

M Y FILE

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Abstract:

The Western European impressions of the Romanian communist state are that the secret police, Securitatea, were everywhere and controlled everything. As a foreign - Norwegian - student in Romania in 1978-79, I did not really care. When the archives were opened, it turned out that my roommate at the students' hostel had in fact a file of some 500 pages -- also covering later years. That file contained photos of him -- and myself, and a reference to my own file. In October 2009, I saw my file at the Romanian Securitate, from the period when I was a student in Bucharest in 1978-1979. This turned out to have only 20 pages. However, both my roommate's story, which he used as raw material for a book ('Verdacht.' Mijn Securitatedossier, Uitgeverij Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2009, "Suspect." Dosarul meu de la Securitate, Editura Trei, București 2013), and my own story provide some insight into what the Securitate did - and did not. Horrible as the system was, and of course with fatal consequences for millions of innocent people, my conclusion is that they did not deserve their pay.

Rezumat:

Impresiile occidentale cu privire la statul comunist român sunt că poliția secretă, Securitatea, era omniprezentă și controla totul. Ca student străin - norvegian - în România anilor 1978-1979, nu-mi păsa. Când s-au deschis arhivele s-a dovedit că de fapt colegul meu de cameră de la căminul studențesc avea un dosar de circa 500 de pagini - ce acoperea și perioada ulterioară. Dosarul conținea și fotografii de-ale sale și de-ale mele, precum și o referire la dosarul meu. În octombrie 2009, mi-am văzut

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dosarul întocmit de Securitatea română. Acesta s-a dovedit a avea doar 20 de pagini. Totuși, povestea colegului meu de cameră, pe care a utilizat-o ca material pentru o carte ('Verdacht.' Mijn Securitedossier, Uitgeverij Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2009, "Suspect." Dosarul meu de la Securitate, Editura Trei, București 2013), precum și propria mea poveste oferă o anumită perspectivă asupra a ceea ce Securitatea făcea – și nu făcea. Oribil așa cum era acel sistem, și, desigur, cu consecințe dramatice asupra a milioane de oameni nevinovați, concluzia mea este că nu-și merita salariul.

Keywords: student life, Securitate, secret services

Am vrut să vin cu tine, dar n-am vrut să citesc dosarul, i-a spus taică-su, mi-e de-ajuns că l-ai citit tu. -- Augustin Cupșa¹

I am neither a historian nor a political scientist. But I do have an academic background, as a philologist and linguist, and in the arts or humanities, we have one thing in common: Sources. The natural sciences perform experiments, we go to the sources and compare them and evaluate their reliability.

And in this case, I am a source, or rather *the source*, or one of the two principal sources. Insofar as my memory is reliable, and in this case, I do think it is, because my period as a student in Bucharest in 1978-79 was very formative. Bucharest, this singular city, from which no man departs without carrying away the traces of his sojourn there. As the poet says.²

The other principal source is in the central archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, CNSAS File no. FI (Fond informativ) 208751, regarding LONE STEINAR, archived on 31 January 1981, microfilmed, I think it means on the stamp, on 2 April 1982.³

I suspected that I had a file already from the beginning, but I did not really care. I went to Romania in 1978 fully aware of the fact that it was a communist dictatorship, but I went there for linguistic purposes - and out of curiosity, and did not consider any of my actions there as more than mildly

¹ Augustin Cupșa, "Răceala", in *Marile bucurii și marile tristeți* (București: Editura Trei, 2013) 6: "I wanted to come with you, but I did not want to read the file, his father said, it was enough for me that you had read it."

² Of course, the opening line from Knut Hamsun: *Hunger. Sult*: "denne forunderlige By, som ingen forlader, før han har faaet Mærker af den..."

³ For general information about the Securitate files and the way they were filed, see for instance Carmen Chivu, Mihai Albu, *Dosarele Securității. Studii de caz* (Iași, București: Polirom, 2007).

subversive - changing money on the black market and so on.

So let us start here, with a survey of my rich and eventful life as a student in Bucharest from 1978 to 1979 -- as a necessary background. I had been to the summer courses in Braşov in 1976, and in the spring of 1978 I had applied for a seven months' grant for the university year of 78-79. The official university year in Bucharest was starting, but I still did not have any answer. I called the cultural department of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent a telex to the recently opened Norwegian embassy in Bucharest, and told me that they even considered making a telephone call there. (This was before the Internet.) In the end, I received a go-ahead; the chargé d'affaires, Mr Per Borgen, had received confirmation that I would receive the grant. And he organised my arrival: The Embassy's attaché, Mr Thor Johansen would meet me at Gara de Nord and take me to a transit students' hostel. So I arrived on the Orient Express in mid-October, was met by Mr Johansen and the embassy's driver, Mihai. After a week or so I had received the first instalment of the grant and been installed in a single room in the students' hostel for foreigners in Grozăveşti. Room 410, block C.

After a week in my new home, there was a knock on the door one evening. Outside there was a young fellow, about my own age, sympathetic-looking, short and slightly stocky. "Good evening, I have been assigned to this room," he said in Romanian: "Bună seara, am fost repartizat aici." I thought, "Oh bother!", invited him inside, we introduced ourselves. He told me that he was Dutch, I answered him "Ik spreek ook een beetje Nederlands" (I had been to a course), and we changed into English.

It was one of the biggest strokes of luck in my life. Not to mention his. And someone else's. I will come to that.

His name was Jan Willem Bos, he was studying Romanian literature, I was studying language and linguistics. We quickly became friends, organised our lectures, our readings, our everyday life, our room. We soon changed that for room 505, swapping with a Greek girl who wanted to get away from her male neighbour. He wouldn't bother us. But there was only one key to the room, so we had to plan our days carefully.

At a seminar of comparative Romance philology I had been introduced to an American student, Cornelia Golna. With Romanian parents - her father was actually an Aromanian from Greece. I met her again at a lecture on the history of the Romanian language a few days later. After the lecture, I had an appointment with Jan Willem to get the key and have lunch together at the self-service restaurant outside the InterContinental hotel, just across the street

from the university. So I invited her to join us.

And suddenly we were three - good friends, going out to eat together, at one of the two pizzerias in town, or elsewhere, or having a drink of Albanian brandy or Bulgarian Cabernet red wine in our room.

On New Year's Eve, we were invited to Doru, a Romanian friend of Jan Willem who also had become a friend of mine. On the way back in the morning of 1 January 1979, I noticed that Jan Willem and Cornelia were holding hands. They married in Amsterdam that summer, they have a daughter (I feel partially responsible for her!), I was at their silver wedding in Amsterdam in 2004, and I saw them most recently in Leiden in January 2015.

It was a strange time. And winter came, with snow.

I had been invited by Mr Borgen, the *chargé d'affaires*, to use the diplomatic mail for my letters home - and back again. When I met him at the embassy the first time, he wanted to show me the garden behind the house - Strada Rabat no. 3, next to the Bulgarian embassy, which is still there, I think. Which was a pretext to tell me that the embassy probably was bugged, and that one or more of the Romanian staff most likely would report to the Securitate - and that I probably knew that already. Which I did.

So I went regularly to the Norwegian embassy, to send and pick up my mail. Usually, the secretary, Ms Sonia Schlanger, would give me my letters, but on one occasion, I was invited into Mr Borgen's office: I had received a suspiciously thick envelope from my parents, and he insisted that I should open it in his presence. It contained several bags of rose hip tea, sent to me by my anxious parents. Mr Borgen was furious. I had to write to my parents to stop this misuse of the diplomatic mail. I could not do that until the next week, and that letter of course crossed a new delivery of rose hip tea. But this time, it was Mr Johansen, the *attaché*, who gave me the envelope. I duly apologised and told him the story, and he split his sides laughing. Anyway, if there was anything easily available in Romania in that period, it was herbal teas.

In January 1979 Mr Borgen was appointed ambassador. I suspect that he was sent as a *chargé d'affaires* to Bucharest with the task of setting up a new embassy there, and the title of ambassador was an award. He truly deserved it. He was strict, efficient, but, if I may say so, quick-tempered. I managed to stay on good terms with him, and I was invited to the official receptions at the embassy.

On the first such occasion, I got to know a Norwegian couple living in Bucharest, Mr Audun Øjford, who was working for the UNESCO European

Center for Higher Education, which was located in Bucharest, and his wife Karla. I would go and see them about once a week, among other things to use their bathtub. The Grozăvești showers were not very inviting. Jan Willem would go to Doru's house for the same purpose.

Audun Øfjord died many years ago, Karla Øfjord is 93 or so. I saw her in Bergen in August last year. She is somewhat forgetful, but remembers good old Bucharest days clearly. We spent a nice evening talking about that time and drinking a lot of red wine.

I left Grozăvești and Romania in May 1979. I was briefly back in 1980. I went to the summer course, this time in Bucharest, in 1982. And I went there again in 1984, to see Jan Willem and Cornelia and their infant daughter Laura. Jan Willem had been a guest lecturer of Dutch there since the autumn of 1982. Romania in 1984 was a lot like Orwell's 1984, and I did not feel like going back for a while. "I am not going back until they are dead," I would say, and no-one was in doubt who "they" were.

I kept my word.

But I managed to see Jan Willem and Cornelia -- and Laura -- almost once a year. And each time, when we took leave of each other, we would paraphrase the traditional Jewish greeting "Next year in Jerusalem": "La anul, la București!" "Next year in Bucharest!" In the December days of 1989, Cornelia was in Greece, where her parents had moved, but I talked to Jan Willem in Amsterdam on the telephone, and we realised that this greeting suddenly could or would come true. And it did.

After 1990, Jan Willem said several times that he would like to have a look at his file. He was convinced that he had one. I said that I didn't care if I had one or not, and if I had one, I wouldn't bother to see it.

We all know the stories about the East German Stasi archives, and how they were partially destroyed. The same thing happened in Romania, with the so-called *Berevoiești case*: A large part of the archives were brought to two factories to be made into paper pulp, the workers refused to do so, and the archives were brought to the village of Berevoiești, where one of the culprits had a brother who had a large bread oven. It did not work out, the papers were dumped nearby, and the culprits were found out.⁴

After a series of political debates, the archives were given over from the Securitate, or what was now the Serviciul Român de Informații, SRI, the

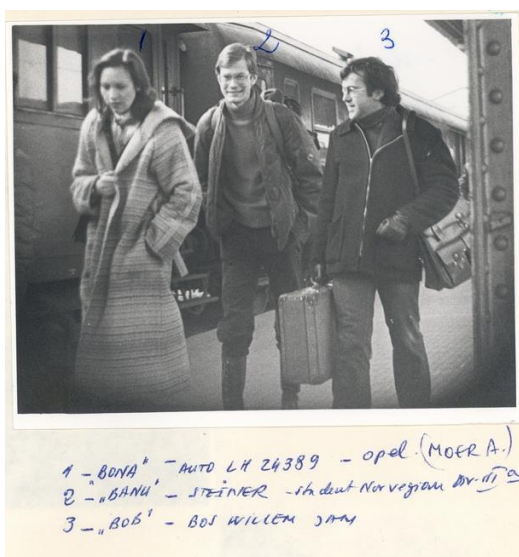
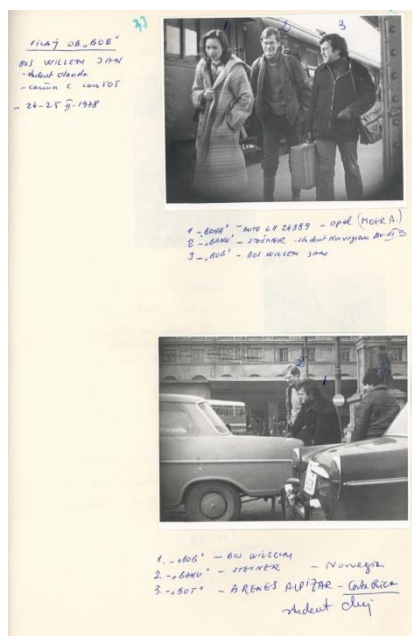
⁴ On the Berevoiesti case, see http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departamentul_Securității_Stalului#Soarta_arhivelor_Securit.C4.83.C8.9Bii with references there. Visited 20.05.2015.

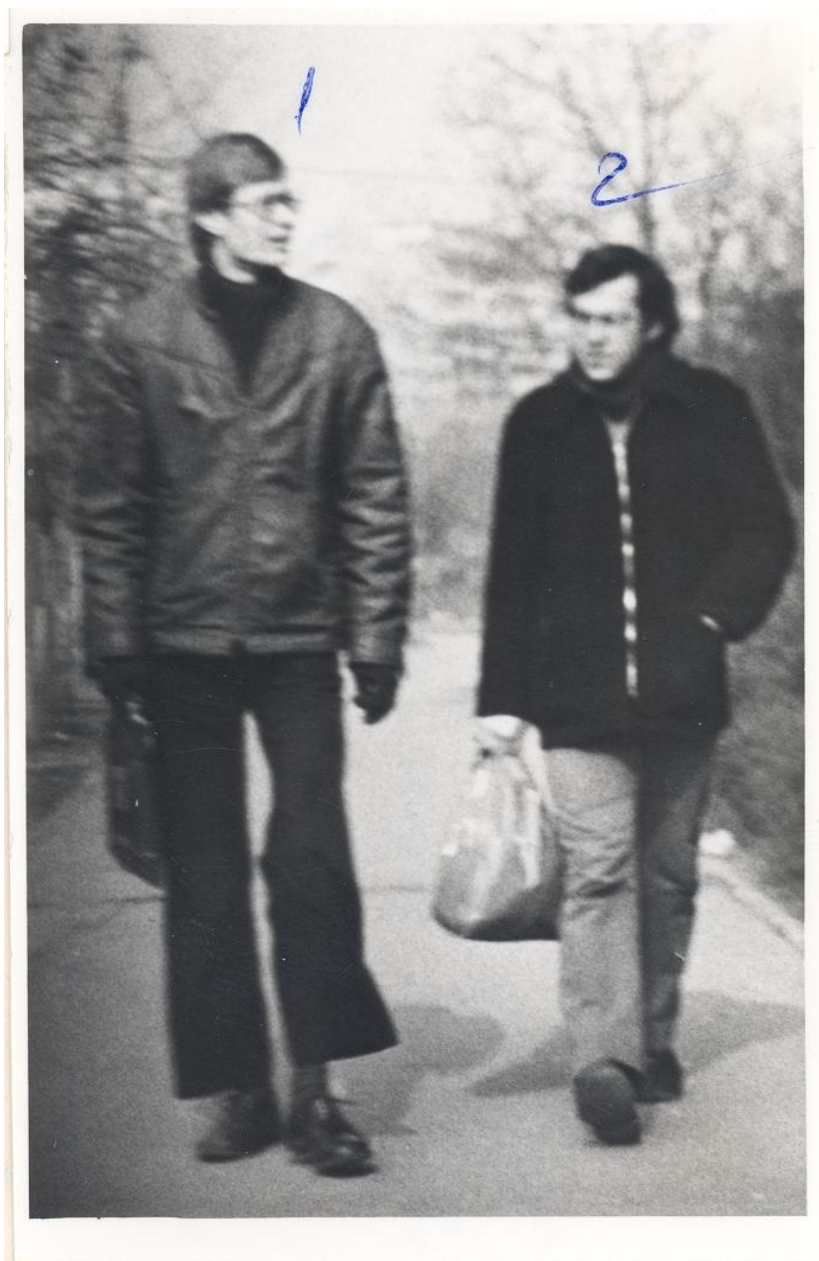
Romanian Information Service, to the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, the CNSAS. The council had been formed by law in 1999, the SRI dragged its feet and handed most of the archives over in 2006. And it was possible to request to see your own file.⁵

Jan Willem requested to do so in 2007. And in October that year I received an e-mail from him. He had been to Bucharest, was now back in the Netherlands, but he had seen his file. It contained about 300 documents, or reports, altogether more than 500 pages. And he enclosed some attachments, including two pages with photographs.

With me. And him. And other people we knew. In everyday situations. There was one of Jan Willem, another Norwegian student, Anniken Moer, and myself, just getting off the train at Gara de Nord, as I was returning to Bucharest in late February 1979 after four weeks in Norway.

I felt sick. It was nauseating. Why!?!





And there was a note identifying me:

2 - "BANU" - STEINER - student norwegian Dir III-a

Which is a reference to the Third Office, which meant that I had a file.
And then I decided I wanted to see it.

But in good time. Jan Willem told me that he actually would write a

whole book about this, which he subsequently did. And the next summer he sent me the manuscript by e-mail, so I could check it. I corrected a few minor details, and was pleased to see what he wrote about me: "I shared a room with a Norwegian student, Steinar. Among the languages he spoke there was also Dutch." Thank you, Jan Willem, that was very generous of you, because my spoken Dutch is not that good. But I can read Dutch. Including the manuscript of the book. And later on the book, which has also been translated and published in Romanian, so references are in fact to both editions.⁶

And in the meantime, the legislation regarding access to the files had been challenged, the so-called Voiculescu case. The Romanian constitutional court then ordered the Parliament to change the legislation accordingly, so in any case, I would have to wait.⁷ In the meantime, let us have Jan Willem's story.

Or the first part of it, which also regards me. The second part covers his time as a guest lecturer of Dutch from 1982 to 1984, and the last part, from early 1989, covers a visit by a Romanian dissident with Dutch citizenship who was allowed to come back to see his mother on her deathbed. Jan Willem came along as a kind of guard. And all this, of course, is in the book.

Why did he have a file in the first place? He had been to Bucharest earlier in 1978, subtitled and doing a voice-over for a Romanian commercial to promote the Black Sea coast in the Netherlands. As a routine, the company, Publirom, had written a report, seemingly enough to open a file. And before leaving for Romania, he had also translated for a young Romanian asylum seeker, for the Dutch Ministry of Justice and the Dutch section of Amnesty International - the last one on a voluntary basis. The asylum seeker had then gone back to Romania, and he was either an agent provocateur (but why?), or more likely, he got cold feet, and was then debriefed by the Securitate.

In February 1979, our friend Doru, with whom we had celebrated New Year, came to Grozăvești to see Jan Willem, and they went for a walk. Outside. Doru told Jan Willem that he had been contacted by the Securitate, asked if he knew the person on a photograph, confirmed that it was his Dutch friend, and

⁶ Jan Willem Bos: '*Verdacht*'. *Mijn Securitedossier*. Uitgeverij Atlas, Amsterdam and Antwerpen 2009. Romanian translation *Suspect. Dosarul meu de la Securitate*. Translated by Alexandra Livia Stoicescu [but the original Romanian texts were not re-translated!] (București: Editura Trei, 2013). I am mentioned on pp. 101-102 (pp. 96-97 in the Romanian edition), and later on pp. 122 ff. (pp. 113 ff.)

⁷ On the Voiculescu case, see

[http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Voiculescu_\(politician\)#Rela.C8.9Bia_cu_Seurita](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Voiculescu_(politician)#Rela.C8.9Bia_cu_Seurita) tea with references there. Visited 20.05.2015.

asked to report on him. He was given some time to think about it. Doru and Jan Willem then agreed that Doru should report, but not what was actually said. If they had discussed politics, he would say that they had discussed classical Romanian literature. Or whatever.

From Jan Willem's file, it appears that the Securitate was pleased with Doru's reports, although they did not contain any important information. Jan Willem being a secret agent of Amnesty International, it was not surprising that he was laying low anyway.

Later in February 1979, there was an episode which in a way is the highlight of this period, and it also involves me. That February, the Securitate had found out that two Dutch representatives of Amnesty International would travel to Romania. They expected them to contact their agent there, Jan Willem Bos, and decided to follow him - "filaj". From early morning to late night. Probably, they did not believe he would go out during the night, though that was of course very easy to do. I once did, on a sleepless night, and no-one bothered me or asked me any questions.

He behaved suspiciously from the very beginning of the "filaj": He went to the main railway station, Gara de Nord, of course to meet the two Amnesty agents. But the first time this happened, he was there to meet me, coming back from Norway with the Orient Express.

I had boarded the train in Vienna, but since the railway carriages came all the way from Paris, in that report I am referred to, by the Securitate agents - and photographers! - as "the person who came from Paris". That's sloppy work. And as you can see on the photographs, I am identified with a reference to my file. But I hadn't been near Paris on that occasion.

Jan Willem kept going to the railway station. He told me that Cornelia had gone to Greece to see her relatives there, and have a break from Romania, a small - and well-deserved - vacation. She would come back by train from Sofija, but he did not know when. When she eventually arrived a few days later, he was at the station to meet her. And when I met her later on the day at the students' hostel, she said: "And Jan Willem was at the station to meet me!? He didn't know when I was coming?" "Nuți," I said, "Jan Willem has gone to Gara de Nord every day." "I can't believe it."

In his book, Jan Willem writes that he is happy that the Securitate so many years later provides him with proof that he took their relationship seriously from the very beginning. Cornelia now has two - independent - sources for this. As I said earlier on: I am a source.

When they saw that he was there to meet Cornelia, and the visits to the

railway station stopped, the Securitate sums up: "This explains all the trips to the airport." Airport!?! So far, it has been Gara de Nord. He never went to the airport. Sloppy work.

And the Amnesty agents from the Netherlands? They left Romania without having contacted, or been contacted by, Jan Willem. The Securitate concludes: "This means that he has been well instructed." Thus, a proof of his guilt! These people *were* paranoid.

And stupid.

And evil.

I read the manuscript of Jan Willem's book during the summer of 2008. The book also contains, at the end, a long interview with Doru. So he has - of course - agreed to let the story be known. In case you wondered.

At that time, it was too late to request to see my file, because of the Voiculescu case. When the new legislation was in place, I dragged my feet a bit, and then, in May 2009, I sent a formal request, by printing out and filling in a form from the web page of the CNSAS, and sending it by recommended mail to Bucharest.

A few weeks later I had a note in my mailbox that a recommended letter from Romania could be picked up at my local post office.

Or, since we hardly have any post offices in Norway any more, most of the services having been moved online or outsourced to the "Post i butikk" system - a separate counter at your local supermarket, I went to pick it up at Meny Wilbergjordet in Fredrikstad. And with my back to check outs and the postal service counter, facing the Mester Grønn florist chain and an all-you-can-think-of store Nille, a situation that struck me as bizarre, I opened the letter. Of course I could not wait until I got home.

I had a file. They had found one so far, and would tell me if they found more. They didn't, so I probably only have this one. It contained 11 documents, and I could come and see it at a specific date they had given. I knew from Jan Willem that this was a mere formality, so I went home and by email, I made an appointment for a day in October the same year. That was a better time for me to go to Bucharest.

When I told Jan Willem about the file, and the size, he told me that "11 documents" would be about 20 pages. Disappointingly small. Nothing to write a book about.

But who? And why? And what kind of information was in it?

The following sounds like it has been written by someone who has been to the same courses in creative writing. Those courses that any self-

respecting writer of fiction and non-fiction will have gone to these days:

"On a cold Friday morning in October 2009, I went to the CNSAS offices in Bucharest, past the porter, presented my ID papers, and was shown into a large reading room."

There were already other people there, I noticed an old man with a big pile of dossiers in front of him. I sat down, and a polite young man, who could have been ten years old when the regime fell, put a meagre case file on the table in front of me.

I opened it.

There was my name.

I turned the page.

It was the embassy's driver, Mihai.

I knew that. Of course I knew that someone at the embassy was reporting. Even if Mr Borgen had not told me, I would have suspected it.

And in a way, it was a relief. I did not make that many friends in 78-79, though more than I have mentioned here. But it would have been sad to see that one of them had spied on me, after being "convinced" by the Securitate. Mihai? I don't blame him at all.

Of course he does not appear with his own name in the file, he has a "conspiratory name", "Cazacu". "The source 'Cazacu' went to the railway station with Mr Thor Johansen, and met a Norwegian student who came with the Orient Express." Kind of silly, since it is so obvious.

And that is also the answer to "why?". Because I was met by the embassy, and later dropped by the embassy to send and pick up my mail. Activities not connected with the embassy are not reported.

Later in the file, other sources appear. "Toader Aristotel" has a note about a dinner at the ambassador's residence, where I was invited, together with a Norwegian female student and a female Romanian student who spoke fluent Norwegian. The source is instructed to follow up the two Norwegian students and to find out, if possible, who the Romanian, Norwegian-speaking student is. In fact, I cannot remember this event on 8 December 1978, but if I was present, the other two must have been Anniken Moer (also on the photograph) and Sanda Baci. The last one spent these years in Norway under the reciprocal grant system, but the Securitate officer "Darie" obviously did not know this.

And the source from the ambassador's residence? As in any suspense novel: It was the butler. (They had a butler!)

Another source from the embassy is "Brădet Ana". That could have

been Mrs Sonia Schlanger, but for some reason I do not think that very likely. But there was another Romanian secretary, and a cleaning lady. The information is factual and void of interest, it only confirms that I go to the embassy to send and pick up my mail.

Some of the documents are handwritten, some are typed. In the typed documents, the typist has not had access to the names, so they are filled in by hand later. The names were top secret, of course.

The last document is not clearly dated on my copy, but it appears to confirm that on 2 April 1982 my case can be shelved, since I left the country for good on 12 May 1980. Sloppy work again: I had the grant for one university year, and then moved out of Grozăvești in early May 1979. I was taken to Gara de Nord by the Øfjords in their car, took the Orient Express to Vienna in the early evening, and then inter-railed my way back to Oslo in a mere 53 hours.

But I was back in May 1980, and I probably did cross the border to Hungary on 12 May that year. The Securitate believed that I had spent that year as well in Bucharest.

Also, in one of the first notes, there is a reference to my stay in Brașov. I had told Mihai that I had been to the summer course there, but somewhere on the way, this information was distorted, so that it seemed that I had spent a year or two in Brașov. The source was instructed to become friends with me and find out who I had been with during that period. He did not, probably because the misunderstanding was corrected. And "befriend me" -- we were on friendly terms, but naturally I was suspicious, so it would not have worked anyway. As the Securitate also should have known.

It is a meagre file, actually not very interesting. Until we compare it to Jan Willem's file. In his file, they find it highly suspicious that he is seeing the embassy people all the time. He probably dropped by there at official receptions four or five times, not more. While I went to my embassy once or twice a week! For my personal mail - but how could they be sure? I usually gave it to the Norwegian diplomats, so they could have contained intelligence that I had gathered. I also received thick envelopes - although the "sources" may have not seen those. If they had, they would never have guessed that they contained rose hip tea bags...

I went all over Bucharest, I took pictures, I went on two day-trips to Brașov, one with Anniken Moer by car, one with Jan Willem and Cornelia by train. During Christmas, I went to Cluj, stayed in a students' hostel, but spent the Christmas days with Sanda Baciu's family. In spring, I took the train to

Sibiu, spent two nights in a hotel in Ocna Sibiului, where I illegally shared a room with Romanians, and then took the train back to Bucharest. They did not notice.

I was in and out at the Øfjords. Karla has always said that they were convinced that they were followed, and that when they first arrived, people came up to them in the street and wanted to change money at extremely high rates. "They think we are spies." And wanted to catch them redhanded and send them out of the country. She says that she is not interested in seeing her file.

But when I was back in Bucharest in May 1980, I stayed at their house. There is no indication of this in my file, though it must be in their file.

And a curious incident: In May 1980, I had been to the *Caru' cu bere* beer hall for a few beers with Doru, and we took the metro to Grozăvești to see some people there. As we walked up from the platform, there were two militiamen standing at the barriers, and I heard one say: "Ăla, cu ochelarii" -- "That one, with the glasses." They stopped me - not Doru, he just waited patiently next to me - and asked me for my legitimation. I showed them my passport, they looked at it, and said ok. It was the first and last time I was ever stopped in Romania in the street and asked to present legitimation. Karla's reaction then: "Not by accident". No trace of this episode in my file.

Could there be more files? In theory, yes. Other people have found out about missing files or parts of files. But that was people like Herta Müller. I am not in her league.

And why all this fuss about Jan Willem as an agent for Amnesty?

There are probably hundreds of books about files from the Soviet block security services. I used to look for the Romanian ones in Romanian bookshops, especially after 2007, when I started coming regularly to the country, but soon decided that neither aircraft baggage allowances, my bookshelves at home nor my own reading capacity was sufficient. But one of the first books in this general group, also monopolising the telling title *The File*, was written by the Englishman Timothy Garton-Ash, about his Stasi file.⁸

His experiences are surprisingly similar to Jan Willem's and mine. The Stasi never knew what they should suspect him to do, when he moved from West Berlin to East, and frequently travelled through the German Democratic Republic and to Poland. But they kept him under close supervision. The reports are in the same stilted and pretentious language as in the Securitate

⁸Timothy Garton-Ash: *The File. A Personal History* (London: Flamingo, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers), 2007.

files (and maybe this is typical police language all over the world anyway): "Then the object walked questioningly around the station." The object! And when he leaves a restaurant, the place is referred to as - in the translation, I would have loved to have the original German! - a "gastronomic establishment" (p. 6-8)

Small details are wrong, the interpretation is paranoid (p. 24-27). And he is surprised by what they do not know: Visits to other cities, other people he met and talked to, radio broadcasts about East Germany on the BBC - there are no traces of this (p. 28).

And they never found out what he was up to - until they read a review of his book about East Germany in *Der Spiegel* (p. 142). Oh - he came to gather information to write a book denigrating their society! By then he is back in Britain, but he is banned to re-entry to the GDR, and turned back at the border a couple of times.

Garton Ash has a fat file; he is a historian, and wants to write a book. So he hunts down some of the big names who were responsible - and manages to get an interview with a certain General (ret.) Kratsch, who reported directly to Erich Mielke.

"He, Kratsch, was the man who got the angry telephone calls from Mielke when people took refuge in Western embassies or some new revelation appeared in *Der Spiegel*. And he would tell the Minister: how can you expect me to prevent it, when we've signed all these international agreements for improved relations with the West, working conditions for journalists, freedom of movement, respect for human rights?" If this refers to the Helsinki accords, it is interesting, because I do not believe anyone responsible in Romania bothered.

But why was this British student followed? It is simple.

"As he had told me already, from their first days at spy school they had been taught to respect and fear the legendary British secret services. But then, from about the mid-1960s, they could not find any more British spies. The officers [...] were desperate." They knew the official people at the embassies, but others? "So whenever an even half-way suspicious-looking Englishman came along, they immediately started investigating to see if he was a spy. They lived in hope, but were usually disappointed" (pp. 159-160).

Secret services are troublesome. They cannot say what they do, but they somehow have to prove that their efforts are worth the money. In democratic societies this is even trickier. In Norway, I think only one head of the PST, as it is called now, has resigned because his period was up. Over the

last 20 years or so, all the others have resigned after a scandal. We have a current one going, regarding the PST's possible illegal use of mobile telephone surveillance.

So here's the reason: For the Stasi and the Securitate: It would have been nice from time to time to arrest a foreign student and show for the world: Look! A spy! We are under attack!

Jan Willem was not a spy. Neither was I, but I could have been, and they would probably not have found out. The surveillance was not pervasive, certainly not for the foreign students. I think that there were some ten thousand Arab students in Romania at that time. In February 1979, there was a shoot-out between two rivalling Palestinian groups in Grozăvești. I cannot give details, since I was in Norway that month, but it should have not happened.

The population should, of course, believe that the surveillance was everywhere. Jan Willem and I were small fry, we would have been lifted out of the country by our embassies at need. Others fared much worse, as we know: Careers ruined, families estranged, people harassed, tortured and killed. As in the quote at the beginning, from a short story by Augustin Cupșa.

The German translator Gerhardt Csejka, who was the editor of the magazine *Neue Literatur* and left Romania in 1986 once told me that his file ran to 3000 pages (personal information, Leiderdorp, the Netherlands, February 2009). His comment: "I cannot read all that."

My file was smaller. Nothing to write a book about. But -- and put next to Jan Willem's file -- enough to be the raw material for a paper.

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