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Secrets and Truths
Knowledge Practices of the
Romanian Secret Police

Oskar-Halecki-Vorlesung 2010

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Oskar Halecki (1891–1973)

Der in Wien geborene Pole war einer der führenden Mittelalter- und Neuzeithistoriker im Polen der Zwischenkriegszeit. Auf dem internationalen Historikerkongress 1923 in Brüssel prägte er die erste Grundsatzdebatte über das Selbstverständnis der historischen Teildisziplin Osteuropäische Geschichte. 1939 zur Emigration gezwungen, gründete er 1942 in New York das „Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America", welches als Zentrum der polnischen Geschichtsschreibung im Exil fungierte. Hier entwickelte Halecki seine geschichtsregionale Konzeption Ostmitteleuropas als historische Strukturlandschaft und verfasste seine bis heute wegweisende Gesamtdarstellung „Borderlands of Western Civilization. A History of East Central Europe" (New York 1952; deutsch „Grenzraum des Abendlandes. Eine Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas", Salzburg 1957) sowie seine grundlegende Studie „The Limits and Divisions of European History" (London, New York 1950; deutsch „Europa. Grenzen und Gliederung seiner Geschichte", Darmstadt 1957). Sein breites Fachwissen setzte Halecki auch im diplomatischen Dienst der Zweiten Polnischen Republik sowie im Sekretariat des Völkerbundes ein.

Katherine Verdery – a Cultural Anthropologist of the Longue Durée

Dietmar Müller

Only at first glance does composing a bibliographic essay about the American cultural anthropologist Katherine Verdery appear to be an easy and one-dimensional task. Firstly, she is undoubtedly an anthropologist who authored influential books about topics central to Romanian history since the 19th century, such as rural society, land property, the concept of nation, cultural politics, gender, socialism, and post-socialism. But furthermore, she could be considered the anthropologist who is most intensively received and quoted outside of her specific scientific community. This is due to her ability to explain and transcend, but also theorize about the real as well as perceived particularities of Romania so that her writings about Romanian case studies can always be read as valuable contributions toward a better understanding of problems of European, even global scope.[1]

The beginnings of Katherine Verdery's relationship with Romania stand in the context of the Cold War. At the beginning of the 1970s the US and Romanian governments agreed to implement an academic exchange program. While the US was primarily interested in supporting Romania's movement to distance itself from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, Romania placed hope in creating this impression but was above all interested in possible knowledge its scientists might gain about American industry and technology.

Verdery's first book – her dissertation entitled *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change*, published in 1983 – arose as the

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1 In my opinion, two texts are especially important in this respect. VERDERY, Katherine: Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe since 1989. In: American Ethnologist 25 (1998) 2, pp. 291–206; CHARI, Sharad/VERDERY, Katherine: Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War. In: Comparative Studies in Society and History 51 (2009) 1, pp. 6–34.

result of years of field and archive research in Transylvania since 1973, in particular in the village of Aurel Vlaicu.[2] This study marks the beginnings of her intensive and decades-long engagement with the rural areas in Romania. Over the years Verdery was prolific in this field: She produced two additional monographs, edited multiple volumes as well as numerous academic articles that are occupied with land property in all of its political, identity, social, and economic dimensions. The long time period of around 300 years (1670s to 1970s), untypical for anthropologists covered in *Transylvanian Villagers*, is already striking as well as the comprehensive field of topics ranging from politics, economy, and ethnos. In this way, she stands in a tradition of social and cultural anthropology that places its field work in close proximity to the political economy of larger units than the village analyzed: provincial Transylvania, the Hungarian side of the Empire, the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy in its international context.

After 1989 Katherine Verdery analyzed intensively the renewed processes of change in rural areas. In 2003 she produced the monograph *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*[3] as well as two collected volumes, edited with Michael Burawoy and Caroline Humphrey respectively, in which the problems of de-collectivization and privatization are analyzed following the demise of state socialism and command economy.[4] The evocative title of

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2   Verdery, Katherine: Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change. University of California Press. Berkeley/Los Angeles/New York 1983. What belongs to the same context: Id.: Social Differentiation in the Transylvanian Countryside between the two World Wars. In: Rumanian Studies 5 (1980–1986), Leiden 1986, pp. 84–104.

3   Verdery, Katherine: The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania. Cornell University Press. Ithaca/London 2003.

4   Burawoy, Michael/Verdery, Katherine (eds): Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life in the Postsocialist World, Boulder 1999. Herein: Verdery, Katherine: Fuzzy Property: Rights, Power, and Identity in Transylvania's Decollectivization, pp. 53–81; Verdery, Katherine/Humphrey Caroline (eds): Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy, Oxford 2004. Herein: Verdery, Katherine: Introduction: Raising Questions about Property, pp. 1–26.
What belongs to the same context: Verdery, Katherine: The Elasticity of Land: Problems of Property Restitution in Transylvania. In: Slavic Review 53 (1994) 4, pp. 1071–1109; Id.: Property rights and power in Transylvania's decollectivization. In: Hann, C. M. (ed.): Property relations. Renewing the anthropological tradition. Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 160–180; Id.: Ghosts on the Landscape: Restoring Private Property in Eastern Europe. In: Focaal 36 (2001), pp. 145–163; Id.: Seeing like a Mayor, or How Local Officials Obstructed Romanian Land restitution. In: Ethnography 3 (2001), pp. 5–33.

books as well as other articles in this field – *The Elasticity of Land; Fuzzy Property; Ghosts on the Landscape* – refers to the difficulty the Romanian legislation and administration have with the restoration of land property in the face of missing or weak systems of land registration. At the same time, the contributions indicate significant agency of regional and local actors in the process of restructuring of property relations that usually did not materialize to the benefit of previous owners but to the benefit of local patronage networks. Using a long-term perspective, she describes the results of the entire land reform regarding the farmers' relationship to their land as the "death of the peasant": "As serfs they had been tied to the soil; as smallholders prior to World War II they had embedded themselves in it; as collective farmers their tie had been broken and the land had become an abstraction, but they were not free to leave. After 1991 they sought to re-embed themselves but for those who finally became rentiers or otherwise could not farm on their own, land became an abstraction once again. This time however they *were* free, heading for Spain and Italy, where they might finally settle."[5] As in the interwar period, after 1989 agricultural land was also distributed more according to populist motivations than economic calculation. In both cases the land distribution resulted in significant fragmentation so that farmers were only able to make slight progress during the interwar period regarding profitability, efficiency, and modernization, while independent farmers were only able to achieve this in exceptions following de-collectivization.

Since 1989, together with her colleague Gail Kligman and the contributions of a series of Romanian colleagues, Katherine Verdery has carried out the large-scale project entitled "Transforming Property, Persons, and States: Collectivization in Romania, 1949–1962." This resulted in a Romanian – and by now translated into English – collection of essays[6] as well as the monograph, authored together with Gail Kligman, "*Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949–1962*."[7] Here the authors reject the view, widespread in Romania,

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5   Verdery, Vanishing Hectare, p. 225f.

6   Dobrincu, Dorin/Iordachi, Constantin (eds): Țărănimea și puterea. Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România (1949–1962). Polirom. Iași 2005. English translation of the volume: Transforming Peasants, Property, and Power: Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1948–1962. CEU Press. Budapest 2009.

7   Kligman, Gail/Verdery, Katherine: Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949–1962. Princeton University Press. Princeton/Oxford 2011. What belongs to the same context: Verdery, Katherine/Kligman, Gail: How Communist Cadres

that collectivization did involve a powerful Communist Party imposing its will on the countryside. Moreover, they analyze that "party rule itself was in a process of being created" by collectivization as the first communist mass action in largely agrarian Romania. On the other hand, "collectivizing agriculture was not merely an aspect of the larger policy of industrial development but an attack on the very foundations of rural life."[8] Taking account of the scarcity of institutions and professionals in the countryside, Kligman and Verdery interpret the socialist modernization and bureaucratization in dialogue with Max Weber, James Scott, and in reference to work by Lynne Viola about the Soviet collectivization, as a special case. In what they rightly consider a contribution to a historical ethnography of state formation, Kligman and Verdery stress that the heavily personalist character of pre-communist Romania was if anything strengthened in socialism. Therefore, if in the later phases of collectivization entire villages entered into a collective, then "perhaps it was not just because they 'gave up' but rather because they accepted a solution that had tacitly recognized their values."[9]

Starting in the mid-1980s, Verdery began to publish about a field of topics that unquestionably belongs to the traditional Romanian historiography: Identity and "national character," Nation and culture. Her central work is a monograph published in 1991, *National ideology under socialism. Identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*,[10] after studies on the rise of the discourse on national identity had already been published in (Romanian) collections of essays.[11] In a discourse-analytic approach, she analyzes the rise and development

Persuaded Romanian Peasants to Give Up Their Land. In: East European Politics and Societies 25 (2011) 2, pp. 361–387.

8   Kligman/Verdery, Peasants Under Siege, pp. 2f.

9   Ibidem, p. 455.

10 Verdery, Katherine: National ideology under socialism: Identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescus Romania, University of California Press. Berkeley/Los Angeles 1991.

11 Verdery, Katherine: On the Nationality Problem in Transylvania Until World War I: An Overview. In: East European Quarterly 19 (1985) 1, pp. 15–30; Id.: The rise of the discourse about Romanian identity: Early 1900s to World War II. In: I. Agrigoroaiei/Gh. Buzatu/V. Christian (eds): Românii în istoria universală. Vol. II, 1, Iași 1987, pp. 89–137; Id: Moments in the rise of the discourse on national identity. I: Seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. In: I. Agrigoroaiei/Gh. Buzatu/V. Christian (eds): Românii în istoria universală. Vol. III, Iași 1988, pp. 25–60; Ivo Banac/Katherine Verdery (eds): National character and national ideology in interwar Eastern Europe. Yale Center for International and Area Studies. New Haven 1995. Herein Verdery, Katherine: National ideology and national character in interwar Romania, pp. 103–133.

of the concept of nation as a process that simultaneously produced a group – the intelligentsia – as well as fundamentally contributing to the fact that it was institutionalized in the form of academic disciplines, professorships, journals, publishers, etc. Not only due to the question of nationhood being posed during the interwar period in significantly enlarged Romania anew, but also because the humanities saw themselves as being in intense and increasing competition with technical professions for resources. Every public speech and publication about the "Nation" and the "people" was now under certain rules in the sense of Foucault. The influence of this institutionalized form of discourse about the nation would also unfold in Ceaușescu's so-called national communism since the 1960s. In contrast to the popular interpretation, the reasons for the national elements in the legitimation of communist rule in Romania cannot only be evaluated as consciously implemented instruments of the regime. On the contrary, Verdery analyzes this as a process that was definitely initiated by leaders but whose rules were no longer able to control the process. However, the ensuing distribution battles for the scarce funding on the level of institutions, journals, etc., ultimately fundamentally contributed to destroying the Party's legitimacy. Her assumption that the topic of the book "will surely be a prominent feature of Eastern Europe in the transition from socialism: national ideologies and the mobilization of national sentiments in the new 'democratic' politics,"[12] proved well-founded. In the 1990s Verdery authored additional studies on the basis of this approach in which she analyzed the use of the "National" post-communist in Romania and Eastern Europe.[13]

The last group of themes that need to be discussed here could be read as a synthesis of Katherine Verdery's studies about the concept of nation and real existing Socialism. These topics resulted in two collections of essays, appearing in 1996 under the title *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* and in 1999 under the title *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change.*[14] At this

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12 Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 4.
13 Verdery, Katherine: Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania. In: Slavic Review 52 (1993) 2, pp. 179–203; Id.: Wither "Nation" and "Nationalism"? In: Daedalus 122 (1993) 3, pp. 37–46; Id.: Beyond the Nation in Eastern Europe. In: Social Text 38 (1994), pp. 1–19.
14 Verdery, Katherine: What was Socialism, and what Comes Next? Princeton University Press. Princeton 1996; Id.: The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change. Columbia University Press. New York 1999. What belongs to the same context:

point it becomes particularly clear why it would be one-dimensional to describe Katherine Verdery as a mere specialist on Romania. That is because although in publications she assumes social-anthropological categories such as time, body-person-identity, space, and meaning, she refers to them in the context of political, economic, and societal systems in the following way: "In speaking of enchantment or enlivening, I have two related things in mind: I hope to show how we might animate the study of *politics in general*, energizing it with something more than the opinion polls, surveys, analyses of 'democratization indices', and game-theoretic formulations that dominate so much of the field of comparative politics."[15] When she analyzes *The "Etatization" of Time in Ceauşescu's Romania*[16] or *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, her results are important for the general understanding of state socialist systems as well as for its restructuring after 1989. Thus, she interprets the social construction of time as part of a political process that aims at subjecting people's use of time and, ultimately their biographies to the greatest possible comprehensible degree to the party and the state. After 1989 the different actors in Eastern Europe have grasped the chance for reconfiguration of the meaning of time and space toward the legitimating and assertion of interests. Using the example of the return of the bones of Inochentie Micu-Klein, the first bishop of the Greek-Catholic church in Transylvania, she makes clear the attempts of collectivization/nationalization of the memory of the dead. One of the methods is time compression in which the time between the death of the hero and its renewed burial are placed in parentheses and declared an historic non-time.

In keeping with anthropological tradition, in the following text Katherine Verdery attempts at self-reflection about the context of her field work in Romania. The fact that this does not lead to navel-gazing, but rather an analysis of overlapping rationalities and practices of a cultural anthropologist and the Romanian *Securitate* can be read as a renewed proof of her ability to depict the large and the small in their inseparable entanglement.

Verdery, Katherine: Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the 'Transition'. In: American Ethnologist 18 (1991), pp. 419–439; Id.: Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe since 1989. In: American Ethnologist 25 (1998) 2, pp. 291–306.

15 Verdery, The Political Lives of Dead Bodies, p. 26.

16 Verdery, The "Etatization" of Time in Ceauşescu's Romania. In: Id.: What was Socialism, and what Comes Next?. pp. 39–57.

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> God preserve me from those who want
> What's best for me,
> the nice guys
> always ready to inform on me cheerfully.
> From the priest with a tape-recorder under his vestment
> and the blanket you can't get under without saying
> Good evening.
> (Mircea Dinescu)[1]

> The aim of the secret services in any carceral universe – and this does not
> necessarily mean a prison – is to know and to repress.
> (Nicolae Steinhardt)[2]

Following the collapse of Eastern Europe's Communist-Party regimes in 1989–91, a number of problems emerged that peace activists, lawyers, and students of comparative politics have treated under the heading of "transitional justice". This concept refers broadly to various means by which the successor states to "authoritarian" polities have sought to address and

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1   Dinescu, Mircea: Democraţia Naturii (1981), quoted in Deletant, Dennis: Ceauşescu and the Securitate. Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989. Armonk/NY 1995, 196.
2   Steinhardt, Nicolae, uncited, quoted in Olaru, Stejărel / Herbstritt, George: Stasi şi Securitatea (Stasi und Securitate). Bucureşti 2003, 203.

overcome their legacy of repression. It has been applied to a wide variety of cases, including South Africa, Rwanda, Argentina, Chile, and the states of the former Soviet bloc. Among the issues covered are how to create democracy and the rule of law in the wake of "lawless" and undemocratic regimes; how to bring to justice those who perpetrated violations of human rights, whether to punish or amnesty such persons, and how to compensate victims; how to prevent supporters of the former regime from corrupting or destabilizing the new order; how if at all to achieve reconciliation among opposing parties; how to come to terms with pasts that were deeply painful and often unacknowledged, and how to revise the nation's historical narrative accordingly. In brief, the literature on transitional justice is about how to go forward from authoritarianism to something better, particularly from a legal point of view.

For the former communist world, a central problem involved whether and how to ban persons who had occupied important posts in the communist regimes or collaborated with the secret police from holding important posts in the new ones. The term used most often to refer to these problems is lustration, a term "invented" in Czechoslovakia,[3] where a lustration law

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3   The word "lustration" paradoxically came from the lexicon of the Czechoslovak secret police (StB), which used it in requesting confirmation from their statistical department as to whether they had in their records information on a particular person. See DAVID, Roman: Lustration Laws in Action. The Motives and Evaluation of the Lustration Policy in the Czech Republic and Poland. In: Law and Social Inquiry 28 (2003)2, 387-439, 388. Its root meaning was "to review or examine". An alternative history comes from BERTS-CHI, C. Charles: Lustration and the Transition to Democracy. The Cases of Poland and Bulgaria. In: East European Quarterly 28 (1994) 4, 435ff., 436. He says the term was used by the police in verifying whether communist cadres were loyal to the party and removing them if not. For more on the term and the phenomenon of lustration, see MEYER-RIECKH, Alexander / DE GREIFF, Pablo (eds.): Justice as Prevention. Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies. New York 2007; NALEPA, Monika: Skeletons in the Closet. Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Europe. Cambridge/UK 2009; SA-DURSKI, Wojciech: Rights Before Courts. A Study of Constitutional Courts in Postcommunist States of Central and Eastern Europe. Dordrecht, 2005; STAN, Lavinia (ed.): Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Reckoning with the Communist Past. London 2009; VERDERY, Katherine: Postsocialist Cleansing in Eastern Europe. Purity and Danger in Transitional Justice. In: BANDELJ, Nina / SOLINGER, Dorothy J. (eds.): Socialism Challenged, Socialism Vanquished: China and Eastern Europe

was passed in 1991 that disqualified certain kinds of people from specific forms of state employment. Of particular concern were former officers and collaborators of the secret police, the StB, which was considered to be so dangerous that the country's democratic prospects could be guaranteed only by eliminating it from politics. Many other post-Soviet countries followed Czechoslovakia's lead, in varying forms.

The literature on lustration reveals major difficulties, however, with using it to accomplish its aim of establishing democracy and the rule of law. Among the thorniest was that because under the communist system it was legal to collaborate with the secret police, the principles of *nulla poena sine lege* and *tempus regit actum* (so-called nonretroactivity principles) would reject prosecuting that behavior after the fact – indeed, in Hungary, the Constitutional Court invalidated lustration laws on precisely these grounds. The rule of law cannot be founded on a violation of legal maxims, even if the regime they served is now seen as illegitimate.

A second set of problems concerned the sources of data to be used for determining whether a person collaborated with the secret police or not: the secret police files themselves. Many observers commented on the irony of would-be law-governed states using as evidence the archive of an organization widely seen to epitomize abuses of probity and truth-telling. As Czech president Václav Havel put it: "It is absurd that the absolute and ultimate criterion for a person's suitability for performing certain functions in a democratic state should come from the internal files of the secret police".[4] The files are a poor guide to police collaboration for a number of reasons. Because agents were offered "bonuses" if they met or exceeded their targets for recruiting informers (such as a TV for every three people

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Compared, 1989-2009. Oxford 2012; and WILLIAMS, Kieran / FOWLER, Brigid / SZCZERBIAK, Aleks: Explaining Lustration in Eastern Europe. A "Post-Communist Politics" Approach. In: Democratization 12 (2005) 1, 22-43.

4   MICHNIK, Adam / Havel, Václav: Justice or Revenge. In: Journal of Democracy 4 (1993), 20-27, here 23.

who signed up])[5], this encouraged them to manufacture informers from people who had not actually agreed to collaborate. Moreover, the permission of local Party organizations was required for recruiting informers among Party members, and no informer's registration file was created for them; therefore, falsified informer registers came disproportionately from the former political opposition, while Party members who had informed remained invisible. In Czechoslovakia, the people with the most extensive secret police (StB) files were dissidents, whom the StB might have approached for collaboration or interrogated at length and then created files for them, even if the person targeted had refused to cooperate – that is, any form of contact with the secret police could become grounds for creating a file that would make one seem a collaborator. Adam Michnik echoed Havel's comment above, noting the difficulties with searching for historical truth in secret police files: "It seems that things are becoming absurd if secret police colonels are to give out morality certificates."[6]

Because concern with secret police collaborators became so important after 1989, it is worth trying to learn more about how the secret police created the knowledge embodied in their files. That is what I propose to do in the present paper, beginning with my own surveillance file from the Romanian *Securitate*, which I use in an effort to better understand the nature of power in that organization and the regime it served. The project is in an early stage; therefore, my remarks are very preliminary – as well as more personal than is usual for an occasion like this one. Although this was not a topic ever addressed by Oskar Halecki, whose remarkable erudition and breadth of vision this essay celebrates, as a man separated from his native Poland by its communist government he would have readily acknowledged its importance. And despite our considerable differences of approach, mine resembles his in seeking to explore politics in East Central Europe

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5 See WESCHLER, Lawrence: The Velvet Purge: The Trials of Jan Kavan. In: The New Yorker, 19.10.1992, 80.
6 Ibid., 23.

in the context of broader trends – in his case, processes of European state formation and re-formation; in my case, the Cold War, which affected both his life and mine.

I approach this topic hesitantly for this audience, for unlike my colleagues in the U.S., East Germans have been hearing about secret police files and living with their often devastating consequences for over 20 years. Why would you be interested in hearing about this subject from me? Perhaps you will find interesting the implicit comparison between the operations of the *Stasi* and those of the *"Secu"* (now enhanced by your exposure to the novels of Herta Müller), but I hope that beyond this you will find useful my approach to thinking about these files. Instead of using this archive as a repository of "truth" and asking if they got it right, I see the archive as a site for and means of producing power. What operation of power do these files reveal? What regime of truth or knowledge do they assume and attempt to serve, and how is it connected with power? What sort of knowledge-production enterprise do we see in them? What common practices emerge from this body of evidence, and what categories and discursive frames? Although these are questions I cannot answer yet, they are my goal.[7] My method will be to use my own file as a set of field notes, generated by *Securitate* officers (*"securişti"*) concerning an ethnographic object they have produced: a US spy. From their field notes I plan to inspect how they envision that object, the categories in terms of which they examine it, their approach to the world in which they place it. Just as they once read and sought to interpret my field notes (which they photographed), so I now read and seek to interpret theirs. The *Secu* and I mirror one another's activity: they tried to decipher my meanings, my pseudonyms, my codes, and now I do the same with theirs.

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7   A similar approach is found in Cristina Vatulescu's book about *Securitate* files: "The verbal portrait of the subject painted in the files tells us much more about the police itself than about the subject." VATULESCU, Cristina: Police Aesthetics. Literature, Film, and Secret Police in Soviet Times. Stanford/CA 2010, 191.

Before I continue, I should briefly set the stage. I begin in the early 1970s, as the thaw of détente in the Cold War got under way. Although scholarly exchanges between the Soviet bloc and the US had existed on a small scale since the late 1950s, they now began to expand; the atmosphere was one of possibility and dialogue, despite the predominant totalitarian imagery. The communist leadership in Romania, in particular, was then emerging as the most open of the socialist countries, especially after Ceaușescu denounced the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Everywhere else there had been riots and protests or else delicate changes in policy that made Communist Party leaders resistant to social research; even Yugoslavia was beginning to close down, in anticipation of Tito's death. By contrast, Romania welcomed researchers, presenting an image of openness that persisted well into my fieldwork. Only Ceaușescu's subsequent evolution justifies our seeing his regime as an unusually oppressive one – an image amply sustained by my files.

I went there in 1973, one of the first US anthropologists to do so. In choosing Eastern Europe, I was simply curious about what life was like in a communist country; I chose Romania because I could work there better than elsewhere. For my project I planned a study of folklore, thinking it would be a safe topic, but as a "pioneer" I knew practically nothing about the country. Thus, the *Securitate* and I faced one another as novices: they had little experience with anthropologists, I little experience with Romania. Between 1973 and 1988 I spent a total of 39 months there conducting ethnographic and library research: in 1973–74, mostly in a Transylvanian village called Aurel Vlaicu in Hunedoara county; in 1979–80, divided between Vlaicu and the city of Cluj; in 1984–85, mostly in Cluj; and in 1987 and 1988, divided among Cluj, Vlaicu, and the city of Iași in Moldavia. Occasionally I went to Bucharest to send my field notes home through the diplomatic mail service of the US Embassy, as did all US researchers at that time. Therefore, my *Securitate* file covers the period from Romania's most open to its most oppressive, as well as the country's three major regions and both urban and rural locations. The file documents all of these tho-