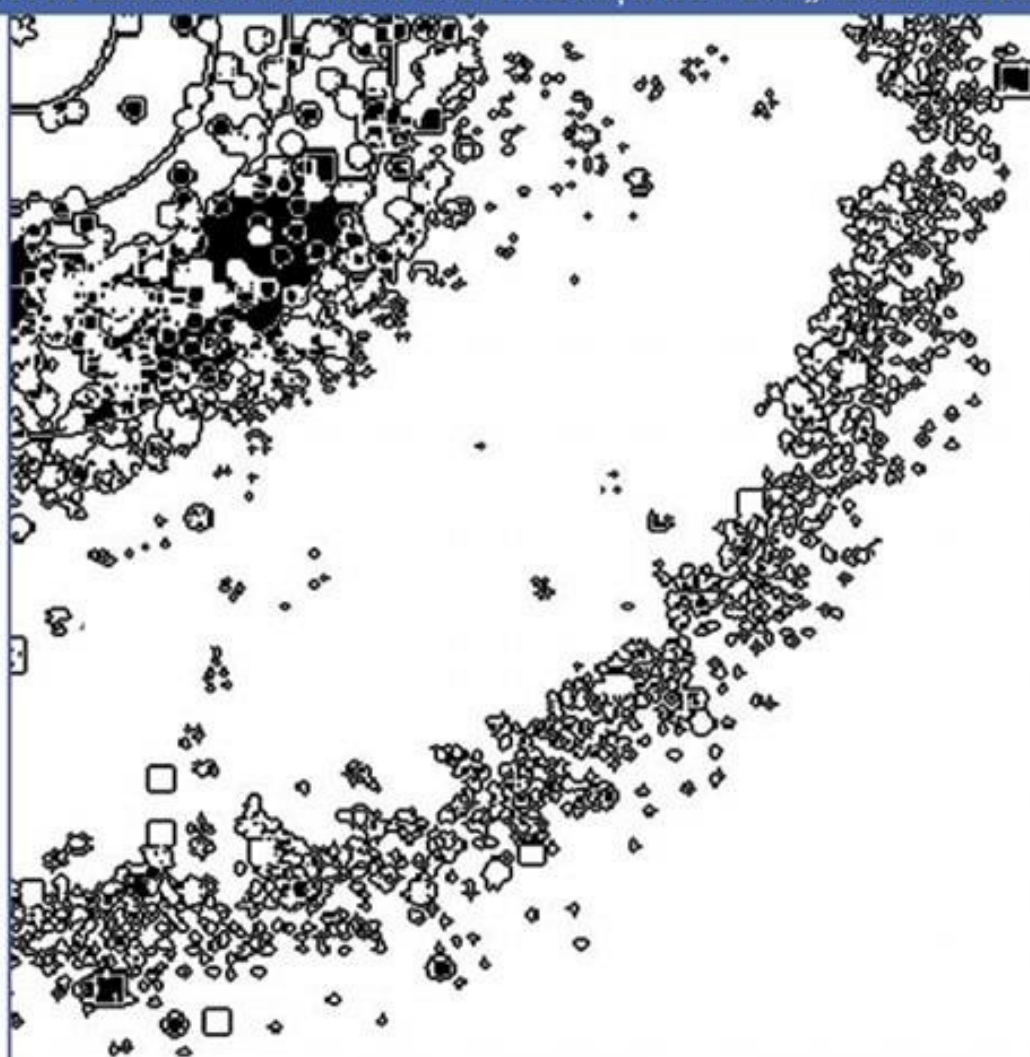


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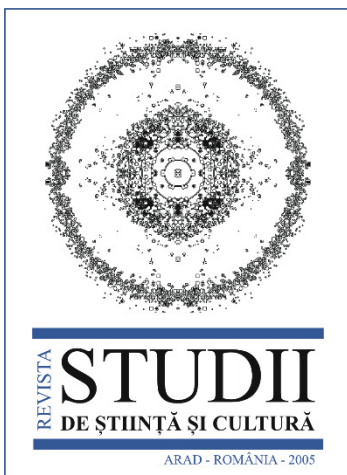
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**LES ROUMAINS DE VOÏVODINE ET L'ÉTAT.
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UN SIÈCLE DE CHANGEMENTS**

**ROMÂNII DIN VOIVODINA ȘI STATUL.
O COMUNITATE GREU DE DEFINIT,
UN SECOL DE SCHIMBĂRI**

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Abstract

The aim of our paper is to evaluate the mobility of the Romanians in Vojvodina during the last one hundred years, and show that the dynamics of this population significantly changed its profile, making the use of both “historical Romanian community” and “Romanian diaspora” unfit to reflect the current state of this community. In the first part of the paper, we present the autochthonous Romanian community of Vojvodina until the First World War, to focus then on the influx of Romanian citizens registered after this date, who merged with the existing population. In the second part, we analyze the state policies of Yugoslavia, and later Serbia, towards their national minorities and foreign citizens in the country, and the effect they had on the Romanians within the borders of the country.

Résumé

L'objectif de notre article est d'évaluer la mobilité des Roumains en Voïvodine au cours des cent dernières années et de montrer que la dynamique de cette population a considérablement modifié son profil, rendant l'utilisation des expressions «communauté

* This paper is the result of Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković's activity at the Institute for Balkan Studies, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, based on the Agreement on the Realization and Financing of Scientific Research during 2022, no. 451-03-68 / 2022-14 from January 17th, 2022.

historique roumaine» et «diaspora roumaine» impropre à refléter l'état actuel de cette communauté. Dans la première partie de l'article, nous présentons la communauté autochtone roumaine de Voïvodine jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale, pour nous concentrer ensuite sur l'afflux des citoyens roumains enregistrés après cette date, qui ont fusionné avec la population existante. Dans la deuxième partie, nous analysons les politiques étatiques de la Yougoslavie, puis de la Serbie, envers les minorités nationales et les citoyens étrangers dans le pays, ainsi que l'effet qu'ils ont eu sur la population roumaine.

Rezumat

Scopul acestui articol este de a evidenția mobilitatea românilor din Voivodina în ultimul secol, arătând că dinamica acestei populații i-a schimbat semnificativ profilul, ceea ce face ca folosirea expresiilor „comunitate istorică românească” sau „diaspora română” să nu reflecte exact statutul și caracteristicile ei actuale. În prima parte a articolului ne vom apleca asupra comunității românești autohtone din Voivodina până la Primul Război Mondial, pentru a ne concentra apoi pe fluxul de cetățeni români înregistrați după această dată, care s-au contopit cu populația existentă. În a doua parte, vom analiza politicile de stat ale Iugoslaviei, și mai târziu ale Serbiei, față de minoritățile naționale și cetățenii străini din țară, precum și efectul pe care acestea le-au avut asupra populației române.

Keywords: *communism, diaspora, migration, Romanian studies, Serbia*

Mots-clés: *communisme, diaspora, migration, études roumaines, Serbie*

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunism, diaspora, migrații, studii românești, Serbia*

I. Preamble. On the usefulness of a concept

Diaspora finds its etymological origin in an Ancient Greek term meaning “scattering, dispersion”, being initially used to refer to citizens of a dominant state who emigrated to colonize a new territory. In time, *diaspora* came to refer to scattered or dispersed populations whose origin lies in a different geographic place, and for a long time it had a very specific meaning: the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their consequent dispersion. Nevertheless, as a unique phenomenon is not useful for social scientists trying to make generalization, the development of diaspora studies prompted the emergence of more fitting and all-encompassing definitions of this central concept.

From the first approaches into this matter and all through the almost three decades long history of the discipline, the quest for a definition of diaspora seems to have been at the forefront of the researchers' interest. From Gabriel Sheffer (SHEFFER, 1986), who tried to build a definition of incipient diaspora based on the idea of labor migration, to Roger Brubakker (BRUBAKKER, 2005), who identified three core elements – dispersion, orientation to a homeland and boundary maintenance – to be included in an overarching definition of diaspora, researchers have offered a wide spectrum of possible definitions. Different approaches have pointed to a wide variety of historical experiences, trajectories and agendas,¹ and consequently to the plurality of definitions of this term, with the tendencies to essentialise diaspora being, in their turn, deconstructed repeatedly.

¹ For more approaches and definitions of diaspora, see: SAFRAN, 1991, ANTHIAS, 1998, KALRA/ KAUR/ HUTNYK, 2005.

Today, due to the overextension of the definition to include a wide range of phenomena, the term *diaspora* became a “catch-all” concept, fashionable in social sciences, but used more or less arbitrarily. Because of its fluid meaning, it is used as an equivalent of *community*, *minority*, *immigrant community* etc. However, when it comes to the Romanians outside the borders of Romania, the academic, political and public discourse in Romania operate the distinction between *historical* or *transborder Romanian communities*, living in the states bordering nowadays Romania, and *Romanian diaspora*, mainly formed during the last 30 years in Western Europe or on other continents.

The Romanians of Vojvodina (or the Romanians from the Serbian Banat, as they are known in Romania) are one of the old Romanian communities outside Romania’s borders, together with the Vlach Romanians of Eastern Serbia and North-Western Bulgaria, Romanians of Ukraine and Romanians of Hungary. However, since the end of the First World War, which marked the division of this region between Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia), until today, the profile of this community has been changing constantly. Namely, during time, waves of population from Romania, more or less numerous, have been settling here and blending with the already existing Romanian population. Researchers called this peculiar type of migration, where the ethnic component is obvious and the people involved capitalize on the shared language, *reverse ethnic migration*, as it takes place from a majority towards a national minority of another country (SOARESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, 2016a). However, the attempt to label the resulting community as *near diaspora*, as opposed to the *distant Romanian diaspora* in Western Europe (SOARESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, 2016b), drawing on Van Hear’s distinction between near diasporas, spread among a number of contiguous territories, and distant diasporas, scattered further afield (VAN HEAR, 1998), might prove rather imprecise and not perfectly fit for this particular community. We argue that, due to the mobility of the population from both sides of the Yugoslav-Romanian border and to the repeated influx of Romanians to this region, this community cannot be easily labeled or categorized today. Neither the well-established and traditionally used *historical Romanian community*, nor the modern *Romanian near diaspora* reflect its current profile and status.

In what follows we present an overview of the autochthonous Romanian community in Vojvodina until the First World War, then focus on the continuous influx of Romanian population after this date, to make a periodization of these migration waves and discuss the reasons that triggered them. It must be emphasized that the population dynamics of the region included almost symmetrical movements of Romanian population in the reverse direction, from Vojvodina to Romania, at different moments in time, which will only passingly be mentioned here. After this, we present and analyze the attitude of Yugoslav (later Serbian) state authorities towards the Romanians in Vojvodina, both during the communist period and after that, to see to what extent minority and naturalization policies influenced the status of this community. Differently framed, in the first part of the paper we consider the issue of the Romanians of Vojvodina from the viewpoint of the Romanian state, which sees them as a transborder national community whose interests Romania must protect, while in the second part, we adopt the viewpoint of the Serbian state, which sees them as a national ethnic minority or foreign citizens, and develops state policies accordingly.

Our data come from several sources. First, we base our study on more than 20 years of field research, participant observation and permanent contacts with the Romanians of Vojvodina. Second, another main data source is a 2015-2016 research project aimed at mapping

the Romanian diaspora in Serbia.² Trying to determine how it was formed, what social groups took part in it, where it was located and what its demographic impact in Serbia was, we revisited several places in Vojvodina to conduct in-depth interviews primarily with Romanian citizens settled there recently. All these interviews were audio recorded and are deposited in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies (DABI) in Belgrade. Third, we rely on archival documents from several archives in Serbia: the Yugoslav Archive in Belgrade, the History Archive in Pančevo and the Archive of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Vladimirovac. Fourth, the paper is based on a multitude of secondary sources, among which our own previous studies on the community.

II. Autochthonous Romanians in Vojvodina

The Romanian community of Vojvodina numbers today about 20,000 members who inhabit around 40 places in the southern and central parts of this geographical area. Historical sources confirm the presence of a Romanian population here in the Middle Ages and during the Ottoman rule over Banat (1552-1716). However, a significant increase of the number of Romanians was noticed during the Habsburg colonization in the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century. During this period, Romanians have inhabited a large number of settlements, but were assimilated in most of the places where they lived together with the Serbs, especially where they were numerically inferior and failed to establish Romanian Orthodox parishes or to open Romanian schools (MĂRAN, 2013).

Christian Orthodox by confession, the Romanians have belonged to the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Sremski Karlovci until the 1865 church division. After this date, they were incorporated into the newly established Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Transylvania and the Banat, based in Sibiu, respectively in the bishoprics of this Metropolitanate, with their headquarters in Caransebeș and Arad. The church division has significantly contributed to the consolidation of Romanian national identity and to the cultural, confessional and economic emancipation of this population. Besides Christian Orthodox, a smaller part of the ethnic Romanians in the Serbian Banat belonged to the Greek-Catholic confession and to various neo-Protestant doctrines (ADAM/ MĂRAN, 2019, p. 42-43).

Of particular importance for preserving the identity of this population was the existence, starting with the 18th century, of Romanian primary schools and higher educational institutions, such as the Grammar School, between 1790 and 1819, and the Serbian-Romanian Clerical Institute, between 1822 and 1867, both in Vršac (Rom. Vârșeț) (ADAM/ MĂRAN, 2019, p. 42). In the last decades of the 19th century, the cultural life intensified due to the set-up of cultural reunions, where the Romanian choirs, *călușari* groups and theater troupes played an important role. This is also the period when the first Romanian publications are printed. Economically, this population was mostly engaged in agriculture and, to a lesser extent, craft and trade. In the decades around the First World War, the first Romanian banks were set up; this stimulated to some extent the economic development of these Banat villages, which, however, remained undeveloped throughout this period (MĂRAN, 2008).

After the Banat was divided between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Romania, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, a series of events and circumstances triggered population displacements, both internally (MICIĆ, 2013), in the two states, and on both sides of the Romanian-Yugoslav frontier. Under the “opting right” established by the Demarcation Protocol signed by the two states in 1920 (POPI, 1976, p. 29), the citizens on both sides of the

² The research project “Romanian diaspora in Serbia” was developed with the financial help of the ERSTE Foundation Fellowship for Social Research 2015/2016, *Diasporas, Nation States and Mainstream Societies in Central and Eastern Europe*.

border were free to choose to cross it and settle in the other country, provided they could make a living, by getting employed as civil servants or securing arable land, in the case of poor peasants.

Starting with this date and until the beginning of the 21st century, the Romanian population in Vojvodina has constantly been supplemented by Romanians from Romania. Each major wave of Romanians from Romania settled in Vojvodina was though preceded or followed by displacement of Vojvodina Romanian autochthonous population, intense population dynamics being characteristic for this border region.³ In what follows we will present the main migration waves from Romania after the First World War.

III. Migration waves of from Romania

III.1 The contractual teachers (1935-1948)

Under the “opting right” mentioned above, but also as a result of the decision of the Yugoslav authorities that all teachers employed in the Romanian schools in Vojvodina had to learn Serbian in one year, most of them left their jobs and moved to Romania. Thus, out of the 105 teachers who worked in these schools during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 72 migrated to Romania, which created many vacancies difficult to fill (POPI, 1976, p. 93). During the 1920s and early 1930s, a series of meetings took place during which the Yugoslav and Romanian authorities sought solutions to the school problem of the minorities on both sides of the border. The result of these intense diplomatic activities was signing the Yugoslav-Romanian School Convention in 1933 (POPI, 1984, p. 302-303), which created conditions for solving these two acute educational problems: Romanian language education in the Yugoslav Banat and Serbo-Croatian language education in the Romanian Banat. One of the main objectives of the Convention was filling in the vacancies, which was solved by employing the so-called *contractual teachers*. More specifically, they were Romanian citizens, teachers who received jobs on the basis of a contract signed with the Yugoslav state, in Romanian language schools in the Yugoslav Banat, and vice versa, Yugoslav citizens employed in Serbo-Croatian schools in the Romanian Banat.

The first group of 17 contractual teachers, Romanian citizens from different regions of Romania, arrived in the Yugoslav Banat on May 25th, 1935, with 29 more teachers to follow on November 23rd, the same year (POPI, 1976, p. 109). In the school year 1935/1936, 47 teachers, citizens of Romania, were working in the Romanian schools of Vojvodina, in addition to 33 native teachers, Yugoslav citizens. The teachers revived the cultural life of the Romanian villages, conducting choirs and fanfares, playing in amateur acting companies etc., but also being involved in the Romanian literary, publicist and scientific activity in Yugoslavia (MĂRAN, 2012, p. 105). Following the opening of the Romanian language section at the High School in Vrșac, in 1934, and at the Teacher Training College in the same city, a year later, Romanian citizens were employed as teachers here as well.

This first wave of Romanian population to settle in Vojvodina after the First World War, though rather small in terms of numbers, had a huge cultural importance in the interwar period, with the teachers also being national activists strongly involved in the cultural life of the villages.⁴

³ The same phenomenon was noticed in Eastern Serbia, with the observation that the migration waves here do not necessarily coincide with those to Vojvodina, because of the different geopolitical status of the region and status of the Vlach Romanian community (for details, see SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, 2016b).

⁴ The contractual teachers working in the Romanian schools in Vojvodina were: Corneliu Andrei, Constantin Arhire, Victoria Arhire, Sima Augustin, Mihai Avramescu, Ion Bălțeanu, Nicolae Băscăanu, Ion Buza, Alexandru Calotă, Alexandru Crișan, Dumitru Ciobanu, Pavel Ciobanu, Ana Cursaru, Gheorghe Damian, Constantin Dascălu, Ioan Dinu, Ștefan Dumireache, Constantin Filimon, Ioan Florea, Constantin Gheorghe, Maria Gherman,

After the Second World War and the instauration of the communist regime in Yugoslavia, the contractual teachers showed a pronounced tendency to return to Romania (MĂRAN, 2008, p. 309). Following the 1948 outbreak of the conflict between Yugoslavia and the states of the Cominform, which also included Romania, the last wave of Romanian teachers left their jobs and returned to Romania, most of them with the families they have formed in Vojvodina. Those who stayed had to give up the Romanian citizenship and became Yugoslav citizens, integrating into the Yugoslav society.⁵

III.2 The students (1970-1989)

Another detectable and quantifiable wave of Romanians settled in Vojvodina was registered during the years of intensified relationships between the communist regimes of the two countries, personified by Josip Broz Tito and Nicolae Ceaușescu. It started in the beginning of the 1970s and lasted until the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, in 1989, and can be termed the students' wave.

Namely, under the agreement on cultural and educational collaboration between Romania and Yugoslavia, signed in 1956, but which came into force only later, following the improvement in political relationships, at the end of the 1960s the first Yugoslav students of Romanian origin started studying at the universities in Romania. 1968/1969 is the academic year when the first Yugoslav student of Romanian origin enrolled in a Bucharest university. The number of students grew by the year, so that in 1978 there were already 150 Yugoslav students in Romania, most of them ethnic Romanians (AJ 320-28-45/1978). Their favorite, and only destination until very late, were the faculties in Bucharest, where they studied medicine, philology, drama, arts, sports, as well as the theological seminaries in Romania.

Many of these students married in Romania and returned home after graduating with their spouses, to settle in Yugoslavia, as the federation was back then a better place, in terms of living standard. Almost as a rule, in most of the couples, the wife was Romanian, while the husband was a Yugoslav citizen. The first such couple came to Vojvodina in 1973. As in communist Romanian passports were held by the police, and prior approval from the authorities was required to obtain the travel document, Romanian citizens marrying foreigners also needed special approval from the Bucharest authorities, a process which could last even one and a half years. After this and the decision to establish their residence in Yugoslavia, they had to give up Romanian citizenship and try to fit into the society of the adoptive state. This was not always easy, especially due to the insufficient knowledge of the Serbian language. Apart from this, all returnees from studies in Romania had to pass a series of exams, in Serbian: Marxism, history

Ileana Gologan, Gheorghe Ionescu, Petru Ionescu, Cornelia Jurca, Nicolae Leonte, Ion Matei, Vasile Maximovici, Ioan Melinescu, Gheorghe Miclean, Iosif Mioc, Ecaterina Opărică, Nicolae Opărică, Aurel Oprea, Nicolae Oprea, Pompiliu Ploieșeanu, Nicolae Polverejan, Dumitru Popescu, Ioan Popescu, Ion Pupezescu, Constantin Rânjălă, Petru Rotche, Ioachim Sboroșteanu, Florian Secu, Gheorghe Stancu, Florea Stănescu, Teodor Șandru, Teodor Șchiopu, Traian Teodorescu, Ecaterina Teofănescu, Teodor Țicu, Marin Udrea, Constantin Ursache, Ion Ursache, Florica Vasiliu, Ioachim Văcărescu, Virgil Vâscu, Stefan Verișan, Marin Voinea, Petru Zaharia, Leonid Zarcuzone (ALMĂJAN, 2010, p. 262). The High School and Teacher Training College in Vrșac employed the following teachers: Ilie Enache, Constanța Loziciu, Ilie Loziciu, George Pălăgeșu, Vioara Pălăgeșu, Plosca Popescu, Nicolae Răducanu, Octavian Ruleanu, Paraschiva Sârbu, Cornelia Vitorovici, Constantin Zamfirescu. Some of them (Ioan Popescu, Aneta Cursaru-Miclean) worked first in Romanian primary schools, then in higher schools.

⁵ From the contractual teachers who stayed in Yugoslavia after 1948, we mention: Mihai Avramescu (1914-1981), teacher in Ečka (Rom. Ecica) and Vladimirovac (Rom. Petrovasâla), later journalist and writer, also choir and orchestra conductor; Teodor Șandru (1912-1993), teacher in Seleuș (Rom. Seleuș) and other villages, also poet; Ion Buza (1915-1999), teacher and then professor at the Teacher-Training College High School in Vrșac; Nicolae Polverejan (1911-1995), teacher and actor of the Romanian Popular Theatre in Vrșac (CHIPURICI, 1995, p. 200-201).

and geography of Yugoslavia etc. Nevertheless, most of the returnees and their Romanian spouses became very appreciated in their fields: medicine, pharmacy, Romanian language education and culture in Vojvodina.

III.3 The small-scale traffickers (1970-1989)

In the same time with the influx of Romanian university graduates, another wave of Romanian population was registered in the border regions of Serbia, namely the owners of the so-called *border traffic passes* or *small-scale traffic passes*. According to the agreement between the government of Socialist Republic of Romania and that of the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia regarding the local border traffic, concluded in Belgrade in 1970, people belonging to the border zone, defined as the region bordering on the state frontier, 20 km deep in both countries, had the right to be issued small-scale traffic passes.⁶ These gave them the possibility to cross the border 12 times during the year, for no longer than 6 day trips, in the border region of the other state. Belonging to the border zone in Romania were 85 places in the counties of Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți, while in Yugoslavia – 75 places in the districts of Čoka, Kikinda, Žitište, Sečanj, Vršac, Kovin, Veliko Gradište, Požarevac, Kučevo, Malo Crniće, Negotin and Majdanpek.

The owners of small-scale traffic passes were practicing a pendulum movement, most of them going abroad and coming back home in the same day, with the complicity of custom officers, who did not stamp the passes, so they could pass the border more times. They were engaged in *suitcase trade* or *shuttle trade*, visible in the 1980s in many Eastern European countries (WALLACE/ STOLA, 2001). Some of these people, using this opportunity not granted to the other inhabitants of already impoverished and secluded Romania, escaped the communist encampment and, via Yugoslavia, reached Western Europe. Others stayed in Yugoslavia for good, as our field interviews testify, settling in Romanian villages or towns in Vojvodina, but also elsewhere.⁷ However, unlike the previous migration waves, this one had a highly irregular and individual character, and mostly went unnoticed and unregistered.

Here we must notice that the Western Romanian frontier, 994 km long, from which 546 km with Yugoslavia, has been also illegally crossed many times, between 1944 and 1989, by Romanians trying to escape the suppressive communist regime (Rom. *frontieriști* “the borderers”). From 1980 until 1989, 16,000 Romanians tried to cross the border, and 12,000 were caught; only in 1988, 400 people were shot on the border between Romania and Yugoslavia (STEINER/ MAGHEȚI, 2009, p. 13), which had become by then one of the best protected, but also one of the bloodiest borders of Europe (more in STAN, 2013).

III.4 The post-communist wave (1989-2007)

After the fall of the Romanian communist regime in December 1989, passport administration and international travel were liberalized. Thereupon, in the first three years after this date, more than 170,000 persons legally left Romania. A big share of rural population of Oltenia remained oriented towards Yugoslavia, and engaged in multiple types of migration, difficult to register (SANDU, 2000, p. 21), following the pre-migration patterns and networks already present in the area, some settling there for good. Those with no financial means to travel to Western Europe were mainly commuting to the neighboring country for seasonal or

⁶ Of the former socialist states, the citizens of Yugoslavia enjoyed a great freedom of international movement, which started as early as the 1960s. By 1977, Yugoslavia had 55 local border traffic agreements with the neighboring countries: 11 with Austria, 10 with Romania, 8 with Hungary, 8 with Bulgaria, 7 with Italy, and 5 with Greece (MIĆOVIĆ, 1977, p. 111).

⁷ The same phenomenon was noticed in Eastern Serbia.

daily jobs in agriculture or on small construction sites. In the first years after the opening of the borders, this destination was particularly attractive, as it did not require a significant financial investment or risk, the Romanian and Vlach Romanian villages were well off due to the substantial remittances and investments of the migrants from Western Europe in their native places, no visa was necessary, and there was no language barrier (SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, 2016b, p. 48). This phenomenon reached very large proportions in Eastern Serbia, mainly in the Vlach Romanian villages, which until 2007 became home to several thousand of Romanian citizens, mainly women, who got married there and established families (SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, 2012, 2016b).

The situation of new Romanian settlers in the Romanian villages of Vojvodina is somehow similar to that in Eastern Serbia, with the observation that the number of people settled here was probably smaller, given that the size of the Romanian community in Vojvodina is considerably smaller than that of Vlach Romanians. This last wave of Romanian citizens settled in Vojvodina is also the most heterogeneous, age- and education-wise. The period of their settling coincided with the breakup of Yugoslavia, the civil wars and the embargo imposed by the international community on the country.

Apart from these migration waves from Romania to Vojvodina, individual crossing of the border and settling in Serbia has been a rule, but did not have a statistical significance and is impossible to document using the tools of sociological or historical research.⁸ After 2007, when Romania joined the European Union and the Romanians could freely travel and work in most of the EU countries, the favorite destinations changed, Serbia being chosen only rarely. Even more, many Romanian citizens settled in Serbia also left the country for Western Europe, with even the Romanian ethnics of Vojvodina now trying to obtain a Romanian passport.

IV. The Romanians in Vojvodina and the state authorities

After Banat's division between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia) and Romania, the Romanians on the Serbian side of the border generally shared the fate of the other Yugoslav citizens. However, there were a few moments in Yugoslavia's history when the fact that they belonged to a national minority had important repercussions on their status and life trajectory. Furthermore, even if from the viewpoint of Romania it is difficult to operate a distinction between the members of this community and to classify them into diaspora or historical community, as we have shown, the Yugoslav, and then Serbian authorities operated with two other important distinctions: Yugoslav citizens members of the Romanian minority, and foreign citizens.

After 1945, when the country was liberated from the Nazi occupation, the new Yugoslav communist authorities were rather distrustful of the Romanian minority population in the Serbian Banat, in light of the relationship between Antonescu's Romania and Hitler's Germany during the war. It is worth mentioning that the first census organized by the Yugoslav authorities after the war, in 1948, offered a figure of 57,006 Romanians living in Vojvodina (MĂRAN, 2008, p. 15). Although the Romanians in Vojvodina as a whole did not actively participate in the establishment and organization of the German occupation system, part of the Romanian intelligentsia and peasantry maintained certain ties with the Germans, which was the main reason of the distrust displayed by Tito's regime. In particular, there were suspicions

⁸ Though not significant statistically, we should mention here the proselyte or missionary migration from Romania. The first Baptist missionary among the Romanians in Vojvodina was Avram Belgrădean, who in 1929 settled in the village of Straža (Rom. Straja), following the example of the Romanian Adventist missionaries from the 1910s and 1920s. These small religious communities had strong and frequent contacts with those in Romania, and settling of believers from one country in the other were not excluded, though the topic has not been thoroughly researched yet (DJURIĆ MILOVANOVIĆ / MĂRAN, 2016).

regarding the attitude of the Romanian intelligentsia and bureaucracy that was engaged in the state service during the war, and their attitude towards the new communist authorities. Therefore, shortly after coming to power in Vojvodina, the new authorities asked for a report on all these individuals, especially of teachers, given the importance they attached to education. Romanians who had collaborated with the occupier were brought before the court, and some were even liquidated; many of those who managed to escape found shelter in Romania or Western Europe. We should mention that one of the political leaders of the Romanians in Vojvodina during the interwar period and during the occupation, Alexandru Butoarcă, lawyer and director of the weekly *Nădejdea* ("Hope") in Vršac, was sentenced in 1950 to six years in prison for his political activity during the occupation period (POPI, 1993, p. 216).

However, the Romanians in Vojvodina were supposed to have the same rights with the other Yugoslav citizens in all respects, at least declaratively. The Law on the Ban of Hate and National, Racial and Confessional Discrimination, adopted by the Chair of the Antifascist Committee for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia on May 24th, 1945, stipulated harsh punishment for discrimination. According to Article 1 of this Law, any form of non-observance of civil rights and granting of privileges to the citizens of the country depending on their national, racial or confessional membership "is punished as a criminal act attempting to violate the principle of equality of peoples and citizens, and the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of the Federative Democratic Yugoslavia, which is one of the main achievements of the struggle for national liberation" (PETRANOVIĆ / ZEČEVIĆ, 1987, p. 184). The enforcement of the law began immediately after its adoption. The National Liberation Committee of the Pančevo District in Southern Banat, for example, by the ordinance of September 6th, 1945, urged subordinate bodies to thoroughly study this law, and "our popular committees, as defenders of this law [...], to fight against the elements that violate this law, especially those who do so through popular power, such as the state official found in official service" (IAP 110-84/1945). Such a policy made it easier for the Romanian minority in Vojvodina to protect itself.

Nevertheless, the repressive measures imposed by the communists upon all richer social strata in the country also affected the Romanian peasants. The compulsory purchase of agricultural products by the state, for example, was a hard hit to the peasantry of Banat, who did not possess the requested quantities (POPOV, 2002). Peasants were hiding their crops to avoid them being taken away, which was one of the forms of resilience against the forced Sovietisation of agriculture. The authorities, in their turn, summoned then the peasants, especially the richer ones, who showed the fiercest resistance, to town halls, where they were subject to interrogations, mistreatment, mockery, arrest (POPI, 1996, p. 100-103). The strong dissatisfaction culminated in the village of Dolovo (Rom. Doloave) near Pančevo, where the peasants attacked the Local People's Committee in 1947. The pressures on the peasantry reached their peak during 1947-1950.

By such methods, the Communist authorities compelled the peasants to join the peasant labor cooperatives. The first cooperative to open in the Romanian villages of Vojvodina was the one in Kuštilj (Rom. Coștei) near Vršac, which was founded in 1947 and was followed by other such cooperatives in all other Romanian settlements. The communist press published a series of propaganda articles, praising the success of the socialist sector and the enthusiasm of the working people. Soon, however, the poor results of these cooperatives became apparent, primarily because the peasants who were forced to join them did not have any motivation. Finally, the peasant labor cooperatives were abolished in 1953.

Another measure which also affected the Romanians in Vojvodina was nationalization. By the decree of December 9th, 1946, of the Ministry of Finance of Yugoslavia, the bank *Luceafărul* ("The evening star") from Vršac, the most powerful financial institution of the Romanians in Vojvodina, was liquidated. Similar institutions shared the same faith. The

Romanian Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia also went through difficult moments, as the agrarian reform left all parishes without large plots of land. Thus, for example, almost 500,000 m² of arable land were taken away in 1946 from the church in Vladimirovac, a village near Pančevo (ABOR 396/1946). Apart from these measures, which had a negative impact on institutions and individuals, there were also positive outcomes of the new policies, such as electrification, the establishment of cultural houses, fire-fighting units and other institutions of public interest.

However, the Communist regime was supported by part of the Romanian intelligentsia from the very beginning, who grasped the opportunity to secure a better social position. Nevertheless, our interlocutors claimed that those who made it out of conviction, out of sincere adherence to communist ideology, were rare. As an argument in this regard, we should mention that both during the interwar and the occupation period, the number of Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) sympathizers among the Romanian population was extremely small. After the war, given Tito's national orientation, many realized that loyalty to the Party brought about privileges, jobs or career advancement. Many of those who during the war had connections with the occupation regime, published articles supporting the Romanian regime of Antonescu or even openly supported the Legionary movement became overnight enthusiastic adherents of Karl Marx's ideology, and eagerly fulfilled the tasks imposed by the YCP. Some of them even became deputies in the new state bodies, from the local to the federal level.⁹

Since the interwar period, the authorities paid particular attention to the foreign nationals on the territory of Yugoslavia. As we have mentioned earlier, the most numerous were the contractual teachers who started coming in 1935 and were employed in the Romanian schools of Vojvodina. After the liberation of Banat, some of these teachers returned to Romania, while others remained, waiting for the new communist authorities to take a decision regarding their status. In the autumn of 1945, the Yugoslav authorities initiated a large-scale registration of all foreign citizens on the territory of the country. At the beginning of September, the Ministry of the Interior sent instructions to all Local People's Committees about the registration of foreign citizens. According to them, each city had to open sections for the control of foreign citizens as soon as possible (IAP 110-88/1945). All foreign nationals had to register at these sections, and the residence permit could not be issued for longer than six months.

The action continued in the coming months. A document issued by the People's Committee of the Pančevo district stated that during the occupation a large number of foreigners, especially from Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia, settled in Vojvodina (IAP 166/1945), among which "there are people of all sorts". It was thus requested to check their position of foreign nationals settled in Yugoslavia before the war and their attitude during the occupation. Provided they were loyal, did not hinder the national interests and the interests of the National Liberation Movement, and had jobs which were useful for the economic recovery of the country, they were allowed to stay. The list of foreign citizens to be drafted by all local government bodies included surname and first name, profession, nationality, year of settling in the country and whether or not they must be repatriated or still allowed to remain in Yugoslavia.

The 1948 Cominform Resolution was a hard blow for the Romanians in Vojvodina who worked for the new state bodies of socialist Yugoslavia, especially because Romania was one of the countries that exerted strong diplomatic and economic pressures on Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Communists organized meetings meant to prove the support of all Yugoslav peoples and nationalities to Tito's regime. On June 5th, 1949 a conference attended by representatives of the Romanians from state bodies, cultural activists and supporters of the Yugoslav

⁹ Such were Traian Flora from Banatsko Novo Selo (Rom. Satu Nou), the president of the Romanian Cultural Union, lawyer Coriolan Lupsici from Pančevo, general secretary of this association, teacher Aurel Trifu from Alibunar and others.

Communist Party took place in Vršac, the main center of the Romanian minority in Yugoslavia. On this occasion, a Resolution was adopted, which categorically rejected the accusations of the Communist regime in Romania.¹⁰ The report on the attitude of the Romanian minority in Yugoslavia towards the Cominform Resolution was read by Aurel Trifu, secretary general of the Union of Cultural-Instructive Societies of Vojvodina, the Romanian section. Such meetings were organized in other places, too. Those who proved their loyalty to the policy pursued by the Central Committee of the YCP maintained their mandates and occupied important positions in the years of the strongest pressures of the Cominform on Yugoslavia. Among them were Aurel Trifu, Nicolae Luca, Petru Lazcu and others. This is also the period when the Yugoslav Communist regime encouraged the establishment of Romanian cultural and educational institutions on the territory of Vojvodina, among which the Romanian High School in Vršac, the Romanian Popular Theater in Vršac, the Romanian Radio Station in Novi Sad etc.

Conversely, sympathizers of the Cominform were accused of betrayal, removed from office and sent to court. Among them there was Traian Flora, president of the Romanian Cultural Union and deputy in the Assembly of the People's Republic of Serbia. In 1950 he was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison, which he spent on the infamous island of Goli Otok, a high-security prison and labor camp for political prisoners. Coriolan Lupșici, a lawyer from Pančevo and representative of the Romanians in the communist state bodies, was sentenced to 10 years in prison, which he also spent on Goli Otok. Both were accused of betrayal and espionage in favor of Teodor Rudenko, former Ambassador of Romania to Belgrade.

The reformist measures taken by the Yugoslav communist authorities during the 1950s improved to a certain extent the position of the country's citizens and limited persecution and arrest. Stalin's death and the restoration of diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the communist countries of the Eastern Bloc also had a positive impact on the status of the Romanian community in Vojvodina, both in terms of living standards, political rights and expressing their national identity.

During the 1970s, Yugoslav state politics dictated that the Romanian citizens settled in Serbia had to give up their citizenship and take the Yugoslav one on. According to our interlocutors who moved to Vojvodina in those years, in spite of all these they have always been looked upon with suspicion by the state. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, during the profound economic, social, political and moral crisis the country found itself in, with elements of anarchy, poor functioning of the rule of law and primitive accumulation of capital, the Romanian citizens in Serbia and Vojvodina could hardly receive the Serbian citizenship. Most of them were rejected without a reason, which brought them into the impossibility to get a permanent job or health insurance.

V. Conclusions

Examining the mobility of the Romanians in Vojvodina during the last century, the changes in the population structure, as well as the processes that triggered them, alongside with the policies designed by the state authorities towards the community, are crucial for understanding the current situation of this population. Only considering the community from an essentially dynamic perspective can we reach valid conclusions. Thus, it becomes obvious that neither the expression *historical Romanian community*, nor *Romanian diaspora* can be used to accurately depict the Romanians living in Vojvodina today, which form a complex community, difficult to label.

¹⁰ *Lumina*, Vârșeț, no. 6/1949, p. 419-422.

Documents confirm the presence of a Romanian population on the territory of nowadays Vojvodina starting with the Middle Ages. However, during the Habsburg colonization of Banat, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the number of Romanians significantly increased. In the 20th century, after the Banat region was divided between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and Romania, a series of events caused displacements of population from one side of the border to the other. Even if the border between the two states has been more or less permeable, depending on the historical circumstances, all throughout the last century, the Romanian population in Vojvodina has been supplemented with Romanians from Romania, the region being characterized by very intense population movements. We have identified several migration waves from Romania during the last century: the contractual teachers (1935-1948), the students (1970-1989), the small-scale traffickers (1970-1989) and the post-communist wave (1989-2007). However, individual, small-scale, irregular migration and fleeing across the border have continually existed, but they have not been statistically significant.

Finally, it must also be said that many of the Romanians in Vojvodina, be they from the older or newer layer of population, emigrated to the countries of Western Europe or to other continents, starting with the second half of the 20th century, sometimes even earlier. For many Romanian citizens who arrived here during the communist regime, Vojvodina was just the first step to the free world.

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