

From the newspaper Romania Libera June 22, 2001

Luxury Mansions of the Romanian Rulers

The homeland is eternally grateful to its elected representatives
Useful addresses for your address book

The great theft and the shameless seizure of luxury mansions in Romania started in the very beginning of the year 1990. At that time, the population was still confused about the then recent events of the December 1989 Romanian Revolution.

Those who placed themselves in leadership positions knew from the very beginning how to take advantage of their status and how to manipulate public opinion in their favor. These new Romanian rulers easily managed to overcome public scrutiny and they installed themselves into the very positions recently held by rulers of the ousted communist regime.

The first “great stasher” of protocol residencies was the Prime-Minister Petre Roman himself, who became overnight an ad-hoc real estate agent of sorts for those powerful.

Let’s look at some significant examples, among the hundreds of real estate abuses that happened after 1990.

Opportunists of Yesterday and Today

A first abuse committed by Petre Roman was that to gain a personal advantage. In 1990, Petre Roman abusively modified the Government Ordinance No. 115/1990 and removed the dwelling on Gogol Street No. 2 from the jurisdiction of the Ministry for the National Economy. Mr. Roman and his family (wife and two daughters) moved into the dwelling on Gogol Street No. 2. The dwelling is located in “Zone 0” of Bucharest and has 220 square meters of living space, composed of 11 rooms on three levels (including basement), 153 square meters of utility space, 3 bathrooms, 30 square meters of balcony, and a refrigerator room.

Which is the abuse of power, in this case? At that time, Petre Roman was already the owner of a beautiful apartment on the stylish Calea Victoriei 83/81, apartment 18.

Mihai Bujor Sion

He, as well as his wife, actress Ioana Pavelescu, are Ion Iliescu’s protégées. They obtained a residence on Gogol Street No. 3. The dwelling has 172 square meters and includes 9 rooms, 122 square meters of utility space and bathrooms, balcony, laundry room and a sauna of 185 square meters. It is true that the rent for this residence was 2,000 lei, as expected (at the end of 1991!) Not to mention that the dwelling was completely furnished (with furniture Bonanza and the kitchen equipped with stainless steel utensils and appliances, etc). Nice for a couple, isn’t it?

Minister Valeriu Pop

He obtained from Petre Roman a residence on Moliere Street No. 4. The approval note for this dwelling contained a stamp stating “approved-urgent” and it was signed by Petre Roman. Next, Roman made a little “chess move” with the residencies and asked Pop to move into the dwelling of the former communist official Gheorghe David, on Herastrau Street No. 6. Based

on these facts, the Control Corps of the Prime-Minister concluded that Petre Roman was guilty of “abuse of power while in office, because he allocated several luxurious and spacious mansions to his friends”. Minister Pop already had a residence on Romania Boulevard No. 41/A. Even though the municipal administration did not agree with the swap of residences between Minister Pop and Gheorghe David, Petre Roman intervened and urgently solved the problem.

Ion Gheorghe Maurer

Here are a few words about some former leaders of the communist era. The now deceased former Prime-Minister of Romania, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, lived for more than 30 years in a huge and superb mansion with 16 rooms on Aviatorilor Boulevard No. 106. Please make a note that the former communist Prime-Minister never paid any money for rent, electricity, maintenance, phone, and other utilities while living in his residence. When, in 1994, a court ordered his eviction, Ion Gheorghe Maurer allegedly said: “I will not leave this house! The ones who gave this order of eviction are judges just like I am a priest. Ilescu must help me now, just as I helped him when he needed help.” The best part of this story is that Comrade Maurer had another dwelling during all this time that was located in a “proletarian (blue-collar)* ” part of Bucharest, called Bordei.

Florea Ceausescu

Is the brother of the “supreme commander”, also nicknamed “the red baron”. In the 1970s, he had a mansion at Snagov, which unfortunately had no lake frontage. After 1990, the former mayor of Snagov, Teodor Biris, made Florea Ceausescu a present. The mayor gave him 800 square meters of wooded land so that the property would have direct access to the lake. The 800 square meters of wooded land were simply taken from two elderly women, residents of Snagov, named Steliana Nechifor and Maria Berlinschi. A recreation center for the former Romanian Communist Youth Organization was planned to be built on the land on which Florea Ceausescu built his mansion, but this did not matter because Florea Ceausescu was the brother of the former Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

Stefan Andrei

Stefan Andrei was the former Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs during the communist era. He was forced to leave his residence from Berna Street No. 7 because the property had been nationalized and the former owners reclaimed it.

Please don't pity him, because he did not end up in the streets. The Ex-Minister has another dwelling on Dorobanti Street and another one in the village of Snagov.

Here is a list of a few other privileged people from the communist era who enjoyed living for free in nationalized homes:

General Constantin Olteanu on Herastrau Street No. 6

Ion Patan on Helesteului Street No. 31

Traian Dudas on Herastrau Street No. 26

Ion Ceausescu (another brother of the Dictator) on Mircea Eliade Street No. 4 (he also had a house in Tunari).

Ilie Ceausescu (another brother of the Dictator) on Bruxelles Street No. 3.

Ceausescu shares the mansion on Mircea Eliade Street, No. 4, with Marius Tarlea, the Vice-President of the Columna bank.

General Nicolae Plesita on Pictor Negulici Street, No.32

Richard Winter on Helesteului Street, No. 16

Returning to the present, we must also mention General Corneliu Diamandescu, the former chief of the General Commandment of Police and the coordinator of the “mineriada” * * from June 13-15, 1990. He managed to put his hands on Gogu Radulescu’s mansion on Eliza Zamfirescu Street.

Lica Secares

He is Ion Iliescu’s close friend and advisor and also one of Ioan Talpes’ very good friends. He obtained the nationalized mansion on Crangului Street No. 24, which belonged to the engineer Hodos. The Hodos family initially regained in the Courts ownership of their mansion, but the appeals proceedings of the Attorney General of Romania to annul decisions favoring rightful owners, resulted in Secares becoming the owner of Mr. Hodos’ property.

Let’s mention some more names of privileged people who entered into possession of nationalized homes.

Victor Athanasie Stanculescu on Helesteului Street, No. 8

"Cico" Dumitrescu on Herastrau Street, No. 4

Dumitru Cioflina on Crangului Street, No. 4

Corneliu Vadim Tudor on Dr. Lister Street, No. 6, next door neighbor with

Radu Vasile on Dr.Lister Street, Nr. 8

Virgil Magureanu on Pictor Rosenthal Street, No13

A Forgotten Parliamentary Report

Between 1994 and 1995, the affair “Apartamentul (the Apartment)” which was officially called “The Report of The Joint Investigative Commission regarding illegalities in dealing with dwellings for members and staff of the parliament, government officials, and the presidency between 1990 and 1994”, stirred a great deal of turbulence in the Romanian political arena, in the media, and in the public opinion.

According to this report, 147 Romanian officials, as well as some of their families and friends, illegally entered into the possession of luxury residencies in “Zone 0” of Bucharest. According to Romanian law, protocol dwellings are “available for elected and/or nominated officials for the duration of their public mandate”. But the Romanian Government transferred hundreds of residential units from its administrative jurisdiction into the jurisdiction of the City of Bucharest. Thus, luxury homes were sold for unbelievable low prices to those who occupied them.

The uncontested champion of illegal real estate dealings was Gheorghe Somanescu, the former director of SC Herastrau-Nord (former ICRA Herastrau). He illegally gave homes to some key persons, and these persons guaranteed Somanescu’s immunity up to the present.

Summer of 1992

Victor Opaschi, past and present counsel to the President, according to his own declaration, was “warned and forced” by Somanescu to move into the mansion of Eugen Jebeleanu (poet),

where Jebeleanu's son, Tudor, intended to create a museum. Thus, "warned and forced", Opaschi had no other choice than to move into the mansion.

The Mansion on Gradina Bordei Street, No. 55

In 1994, the courts acknowledged the ownership right over this mansion to the rightful owners. At the same time, Somanescu illegally gave the mansion to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is no other than Mircea Geoana, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Kiseleff Street, No. 27

The rightful owners of this mansion were involved in legal proceeding to recuperate their confiscated home, but this fact did not hinder Somanescu to give it to three of his friends, Eugen Plesa, Jamal Kourbissa, and Victor Niculescu.

And since we are at this point, let's discuss Somanescu's wealth. In 1994, Somanescu was awarded the title of "revolutionary" which gives numerous advantages to the holder. Somanescu has a residence with 3 rooms at Ghermanesti, another residence with 4 rooms at Otopeni, a mansion at Paris, an apartment on Caragea Voda Street, No. 9-11, another apartment on Unirii Boulevard, No. 10/1/B5, another apartment on Unirii Boulevard, No. 10/1/J5, and his old apartment from before 1989. The revolutionary Somanescu is the owner of several parcels of prime land: 1000 square meters at Snagov, 5000 square meters at Paris, 1000 square meters at Vidra, 2000 square meters at Ciorogarla, and 1000 square meters at Otopeni.

But let's continue with the "Apartamentul" report and name some of those who illegally took advantage of luxury residencies and bought them at very cheap prices from the state fund:

Victor Babiuc and wife Lucia on Libertatii Boulevard, No. 20, 4 rooms.

Traian Basescu on Aviatorilor Boulevard, No. 57, 7 rooms, 290 square meters.

Silviu Brucan on Helesteului Street, No. 26, 7 rooms, 180 square meters (basement + ground level + first level + garage)

Radu Campeanu on Dorobanti Avenue, No. 45

Nicolae Cerveni on Nicolae Ionescu Street, No. 10

Traian Chebeleu on Dr. Lister Street, No. 63, 4 rooms

Eugen Dijmarescu on A. Vlaicu Street, No. 42-46, 6 rooms

Mircea Dinescu on Aviatorilor Boulevard, No. 69, 14 rooms, 346 square meters

"Cico" Dumitrescu on Herastrau Street, No. 4

Marian Enache on Cantemir Boulevard, No. 1, 4 rooms

Oliviu Gherman on Kiseleff, No. 20, 4 rooms

Viorel Hrebenciuc on Calea Victoriei, No.101,4 rooms

Cazimir Ionescu on Docentilor Street, No. 9 (basement +ground level + first level + attic)

Dan Iosif on Calea Victoriei, No. 155, swapped his former residence on Armindeului Street, No. 7 with this one

Mugur Isarescu on A. Vlaicu Street, No. 42-46, 4 rooms

Liviu Maior - Libertatii Street, No. 22

Ovidiu Musetescu on Th. Sperantia Street, 4 rooms

Adrian Nastase on Aleea Trandafirilor, No.4, after in 1991 he donated to his father-in-law, Angelo Miculescu, his residence on Aviator Jean Texier Street, No. 4

Misu Negritoiu bought 4 rooms on Mexico Street, No. 2, after he sold his own residence

Sergiu Nicolaescu occupied the ground level of the mansion on Zambaccian Street, No. 21, plus 5 rooms basement as film studio

Andrei Paunescu lived with his father Adrian Paunescu on Dionisie Lupu Street, No. 84, but Hrebenciuc gave him from RA-APPS, 3 rooms on Turda Street, No. 120/38/5

Dan Mircea Popescu received in 1991 from the President, an apartment on Cantemir Boulevard, which he rented, then he swapped his residence with his brother who subsequently bought the apartment. The same D. M. Popescu bought an apartment on A. Vlaicu Street, No. 42-46 where he registered his mother who was already renting a state owned residence.

Adrian Severin had a house Dr. Felix Street, No. 97, but he requested another residence because the one he had “was not large enough to fulfill his job”. He received a new residence on Kiseleff, No. 24 and signed “I declare that I do not have another residence”.

Nicolae Spiroiu bought the apartment on Unirii Boulevard, No. 5 from the Ministry of National Defense which he then donated to his children. He received another residence on Aviatorilor, No. 102.

Teodor Stolojan already had a private property on Aleea Callatis, No. 3, but he received and bought in installments 6 rooms on A. Vlaicu Street, No. 42-46

Razvan Theodorescu was property owner on Hatmanul Arbore Street, No. 3-7 (4 rooms) but he received another mansion (basement + ground level + first level) on Herastrau Street, No. 35

Virginia Gheorghiu is spokesperson of the Government. Even though she already had a house, she received a residence on Ilie Pintilie Boulevard, No. 4.

Alexandru Mironov already had a house on Aleea Lotrioara, No. 10, but he received another 3 rooms on Calea Victoriei, No.153, which he subsequently bought.

by Adrian O. Vasiliu

* one of the most exclusive residential areas, situated in North Bucharest near the lakes

** the miners were organized and ordered by the secret services to invade the city of Bucharest and to terrorize people in order to stop the democratic forces from gaining ground in the situation created after the revolution. The crimes committed were not investigated as of today. Iliescu as well as Constantinescu Governments prevented any disclosure of the truth.