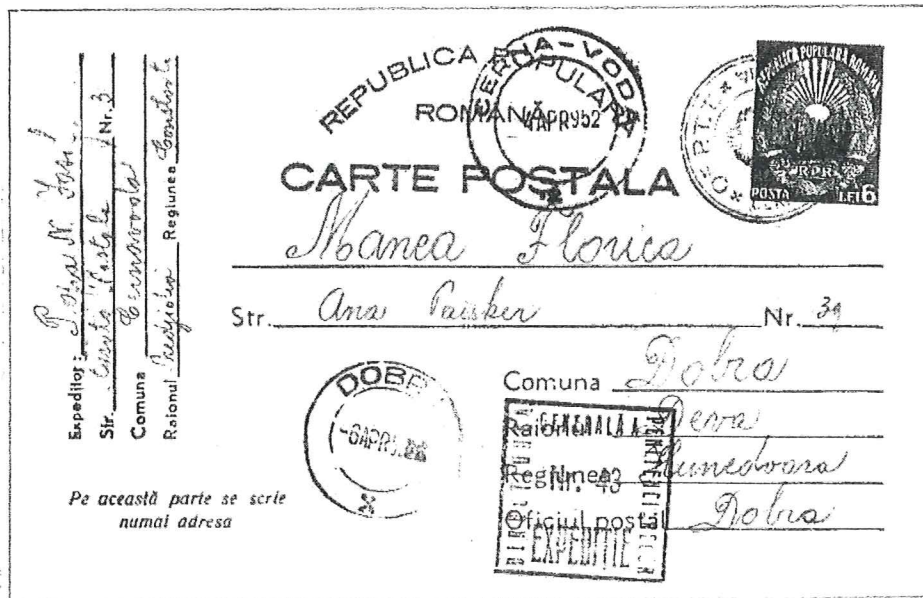


Fig. 7 Another example of censored mail from 1951-1953: Postcard sent by a detainee from "Casuta Postala nr. 3, Cernavoda" (the working camp of Cernavoda, along the Danube - Black Sea channel), posted 4.4.1952 in CERNA-VODA, censored with the rectangular marking no. 43, arrival in DOBRA on 6.4.1952.

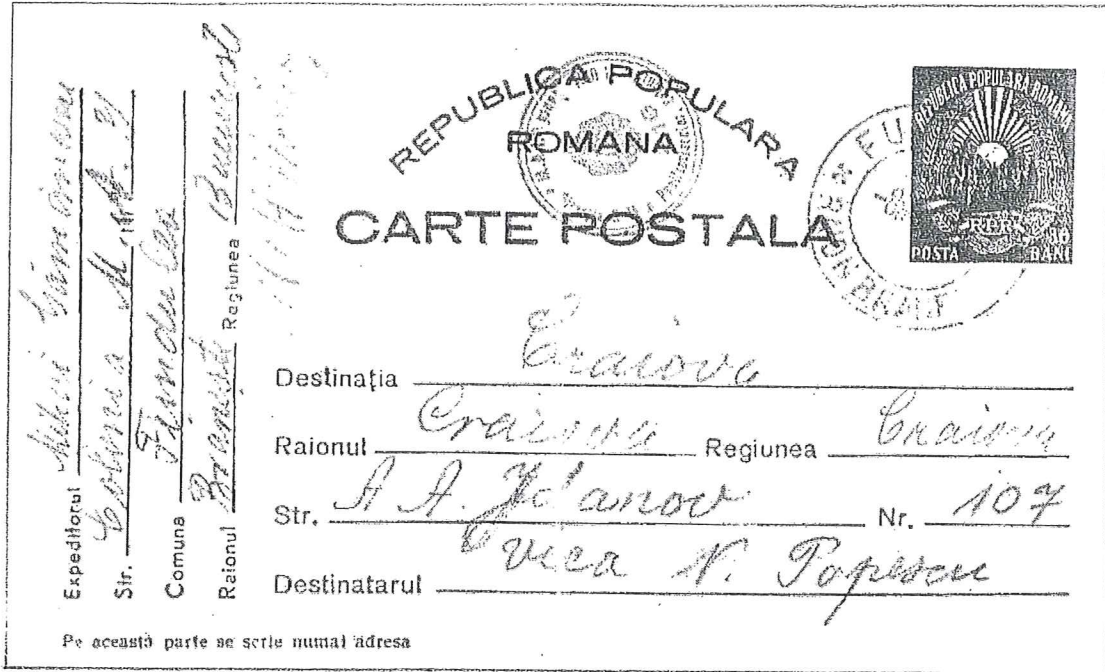


Fig.8 Postcard sent by a detainee from "Colonia M.A.I. Fundulea, Raionul Branesti" (agricultural working camp near Bucharest), stamped FUNDULEA / RAION BRANESTI on 8.9.1953, censored with the round violet marking reading "M.A.I. Directia G-la a Penitenciarelor, Coloniilor si Unit. Munca / 216", addressed to Craiova.

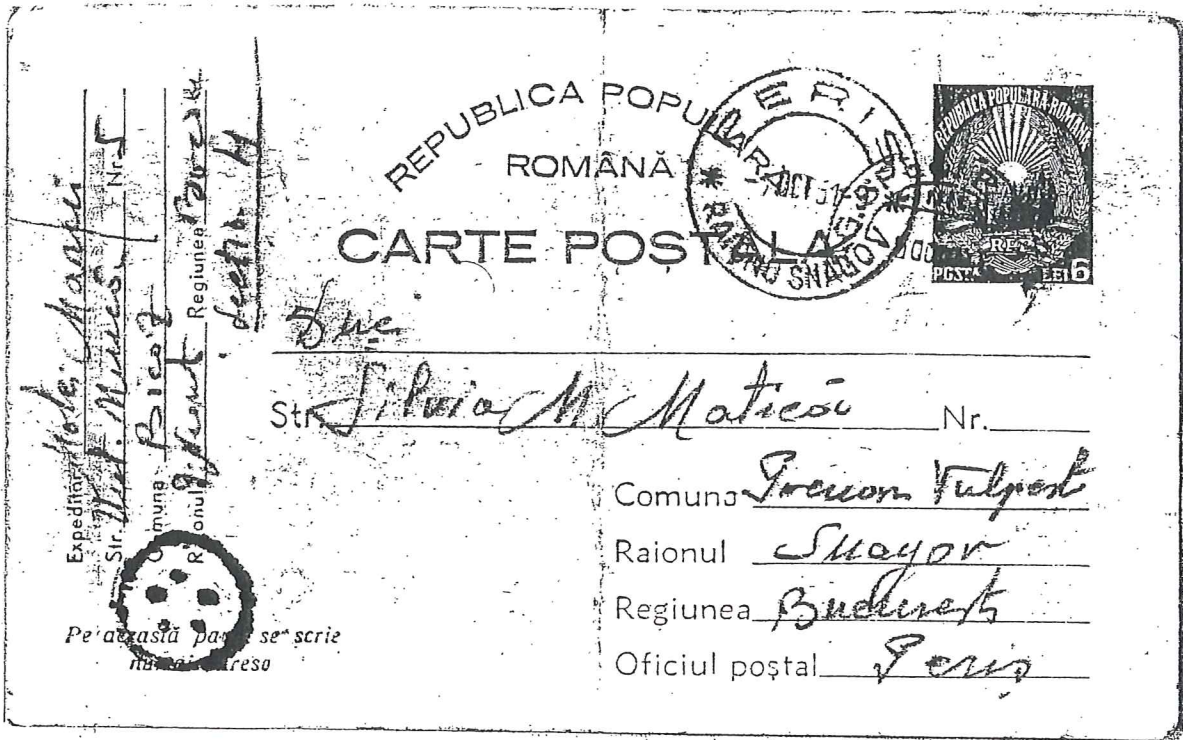


Fig.9 Post card sent in October 1951 by political detainee from "Working Unit No.5, Bicaz", located near the Bicaz Dam.

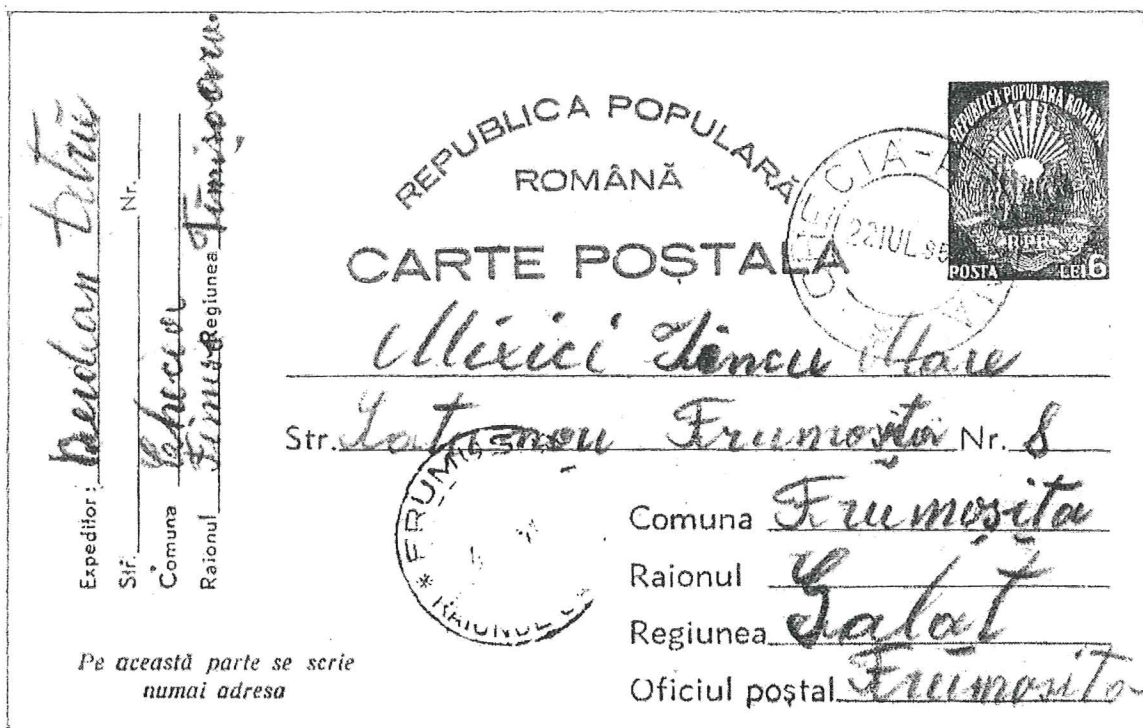


Fig. 10 - deportation mail: a postcard sent from CHECIA-ROMANA of Banat the 22.7.1951 to a member of the deportee Serbian Mixici family, at that time just arrived in Baragan, in the "dislocation place" of Frumusita-Noua (see the arrival marking FRUMUSITA / RAIONUL GALATI and the address: Mixici Iancu Mare, Satu Nou Frumusita nr. 8 = Mixici Iancu Mare, the New Village of Frumusita).

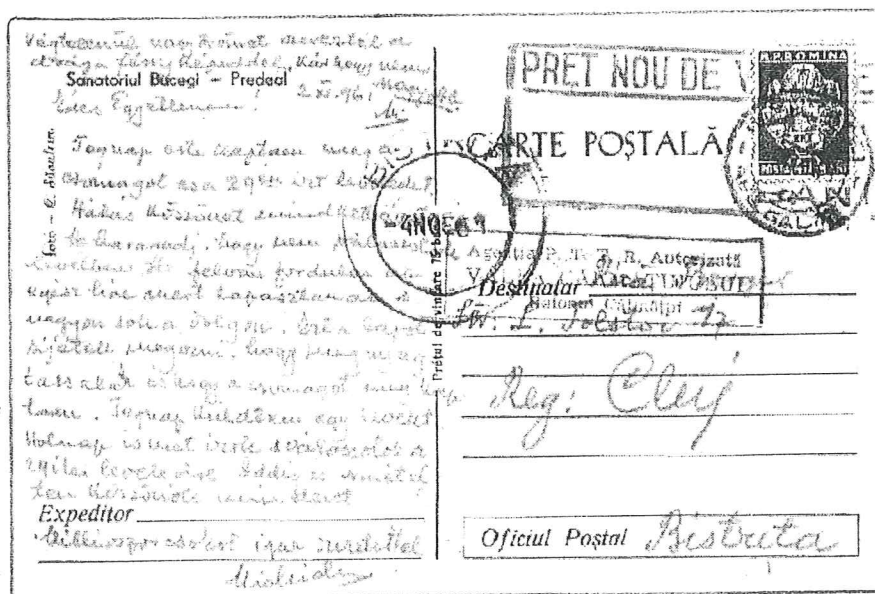


Fig. 11 - deportation mail: a postcard sent 2.11.1961 from the Postal Agency of Valea Calmatuiului (known also as Rubla) "Agentia P.T.T.R. Autorizata / VALEA CALMATUIULUI / Raionul Calmatui", re-stamped at INSURATEI / REG. GALATI and arrived in BISTRITA the 4.11.1961. The sender is the ex-police chief of Bistrita, now with compulsory domicile in Baragan.

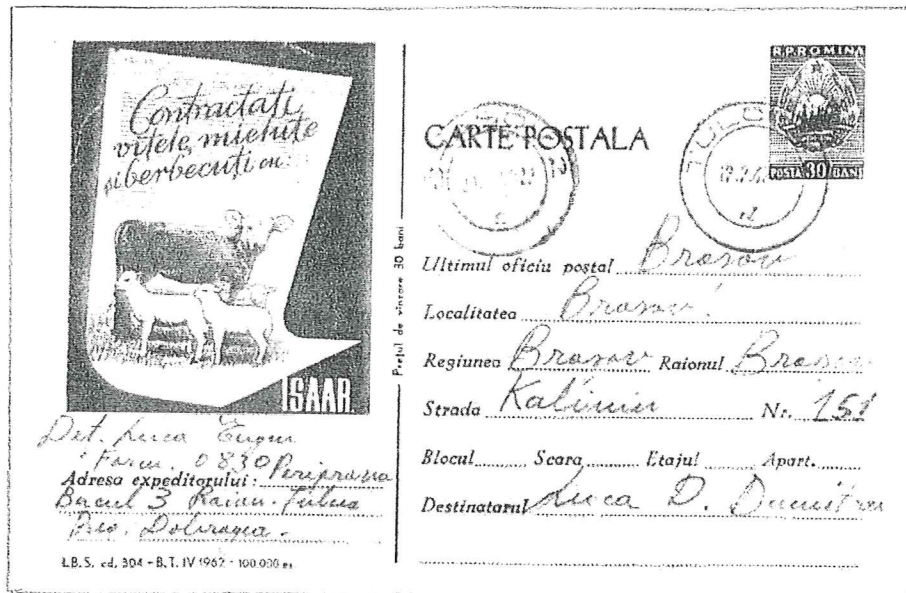


Fig. 12 - an example of detainee's mail from 1958-1964 (without censorship markings): postcard sent by Det(inut) Luca Eugen, Form(atiunea) 0830 Periprava, Bacul 3, Raion Tulcea (=detainee Luca Eugen, Formation 0830 Periprava /a work camp in the Danube's Delta/, Ferry no.3), postmarked TULCEA on 19.2.1962, arrived in Brasov the 20.2.1962

THE 'OPRIT A SE CENZURA' MARKING ('FREE FROM CENSORSHIP')

by Horst Scherrer, Norderstedt, Germany
(Translated by Horst Helberg)

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No other country that was involved in World War II had such a variety of different civil censor stamps, as Romania did. The fact that a country at war claims the right to control not only the military mail, but, through censorship, the civilian mail as well, is well shown in Romania. What was, during the period from 1941 to 1946, an intense administrative effort, is today a great field for interested philatelists. In addition, it is an area in which even the young collector, with limited financial resources, can join. At almost every collectors club meeting, one can find such markings on Romanian material for very little money. This is to be expected, as in the years between 1941 and 1946, there were millions of pieces of mail that were handled by censorship offices.

Unfortunately, during the 50 years prior to the publishing of the handbook by Telegut-Thielk, 1995 (latest version), the entire area of Romanian censorship mail was neglected. Even the handbook, Die Postzensur (The Post Censorship), 2nd edition published in 1996 in Munich by Karl Kurt Wolter, which describes the censorships of the entire world, provides information about the censorship of civil mail, but reveals very little information on Romania (pages 65 and 66). The reason why collecting and studying this material in Romania had practically no importance is simple: this subject was more or less taboo and post that was in any way connected to World War II, even the ones with non-military censorship, appeared uninteresting and didn't receive any attention. In addition, no publication or handbook was available on this topic, which shows, even more, the disinterest that existed at the time