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**NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PITESTI RE-EDUCATION
EXPERIMENT FILE IN THE COMMUNIST ROMANIA (1949-1951).
CASE OF IOSIF FUCHS**

Abstract: The phenomenon of Pitesti Re-education during communist Romania – from 1949 to 1951 – has made a lot of ink to flow and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon. We are aware that there is a long list of questions unanswered or unsatisfactorily handled. Starting from the testimonies of survivors who make mentions about certain people less known who played an important and suspicious role in re-education, the name of Iosif Fuchs has caught up our attention in particular. Our text introduces us to his prison time circumstances, pointing out to many elements that are extremely intriguing, thus suggesting the importance of this individual and the consistency of the role he played within this phenomenon. What type of missions did he have, how he accomplished them, what were his activity results and the role he played within this phenomenon can only be guessed at, with future research hoping to bring further clarification.

Keywords: communism; re-education; Pitesti; Securitate; Iosif Fuchs.

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The phenomenon of Pitesti Re-education during communist Romania has made a lot of ink to flow and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon. A rich list of reference books¹ has been assembled so far – having even started prior to 1990 with several volumes published in exile, completed with thorough studies of dedicated researchers². Details on this experiment are well supplied, leading to a

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¹See the list compiled by Pitesti Prison Memorial, available at <https://pitestiprison.org/mip--resurse.html>.

² See, firstly, the volumes by Mircea Stănescu: *Procesele Reeducării (1952-1960)* (Bucharest: ‚Memoria’ Cultural Foundation Publishing House, 2008); *Reeducarea în România comunistă (1945-1952). Aiud, Suceava, Pitești, Brașov* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2010); *Reeducarea în România comunistă (1948-1955). Târgșor, Gherla* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2010); *Reeducarea în România comunistă (1948-1955): Târgu-Ocna, Ocnele Mari, Canalul Dunăre-Marea Neagră* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2012);

good understanding of the stages, mechanisms and specifics, knowledge of the victims and the torturers – more so about the ones in the limelight and to a lesser extent about the ones in the shade. Even so, there are still questions left unanswered or whose explanations are not satisfactory. We are not going to dwell on it, however we will reiterate our belief that we are still far off from discovering and understanding all the sides and twists of this phenomenon so intricate and equally sensitive, convoluted and conniving. Starting from the testimonies of survivors, who brings up the existence of less known individuals who would have played a decisive and disreputable concurrently, a name has drawn our attention in particular. He is Iosif Fuchs.³

The memory of the former detainees in Pitesti does not add too much to his portrait. He is always associated with another inmate, Ioan Steier, as they are both introduced in bulk as Zionist Jews convicted for illegal border crossing, guard duty, members of Turcanu group, enforcers and torturers both at Pitesti⁴ and at the Canal⁵. Either way, their involvement with the re-educated people did not follow their own re-education, they had not been beaten or pressured in any way to take this step, they had done any disclosure as there was nothing to disclose. At the Canal, Fuchs had been granted certain favors, as far as the right to conjugal visits⁶. Even so, the attitude towards Iosif Fuchs – who is our main topic in this article – is bisect. For instance, a former convict is rather puzzled by the fact he had joined the group of

Documentele Reeducării (I) (Bacău: Vicovia Publishing House, 2013); *Documentele Reeducării (II)* (Bacău: Vicovia Publishing House, 2018).

³ In the memoirist documents or works, the name is often spelled Fux, Fuchs, Fuks, Iosif or Josef. We decided to use the official spelling, which is Iosif Fuchs. The same for Ioan Steier, who often shows as Staier, Stainer, Staer sau Steyer.

⁴ Grigore Dumitrescu, *Demascarea* (Munich, 1978), 41.

⁵ Cezar Zugravu, *Dictatura. O tragedie românească* (Iași: TipoMoldova Publishing House, 2005), 249. „[...]re-educated students in Pitesti, both normators and very active in the Peninsula camp; they participated in all the beatings and tortures conducted by Chirion, Bogdănescu and Enăchescu in the camps of re-educated students no. 13 and 14; along with their henchmen, Fuchs and Steier had their hands in tens of broken heads and hundreds of broken ribs of the unfortunate who had the bad chance to fall into their hands (to be read, paws). Their deeds should not be prescribed, either, for this couple of individuals (International laws regarding crimes against humanity never prescribe)“.

⁶ Teodor Mihadaș, *Pe muntele Ebal* (Cluj: CLVSIVM Publishing House, 1990), 205-206. „[...] To the ones placing themselves on the good work record, namely most disciplined, devoted, trustworthy, were granted the favor of conjugal visit, which was a right to their wife's body right there, in the colony. [...] Then Fox, the Jew, followed – since he was single, he called a former girlfriend from Bucharest who came right away. [...] The friendship between the political activist and Fux was serious and solid“.

torturers⁷, while another one portrait him as the instructor in the Turcanu's team, in the beginning, until re-education started running⁸. Another testimony somehow backs up the statement, saying that Fuchs and Steier were front and center in Pitesti and similarly in the Peninsula-Valea Neagră⁹. Last, but not least, another survivor is even more outright: „*In prison in Pitești, two young Jews turned up, first-hand torturers, who had a suspicious role. They were FUX and STAIER (or STAINER). A few things are known about them. Nevertheless, it is quite enough to place them in the ranks of the organizers of the massacre. [...] Both of them had been convicted lightly, for an illegal frontier crossing. It is not a sure thing which one divulged to the other detainees in Oradea prison that the re-education of students was about to start in Pitesti prison. This reveal was made before the 'testing the waters' done by Securitate with me and other students, at the end of the investigations in 1948. These young Jews were supposed to look over Turcanu. To make sure all the hellish methods students were subjected to were well implemented.*“¹⁰.

The archive documents, researched and published, had not even to this day shed light on the role played by Fuchs. During the investigations and trials following the abortion of the action, the moment he joined the team of torturers¹¹ is mentioned, he is depicted as one of the „elite“¹², member of the committees of re-education¹³; it is emphasized that he had been in close connection with the

⁷Dumitrescu, *Demascarea*, 41. „[...] Once I arrived in my spot and taking my imposed position, I see in great wonder that Fuchs and Miulescu joined Turcanu's team. When and how this happened, I cannot comprehend! That must have been during those ten minutes when I was in the bathroom..... or maybe during the night, after Serban had killed himself“.

⁸ The statement belongs to Octavian Tomuță, who elaborated on this topic during a show on the national television, on the occasion of publication of *Memorialul ororii. Documente ale procesului reeducării din închisorile Pitesti*, Gherla volume. The show in 1995 was called „În fața dumneavoastră“, producer Vartan Arachelian.

⁹ Nicolae Călinescu, *Sisteme și procese de brainwashing în România comunistă* (Bucharest: Gama Publishing House, 1998), 33.

¹⁰Octavian Voinea, *Masacrarea studențimii române în închisorile de la Pitesti*, Gherla și Aiud, testimonies written by Gheorghe Andreica (Bucharest: Majadahonda Publishing House, 1996), 58.

¹¹ F.a., *Memorialul ororii. Documente ale procesului reeducării din închisorile Pitesti*, Gherla (Bucharest: Vremea Publishing House, 1995): 359. Deposition of Nutti Pătrășcanu on 31.08.1953. He says, among other things: „[...] In the evening of 31st of December 1949, with no further talking, so there will be no waste of time, as Turcanu says, following an incident with inmate Angelescu, Țurcanu starts the beating that had become common practice and in which I am fully involved [...] That night, I met Staer Ion, former party member who did not understand what was going on in there. Țurcanu explained everything to him and picked him and another Jew, Fuchs, to join his group“.

¹²*Memorialul ororii*, 367.

¹³*Memorialul ororii*, p. 444. Statement of Cornel Pop on 10.06.1953.

administration at the Canal¹⁴. The most interesting information is that he was not beaten on orders from Țurcanu, as he did not wish to arise any suspicion of anti-semitism, given that everything was meant to be conspired.¹⁵ We will not go into details of conspiracy and exposure of the action of the party and Securitate, just to name two variants. The former belongs to the survivors, and is confirmed by a substantial documentary evidence – communists organized everything and then tried to blame it on the inmates, making up a legionary conspiracy that wanted to compromise the regime. The latter comes from Securitate and it was recently revisited by a (small) part of the historiography of the topic. According to this, the inmates – mainly legionars – the ringleaders, fought and tortured one another, as everything was based on the cult of violence and revenge. No comments here. What is certain is that all the information on Fuchs, as well as his ethnicity – a particular case at Pitesti, where most inmates were legionaries, made us initiate more thorough research of his case.

Born in Sighet, on 18th of October 1920, he graduated high school and then he was subject to compulsory labor in the Hungarian special detachments. In 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz, went through more German labor camps and was released in Dachau in the spring of 1945. Coming back to Romania, he lived with one of his sisters in Oradea and enrolled in Politehnica University of Bucharest.

In August 1948, a large number of Securitate officers from Oradea got off the plane at the local airport – based on some background information – and arrested a group of 7 people¹⁶. The initial accusation were of attempted smuggling, where the group was intending to leave the country in a T.A.R.S. Douglas airplane, after a deal with the pilot who was supposed to change the course, with the final destination in Salzburg¹⁷. Everyone was searched and they all were found in possession of foreign currency and various goods (mainly expensive jewelery); for Fuchs, he had RON 5,000 and a gold watch evaluated at RON 25,000, while his fiance had personal belongings in the amount of RON 33,200¹⁸.

In a first statement, given the day after his arrest, Iosif Fuchs mentions that he accepted Nicolae Kassirer's idea – the initiator of the action – to join the attempt

¹⁴*Memorialul ororii*, 490. Statement of Maximilian Sobolevski on 15.10.1953.

¹⁵ Alin Mureșan, *Pitesti. Cronica unei sinucideri asistate* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2010), 185.

¹⁶ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. II. Table with the arrested people in the file, detained on 17.08.1948. They were Kassirer Nicolae, Wald Ferdinand, Nusbaum Eugen, HausmanFrimi, Fuchs Iosif, Nusbaum Magdalena and Kassirer Rozalia. Hausman Frimi was Iosif Fuchs's fiancée.

¹⁷A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 70. Minutes on 18.08.1948.

¹⁸A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 71.

of leaving the country, due to the fact that his family was against his plans to marry Hausman Frimi. At the same time, he confesses to have been given to the organizer the amount of RON 180,000, to start with, and then it was raised to RON 272,000 – for him, his fiancée and her sister, out of the total of RON 1,000,000 that needed to be collected to pay as much as the pilot had demanded. He ended his first interrogation by justifying the large sums of money as being received from his brother, Zoltan Fuchs. He insisted on this idea of deciding to leave the country because he had been denied a passport¹⁹ in 1947. Other statements or interrogation minutes, signed by Fuchs during the inquiry that continued until October while he was detained in the Penitentiary in Oradea, do not bring any essential elements. The entire group was prosecuted – Iosif Fuchs was sentenced to 8 years of correctional prison for attempt of illegal border crossing, 1 year of correctional prison for attempt of exporting foreign currency and 6 months of correctional prison for the attempt of customs smuggling, where he was to serve the longest sentence²⁰. On the occasion of the appeal in January 1949, he was the only one in the group to have his sentence reduced to 3 years of correctional prison, as the initial sentences were maintained²¹.

He was first transferred to the penitentiary in Pitesti and ended up at the Canal in June 1950, released on 1st of June 1951²², which means he did 2 and a half months less than the three years of his sentence. So far, nothing is out of the ordinary – except for the reduction of sentence during the appeal, it seems a normal concentrationary course. Upon a closer examination, there are however more elements raising questions, if taken individually. We will introduce them in the chronological order, with our comments.

We are taking note, thereby, about the interrogation and incarceration of Fuchs at the penitentiary in Oradea, at the time where the head of the local

¹⁹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 117-118. Deposition on 18.08.1948.

²⁰ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 231-232. Excerpt of the Court resolution no. 593 on 23.10.1948. The other defendants were convicted, as follows: Kassirer Nicolae – 12 years of hard labor; Wald Ferdinand – 15 years of hard labor; Nusbaum Eugen – 10 years of hard labor; Kassirer Rozalia, Nusbaum Magdalena and Hausman Frimi – 3 years of correctional prison; Davidovits Ștefan – 1 year of correctional prison, while Hausman Ella (Frimi's sister); Fuchs Ferdinand (Iosif Fuchs' brother); Szedlacsek Terezia (Iosif Fuchs's sister); Kertesz Ladislau; Pollak Joel; Friedman Emeric, Gerendas Ludovic and Nagy Iuliana were exonerated.

²¹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 213-224. Resolution no. 384/949 on 17.01.1949 of the Supreme Court, Criminal Division.

²² According to the criminal records files in the Archives of the National Administration of Penitentiaries (hereinafter called A.A.N.P.), available at <https://www.iicmer.ro/fise-matricole-nou/?drawer=Fise%20matricole%20penale%20-%20Detinuti%20politici>.

Securitate was colonel Ludovic Czeller²³. While Fuchs was leaving to Pitesti, Czeller was moving to Bucharest, to occupy an important position at the Directorate of Prisons, with a full involvement inclusively in the re-education at Pitesti. The matter is corroborated with another information, more exactly a non-dated document from the same timeframe. Fuchs's transfer sheet – after the sentencing, to another place where he was supposed to serve his punishment – was initially filled out with Constanta as the destination and the reason for transfer, 'for works', which means he was meant to go to one of the colonies of the Canal. A mysterious hand crossed the text with a line, changing the destination 'to Pitesti, acc. to Dir.'s order. 2213/949'²⁴. All we can is to assume a superior intervention, whose interest was for Fuchs to go to Pitesti.

Here is clue, in the form of correspondence between Securitate in Bucharest and the Regional Directorate in Oradea, initiated by Gavrilă Birtaş²⁵ himself – another individual who was about to play a role in the organization of re-education, in which there was a request for information about Fuchs' status even since January 1949²⁶. You cannot rule out the fact that the relatives of the freshly convicted to

²³ Ludovic Czeller (1896-1953), lathe operator, communist since 1930, arrested in the inter-war period for communist activity. Expelled from PCdR in 1935, due to being suspected of cooperating with Securitate. Chief-commissar at Police headquarters in Oradea (1.01.1945-4.03.1946); Chief-commissar at Police headquarters in Sighet (4.03.1946-5.09.1946); Chief-commissar (5.09.1946-24.07.1947), Quaestor (24.07.1947-1.04.1948) and Chief inspector of the Securitate Regional Inspectorate in Oradea/Regional Directorate of Securitate in Oradea (1.04.1948-31.05.1950). In the summer of 1950, he was transferred to D.G.P., as being the head of the Control Body of D.G.P.C.U.M. (11.08.1950-3.06.1952). Strongly involved in Pitesti type re-education, he killed himself on 3rd of June 1952.

²⁴ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 240. Transfer sheet in the name of Iosif Fuchs, drafted at Oradea penitentiary, non-dated.

²⁵ Gavrilă Birtaş (1905-?), trainee carpenter, communist with illegal activity since 1922, convicted during the inter-war period. Between 193 and 1933, he attended the Lenin School in Moscow. He was co-opted by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of P.C.d.R. He joined the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1946, and he was the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Securitate in Oradea Mare, employed by D.G.S.P. in 1948, in the position of director. After 1952, he was sidelined and went back to Securitate in Oradea, then he occupied the position of director of the Control Body in the Minister of the Land Management. For further details, also see Mircea Stănescu, *Destine în nomenclatura comunistă: Gavrilă și Eva Birtaş*, text available at <http://mircea-stanescu.blogspot.com/2010/11/destine-in-nomenclatura-comunista.html>.

²⁶ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 228. Telegram from 22.01.1949. It might have been an intervention conducted by the family to Bucharest authorities - Birtaş was informed that the Fuchs had been at Auschwitz, but their sister was spared deportation because she was married to a Christian man. The solicitation to Securitate in Oradea was ending with these words: „[...] *I shall be given in 3 days a detailed report about the*

have met Birtas (maybe Czeller, too), considering that he had been the head of the local Securitate between 1946 and 1948. The reply came in 3 days, providing details on the marital status of the family members, while including a much more interesting issue about Zoltan Fuchs, the older brother, who has been a major in the Soviet army in Prague²⁷. The way it is formulated does not help us to understand whether he was a former major, current major, whether in Prague or in Romania at the time of the report being drawn up.

Even sentenced to 3 years only, with the condemnation to expire in 1951, it seems that steps were taken to release Fuchs much before this time limit. In July 1950, the same Gavrilă Birtaş was requesting from the same Securitate in Oradea complete information about the inmate for the time he has spent in the local penitentiary and also the approval of this institution in regard to the early release.²⁸ A few days later, Oradea will be asking about the opinion of Securitate Pitesti in this matter²⁹. We have not identified a reply from Pitesti in the archive file, while Oradea seems to avoid assuming the liability, hinting that the Regional Directorate in Constanta should have the final word, as the detainee was incarcerated at the Canal at that time³⁰. Or, the latter will reply in September, stating that the resolution on the release was not favourable, „since the political activity in the past was not accounted for.”³¹

For now, everything goes silent about the issue of the early release, yet another element both intriguing and strange comes up, considering the lack of finality. Mid-September 1950, the same Gavrilă Birtaş warns the Securitate in Constanta, more precisely major Nicolae Doicaru³², that he is going to sent an

things that happened and also about the Missus and his brother. Ss. Col. Of Securitate Gavrilă Birtaş“.

²⁷A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 1, f. 215. Telegram of the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Oradea to General Directorate of Securitate in Bucharest, addressed to comrade col. Gavrilă Birtaş, signed by lt. col. of Securitate Ludovic Czeller.

²⁸A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 244. Telegram of the General Directorate of Securitate to the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Oradea on 15.07.1950.

²⁹A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 245. Telegram of the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Oradea to the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Pitesti on 18.07.1950.

³⁰ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 247. Telegram of the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Oradea to the General Directorate of Securitate on 9.08.1950.

³¹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 249. Telegram of the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Constanța to the General Directorate of Securitate on 8.09.1950.

³² Nicolae Doicaru (1922-1990), commissar of Securitate since 1945, head of the Securitate Inspectorate Constanța since 1948, Securitate captain since 1948, Head of the Regional Directorate of Securitate in Constanța, since 1949. Deputy of D.I.E. Director since 1955 and Head of Directorate I – Foreign Affairs in Securitate, starting with 1959. Deputy of the minister of internal affairs and head of D.I.E., since 1972. Discharged in 1978, after Ion

information note about Iosif Fuchs and Ioan Steier, and asks to be answered in a report as complete as possible upon the facts herein included, as ,this document has been asked by higher ranks.³³ The answer could not be located in the archive, yet another document seems to clear up this issue, at least partly. ,[...]Steier Ioan and Fuchs Iosif, as having been recruited as informers by the intelligence service in the colonies, were placed in a brigade of legionaries, to obtain inside information from those people. The moment the legionaries found out that they were Jews, they started beating them. Since D.R.S.P. Constanta had held information prior to our report about the incidents, they contacted the administrative bodies of the colony to move them into another brigade of political convicts. At the same time, they also made known to the intelligence service in the colony not to proceed incorrectly with recruiting that will not bring any result to the information works. We recommend indicating the case to the General Directorate of Prisons, so that measures should be consequently taken, for the reason that these mistakes in the information work not only miss their purpose but also they create unhealthy states of mind among population³⁴.

A few comments are quite mandatory here. Firstly, we are not at all aware of any resentment or a legionary action in the communist prisons against the convicts of a Jewish ethnicity. Nicolae Steinhardt himself mentions otherwise, support and outreach³⁵. For the case at hand, it is more about the quality of the two collaborators and informers of the administration. Even so, the issue is rather strange, when considering that Fuchs and Steier were the leaders of re-education at the Canal, given their well-known relation with the administration, hence the impossibility to place them in a barrack conspired manner, with certain missions. Moreover, Fuchs had been to Auschwitz and was wearing a tattoo on his right arm, an element that could not be hidden to the sight of the other inmates³⁶. It is probable that the document, which suggests the start of an internal investigation, considers the relation between Securitate, Administration of Prisons (and of the colony, in particular) and the Department of Inspections. A few handwritten mentions on the

Mihai Pacepa's fled the country. He died in suspicious circumstances (suicide is the official version) during a hunting party in 1990, shortly after being elected first counsellor for Gelu Voican-Voiculescu in the F.S.N. government.

³³ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 257. Telegram from 15.09.1950. Information note being referred to does not exist in the archive file.

³⁴ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 254. Note from 9.10.1950, not signed, which does not mention either the sender or the recipient.

³⁵ Nicolae Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii* (Publishing House of Rohia Monastery, 2005),141.

³⁶According to the criminal records file of A.A.N.P., which mentions in the ,Particularities' column: „tattoo on left arm A4343, a number from Auschwitz labour camps“.

edge of the document refer to Tudor Sepeanu³⁷, but its degradation makes these passages illegible. The mystery thickens also since the archive file does not include any other documents to elucidate the route of the investigation for this topic.

So far, there are all these puzzling actions of Securitate in regard to Fuchs' hypothetical early release to which his family's will add in October 1950.

In a joint statement, his brother and his brother-in-law – Fuchs Ferdinand and Szedlacsek Iosif – assume moral and material liability in case the early release is approved, underlining that it will be at the discretion of the authorities to allow him to resume his studies or to be in employment³⁸. A few days later, Fuchs' sister, Tereza Szedlacsek, also intervenes by requesting from the commander of the colony where her brother was detained to hand over the release application, *herein included, so that she can sign it by her own hand and, after that, please be willing to submit it for resolution to the competent authorities.*³⁹ In spite of the covert interventions, we can only guess at, it is interesting that commander Zamfirescu deny the application, for the reason that the inmate was being punished for insubordination⁴⁰.

Gavrilă Birtaş insists, by requiring urgently from Securitate in Constanta a report concerning the conclusion on the early release⁴¹. The reply does not take too long and, this time, it is favourable⁴². It is quite strange that Fuchs signed a petition

³⁷Tudor Sepeanu (1914-?), high school graduate, studies at law school interrupted at University of Bucharest, graduate of Cavalry Officers School in Târgoviște, in 1938. Employed at the Minister of Internal Affairs, after 1945, former head of the Internal Policies Bureau in the General Directorate of Securitate Police (May –September 1946), director of the Judicial Police with the Prefect's Office of Bucharest (September 1946- March 1948), head of the Securitate Inspectorate of Bucharest (March – September 1948), head of the Directorate of Securitate of Bucharest (September 1948- January 1950). Between January 1950 and March 1951, he was General Inspector of the Inspections Department of DGP, in charge with the information work in penitentiaries. One of the main organizers of re-education in the prisons of that time, mainly in Pitesti, Gherla, Târgu Ocna, Ocnele Mari and Canal. Arrested in 1953, he was sentenced in 1957 to 8 years of forced labor, as having been involved in the process of the Internal Affairs officers responsible for the re-education of the political detainees. He was pardoned and discharged on 13.11.1957, according to the criminal records files of A.A.N.P. For further details, also see Mihai Burcea, Marius Stan, Mihail Bumbuş, *Dicţionarul ofiţerilor şi angajaţilor civili ai Direcţiei Generale a Penitenciarelor. Aparatul Central (1948-1989)* (Iaşi: Polirom Publishing House, 2009), 406-413, as well as Mureşan, *Pitesti. Cronica unei sinucideri asistate*, 274-279.

³⁸ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 209. Statement signed on 25.10.1950 in front of a Notary Public in Oradea.

³⁹A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 189. Application from 30.10.1950, annotated by hand by commander Zamfirescu.

⁴⁰A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 189.

⁴¹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 250. Note from 22.11.1950.

⁴² A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 251. Note from 5.12.1950.

at the end of December 1950, requesting a document of good conduct for the time he spent at the penitentiary in Pitesti, to use it for his application for early release. He adds ,[...] *During all the time I was in the penitentiary of Pitesti, from 27.12.1949 to 3.06.1950, I demonstrated an exemplary behaviour in all aspects, I never contravened the regulations laid down by the administration, which I complied with precisely.*⁴³ It is very likely that, a few days later, he will address the application for early release to the administration, documenting his argumentation on a few elements. He reminded them of the reasons for his conviction and of the fact that he had been the only one being granted a reduction of his sentence. '[...] *compared to the other co-defendants, interested in saving their wealth, [...] in relation to the social profile of the other co-defendants, revealed as enemies of the working class, the undersigned was indifferent to any ambition of grabbing goods*'⁴⁴. He presents his social origin as being modest, as the seventh child in a poor yet hard-working family who endured persecution of the bourgeois regime and racial, in the Nazi years. He emphasized the fact that his father was the leader of the workers in Sighet during the proletary revolution in Hungary and he activated underground during high school, on the verge of being arrested for communist activity. He fled Sighet, escaping prison but he was enlisted in a mandatory labour detachment from where he was sent to Auschwitz three years later and to other seven labour camps. Upon his return to Romania, he enrolled in Polyethnic of Bucharest, studying hard to recoup the lost years and managing to reach the top of his class.

He insisted upon the fact that his intention to leave the country was strictly motivated by the love he had for Frimi Hausman and that his family did not agree to this marriage. Finally, he asked the authorities to consider that he was a young man of a modest upbringing, excited about the new regime, that he had been working hard during his detention, both in Oradea, Pitesti and at the Canal and also that he was deported to the labour camp and experienced racial persecution, therefore he requests the approval of the early release application.⁴⁵

Besides the pathos in the document, filled with reasons not at all connected to the legal aspects, at least in the case of his behaviour and ,work' during his detention, we are in possession of the viewpoint of the administration at the Canal,

⁴³ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 208. Handwritten application from 25.12.1950.

⁴⁴ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 211-212. Application for unconditional release, non-dated.

⁴⁵ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 211-212.

which is stupendous. Not only that he did not work⁴⁶ – as we know it, as we are perfectly familiar with the torture and ordeal to which the political detainees were subjected, but in reality *he exposed the malicious elements*, according to an evaluation report issued by the colony Peninsula⁴⁷. Eventually, in May 1951, an internal commission of the camp convenes, comprising a delegate of the court in Constanta, commander Zamfirescu and Toma Chirion⁴⁸ – from the Bureau of Inspections, which gives a favourable answer⁴⁹, and Iosif Fuchs is released after a few days, on 1st of June⁵⁰. It is worth mentioning that his fiancée, Hausman Frimi, was released from the prison in Mislea in March 1951⁵¹, even though her sentence would have ended in October the same year; shortly after that, they got married.

Although why the Securitate was interested in Iosif Fuchs is not quite clear, maybe in the context of the processes of re-education, they will still be inquiring about his life for some years afterwards, more so after seizing the correspondence between his wife and some relatives in Sighet, when they found out that the Fuchses had been in Israel since 1952.

Upon verifying their situation in 1955, it is established they had left *illegally*⁵², as they were not recorded as such at the Bureau of Foreign Citizens of the Militia in Oradea⁵³. It will only be in 1956 when a prosecution file is opened as it is considered they crossed the border illegally and he was labelled as a traitor to his

⁴⁶ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 207. Evaluation report from the colony Peninsula on 22.01.1951. This stipulates as such: *„during his detention in this penitentiary, he has never been given any punishment through labour, thanks to his good conduct“*.

⁴⁷ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 196. Evaluation report, non-dated. Standard document, signed by hand by the commander and the heads of the Bureau of Inspections, Bureau of Education and the Technical Office. The standard formulation stipulates: *„if the individual has adopted the R.P.R regime. “*, and the handwritten addition says: *„he exposed the malicious elements“*.

⁴⁸ Toma Chirion (1925-?), Securitate lieutenant, political officer in many colonies at the Canal.

⁴⁹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 190. Report of the Working Staff in the Valea Neagră Peninsula, on 17.05.1951.

⁵⁰ According to the criminal records files of A.A.N.P., available at <https://www.iicmer.ro/fise-matricole-nou/?drawer=Fise%20matricole%20penale%20-%20Detinuti%20politici>.

⁵¹ A.C.N.S.A.S., Criminal Fund, File no. 28327, vol. 2, f. 29. Note of the Court to the Penitentiary in Mislea, on 16.03.1951.

⁵² A.C.N.S.A.S., Informative Fund, File no. 257725, vol. 1, f. 3. Iosif Fuchs' personal chart compiled by the District Directorate of Sighet of the Regional Directorate of Baia Mare in the Minister of Internal Affairs, on 16.12.1955.

⁵³ A.C.N.S.A.S., Informative Fund, File no. 257725, vol. 1, f. 35. Report of the Regional Directorate of M.I.A. in Oradea to the M.I.A. Regional Directorate in Baia Mare, on 23.11.1954.

country. The purpose of the action was to establish the current activity of his relatives and ,document his malicious intentions.’⁵⁴. The action will be dragging on for many years and is closed in 1962, as the authorities ascertain that all Fuchs’ relative in Romania had left the country in the meantime⁵⁵. This is where all the documentary evidence left by this individual in the files of former Securitate ends its trail.

As a conclusion, there are lots of elements confirming the memories of the former political detainees who had gone through re-education, at Pitesti or at the Canal, who described Iosif Fuchs as a person more than questionable. Firstly, the sentence reduction upon appeal is extremely suspicious – as he was the only one in this group to benefit from such clemency and his early release, with the assistance of higher ranks. The involvement in his favour and handling his evolution in the concentration space by some important people, namely Gavrilă Birtaş, Ludovic Czeller or Tudor Sepeanu, is a clear sign that he was an individual of a particular interest. The existence of the mysterious brother, Zoltan Fuchs, officer in the Red Army, can only reinforce the statement. Moreover, we have today the documentary confirmation of the fact that he had placed himself in the group of informants, against the other detainees. His clandestine departure from Romania right after his release, and with the Securitate (at least apparently) not being aware of this action despite their efforts to clear that up, place Iosif Fuchs in the position of a beneficiary of an occult support. All the above suggest the importance of this individual and the consistence of this role in re-education. What role did he play, what mission did he have – if any – and how he accomplished it, we hope to find out in future research studies.

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⁵⁴ A.C.N.S.A.S., Informative Fund, File no. 257725, vol. 1, f. 1-2. Resolution of opening a local prosecution file, on 4.1.1956.

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