

COSMIN BUDEANCĂ*

“THE CHURCH DOES NOT EMIGRATE”. THE BISHOP ALBERT KLEIN AND THE EMIGRATION OF EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN PRIESTS FROM ROMANIA (1969–1989)**

My study focuses on some aspects of the role played by the Evangelical Lutheran Bishop Albert Klein in the emigration of ethnic Germans (Saxons) of Transylvania, Romania, between 1969–1989, especially in the prevention of the emigration of the Evangelical Lutheran priests.¹ This paper is based on general studies on the history of Germans in Romania during communism, on documents of the archives of the former Romanian political police (Securitatea) and on seven oral history interviews conducted with people who knew Bishop Albert Klein personally.

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This analysis relies on secret Securitate documents, Romanian government reports, and also personal interviews with Germans who left communist Romania or Germans who decided to stay in the country after 1978 and who knew Bishop Albert Klein in person. The secret documents consulted for this analysis are from The National Council for the

* The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile, Romania.

** This work was possible with the financial support of the Sector Operational Program for Human Resources Development 2007–2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, within the project POSDRU 89/1.5/S/60189 with the title “Postdoctoral Programs for Sustainable Development in a Knowledge Based Society”.

¹ A large version of this study was published in the Romanian language, Cosmin Budeancă, “Biserica nu emigrează. Episcopul Albert Klein și emigrarea preoților evanghelici lutherani din România în ultimele două decenii ale regimului comunist” [“The Church does not Emigrate. The Bishop Albert Klein and the Emigration of Evangelical Lutheran Priests from Romania (1969–1989)”], in: *Arhivele Totalitarismului [The Archives of Totalitarianism]*, XXI, no. 78–79 (1–2/2013), pp. 166–179 and no. 80–81 (3–4/2013), pp. 165–178.

Study of the Securitate Archives² and include twenty seven volumes of over 5,000 pages produced by the foreign branch of the Securitate, and five files (of fifty three volumes of over 18,500 pages) that belonged to the Securitate Documentary Records.³ I have also found important information for the topic of this article in the twelve information files⁴ opened by the Securitate on behalf of Bishop Albert Klein (containing 3,853 pages) and in the two network files⁵ (containing 638 pages).

For this study, I also used seven personal interviews. These interviews were part of a larger data collection effort, which resulted in over 100 interviews with ethnic Germans. Respondents were selected through the snowball sampling technique⁶ with an eye to their age, gender, educational background, profession, and knowledge of the subject of the emigration.⁷ Interviews were conducted during the 2002–2012 period, in Bucharest as well as towns and villages of the Transylvanian counties of Hunedoara, Alba and Sibiu, and, also in Germany. Most interviews took place at the respondent’s residence, but a few were conducted in neutral spaces or institutions, when respondents wished so or in the case of German emigrants visiting Romania. Interviews lasted between thirty and two hundred and fifty minutes. Copies of the interview transcripts are available in my personal archive and on request from the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives.

The sequence of the questions was tailored to the respondent, and most questions were open-ended, enabling respondents to elaborate on their answers. Interviews with German respondents touched on emigration, Romanian communist repression against Germans (deportations, arrests, nationalisation and expropriation of property), the roles of the elites in the life of the German community in Romania, illegal emigration,

² Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității – Archive of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate’s Archives, (Hereinafter ACNSAS) – was founded in 1999 as an autonomous administrative authority with juridical authority under the control of Parliament and as its main domain of activity administers the archive of the Securitate (former political police of communist Romania).

³ These records, created in the 1950s, include the files of historical, not operative, interest. The documents in this stock cover a period from the early years of the twentieth century and the first years after the revolution of December 1989 and they are extremely diverse, ranging from published works, unique manuscripts, private letters, documents belonging to some State authorities, military organs, ecclesiastical authorities, photos, maps, statistical tables, charts, press excerpts, the statutes of various organizations. Florian Banu, “Direcții ale studierii regimului comunist din România. Studiu de caz: cercetătorii acreditați la CNSAS” [“The Directions of Studying of the Communist Regime in Romania. Case study: Researchers Accredited at CNSAS”], in: *Arhivele Totalitarismului* [The Archives of Totalitarianism], XVI, 58–59 (1–2/2008), pp. 124–132.

⁴ “The Informative Files” gather all the records compiled by the Securitate during the process of watching certain individuals. This type of files includes biographical information about the people watched, personal statements made by various people, transcripts of discussions held by the subject watched by the Securitate, information on the opinions of the one watched, his/her photos. Banu, “Direcții ale studierii...”, pp. 124–132.

⁵ “The Network Files” cover the records compiled by the Securitate for each informer and some candidates willing to be recruited as informers. Such a record includes biographical data, personal statements, checks, information about the political views of the subject, and in some cases informative notes provided by the respective informer. Banu, “Direcții ale studierii...”, pp. 124–132.

⁶ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History. A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 45; François de Singly, Alain Blanchet, Anne Gotman, Jean-Claude Kaufmann, *Ancheta și metodele ei* [The Investigation and Its Methods] (Iași: Polirom, 1998), pp. 149–150.

⁷ Raleigh Yow, *Recording...*, p. 20; Kathryn Anderson, Dana C. Jack, “Learning to Listen”, in: Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 157.

as well as the demographic problems (the birth and death rates, inter-ethnic marriages) experienced by the German community until 1989.

Oral history and the study of archival documents are seen as complementing each other. On the one hand, as a method of data collection, oral history is limited by the respondents' imperfect recollection of events, subjective selection and retrieval of information, and the uncertain ways in which the memory of directly experienced events blends with hearsay and information acquired years after the events occurred. This is especially true in the case of older respondents who are asked to talk about events that took place decades before interviews are conducted. On the other hand, archives, especially the secret archives, offer only a partial view of the communist period that often blatantly contradicts the reality as experienced by the victims of the political police and the bystanders.⁸ This complementariness of oral history and archival documents has been convincingly advocated by Paul Ricoeur, who considered that oral testimonials were as valid as any written historical document.⁹

The works related to the subject are very few, which makes the reconstruction of the age and the subject rather difficult.

A SHORT HISTORY OF TRANSYLVANIAN SAXONS

The Germans living in Romania were divided into several distinct groups scattered across the country: the Saxons, the Swabians, the Landlers or Transylvanian Landlers, the *Zipsers*. There are significant differences between these groups, depending on the areas of origin, the time they first came to Romania, their language and traditions. The most important groups are represented by the Saxons (located in Transylvania) and the Swabians (in the Banat and in Satu Mare areas).

Germans, from the areas of the Rhine, Mosel, Thuringia, Bavaria and Saxony settled in Transylvania from the second half of the twelfth century until the fourteenth century, at the request of the Hungarian kings, who needed their help in order to consolidate their control over the newly conquered territories. Given a number of privileges, the Transylvanian Saxons (as they came to be known) were able to develop an important civilization that influenced the other ethnic groups in the area.¹⁰

In the sixteenth century the Saxons adopted the reformist ideas promoted by Martin Luther, became followers of the Augsburg Evangelical faith as they are to this day.¹¹

Over time they had an important role in the development of the areas in which they resided, including in major cities of Transylvania such as Sibiu, Braşov, Sighişoara, Mediaş, Bistriţa, as well as in smaller towns and many villages.

⁸ Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different", in: Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 68–71.

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea [Memory, History, Oblivion]* (Timişoara: Amarcord, 2001), p. 216.

¹⁰ Vasile Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni 1918–1944 [Contributions to the Knowledge of the History of Transylvanian Saxons 1918–1944]* (Sibiu: Hora, 2001), p. 11.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

SOME ASPECTS ABOUT THE GERMANS IN ROMANIA DURING COMMUNISM

The dramatic decrease of the German minority in Romania under the communist regime represented a continuation of a demographic trend, which started at the end of the nineteenth century and accentuated after World War II and the consolidation of the communist regime during the late 1940s and the 1950s.¹²

The Nazi sympathies of some ethnic Germans constituted a sufficiently strong reason to consider that the entire minority represented a potential threat to the Romanian communist regime and several measures were taken against them, such as deportations¹³, nationalisations, many Germans were arrested and convicted in political show-trials, being condemned to long prison terms. During the 1950s, the Securitate played an important role in monitoring and suppressing ethnic Germans.

The demographic decrease was a consequence of numerous factors, of which emigration was the most significant. In turn, emigration had varying intensities, being influenced by national and international factors, such as the repression campaigns directed against the German population immediately after World War II, the communist policies targeting ethnic minorities, the economic difficulties of late communism, the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967, and this country's subsequent political and economic interests.

Rudolf Poledna, sociologist, distinguished three important waves of German emigration from Romania, but the research available to date does not enable us to estimate how large these waves were.¹⁴ The first wave (1939–1950) included Romanian Germans who left the country during and immediately after World War II because they voluntarily enrolled in the armed forces of Nazi Germany or became prisoners of war and refused to return to Romania after the war or their liberation; served in the Romanian army and, after the country turned against Nazi Germany on 23 August 1944, were impris-

¹² Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Bolovan, “Contribuții privind structura etnică și confesională a Transilvaniei în secolul XX” [“Contributions About the Ethnic and Confessional Transylvania in the Twentieth Century”], in: Sorina Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan (eds.), *Sabin Manuilă – Istorie și demografie [Sabin Manuilă – History and Demography]* (Cluj-Napoca: Fundația Culturală Română, 1995), pp. 157–161.

¹³ For example, in 1945 around 70,000 Germans were deported to Soviet Union for the reconstruction work, until 1949, and in 1950 a few thousand Swabians from Banat (the South-West part of Romania, near the border with Yugoslavia) were deported to Bărăgan Plain (in the East part of Romania), until 1955–1956. Hannelore Baier (ed.), *Deportarea etnicilor germani din România în Uniunea Sovietică 1945 [The Deportation of German Ethnicity from Romania to the Soviet Union in 1945]* (Sibiu: Forumul Democrat al Germanilor din România, 1994); *Germanii din România 1944–1956, culegere întocmită de Hannelore Baier [Germans from Romania 1944–1956, a collection made by Hannelore Baier]* (Sibiu: Honterus, 2005); Weber, Georg, Weber-Schlechter, Renate, Nassehi, Armin, Sill, Oliver, Kneer, Georg, *Die Deportation von Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion. 1945–1949, I–III* (Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau, 1996); Corneliu Gaiu, Valentin Orga (eds.), *Sașii transilvăneni între statornicie și dezrădăcinare / Die Siebenbürger Sachsen zwischen Heimatruhe und Entwurzelung [Transylvanian Saxons Between Steadiness and Uprooting]* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2006); Lavinia Betea, Cristina Diac, Florin-Răzvan Mihai, Ilarion Țiu, *Lungul drum spre nicăieri. Germanii din România deportați în URSS [The Long Road to Nowhere. Germans from Romania Deported in USSR]* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012).

¹⁴ Rudolf Poledna, *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint? Transformări sociale la sașii ardeleni după 1945: o analiză sociologică din perspectivă sistemică [Sint ut sunt, aut non sint? The Social Transformation of Transylvanian Saxons after 1945: A Sociological Analysis in a Systemic Perspective]* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001), p. 89.

oned by the German army; were evacuated from Northern Transylvania and Banat after 23 August 1944, or fled those provinces in fear of the invading Soviet troops; deserted in Germany or Austria from the German or Romanian armies; and had been deported to the Soviet Union and, because of health reasons, were sent to Germany to recover. The second wave included the Germans who emigrated in 1950–1989 as a consequence of the consolidation of the Romanian communist regime and the 1967 bilateral agreement with West Germany, through which Romania became the only communist country other than the Soviet Union to have direct relations with West Germany. The third wave consisted of those who left Romania after the December 1989 revolution and before 1993.¹⁵

The Securitate (Romanian political police) documents reveal that the communist political police had an important role in the Romanian Germans' emigration, as certified by a series of agreements between the Romanian communist and West German democratic authorities. According to Banu and Dobre, the Securitate's involvement in the issuing of visas permitting Romanian citizens to leave the country began in January 1962.¹⁶ The Securitate and the Romanian communist leaders became more interested in this matter, once they understood that they could obtain important financial dividends as a result.¹⁷ The proceedings were used to acquire Western technology and machinery necessary for Romanian industrial plants. In time, communist Romania's need for foreign currency grew, determining important changes in emigration patterns.

BISHOP ALBERT KLEIN – A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

He was born on March 16th, 1910 in the town of Sighișoara (Romania)¹⁸, the youngest son of Professor Albert Klein. In 1925 his family moved to Sibiu. He studied at Sighișoara and Sibiu and in the summer of 1930 he was enrolled at the University of Marburg (Germany). In the autumn of the same year he became a student at the University of Cluj (Romania), where he studied physics, chemistry and mathematics. In 1931/1932 he was an associate student at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Cluj. In 1933/1934 he studied theology at the University of Tübingen and from November 1934 until March 1935 he was in Berlin where he pursued his studies of theology and chemistry. Between March 1935 and November 1936 Klein was in Cluj, where he finished his studies in physics and chemistry. In 1937 he also finished his theological studies at the University of Tübingen. Since 1937 Klein had taught physics, chemistry, mathematics and religion

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

¹⁶ Florica Dobre, Florian Banu, Luminița Banu, Laura Stancu, *Ațiunea "Recuperarea". Securitatea și emigrarea germanilor din România (1962–1989)* [*The Action "Recovery". Securitatea and Emigration of Germans from Romania (1962–1989)*] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2011), p. 29.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 33. For similar reason were made agreements with Israel, for emigration of Jews from Romania. See: Radu Ioanid (ed.), *Securitatea și vânzarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel* [*The Securitate and the Sale of the Jews. The History of the Secret Agreements Between Romania and Israel*] (Iași: Polirom, 2015).

¹⁸ ACNSAS, Documentary Fund (Thereafter DF), file no. 13381, vol. 20, f. 146.

studies in the town of Sebeș and in 1939¹⁹ he moved to the Brukenthal High School in Sibiu, where he taught the same subjects.²⁰

In the '30s and during the war he was involved in a series of activities of a nationalist character²¹, which would affect his existence later on. Between 1941–1943 he was enrolled in the Romanian Army and fought on the Eastern Front.²² In 1945 he was deported to the Soviet Union, together with other previously mentioned Germans, from where he returned in December 1945 seriously ill. Then he worked as a pastor in Dobârca (1946–1953) and Petrești (1953–1958) and as a parish priest in Sebeș. In 1968 he was appointed a parish priest in Brașov and in 1969 he was elected the thirty-fifth bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Augustan Confession of the Socialist Republic of Romania.²³ His position was recognised by Decree no. 447 of 15 May 1969.²⁴

His election generated great expectations among the evangelical Lutheran priests who had been disappointed by the policy of his predecessor, considered as an “adaptation to the state”²⁵.

Albert Klein was the bishop of the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession in Romania for twenty one years, during a very difficult period for both the religious denominations and the national minorities. He died on 8 February 1990 in Sibiu.²⁶

Unfortunately, his work during the episcopate period is very little known. This situation was made worse by the fact that he has not left memoirs that would have helped historians and those interested in the history of the German minority in the communist years understand some controversial decisions he made.²⁷

¹⁹ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Klein_%28Bischof%29 (last visited January 4, 2017).

²⁰ ACNSAS, Informative Fund (Thereafter IF), file no. 258189, vol. 1, ff. 19–20; http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Klein_%28Bischof%29 (last visited January 4, 2017); author's personal interview with Hans Klein, Albert Klein's son. He was born in 1940. German, priest and teacher, retired. Interview was conducted by author on November 10, 2011, in Sibiu town, Sibiu district, and is available in the personal archive of the author.

²¹ Starting with 1931 he was one of the founders of Nationale Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien – NEDR [Movement of National Renewal of Romanian Germans], a radical organisation, which accepted and promoted the ideas of Adolf Hitler. He was involved in Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien [German Ethnic Group]. The organisation was created under pressure from Germany in 1940 and represented the Germans from Romania between 1940 and 1944. Albert Klein was school inspector inside of this, and he was, too, member of National-Socialist Party of Romanian Germans. ACNSAS, IF, file no. 235789, ff. 5, 14; file no. 258189, vol. 7, f. 84.

²² ACNSAS, IF, file no. 235789, ff. 5, 14; file no. 258189, vol. 1, ff. 19–20; vol. 7, f. 84.

²³ ACNSAS, IF, file no. 258189, vol. 1, f. 24; file no. 258189, vol. 6, f. 3; <http://petersdorf.siebenbuergen.ro/monitorulcluj.html> (last visited January 4, 2017).

²⁴ *Buletinul Oficial [The Official Journal]*, no. 58, 16 May 1969.

²⁵ Helmut Pilder, “Rezistență și adaptare în cadrul bisericii evanghelice din Transilvania după al doilea război mondial” [“The Resistance and Adaptation within the Evangelical Church in Transylvania After WWII”], in: Gerhard Möckel, *Biserica între adaptare și rezistență [The Church Between Adaptation and Resistance]* (Munich, 1980), cf. ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 22, f. 232v; Comunitatea preoților transilvăneni din R.F.G., “În legătură cu situația Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania” [The Community of Transylvanian Priests in FRG, “About the Situation of Evangelical Church from Transylvania”] (Thereafter Comunitatea preoților, “În legătură cu”), cf. ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 23, f. 281.

²⁶ For more details about the German minority from Romania after 1990 see <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/node/minoritatea-german-1990> (last visited January 4, 2017).

²⁷ For the period when he was priest in Dobârca, Petrești, Sebeș and Brașov and bishop, see: Albert Klein, *Ein Leben im Glauben* (Heidelberg: Hora & AKSL, 2010). The book contains reports, essays and commentaries on the state of the church.

REPORT ON THE EMIGRATIONS OF ETHNIC GERMANS DURING THE EPISCOPATE OF ALBERT KLEIN (1969–1990)

In the '70s and especially in the '80s, the communist authorities had a duplicitous attitude regarding the emigration. They tried to prevent this phenomenon, which would have affected the country's image abroad, because a large number of people who wanted to leave Romania were compelling evidence that the socio-economic and political situation is not very good. However, the need for foreign currency and national-communist ideas, which will be discussed later, determined that they accept a controlled emigration of Germans and Jews.

As priests had a great influence in the community, the authorities intended to use them to mitigate that phenomenon. But even some priests wished to emigrate, which made the Evangelical Lutheran Church determined to try to stop them. Thus, in 1966, Bishop Friedrich Müller-Langenthal (1945–1969), Albert Klein's predecessor, made an agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Federal Republic of Germany²⁸, which stated that the priests who emigrated without the bishop's approval could not be appointed to a parish. The measure was inspired by a similar agreement concluded between The Federal Republic of Germany and The German Democratic Republic's churches, because The German Democratic Republic had similar problems with its emigrating priests.

According to the priest Herman Pitters, this measure had little impact, but included the fact that it annoyed the priests who wished to emigrate. "Bishop Müller made an agreement between the local church and the German church, which stated that the priests who, so to speak, run from here [...] should not be welcomed there immediately. This convention had no great effect. It annoyed those who still emigrated, and thus distrust emerged. This problem was [...] a very pressing issue for the church for decades."²⁹

In January 1967, two years before Albert Klein was elected bishop, diplomatic relations were established between Romania and Germany to the embassy level.³⁰ The normalisation of the political relations led to further gradual increase in the number of the German emigrants from Romania in the coming years. In 1977 the number of emigrants exceeded 10,000 people for the first time.

In 1975, a written agreement between the church in Romania and the church in the Federal Republic of Germany was concluded; its provisions referred to appoint-

²⁸ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 22, f. 242–242v; Author's personal interviews with Paul Philippi, Herman Pitters. Paul Philippi was born in 1923 he was a professor, theologian and politician. The interview was conducted by the author on 10 November 2011, in the town of Sibiu, Sibiu district, and is available in the personal archive of the author. Herman Pitters was born in 1932. German, teacher of Theology, Dean of the Protestant Theological Institute of Sibiu, retired. The interview was conducted by author on November 10, 2011, in Sibiu town, Sibiu district, and is available in the personal archive of the author.

²⁹ Author's personal interview with Herman Pitters.

³⁰ Anneli Ute Gabanyi, "Die Aufnahme der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Rumänien (31 January 1967). Voraussetzungen und Folgen", in: Cătălin Turliuc, Flavius Solomon (eds.), *Punți în istorie. Studii româno-germane [Bridges in History. Romanian-Germans Studies]* (Iași: Cantes, 2001), p. 178.

ing the priests who came from Romania, on condition of being able to prove that they had served as deacons or priests assistants for three or four years before emigrating. In its turn, the Evangelical Church of Romania decided not to allow any priest to leave his parish.³¹ Following this convention, and to calm people, Bishop Klein assured the 155,000 Transylvanian Saxons that the church would not emigrate.³²

In January 1978 there was a milestone in the history of the ethnic Germans in Romania: the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and President Nicolae Ceaușescu³³ reached an agreement regarding the maintenance of the level of emigration at the level registered in 1977 (11,000/year).³⁴

After 1978, even if there were agreements between churches in Romania and the Federal Republic of Germany, priests continued to emigrate, in even much higher proportions than in the previous years.³⁵ According to the information supplied by the West German news agency, seventy evangelical priests left Romania in seventeen years (1961–1978) and thirty five priests left it during 1978–1980.

In 1981, “in the 174 evangelical parishes of the Saxons in Transylvania, only 151 priests were left of the 187 that had held office there before.”³⁶

BISHOP KLEIN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES

As a leader of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, Bishop Klein needed to have a good relationship with the authorities. This was because at that time period it was impossible to have such a position without the agreement of the authorities, who wished to control the Churches. If we consider the “problems” from his past (his nationalist activity in the ’30s)³⁷, there might have been some pressure (potentially blackmail)³⁸ applied by the authorities. However, it seems obvious that in return for being accepted as a bishop by the Romanian authorities, he would be obliged to make some compromises.

³¹ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 22, f. 242–242v; vol. 26, f. 69.

³² ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 22, f. 242–242v.

³³ Nicolae Ceaușescu (26 January 1918 – 25 December 1989) was the General Secretary of Romanian Communist Party (1965–1989), head of the country (1967–1989) and the president of Socialist Republic of Romania (1974–1989).

³⁴ Ernst Wagner, *Istoria sașilor ardeleni [The History of Transylvanian Saxons]* (Bucharest-Munich: Meronia, 2000), p. 94.

³⁵ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 22, f. 242–242v.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ Comunitatea preoților, “În legătură cu...”, cf. ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 23, f. 280.

³⁸ Author’s personal interview with Hans Bergel. He was born in 1925. Former political prisoner in communist Romania. He emigrated to Federal Germany in 1968. Writer and journalist. Between 1970 and 1989 editor of *Siebenburgische Zeitung*, the newspaper of the *Landsmanschaft* (Association of Transylvanian Saxons from Germany, Munich). The interview was conducted by author on September 7, 2012 in Gröbenzell, Germany, and is available in the personal archive of the author.

BISHOP KLEIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLITICAL AUTHORITIES

As mentioned above, Bishop Klein frequently supported the official position stated by the Romanian leaders, in the West; his accounts on the ethnic Germans totally differed from reality.

During the communism period, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was under the control of the state authorities, both through the Securitate and the Religious Cults Department (an institution whose responsibilities were to watch and monitor all the cults in Romania)³⁹. Under these conditions, Bishop Klein was forced to surrender to the orders received from Bucharest and he was obliged to present to the Religious Cults Department information on the content of discussions held with various religious or public figures. For example, the subjects discussed at Düsseldorf on 7 June 1985, with Richard Weizsäcker, the President of Federal Republic of Germany, were communicated to the Department of Religious Cults.⁴⁰ Also, the day after the discussion with the German Ambassador on 7 October 1985, the bishop sent a letter to the Department of Religious Cults to inform them of it.⁴¹

His anti-emigration position seems to have been highly appreciated by the leaders of Romania. Thus, in 1987 he announced his intention to quit his position for health reasons⁴². The bishop's son remembers about that moment and said that Ceaușescu himself would have insisted on changing his mind. "Ceaușescu would not let my father retire. The argument was that he was considered an element of stability. From what I know now, Ceaușescu had some fear that the people would revolt even more... if he leaves."⁴³

This statement cannot be proved by documents, but it is certain that the Department of Cults did not approve the Bishop's retirement, considering a change in the management of the evangelical cult against the contemporary domestic and international background inappropriate. In this context, the Securitate considered that despite of his old age, the Bishop's state of health was good.⁴⁴

THE BISHOP'S RELATIONS WITH THE POLITICAL POLICE (SECURITATE)

The political police (Securitate) had an important role in controlling the population in the communist Romania. The ethnic minorities and religious cults were some of its "targets". The involvement of the political police in controlling the emigration

³⁹ See: Adrian Nicolae Petcu, "Activitatea Departamentului Cultelor în atenția Securității (1970–1989)" ["The Activity of Department for Religious Affairs under surveillance of Securitate (1970–1989)"], in: *Caietele CNSAS*, II, (4)/2009, (Bucharest: Editura CNSAS, 2010), pp. 69–120.

⁴⁰ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 36, f. 345.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 340.

⁴² ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 40, f. 236; Network Fund (Thereafter NF), file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 2.

⁴³ Author's personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁴⁴ ACNSAS, NF, file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 2.

phenomenon was huge⁴⁵, and to facilitate it, they used the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Directorate I and the Military Unit 0544, through its own sources, and the Religious Cults Department will involve the leaders of the German Evangelical Lutheran Cult in our country in a systematic activity to combat and discourage emigration, using their international religious connections, direct contacts in the country and abroad with cult representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and other countries, their own specific publications and those from abroad, and also by sending some clergy abroad.⁴⁶

Bishop Klein, both a representative of an ethnic minority, and an Evangelical Lutheran Church leader, was also under surveillance by the Securitate. According to files, the Securitate started his surveillance in 26 June 1956, but is possible surveillance started even earlier.⁴⁷

From 1956 to 1969, when he was elected Bishop, Klein was kept under surveillance, as both individual and group records⁴⁸ show, being suspected of “nationalist manifestations”, one of the “themes” because of which the Securitate was watching the representatives of the ethnic minorities and the Romanians alike.

For his surveillance, the Securitate used all the usual methods: informers (the files contain hundreds of notes about his activity), operational techniques (microphones installed in the parish house, bedroom and dining room, with hundreds of pages of transcripts of conversations recorded) mail control, stakeout.⁴⁹

This informative surveillance continued after his election as a bishop, but so far his tracking information for this period has not been identified, only information showing that in the '80s he had microphones installed in the office⁵⁰ (but it is believed that it is very likely that microphones were installed at his home too).

But Klein's relationship with the Securitate was not only limited to the fact that he was under surveillance. He was connected with the Securitate as an informer, with five code names: *Sebeșul* (up to 12 June 1968⁵¹), *Silvestru Dan* (from 14 June 1968⁵² onwards), *Dumbravă* (The Grove) (from June 1969, a short time after he was elected bishop⁵³),

⁴⁵ Dobre et alii, *Acțiunea “Recuperarea”...*, passim; Liviu Țăranu, “Afacerea ‘Peregrinii’” [“The ‘Pilgrims’ Affair”], in: Constantin Moșincat, Dan Poinar (eds.), *Pietre de hotar [Milestones]* (Oradea: Tipo MC, 2007), vol. 6, pp. 221–229; Cosmin Budeancă, “Involvement of Romanian Former Communist Political Police (Securitatea) in the Process of Romanian Germans’ Emigration 1978–1989”, paper presented at “The German Diaspora in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union”, workshop held at the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University (Great Britain, June 2012).

⁴⁶ Departamentul Securității Statului, “Program de măsuri privind prevenirea, cunoașterea și neutralizarea acțiunilor cu caracter naționalist-german” [State Security Department, “Program of Measures on Prevention, Awareness and Neutralizing Action by German Nationalist”] (March 30, 1987), ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 40, f. 382.

⁴⁷ ACNSAS, IF, file no. 258189, vol. 1, f. 195.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, ff. 1–4, 7–14.

⁴⁹ ACNSAS, IF, file no. 258189, vol. 1–12, passim.

⁵⁰ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 19, f. 59; NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 2.

⁵¹ ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, ff. 88–89.

⁵² ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, ff. 3, 9–17, 162; DE, file no. 13381, vol. 2, f. 36.

⁵³ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 20, f. 146; NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 1.

Sergiu Nicolaescu (1975–1978)⁵⁴, and Păltinișan (1982–1986⁵⁵). But in this context I must say although he is mentioned in documents as an informer and gave information at Securitate, we not yet identified any commitment to collaboration.

Due to his relationships with the politicians and senior prelates of the Federal Republic of Germany, whom he met during visits to Germany, and also because he often received visits from the West, Bishop Klein was frequently used – as already stated – to misinform them about the situation of the Germans in Romania. Before important visits he used to be trained counter-informatively⁵⁶ by officers of the Securitate. Also, after he received or paid visits, he used to submit information on the content of conversations both to the Cults Department and to the Securitate⁵⁷.

Furthermore, he provided the Securitate with reports on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, or documents related to the issue of migration, produced by different associations and organisations of the Saxons who had emigrated to Germany.

For example, at the end of 1983 (or early 1984, the document does not mention the date – my note) a delegation “The Parliamentary Group for friendly relations between the FR of Germany-Romania” came to Romania and was received in Sibiu by Bishop Klein, who presented the reasons for the emigration of Germans to the guests. Referring to the situation in the past years, he mentioned that some of the reasons were

the attraction of the higher living standards, the facilities offered to the immigrants of German origins, the hostile propaganda carried out by the *Landsmannschaft*⁵⁸ of Transylvanian Saxons in the Federal Republic of Germany in favour of the total emigration of Germans from Romania etc. The Federal Government itself acts unilaterally in the direction desired by the association *Landsmannschaft*, without noticing the negative consequences on those who remain and become fewer. Thus, the intensively discussed measures of the West German government in 1983 exclusively served the cause of emigration, enhancing the existing psychosis among Germans in Romania.⁵⁹

The arguments used by the Bishop are the same as the ones in the various documents compiled by the Securitate and used to misinform on the real situation in Romania, which leads one to believe that on the occasion of this visit, as in other instances, Bishop Klein was counter informatively prepared and specially trained by the Securitate.⁶⁰

On the other hand, a note analysing the activity of “the informer” Albert Klein affirmed, in 1988, that he had great possibilities, both in Romania and abroad, he was trained and assigned responsibilities by numerous cult emissaries, diplomats, parliamentarians and other foreign politicians, journalists and press correspondents, repre-

⁵⁴ ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, ff. 62–70.

⁵⁵ ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 2, f. 14.

⁵⁶ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 23, f. 271–271v.

⁵⁷ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 39, f. 379.

⁵⁸ The Association of the Transylvanian Saxons in Federal Republic of Germany was formed in 1946 in Munich for the integration of Transylvanian Saxon in Germany and for the preservation and promotion of Transylvanian Saxon culture.

⁵⁹ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 30, ff. 126–127.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 126.

sentatives of religious aid organisations, leaders of tourists groups, all under the security suspicion.

In addition to these foreign suspects over [whom] he has successfully achieved control and influence, Bishop Klein consistently presented his favourable views on the current situation and prospects of the population of German origin in Romania, on the issue of emigration especially, among priests who were presented with arguments, as well as with his anti-emigrational convictions and conceptions, advocating maintenance of the traditional ethnic patterns of the German population in our country by all means.

Capitalising on the importance of the source and the fact that he is known abroad as a representative figure of the German population in Romania, he was also used in counter-propaganda actions through diplomatic and press channels in the German-speaking areas, as his favourable points are defined in the media abroad.⁶¹

In those years priests were being watched by the Securitate for various reasons: because they wanted to emigrate, they encouraged emigration or they were in contact with foreigners. Thus, priest Klaus Werner Neugeboren was put under surveillance in 1971–1972 for having contacts with the Saxons who had emigrated from the village of Reci (Alba County) and subsequently returned to visit the country.⁶²

In order to better keep people under control, recruiting priests as informants was then a current activity. In 1978, for example, a report on the thirty four German Lutheran priests in the management of the Evangelic District of Augustan Confession in Braşov shows that six were put under informative surveillance, four were informatively watched⁶³ and ten were informers of the Securitate.⁶⁴

Such pressures applied by the political police influenced their decision to emigrate. The bishop's son told us that his father also used his position and relationship with the Securitate to help the priests who were under the surveillance of the political police, and asked for support. “He said several times, almost annually... “If you have any problems with the Securitate, I'll help you.” I asked: “How do you do that?” He called somebody in the Party or somebody else: “Please let the gentleman alone...” And if he used to say so... they knew that the one watched was aware of it and he was left alone.”⁶⁵

But knowing the how the Securitate used to pursue its interests, we do not believe that such a stratagem to protect priests could have been very effective. On the contrary, according to a Securitate document from 1988, it was even used to achieve “specific tasks” “among the evangelical priests involved (watched – my note C.B.)” and it was to be used further to “know and counteract some tendencies and unfavour-

⁶¹ ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, ff. 1–2v.

⁶² Denisa Bodeanu's personal interview with Klaus Werner Neugeboren. He was born in 1945. German, priest. The interview was conducted by Denisa Bodeanu on October 19, 2010, in Bucharest, and is available in the Oral History Archive of ACNSAS.

⁶³ Informative surveillance involved more complex Securitate procedures, whereas informative watching was a simpler form of obtaining information about a person.

⁶⁴ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 7, ff. 98–102.

⁶⁵ Author's personal interview with Hans Klein.

able trends within the cult, various activities envisaged, with internal and external implications.⁶⁶

BISHOP ALBERT KLEIN'S POSITION TOWARDS EMIGRATION

As was his predecessor, Bishop Albert Klein was also against emigration. In the Securitate files, the first statement of his position against emigration, dates were found from 1957.⁶⁷ Both in documents and oral testimony, the name of the bishop is connected to the phrase "The Church does not emigrate."⁶⁸ The date on which he made the remark is not recorded. His son, the priest-professor Hans Klein, assumes that his father might have made it "immediately after he was appointed in 69" and the context was as follows: "A lady in the crowd, said: «We do not leave the country, but who is going to bury us?» "There will be people, the church is not leaving. A certain organisation that cares for you will not leave." The fact that the church should not leave was for the man's soul, as no one is left to take care of it...⁶⁹

His attitude against priests' emigration is explained by some interviewees⁷⁰ in that he strived to preserve the unity and identity of the Saxon community in Transylvania. As the role of the priests was essential to achieve this purpose, he interceded with the authorities of his age to increase the number of places in the institutions based on theological education to replace the positions available due to retirement, death and emigration.⁷¹

The measure was necessary, given that, for example, in 1970 there were forty three parishes vacant in Transylvania⁷², and in 1981 in Mureş County, of the seventeen Evangelical priests, ten requested emigration and three planned to remain illegally abroad if they had the opportunity.⁷³

He also tried to help improve the priests' lives, facilitating the renovation of the priests' houses and equipping them with bathrooms.⁷⁴

No statistics are known on the percentage of priests involved in the process of emigration, but according to two witnesses, who had good knowledge of the issue, it seems that there was some interest from the state to encourage priests' emigration. Thus, the priest, Professor Hans Klein, son of Bishop Klein said that priests were issued a passport faster than people belonging to other socio-professional categories, because they were not integrated into the economic system of the state.⁷⁵

⁶⁶ ACNSAS, NE, file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 2.

⁶⁷ ACNSAS, IF, file no. 235789, f. 6.

⁶⁸ Author's personal interviews with Hans Klein, Hans Bergel, Paul Helmut Niedermaier. Paul Helmut Niedermaier was born in 1937. German, historian and architect. The interview was conducted by author on November 9, 2011, in Sibiu town, Sibiu district and is available in the personal archive of the author.

⁶⁹ Author's personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁷⁰ Author's personal interviews with Hans Klein, Herman Pitters, Paul Helmut Niedermaier.

⁷¹ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 28, f. 197-197v.

⁷² ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 2, f. 36.

⁷³ *Dobre et alii, Acțiunea "Recuperarea"...*, pp. 330-331.

⁷⁴ Author's personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

Mr. Helmut Paul Niedermaier has a similar view: “As a member of the District Consistory I had access to a number of documents that have been published. On that basis we calculated: in the second half of the ’80s, when the problem became more acute [...] five times more priests than laics received permission to leave – as compared with the total number of the German population in Romania. In villages, priests were regarded as representative persons. They belonged to the elite of the respective local communities. In this context, the numbers of elites decreased, which had an effect on communities.”⁷⁶

Encouraging the emigration of priests could be explained in two ways: 1.) The communist regime was atheist and the emigration of priests was meant to weaken the control of a church (in this case the Evangelical Lutheran Church) on the population; 2.) In the ’70s, in the context of imposing the national communism and the ethnic homogeneity that it involved, the Saxons’ emigration was convenient for the communist authorities⁷⁷, because in return, Romania received large amounts of foreign currency. At the same time, it was a phenomenon that had to be controlled in order not to affect the country’s image internationally and this was where the church management intervened, whose role was to mitigate the emigration phenomenon among priests.

As stated by his son, Hans Klein, the bishop was only opposed to priests’ emigration, leaving the population freedom of choice. “My father’s slogan was: ‘We do not interfere with lay people’s decisions, but we ask the priests kindly not to leave and to serve the church.’”⁷⁸

The priest Herman Pitters shares the same point of view, according to which Bishop Klein would not have been opposed to people’s emigration except for the clergy. “Bishop Müller had a very clear position... He had the following idea: “We, with our historical background, we belong to this country and we need to continue this culture.” Bishop Albert Klein did not think so, in these historical terms, however, he said: ‘Emigration is something purely personal and each person has to judge by his/her conscience, but we should do our best so that people who live here and will remain here should have well-defined religious landmarks. The Church does not give a slogan for all the people. The priests should remain...’ they were unable to go, anyway.”⁷⁹

But the documents provided by the former Securitate state the fact that both the bishop and the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church tried to reduce the Saxon population’s inclination to emigration.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Author’s personal interview with Paul Helmut Niedermaier.

⁷⁷ Wolfgang Rehner, “Problemele populației de etnie germană în România. Tendințele ei de emigrare” [“The Problems of the Ethnic Germans in Romania. Their Emigration Trends”], in: Romulus Rusan (ed.), *Analele Sighet 10. Anii 1973–1989: Cronica unui sfârșit de sistem [Sighet Annales 10. 1973–1989: The Chronicle of the End of the System]*, (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2003), p. 232; Denisa Florentina Bodeanu, “Emigrarea etnicilor germani din România: cauze, etape și consecințe” [“The Emigration of Germans from Romania: Causes, Stages and Consequences”], in: Corneliu Gaiu, Valentin Orga (eds.), *Sășii transilvăneni între statornicie și deșrădăcinare/ Die Siebenburger Sachsen zwischen Heimattreue und Entwurzelung [Transylvanian Saxons between Steadiness and Uprooting]* (Bistrița: Accent, 2006), p. 380.

⁷⁸ Author’s personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁷⁹ Author’s personal interview with Herman Pitters.

⁸⁰ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 28, f. 197.

Thus, in January 1974, during a discussion with the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Bucharest, Erwin Wickert, and his first councillor Killian Werner, Bishop Klein expressed his desire to limit the impact of the “law to compensate damages” (Lastenausgleich). According to this law, those who were expelled, emigrated from the socialist countries or displaced as a result of some armed conflicts were to receive compensation for the goods they were forced to leave behind in their country of origin. The Romanian emigrants benefited from similar compensations, but Bishop Klein said that they would not fall under the provisions of the law and consequently they should not receive such compensation. The Bishop warns the two German officials that “many Saxons and Swabians sell their property before their final departure from our country and in the Federal Republic of Germany they declare that they were compelled to do so, seeking compensation through Lastenausgleich⁸¹ and they receive amounts up to 40% of their declared wealth, on the basis of some testimonies made by ‘relatives’. The fact that the German government grants such compensation motivates some to attempt to emigrate.”⁸²

Moreover, in December 1978 the General Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania, commissioned Bishop Klein “to direct ‘a pastoral notice’ to all the evangelical priests, calling them to take a stand against the emigration phenomenon.”⁸³

Both the oral history testimonies and the documents reveal the fact that the bishop was adamant towards emigration. However, his son argues that sometimes he used to make allowances to some priests on their intention to emigrate.⁸⁴

Since the general background in Romania was constantly worsening, the pro-emigration influence from Federal Republic of Germany was growing, and the measures taken by the communist authorities in Bucharest affected the identity of the German communities, Bishop Klein’s attitude of opposition to emigration aroused an obvious dissatisfaction among priests as well as among a section of the population.

BISHOP KLEIN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLITICAL AUTHORITIES AND THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF GERMANY

Beyond the agreement already mentioned concerning priests who could not obtain parishes in the Federal Republic of Germany in case of emigration without the approval of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, the subject of emigration was a constant theme in Bishop Klein’s dealings with the political authorities and the management of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany⁸⁵, as clearly shown in the meetings the

⁸¹ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 11, f. 128.

⁸² Author’s personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁸³ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 14, f. 186.

⁸⁴ Author’s personal interview with Hans Klein.

⁸⁵ In the documents of the Securitate there are mentioned documented discussions “with brilliant results” that Bishop Klein had with the following personalities from the West: H. D. Genscher, vice-chancellor and minister of

bishop had during his visits to Germany, his correspondence and his discussions with the representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany’s Embassy in Bucharest.

To exemplify, reference is made to only to a few sources. On 26 September 1985, the President of Federal Republic of Germany, Richard Weizsäcker sent Albert Klein a letter in which he mentioned a former conversation they had at Düsseldorf on 7 June in which the president suggested to have a discussion with the ambassador of Federal Germany at Bucharest to decide how the German minority in Romania could be helped in the future.⁸⁶

The discussion with the ambassador took place on 7 October in Sibiu. During this discussion, the bishop also referred to the progress of emigrations, stating that since January 1978 (the date of the agreement between Schmidt and Ceaușescu) there had been a steady increase in the number of Saxons who emigrated – from 4,500 in 1978 to 6,700 in 1984. The bishop expressed his concern and stated that if the situation continued, in about twenty years all the 132,000 Saxons of Transylvania would have emigrated.⁸⁷

The bishop accused the associations of Saxons, who had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany, of spreading emigration propaganda and influencing those who had remained in Romania, and he also referred to some employees of the Church, who travelled as tourists to the Federal Republic of Germany and remained there illegally. He made specific reference to two clerks of the Superior Consistory, who in August and September 1985 did not return to Romania.⁸⁸

Because the agreements between the two Churches (in Romania and the Federal Republic of Germany) did not bring the desired results and the number of priests who emigrated was high, Bishop Klein intervened and on 25 April 1986 the Union of Evangelical Churches of the Federal Republic of Germany (EKD) released a generally binding regulation for all the Union member churches. This regulation was put in writing for the first time and its purpose was to discourage priests from emigrating from Romania and subjecting those already established in the Federal Republic of Germany according to the same procedures. In the previous years (1978 and 1980), the EKD had already issued two similar decisions, but as they were not binding⁸⁹, they were not fully observed and some emigrating priests were assigned parishes.

During the discussions with the authorities in Germany, Bishop Klein often used typically communist arguments. He stated that the Germans in Romania were very pleased with the life they were leading and no one could imagine them leaving the

Foreign Affairs of Federal Republic of Germany (during his visit in Romania, in December 1987); Hans Koschnick, the president of social-democratic group from Bundestag; Jack Spitzer, deputy in USA; Joachim Heubach, Bishop in Federal Germany; Walter König, president of Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde [The Society of Transylvanian History Studies] from Heidelberg; Olaf Ihlau, journalist at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; Hermann Heine-mann, minister in Federal Germany; Schulse Vobach, editor to TV 2 in Federal Germany; Helmut Mathias, Federal Germany’s ambassador in Romania, and others. ACNSAS, NF, file no. 289570, vol. 1, ff. 1–2.

⁸⁶ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 36, f. 340.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, ff. 345–346.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 347.

⁸⁹ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 39, f. 155.

country, but those in the West were guilty of the emigration phenomenon, because they were trying to attract them by propaganda and speaking of various benefits. For example, from 3 to 17 December 1988 Klein attended the Central Council of the Evangelical Churches in the Federal Republic of Germany at Hanover (5–12 December), during which occasion he had meetings with outstanding political and religious figures of Germany (e.g. the former President Carstens and the current President, Richard von Weizsäcker).⁹⁰

The participants wished to learn more about the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, the Saxons and the emigration phenomenon. Klein restated the Church's position against emigration and he replied as a true communist state official would⁹¹, including details from Ceaușescu's speech delivered at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in November 1988. Regarding the issues of the German minority, he explained that "some redundancies made in the German educational institutions, particular in cultural life as well as the problems faced by the Evangelical Church were all the undesirable consequences of emigration, not the result of a state policy allegedly oriented towards the assimilation of the cohabiting minorities through Romanisation."⁹²

As a result, the participants at the conference and the bishops committed themselves not to yield to the pressures exerted by the newly emigrated evangelical priests – twenty seven priests had already settled in Bavaria and nineteen in Baden-Württemberg – and to continue to comply with the agreement concluded with the church in Romania.⁹³

One cannot know whether the ideas presented by the bishop at these meetings were wholly his beliefs or the result of the counterintelligence training he was submitted to by the Securitate.⁹⁴ It is certain that the authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany were misinformed about the real situation of the German minority in Romania, and the rumours according to which the bishop used to serve the interests of the communist authorities as opposed to the interests of his community were spread among the priests.

It is difficult to assess to what extent the West German authorities considered the information provided by the bishop to be accurate, but the position to which he had been appointed, as head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Augustan Confession in Romania, must have enjoyed some credibility. As a proof of this, on 6 September 1988 he was awarded "The Order of Merit of Federal Republic of Germany" by the President of Germany. The bishop was awarded the decoration by the Ambassador of Germany in Bucharest.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 46, ff. 190–191.

⁹¹ For that matter, since March 9, 1975, Albert Klein was member of the Grand National Assembly (The Legislative Assembly of Communist Romania). ACNSAS, NF, file no. 289570, vol. 1, f. 72.

⁹² ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 46, ff. 194–195.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, ff. 193–194.

⁹⁴ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 28, f. 197–197v; vol. 30, f. 127; vol. 46, f. 190.

⁹⁵ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 46, f. 196.

THE PRIESTS’ AND EMIGRANT SAXONS’ REACTIONS TO BISHOP ALBERT KLEIN’S POSITION

There was a permanent conflict between Bishop Klein, the emigrant priests and other leaders of the Saxons in the Federal Germany (especially those who were part of the *Landsmannschaft*), who championed the emigration during all those years. Thus, a group of evangelical clergy who formed “The community of Transylvanian priests in the Federal Republic of Germany” criticised the efforts he made to prevent other Saxons to emigrate. They challenged the bishop’s view, according to which, the responsibility of the Church “is to provide spiritual care to the Transylvanian Saxons as long as they would live in Romania”. The priests who had emigrated felt that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania should also take into account the 80% of the German population who wanted to emigrate or those who had already emigrated.⁹⁶

The same priests who had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany resented the fact that leaders of the church did not appreciate those who wanted to emigrate, or who had already emigrated, and especially the intellectuals (professors and primary school teachers).⁹⁷

Hans Bergel, the editor in chief of the newspaper *Siebenburgische Zeitung*, owned by the *Landsmannschaft* shared the opinion expressed by the emigrant priests, who felt that the Church should be close to its parishioners; Hans Bergel was one of the advocates of the emigration of the Germans. He constantly fought Bishop Klein’s position in his articles and public actions, saying that ‘the church should share its location with its parishioners.’⁹⁸

In addition to the numerous articles and discussions held with senior officials of the German state, in which he advocated emigration, Hans Bergel also became well known for other approaches in favour of those who wanted to leave Romania. Thus, in August 1980 it is reported in the documents of the Securitate that he intended to work together with Wilhelm Bruckner, chairman of the Association of the Transylvanian Saxons in the Federal Republic of Germany, in order to send a memorandum to the Hague on behalf of the Association. In this document Bergel and Bruckner were to accuse Bishop Klein of anti-emigration propaganda among Germans, and of not allowing the evangelical priests to settle abroad, thus supporting the policies of the Romanian government that failed to meet its commitments made at Helsinki.

They also intended to ask the German government to prohibit Bishop Klein from travelling to FRG, since in his contacts with different personalities and representatives of the emigrants, he supported and justified the fact that the Germans should remain in Romania.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Comunitatea preoților, “În legătură cu...”, cf. ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 23, f. 281.

⁹⁷ Comunitatea preoților, “În legătură cu...”, cf. ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 23, f. 285.

⁹⁸ Author’s personal interview with Hans Bergel.

⁹⁹ ACNSAS, DF, file no. 13381, vol. 20, f. 362.

An episode of the conflict between the *Landsmannschaft* and Bishop Klein occurred in the summer of 1973, from 10 to 11 June 1973, when the Bishop was invited to participate at the annual meeting of the Saxons, held in Dinkelsbühl. The Bishop decided not to attend the event. The main reason was that the *Landsmannschaft* was the organiser of the meeting. A document of the Securitate shows the detailed reasons, which led to the Bishop's decision, namely that, in his opinion, the *Landsmannschaft* dealt exclusively with the interests of the Saxons in the Federal Republic of Germany, favouring emigration, even illegal emigration, being in support of "those who leave the country fraudulently misusing a passport with a visa for temporary travel abroad"; that it did not show signs of "normalisation" of its relationship with Romania and it did not wish to establish relations with the Association *România*¹⁰⁰; that the *Landsmannschaft* was in a managerial crisis and its presence would strengthen the management of that time, without changing its attitude towards the Evangelical Church of Romania and towards "the legitimate representatives of the population of German origin in the Socialist Republic of Romania and towards the organs of the state". But as these real reasons could not be invoked because they would have generated a genuine scandal, to explain that he could not attend the meeting in Dinkelsbühl, Bishop Klein announced that he would receive the visit of the new Evangelic Bishop of Thuringia (The German Democratic Republic).¹⁰¹

The Bishop was unhappy with the efforts made by the *Landsmannschaft* to support emigration, while the Saxons who had emigrated were, in their turn, dissatisfied with the position of the Bishop and the Evangelical Church, which was considered to be too close to the communist authorities. For example, on 17 May 1976, in a discussion in Munich with a Saxon of Transylvania (who was an informer of the Securitate), Erhard Plesch (the President of the *Landsmannschaft*) expressed his disillusionment with the Evangelical Church and with the priests, considering that their attitude regarding the issue of immigration was dishonest. He stated: "If you talk to your Bishop or to any priest you visit, you hear only that there is only wealth and freedom, that there is nothing to complain about, etc. But every person in the street would confirm the contrary. I cannot understand the hypocrisy of the church, or the fear of reprisals, but in any case priests do not play a praiseworthy role in this matter [...] If until recently I had considered the church as a potential help in our work to find and know the truth, we will not do so in the future, because what we learn from the priests can be read in the newspapers."¹⁰²

But not all the reactions coming from the German emigrants were against Bishop Klein and his position. For example, the brothers Hans and Paul Philippi and several other representatives of the German emigrant priests advocated staying in Romania. Bishop Klein had positive relations with them, as they had shared objectives: preventing emigration.

¹⁰⁰ The Association *România* was a tool of Romanian authorities and of the Securitate, which conducted various cultural activities to influence and support the Germans who no longer lived in Romania, had a favourable attitude towards the regime from Bucharest and were against emigration.

¹⁰¹ ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 1, f. 173.

¹⁰² ACNSAS, DE, file no. 13381, vol. 6, f. 210v.

CONCLUSIONS

Bishop Albert Klein’s ultimate desire was to maintain the unity of the Saxon community in Transylvania at any cost, even against the inclinations of its members, which explained his anti-emigration position. The measures taken to pursue this objective along with his conciliatory position towards the communist authorities disappointed the priests, who expected him to change the relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the communist state on his election as bishop.

An analysis of his behaviour proves that, to prevent the emigration of the Saxons, it was essential for Bishop Klein to try to keep the priests in the country. Their influence on the population was very significant, and their departure would have increased the population’s inclination towards emigration. For example, in November 1984, during a conversation with the *Landsmannschaft*’s President (Wolfgang Bonfert), Bishop Klein said that “the intellectuals, among them the priests, emigrate in much higher proportions than rural workers and citizens. Thus, the number of priests who had emigrated is proportionally two and half higher than the corresponding number of parishioners. Therefore any priest inciting his parishioners to emigrate is irresponsible towards his community.”¹⁰³

On the days of the Revolution of 1989, being sick and obliged to stay at home, Bishop Klein was informed about what was happening in Sibiu by Wolfgang Rehner, the priest who remembers that the bishop rejoiced when he learned of the fall of communism. “On the days of the Revolution I spent a lot of time in the streets, and before returning home I used to visit the bishop first. We talked and he enjoyed our conversations. That was the last joy left to him, then he died.”¹⁰⁴

But before dying, on 8 February 1990, relieved from the totalitarian pressure, Bishop Klein publicly admitted to having made mistakes. His death, however, came before the exodus of the Germans from Romania, and implicitly of the Saxons’, whom he had tried to prevent from leaving for so many years. It is estimated that approx. 85% of the Saxons left Romania after 1990.¹⁰⁵ Even if he was motivated by the best feelings towards the community that he had shepherded, he might have been disappointed to see that the evolution of history did not justify his decisions.

The best conclusion about Albert Klein and his destiny may have been set forth by Hans Bergel: “Klein was a tragic figure. What could he have done, to revolt against Ceaușescu? What would this have contributed to? It would not have contributed to anything. I would have not wanted to be a bishop in a communist country at the time.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ ACNSAS, DE file no. 13381, vol. 35, f. 400.

¹⁰⁴ Author’s personal interview with Wolfgang Rehner. Priest. PhD in Theology. The interview was conducted by author on November 10, 2011, in Sibiu town, Sibiu district, also available in the personal archive of the author.

¹⁰⁵ See http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biserica_Evanghelic%C4%83_de_Confesiune_Augustan%C4%83_din_Rom%C3%A2nia (last visited January 4, 2017).

¹⁰⁶ Author’s personal interview with Hans Bergel.

KEY WORDS

Romania, Communism, emigration, Saxons, Evangelical Lutheran Church

COSMIN BUDEANĂ – researcher/expert, The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile, Bucharest, Romania. Post PhD Scholarship – “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca (2011–2013); PhD in History at “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca (2008 with thesis *The Perception of German Ethnicity by Transylvania Romanians after 1918. A Case Study: Hunedoara, Alba and Sibiu Districts*); MA in Oral History at “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca (1998); BA in History at “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca (1997). Coordinated many research projects (selective): *Survival and Socio-professional Integration Strategies in the Families of Former Political Prisoners in the First Two Decades of the Communist Regime* (2015–2017); *Prison Experiences in Communist Romania (2007–2012)*; *The Image of the Other in Transylvania after 1918. Case Study Romanian-German Mixed Communities from Hunedoara, Alba, Sibiu Counties* (2001–2002). Published many books (the latest): *The Perception of German Ethnicity by Transylvania Romanians after 1918. A Case Study: Hunedoara, Alba and Sibiu Districts. An Oral History Research*, Târgovişte, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing, 2016, (author, in Romanian); *The Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe: Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda*, LIT Verlag, Berlin-Münster-Wien-Zürich-London 2016, 798 p. (co-editor, in English). Published many articles (the latest): *Model sowiecki i początki kolektywizacji rolnictwa w komunistycznej Rumunii (The Soviet Model and the Beginnings of Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Romania)* in Tomasz Osieński (ed.), „Rewolucja społeczna” czy „dzika przebudowa”? Społeczne skutki przekształceń własnościowych w Polsce (1944–1956), Institute for National Remembrance, Lublin (in Polish); *The Last Stage of Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania. Repressive and Restrictive Methods against the Rural Population*, in Sorin Radu, Cosmin Budeancă (eds.), *The Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe: Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda*, LIT Verlag, Berlin-Münster-Wien-Zürich-London 2016 (in English); *The Romanians’ Perception on the Social-Economic Situation and Occupations of Germans from Hunedoara, Alba and Sibiu Counties (Romania) in the Interwar Period*, in Ottmar Traşcă, Virgiliu Țărău (coord.), *O identitate secundă. Dennis John Deletant, Istoria, România și României (A Second Identity. Dennis John Deletant, History, Romania and Romanians)*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2016 (in Romanian); *A romániai németek Sovjetunióba történő 1945-ös deportálása román szemszögből. Esettanulmány: Hunyad, Fehér és Szeben megyék (The Romanians’ Perception of the Deportation of Germans from Romania to Soviet Union in 1945. Case Study: Hunedoara, Alba and Sibiu County)*, in *Levéltári Közlemények. Nyolcvanhatodik évfolyam. 1945 – Korszakhatár*, Budapest, Archivum Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 2015 (in Hungarian); *The Merchants of Human Beings: The Securitate’s Role in the Emigration of Romania’s Germans (1978–1989)*, in “Transylvanian Review”, vol. XXIV, no. 1, Spring 2015, pp. 59–78 (in English); *The “Comrades”, Propaganda and the Collectivization of Agriculture in Eastern Europe. The Ploughmen’s Front in Romania*, in “Historický časopis”, 2015, 63, 1, pp. 113–135, Bratislava, Slovakia (with Sorin Radu, Flavius Solomon, in English).

„Kościół nie emigruje”. Biskup Albert Klein a emigracja kapłanów ewangelicko-luterańskich z Rumunii (1969–1989)

W komunistycznej Rumunii problemy polityczne, gospodarcze i społeczne zmusiły wielu ludzi do emigracji, a Sasi siedmiogrodzcy (Niemcy z Siedmiogrodu) nie byli w tej kwestii wyjątkiem. Rządzący Rumunią jednak nie pozwalali im na opuszczanie kraju, wyobrażali sobie nawet, że ich władza sięga poza jego granice. Aby powstrzymać emigrację, władze komunistyczne wykorzystywały wiele sposobów. Posłużyli się także przywódcą Kościoła ewangelicko-luterańskiego, bp. Albertem Kleinem. W artykule przeanalizowano niektóre aspekty roli biskupa w wychodźstwie Sasów siedmiogrodzkich w latach 1969–1989, a zwłaszcza w zapobieganiu emigracji kapłanów ewangelicko-luterańskich, przywódców społeczności niemieckiej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Rumunia, komunizm, emigracja, Sasi siedmiogrodzcy, Kościół ewangelicko-luterański