



MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF  
**COMMUNISM**  
TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY



# Newsletter

Winter 2021

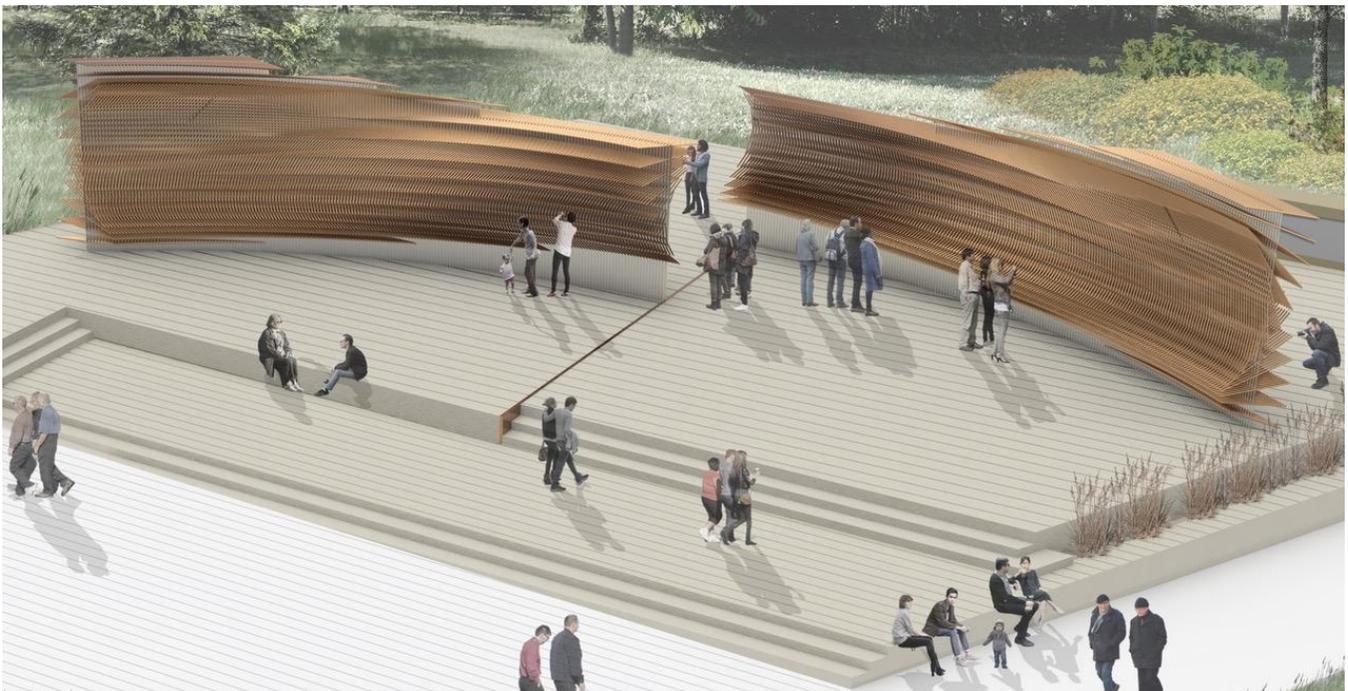
Volume 12, Issue 1

## Project Update

As we reported to you previously, COVID-19 is hampering the progress of the construction of the Memorial. In a recent letter to Tribute to Liberty affirming the Canadian government's commitment to completing the project, Minister of Heritage Steven Guilbeault states the project "is facing unforeseen challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

"The pandemic has had a devastating impact on businesses across the country, which in turn, has affected a number of government projects, the Memorial among them," writes the Minister.

The full letter from Minister Guilbeault including a more detailed project update can be found on the next page.



Artist's rendition of the *Memorial to the Victims of Communism: Canada, a Land of Refuge* currently under construction at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories in Ottawa, Canada.

To : Ludwik Klimkowski

Subject: Memorial to the Victims of Communism: *Canada, a Land of Refuge*

Dear Mr. Klimkowski:

Let me begin by taking the opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year filled with good health, success and prosperity.

I am writing to you foremost to affirm the Department of Canadian Heritage's commitment towards completing the Memorial to the Victims of Communism: *Canada, a Land of Refuge*, which is facing unforeseen challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on businesses across the country, which in turn, has affected a number of government projects, the Memorial among them. As you know, Paul Raff Studio's subcontractor for the artwork fabrication, MAF Industries, did not reopen following the initial spring lockdown.

I understand that Tribute to Liberty and its stakeholders are concerned about the impact these latest challenges have had on the schedule to complete the Memorial. Please be assured that officials at the Department have been working diligently in cooperation with our project implementation partners at the National Capital Commission (NCC) to develop the most practical and timely path forward for the project, while taking into account the various financial and legal implications.

At the same time, the Department has been continuing work on the Wall of Remembrance and secured the support of two historians to review the list of names, groups and events that were provided by Tribute to Liberty. In parallel, the NCC has been working on a number of fronts to ensure that construction can resume quickly once additional funding is secured.

Officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the NCC will continue to work with Tribute to Liberty over the coming months to seek ways to expedite the project, while ensuring that further risks are minimized.

Please accept my best wishes,

Sincerely,



The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P. (*il, lui, he, him*)

## ***History Unhidden*** **Keys, Mikes, Spies – How the Securitate Stole Romania’s Privacy**

Written by Marcel Gascón Barberá published with permission from [BalkanInsight](#)

A peek into the files of the infamous old Communist secret police casts chilling light on the way they turned an entire country into a big open prison.

The almost unlimited control that the Securitate exerted over every single segment of Romania’s population before the fall of the Communist regime is commonly known among those even slightly familiar with life on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

For those who did not experience it, however, it is hard to imagine the levels of fear and oppression generated by an army of secret police agents that peaked at 500,000 informants out of a population of 22 million.

A good way of getting closer to understanding it is having a look at the formidable archives that Romania’s communist secret police produced since it was established in 1948.



Files of the Romanian Securitate.

Despite initial resistance from most politicians and from the old Securitate cadres that remained in charge of the post-Communist secret service, democratic Romania has now given the public access to a significant part of the archive.

It has done so through the Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, CNSAS. Established in 1999, the council gradually receives files previously held in the custody of the secret service, and makes sure they are

made available to those who were spied on by the Securitate but also to professionals and members of the public who show a legitimate interest.

“The CNSAS is in charge of a volume of files that would stretch for 26 kilometres, if we were to put them in line,” explains Ionel Ivascu, director of the archive facilities on the outskirts of Bucharest.

The millions of informative notes kept at the warehouse, Ivascu remarks, offer a unique and rich picture of all aspects of life in Romania between the late-1940s and December 1989, when Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was executed and the regime’s secret police abolished.

Created in 1948 by Romania’s new Soviet-backed rulers to apply the regime of terror that would keep the country Communist for more than four decades, the Securitate started its sinister mission with brutal resolve.

Numerous political detainees died in its prisons or while being subjected to forced labour. The Securitate was also responsible for the so-called Pitesti Experiment, whereby prisoners were forced to torture each other, to shatter their consciences and break any bonds or mutual loyalty.

The death of Stalin in 1953, and the rise of Ceausescu to power in 1965, changed the repressive face of the Romanian regime and the nature of its main agent.

Obsessed with earning a better image in the West, this apparatchik with nationalist views and a patent dislike for Moscow declared the country free of political prisoners and put an end to the executions, forced labour and other forms of systematic state violence, now deemed incompatible with the image he wanted to project abroad.

“In this period [the 1970s and 1980s], social control replaced brute repression,” historian and CNSAS archives researcher Adrian Cioflanca told a conference about the Securitate surveillance on the Jewish doctor and intellectual Nicolae Cajal and his family.

As an influential Jewish Romanian with ties to foreigners and contacts abroad, Cajal was monitored “every minute” by agents who followed him and his relatives as well as through electronic recordings and the reports of some of those recruited as informers within the medical profession and the Jewish community.

## Life under the Securitate's lens

Born in Transylvania in 1914, the democratic politician Corneliu Coposu spent most of his adult life under the close watch of the Communist secret police, having first known detention before World War II under the regime of King Carol II.

Coposu rose to prominence as the young secretary of the National Peasant Party leader, Iuliu Maniu, who died in the infamous Sighet prison in 1953 after six years of detention and forced labour under the same regime that kept Coposu himself in jail for more than 15 years. Coposu's wife, Arlette, died of cancer in 1966, after spending 14 years in detention.

Coposu and his wife were subjected to the "brute force" repression that defined the Communist regime during its first years. Later, he was to suffer under the "social control" era that began to take shape after his release in 1964 following two years of forced residence near the eastern city of Braila.

His file at the CNSAS is chilling testimony to an ordeal that started in 1947 with his arrest for carrying out "hostile actions" against the new authorities and producing "counter-revolutionary" content.

It continued with his conviction after nine years of detention without trial, to be perpetuated after his release with permanent Securitate surveillance of himself and his family.

For example, handwritten notes produced by one of his friends and former political colleagues who informed on him until Communism collapsed speak of a 1967 car trip to Brasov with Coposu, reporting all his comments and those of those he had met. They, in turn, were then followed or even recruited as agents. The same informer tried to compromise Coposu, suggesting he write to a contact in the US, and reports on his speech at the funeral of a fellow former National Peasant's Party member.

"I went to the archives and was sickened by what I saw," one of Coposu's sisters, Flavia, told BIRN. "A Securitate patrol was permanently in front of the house. Telephone conversations were intercepted and Cornel was continuously interrogated," her sister, Rodica, adds.

Reading the files of their brother, whose funeral in 1995 was attended by thousands, was a traumatic experience for the Coposu sisters, who were barred from holding certain jobs and forced to live in a small

house with their whole extended family, including their brother.

"I found a list with the name, profession and motives of those who informed on him," recounts Flavia. "One of them, a prominent Peasant Party leader, said he knew Cornel since his youth, and decided to inform on him as he was an immoral person – because he liked to play bridge!" Another informer, she explains, was a doctor and friend of Coposu's who is said to have collaborated in exchange for a visa to see his daughter abroad. "At least he was sincere," Flavia concedes.

Another document they found sheds light on how the Securitate installed the microphones that recorded all the conversations they had at their house near central Bucharest, where the family moved in 1975.



Bucharest 2009. Romanian students memorializing victims of the Securitate and victims of the 1989 Revolution.

In order to install the microphones inside the property, the secret police arranged for the family, their neighbours and those in charge of the maintenance of the block to be sent on work trips, meetings or professional training "so no one was there and they could be free to mount the devices". This shows how the Securitate could command virtually all the state structures when they needed to carry on a mission. "The first floor is not a problem as they are our zealous collaborators," the document read.

Among the discoveries made by the sisters at the CNSAS archives were a set of keys to the house where the family still lives.

"We are talking about the destruction of the classic distinction between the private and the public sphere, which in the Western world dates back from the Middle Ages," historian Adrian Ciofalca says about the extent of the regime's surveillance. It turned the whole country into an open prison where arrest or torture were now hardly necessary to enforce obedience, he and others noted.