



TRADING GERMANS

A FILM BY RAZVAN GEORGESCU

produced by HI FILM (Bucharest) & Februar Film (Berlin) & Razvan Georgescu



*How was it possible to trade an entire ethnic group, appr. 245.000 Germans, out of Communist Romania between 1968 and 1989?
What were the reasons for the vanishing of a 850 years cultural tradition from Romania within 22 years, a historical blink of an eye?*

*What is the price of a human being?
How do you calculate the price of liberty?*

THE STORY

The highly confidential deal between the governments of Western Germany and Romania's Secret Service SECURITATE to buy/sell the entire ethnic German population out of communist Romania is a unique case in the Cold War history. This systematically planned operation with the code name „*Kanaf*“ has been pursued constantly and with high priority by every German chancellor and government and by Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his Secret Service Securitate since 1968 until 1989. The deal generated approx. 3 billion Deutschmark, various cars, embargoed computers for the Securitate database and even surveillance technology for the Romanian Secret Service. Thus, the ones who left, unvoluntarily helped to repress the ones left behind.

This trade also meant the loss of an 850 year old German culture on Romania's territory.

The Germans from Romania were returned to their ancestor's homeland in a secret act, for cash and with no receipts. Germany gained in return approx. 245.000 mainly well trained ethnic Germans, a future Nobel prize winner for literature – Herta Müller - among them.

What does it mean to be part of a trade that changes your life and not to be able to take influence on this process?

How do you define „homeland“ if you are a mere negotiation object and historical circumstances doom you to commute across a tormented European continent?

What did it mean, how did it feel to be a „German ethnic minority“ after WW II. in Romania?

TRADING GERMANS delivers an emotional first hand account of one of the biggest cases of human trafficking during the Cold War.

A story of greed, courage, hope and remorse.

THE FILM

The film takes mainly an emotional and intimate look on the personal stories of those who have been the object of this secret deal.



Johann Lippet, writer
(8.500,- DM)



Hansi Schmidt, handball player
(72.000,- DM)



Karl Hann, ecological farmer
(7.000,- DM)



Helmut & Christine Bader, IT specialist & teacher
(46.000,- DM)



Erika Lazar & family, medical assistant
(48.000,- DM)



Hartwig Ochsenfeld, translator
(7.000,- DM)

On a second level the film also unveils the confidential political mechanisms behind this unique trade during the Cold War.



Stelian Octavian Andronic
Securitate officer- Romanian negotiator
(1981-1986)



Dr. Heinz-Günther Hüscher
German undercover negotiator
(1968-1989)



Viorel „Bebe“ Bucur
Police captain

And on a third level the film highlights the influence of the „grand politics“ on this secret transaction.



Four Germans chancellors and nine German governments of various political couleur have supported unconditionally this secret deal.



Klaus Kinkel
Genscher's chief of staff (1968-1974)
German Foreign Minister (1992-1998)



Hans-Dietrich Genscher
German Minister of Interior (1969-1974)
German Foreign Minister (1974-1992)



Horst Teltschik
chancellor Helmut Kohl's chief of staff & foreign
policy adviser (1981-1998)

Was trading the Germans out of Romania a humanitarian act? A reprehensible transaction? A cynical transfer of labour force? A good or a bad business for Romania and Germany? Or even an act of ethnic and cultural cleansing?

As events unfolded and years passed on, some sections and employees of the Romanian Passport Services and of the Securitate , took extra advantage of this mechanism. Starting with the early 1980's, Securitate employees asked for significant amounts of money directly from Germans in Romania in order to get them a better place on Dr. Hüsich' list or even passports within days. This way the Romanian authorities charged money not only from the German government according to the secret deal but also privately, from the German individuals in Romania. This was a conundrum for the people willing to pay the extra money (between 20,000 and 45,000 marks), as possession of foreign currency was strictly forbidden in Romania. The money collected by these intermediaries was not officially accounted for anywhere. It adds up to several hundred millions Deutschmark.

During the only direct meeting between Dr. Hüsich and Ceauşescu in December 1989, the dictator denied the existence of the confidential agreement regarding the trading off he Germans from Romania with the code name "Kanal/Recuperarea" and refused to receive any more money for emigration permits. The real motivation of his sudden change of attitude is unknown. Maybe it was because Romania had recently repaid all its external debts and the dictator didn't want any intervention in the internal affairs of the country. In any case three weeks later Ceausescu died in front of a firing squad. The following year another 115.000 ethnic Germans fled almost in panic to West Germany. No money has been paid for them. Less than 38.000 Germans are living in Romania today.



PRODUCTION DETAILS and CREW

88 minutes, DCP/ Hdcam, English and Romanian versions, 2014.

Produced by Hi Film Productions (Romania), Februar Film (Germany) and Razvan Georgescu.

Coproduced by: HBO Romania, MDR, RBB, supported by: Media Program of the EU, Hessische Filmfoerderung, SRTv and Robert Bosch Stiftung.

Executive producers: Ada & Alexandru Solomon (alecusolomon@hotmail.com), Florian Hartung.

Camera: Alexandru Solomon, Sami Karim, Marius Besu.

Editing: Wolfgang Lehmann, Catalin Cristutiu.

Music: Remus Georgescu, Anatol Stefanet/Trigon.

THE DIRECTOR



RAZVAN GEORGESCU (r.georgescu@gmx.net)

Born in Targu Mures in Transylvania/Romania in 1965, he spent his youth in the city of Timisoara/Banat. Attended the German school and studied philology at the university of Bucharest. Based in Frankfurt Germany since 1990. He has been working as a director and producer of programmes and documentaries with a special focus on recent history and culture for several broadcasters (ARTE, ZDF, BBC, ARD, TVR). Attended Documentary Campus 2002 and the Pygmalion initiative for scriptwriting. Founder and owner of PELEGRIN FILM s.r.l. in Timisoara, Romania, specialised on internationally co-produced documentaries.

Filmography (excerpts):

TESTIMONY (2010/ 90 min.)- director & producer (ARTE/ZDF, TVR, SF)

CHILDREN OF THE DECREE (2004/ 52 & 75 min.) – producer and co-author with Florin Iepan (ARTE/TVR, WDR)

THE H.P. SYNDROM (2003/ 52 min,) – director (ARTE, ZDF, 3sat)

THE MONTE CRISTO FILE (2001/ 52 min.) – director (ARTE, 3 sat)

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