RÎMARU

BUTCHER OF BUCHAREST

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Prologue

The spring and early summer of 1970 was an eventful and momentous period for Romania. April and May saw a combination of unusual and extreme weather conditions. Torrential rains were accompanied by high winds and a heatwave which melted the frozen icefields of the Carpathian mountaintops. In the first weeks of May, the rivers rising in the Carpathians or flowing down from the high ground into the Danube began to overflow, signalling the start of a notable disaster.

The Danube rises in Germany's Black Forest and runs through Austria and Hungary down to its Delta in South East Romania. Famed for its beauty and benevolence, the Danube has also been, by tradition, the most important transport and communications link between and within the regions it serves. As it nears its final destination, the river is fed by a multitude of streams rushing downhill from the Carpathians to join it, and these waters nourish the most heavily populated and intensely cultivated plains and valleys in the region. Within this landscape, floods are not unusual. 1970, however, was exceptional. In one hectic month, between the 12th of May and the middle of June, the floods killed more than two hundred people, drowned over a hundred thousand cattle and farm animals, and destroyed thousands of houses, leaving a quarter of a million people homeless. Low-lying villages were evacuated to centres

higher up, the majority of farmland was inundated and industry went into recession.

After a fortnight, the waters had begun to recede, but another bout of rain and snow restarted the cycle, and it was another three weeks before the floods finally began to retreat.

The event was cataclysmic for a countryside still struggling to come to terms with the massive disruptions unleashed in previous decades by various official policies. The impact was even more troubling for a nation in the grip of various anxieties about its political future and identity.

In March 1965, Nicolae Ceauşescu, the new General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, had declared its independence from the diktats of the Kremlin, and reinforced the message later on in 1968 by refusing to join his Warsaw Pact neighbours in suppressing the Czech revolt. As the floods progressed, international aid and relief agencies began pouring in to assist the regime, now seen in the West as an Iron Curtain maverick. Ceauşescu himself, after a brief visit to Moscow, toured the affected areas, and made a point of being seen directing operations in Brăila and Galați, significant areas because of their heavy industry, storage facilities and proximity to the Danube ports. The nation had also been mobilised to meet the emergency. Public health officials and volunteers toured the country warning about the dangers of drinking untreated water, and inoculating the citizenry against typhoid. The military, reinforced by an army of construction workers and engineers, worked tirelessly to repair and replace dikes and flood defences. In this atmosphere, Ceauşescu seized every opportunity to take advantage of the mood of solidarity to

reiterate his message of independence from Moscow, and to proclaim the unique status of the national identity.

In later years, Romanians would look back on this period as part of the regime's 'good years'. On the other hand, it was this same moment, the time of the floods, which unleashed the most dangerous and unrelenting predator the nation had ever seen.

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The 15 most serious crimes of which Rîmaru was convicted.

8/9 May 1970 – Elena Oprea – premeditated murder
1/2 June 1970 – Florica Marcu – rape, mutilation and cannibalism
19/20 July 1970 – OCL Confecția store – theft of public property
24 July 1970 – Margareta Hanganu – assault, wounding and aggravated theft
22/23 November 1970 – Olga Bărăitaru – attempted murder, rape and aggravated theft
15/16 February 1971 – Gheorghița Sfetcu – attempted murder and aggravated theft
17/18 February 1971 – Elisabeta Florea – assault and attempted murder
4/5 March 1971 – Fănica Ilie – premeditated murder, rape and aggravated theft
8/9 April 1971 – Gheorghița Popa – murder, rape, cannibalism and aggravated theft

1/2 May 1971 – Stana Sărăcin – assault, wounding and attempted rape
4/5 May 1971 – Mihaela Ursu – murder, rape
4/5 May 1971 – Maria Iordache – assault and attempted murder
6/7 May 1971 – Margareta Enache – assault and attempted murder
6/7 May 1971 – Elena Buluci – assault and attempted murder
7 May 1971 – Iuliana Frunzinschi – assault, aggravated theft of public property and aggravated theft of private property

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The Rîmaru family had its origins in Wallachia, the Principality which united with Moldavia during the 19th century to create modern day Romania. More precisely, the family sprang from Lesser Wallachia, now known as Oltenia, a patch of land lying between the Danube, the Southern Carpathians and the Olt River.

Oltenia shared the chequered history of its larger twin, Greater Wallachia (Muntenia), with a few special wrinkles of its own. The region came into existence as part of the First Bulgarian Empire, and after the 10th century, Hungary and Bulgaria jostled for a couple of hundred years over dominance of the territory. From the 15th century, however, the Ottoman Empire took control, a situation which persisted, only interrupted by brief periods of Russian occupation, until the unification of 1859 brought the Kingdom of Romania into existence.

Oltenia's history, however, had its own special flavour. Shaped by the politics of hundreds of years of anti-Ottoman struggle, the region threw up some of the figures who continue to dominate the imagination of Romanians. For example, Vlad the Impaler, the 15th century ruler and inspiration for the 19th century legend of Dracula, was famous for the bloodthirstiness of his reign and his campaigns against the Ottomans. He flourished in Northern Oltenia and gives us the first link between a ruler and the establishment of Bucharest as the administrative centre of the district.

By the first decades of the 20th century, the region could display a distinct pattern of leaders who were radical, ruthless and unfailingly violent. By tradition these figures had certain characteristics which were valued and endlessly celebrated in their environment. They were violent. They were self willed and rebellious, almost by reflex. The only authority they would accept had to be validated by the force of their own instincts, and they had the rare talent of being able to escape punishment or penalties for their murders and thefts.

A typical historical figure who became an Oltenian folk hero was the 19th century hajduk (bandit) Iancu Jianu, who was born into a family of boyars (hereditary aristocrats) in Caracal, which was also, later on, the same small town where Ion Rîmaru's parents, Florea and Ecaterina, grew up.

Jianu owned land and slaves, but he was vociferous about his opposition to the Ottoman policy of appointing Greek (Phanariot) rulers in preference to the local boyars. Returning home one day to find that he was being taxed, he killed the tax collector and ran away to assemble a band of outlaws which proceeded to rob and murder people all over

Wallachia. He was caught and imprisoned in 1812, but, after his relatives intervened, he was released. He returned to his life of brigandage and continued even after being pardoned. Finally, in 1817, he was again caught and sentenced to death by hanging, but he was saved by an old custom by which a condemned man could be reprieved if a woman proposes to marry him and he accepts. Safely married, Jianu settled down and lived comfortably for another three decades, even serving for a time as local official.

Another native of Caracal, closer to contemporary times, was Gheorghe Argeşanu, who was appointed Prime Minister by King Carol II in 1938, after the assassination of his predecessor Armand Călinescu by the fascist party, the Iron Guard. Among his first actions were the public display of the assassins' bodies, and the arrest and execution (without trial) of three Iron Guard members – in each county. Later on, after the Iron Guard took over the Romanian government, Argeşanu was killed as part of the massacre at Jilava prison when over 60 political prisoners were murdered in one night.

All this was part of an active living memory in Caracal.

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Ask the average Romanian about Caracal and their first reaction will be surprise that a foreigner has even heard of the place. The next reaction will be, more or less, derogatory. "Caracal?" "It's nowhere." "A hole." "The most depressing place I've ever been in." And so on.

Romanians, therefore, seem to talk about Caracal in much the same way as Americans mention hillbilly and

redneck territory. There is even an archaic witticism that exploits the Romanian love of wordplay, which turns on the meaning of *căruță cu proști*, an expression signifying a carriage/cart conveying fools or idiots. Where did the *căruță cu proști* crash/unload its passengers, the joke runs – answer, Caracal!

In contemporary times, Caracal is notable for being the town where the local authority built a proud new development, but then found that the contractors had forgotten to remove all their equipment, so that the walls of the new block of housing also enclosed an enormous crane.

It goes without saying that comments and stories of this kind do an injustice to Caracal. By the end of the 19th century, Caracal was the region's second most important city, at the centre of one of the most important agricultural districts in the country. The town had a moderately stable population, upwards of 30,000, and a notable role in the collection, storage and transportation of Oltenia's agricultural products. In this sense, it was an accurate reflection of Oltenia's status.

On the other side of the equation, the Oltenian population suffered a significant degree of fragmentation and pressure as a result of their own prominence in the politics and economy of the surrounding regions. Take the issue of agriculture. Oltenia was famous for its production of grain, a crop which imposed different demands to those coming from small scale peasant holdings. Until the latter part of the 19th century grain allowed for large scale landownership by boyar families, and, for a workforce composed of Roma slaves, corvée labour[1], and the rural poor.

1 A feudal hangover in which workers were attached to large estates and largely unpaid.

This was very far from a smiling landscape inhabited by a stable peasantry. Instead, most of the population were landless peasants, labourers plagued by a parasitic class of bandits (hajduks), and dependent on the whims of great landowners or boyar families. On top of all this, the entire population, both the privileged and the disenfranchised, were mere units in an economic and political structure shaped and controlled by foreign powers.

The Wallachian revolution of 1848 was an attempt to resolve some of these issues by wrestling local autonomy from the Russian administration, whose rule had been licensed by the Ottomans. It was led by a group of young officers, heavily influenced by the Romantic and Liberal trends driving revolutions all over Europe in that year. Under Russian pressure, the Ottomans suppressed the revolt, but, in its aftermath, a passionate debate sprang up which led to significant changes in the politics of the region. This period saw the emancipation of Roma slaves and the abolition of the corvée system, while clear outlines of future land reform were drawn up and massively supported by the peasants. These plans, however, were delayed and quashed by the landlords, and land reform went on the back burner for another generation. 15 years later, redistribution began in earnest, but the amount of land allocated to the peasants was tiny and these holdings were then taxed and regulated to such an extent that most of their owners were driven back into destitution. Another 50 years of intensifying poverty climaxed in the Peasants Revolt of 1907, which started in Moldavia but rapidly spread to Oltenia, and threatened, for a time, to set off a full blown revolution. Contemporary estimates suggest that about 3,000 people were killed

during the army's ruthless crushing of the rebellion. Later on, eyewitnesses claimed that the regime's historians were exaggerating the figures, but there is no doubt that the peasants' revolt was a desperate response to desperate conditions.

By now, everyone of any importance knew about the peasants' disaffection and its causes, yet it was another 15 years before there was another attempt at land reform. Once again, however, the reforms did little to ameliorate the grinding poverty of the countryside. By the outset of World War Two, agriculture accounted for over 70% of Romania's national product, but half the arable land was owned by 8% of the landowners.

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Little is known about Florea Rîmaru's early life before he was recruited into the army, but the fact that he joined as a common soldier and served throughout the conflict is a significant indication of his position in the society and his prospects. Given the history and the infrastructure of the region, the sons of the landless rural population in Oltenia were living on borrowed time.

Anyone who could arrange it escaped, joining the growing urban centres like Bucharest, or moving further afield. The great Romanian sculptor Brâncuşi left the life of an infant sheepherder to work in Craiova, the major city of the region, then moved to Bucharest, and from there to Munich, before travelling to Paris. Later on, the future dictator, Nicolae Ceauşescu, born in rural Oltenia around the same time as Florea Rîmaru, arrived in Bucharest at the age of 11, to

follow his destiny.[2]

Florea Rîmaru was one of those who remained, part of the population pool available for recruitment, and the most notable fact about his army service was that he survived World War Two. The army he joined started its war on the Eastern Front, fighting with the Axis Powers against the Russians. It is estimated that a quarter of a million Romanian soldiers died in that campaign. Later on, the fascist Iron Guard government used elements of the army to pursue some of the most vicious aspects of the Nazis' anti-Semitic policies. When King Michael took Romania into the Allied camp, the army was committed to fighting their former allies in the German and Hungarian forces, driving through Moldavia and Wallachia down into Oltenia and across the Danube. The battle of Turda saw an entire month of the bloodiest fighting of the campaign. Survival was a lottery.

After the war, Florea married Ecaterina and they lived in Caracal, but there was nothing about their personal histories or environment which would have guaranteed a happy, settled existence. Florea drank, and, according to some reports, beat his wife daily. He had no skills and owned nothing. There was nothing to hold the couple in Caracal, and the next stop was Corabia, a small Danube port facing Bulgaria across the river.

Under the postwar Communist regime, Corabia was

2 One of the boyars who was most prominent in arguing the peasants' case for land reform in the wake of the 1848 revolution was named Ceauşescu. It is not clear whether the dictator was related to him, but it is an ironical footnote to the career of a politician who was an avid supporter of the expropriation involved in the collectivisation of agricultural resources.

about to diversify out of its role as a trans-shipment area into becoming a busy industrial centre with such enterprises as a sugar mill and a furniture manufacturing plant. There was work in Corabia, but, if Caracal was 'nowhere' ,Corabia was a sort of post restante to nowhere. After the excitements and traumas of the war, Florea was bored, depressed and angry, his state of mind complicated by the fact that he was convinced he had syphilis (lues), and, by his own account, he was debilitated by the illness in the two years before his son, Ion, was born in Corabia, on the 12th of October 1946.

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On the surface, Corabia can boast some impressive features - an Orthodox cathedral, a remarkable Roman ruin (Castrum Sucidava), and a monument to the town's role in the Romanian War of Independence, while the riverside walks offer a succession of stunning views over the Danube.

In 1946, however, Corabia was a small port and border crossing, ravaged by war, whose inhabitants numbered less than 20,000. The river offered an easy passage in and out of the town, so individuals came and went at an even faster rate than the rest of the county, leaving behind a fragmented and unstable population, largely dependent on their role in the business of storage and trans-shipment. In the circumstances, the town had little to offer a young man like Florea, except drink, casual labour, and a series of unwelcome responsibilities.

The Rîmarus lived in 109 Timiș Street, a house belonging to Ecaterina's parents, Florea and Maria Ciocan. Timiș

Street was a side street of small and largely dilapidated properties, which ran across the main boulevards, at some distance from the pleasant views of the river, and on the other side of the town centre. There were two more children, Cornel, who was a boy nine years younger than Ion, and Georgeta Maria, five years younger.

Ion's health was delicate from early on. At the age of six he was treated for pneumonia, and when he turned sixteen he was committed to hospital with hepatitis. Then when he was eighteen he contracted gastritis which became aggravated while he was undergoing military training in a unit of pontoons at Turnu Măgurele. About two months after joining the army he was diagnosed during a medical inspection and sent to the hospital in Ploiești where he spent two months being treated for a duodenal ulcer.

Apart from all this, Ion Rîmaru, by all accounts, had a difficult and troubled childhood. These reports, however, were gathered in the wake of Rîmaru's arrest and trial, as an official part of the subsequent investigation. It is not hard to imagine the response of the average citizen in that time, when asked about the childhood of a notorious killer by a member of the Militia or Securitate forces. Few people were likely to reply that Ion was a charming little chap with a sunny disposition. Corabia, in addition, was a tiny place, which, like the rest of the country, was going through a ferment of change, without the big city safety valves of anonymity and indifference.

The new postwar regime had, early on, identified children, especially the children of the previously oppressed proletariat, as an essential element in demonstrating the benefits of socialist equality. It was these children, mostly from a

'healthy' (proletarian) background, who would become 'new' men and women, and inherit the new world. Children, therefore, were an essential backdrop to every parade, and every display of civic identity, marching, singing, and waving flags. It was children who inhabited the healthy activities of the Pioneers[3] and exemplified the disciplined virtues of socialist education. Out of all the conceivable moments in history, this time and place must have been among the least accommodating in which a surly and rebellious teenager could find himself.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that Ion Rîmaru showed signs of having real and consistent problems. He was punished repeatedly at school, mostly for his inability to accomplish and complete his work. According to his parents, the teachers spoke to them repeatedly about his failure to apply himself. Until the 9th grade, at around the age of fourteen, he progressed from grade to grade at the bottom of the class, with no record of achievement except for the dislike and suspicion he attracted. Typically, he was given to violent outbursts of anger, he was known to torment and kill small animals, and he responded to his mother's admonishments with a brutal rudeness, echoing the brutal manners of his father, who, at a time when wife beating was not uncommon, shocked the neighbours by his treatment of his wife.

Ion was certainly suffering psychologically; and it is more than likely that he was also suffering physically from the digestive problems which led to his being diagnosed with oesophageal spasm, in Bucharest, at the age of twenty one, an exceptional condition for someone less than fifty years

3 A youth movement, partly based on Boy Scout principles.

old; but, however unreliable the diagnosis may have been, it is clear, in hindsight, that Ion needed various kinds of attention which were lacking in his environment.

His troubles grew more serious as he grew older. He was forced to repeat the 9th grade, a humiliating experience for someone who was already firmly stuck in the role of an outsider. Puberty added another dimension. He developed a relationship with a younger schoolmate, and they were discovered one day in flagrante. Unfortunately for Ion, she was the pubescent and virgin daughter of a primary school teacher. What ensued was described as 'a public scandal'. The result? More punishment and a deeper sense of isolation. To make matters worse, the girl died later of septicaemia.

Unsurprisingly, he then gravitated towards a life of youthful delinquency. There is no exact record of his teenage misdemeanors, but he was arrested and convicted in 1964, during his last year at the Lyceum, for his part in the theft of some melons from a local State Enterprise, C.A.P. Voința. The charge was 'aggravated theft', because, when the gang was surprised by the watchman, it was Ion who attacked the man and beat him ferociously. As a result, he was sentenced to five months imprisonment, half of which he served in the penitentiary at Caracal.

In spite of all this, Ion's school records show that he consistently achieved a perfect grade for his conduct. There may be two main reasons for this extraordinary contradiction. Firstly, it is possible that he had already developed a capacity for vicious behaviour and fully understood the necessity for wearing a mask of virtue, in order to avoid discovery and punishment. The second possibility may be that Rîmaru's teachers took into account his 'healthy' proletarian

background, and avoided any likely official complications for themselves and the school by ticking the good conduct box whenever his name came up. Given Ion's indifference or ineptitude at hiding his delinquencies, the second explanation seems rather more convincing. It also goes some way towards answering another difficult question. How was it that Rîmaru himself escaped any kind of official notice for as long as he did?

The solution may be that this was a kind of perfect storm in which the history of the region and his family, his neglected childhood, and his perceived instability, met with the ideology of a dogmatic regime, to nourish the insanity of his activities. It may be that if the state had been more accommodating towards the diagnosis and treatment of mental problems Ion's would have been identified and dealt with earlier. The ideology of the regime, however, simply did not allow for the idea that the perfect socialist state could be the incubator of mental illness. It may also be the case that, if Ion had not emerged from an impeccable proletarian background, his behaviour and his disability might have been challenged earlier, along with his almost total failure at school.

In any case, between leaving the Lyceum in Corabia, in 1964, and his arrival in Bucharest, in 1966, at the Nicolae Bălcescu Institute (renamed in 1985 The University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine), Rîmaru went through a number of experiences which might be described as traumatic. He graduated, and passed the baccalaureate. He served a prison sentence. He was conscripted and discharged from the army, and he spent another two months in hospital while they investigated

whether or not he had an ulcer.

Afterwards, he took the exams for admission to the Nicolae Bălcescu Institute and scraped a pass, with a grade of 5.33 (out of 10), the lowest possible entry qualification.

In the meantime the family was disintegrating. They had returned to Caracal in 1953, but this was not a success, and by the end of the decade they were back in Corabia. Florea then claimed that he had caught his wife with a man, but he continued to live with her until late in the sixties. At this point he got a job at the ITB Floreasca Garage in Bucharest. Floreasca was one of the newer districts of the city, settled in the interwar years by skilled workers, and for the regime it was one of the areas where its support was strongest. For Florea there was a sense that he had arrived.

In 1966 Ion Rîmaru had also arrived. At last he was in the city where his obsessions could flourish, and his dreams could be realised.

Chapter 1

Bucharest 1970

The winter was long and hard. A biting wind scoured the broad avenues of the city centre, prompting old exiles to talk about the incessant gales which propelled the frosts of Siberia through the streets of Moscow. On some nights the temperature dropped perilously close to minus 30 degrees. Citizens, now beginning to be inured to shortages and blackouts, welcomed in the new decade, wrapped themselves in thick overcoats and queued with a minimum of complaint, unaware that they were on the verge of something worse than just another difficult phase.

By the beginning of March, it seemed as if the snow and ice had been impacting the pavements for much too long, but, in Bucharest, spring erupts with an unexpected and violent passion.

The ice dissipates and the dingy grey of the clouds retreats into a dull mist around the foothills of the mountains to the north, to be replaced in the sky by pale blue and gold. The trees lining the Boulevard of the Aviators or stubbling the innumerable scruffy pieces of wasteland behind the housing blocks, begin to glow green with the long suppressed energy of months; and the margins of pockmarked streets start to be dusted yellow by the ubiquitous little daisies of the central

plains, interspersed with tiny carnations and pelargoniums. In between all these, bristle clumps of wayside rosebushes crowned with little points of brilliant crimson.

By the spring of 1970, Ion Rîmaru had already been a student at the Veterinary School for 4 years, and he was in the middle of his 5th year. He had been obliged to repeat the second year, and now he was in the process of repeating his third year. He was a poor student, but he had actually found himself, once again, at the point of an unstated conflict which determined his environment, but about which he could do nothing.

The Nicolae Bălcescu Institute was one of the central actors in the agricultural sector's response to the government's attempts to increase productivity. The admission of such a poor quality student as Rîmaru had been a symptom of the institution's struggle to maintain student numbers, and conform to a new system of values. At the same time, it was impossible to pretend that Ion met the required standards. "Shy and semi-literate, with a very poor vocabulary and an extremely narrow set of interests", was the way that one of his professors described him, but there was little or nothing the institution could do about improving his capacity or, even, about getting rid of him.

Ion's career began to be a reprise of his schooldays. He neglected his studies, and absented himself from most of his classes. He made no close friends, and his colleagues found his behaviour strange, unpredictable and sometimes frightening. In general he seemed isolated and alone. At the same time it is clear that he had a large extended family. On his father's side there were three brothers and a sister living in the countryside. Another sister lived in Corabia. In

Bucharest there were various cousins, including a namesake, Ion Rîmaru. On his mother's side there were numerous family members all living in Bucharest. On the other hand, Florea was on familiar terms with only one of them, his cousin Ion, and, although his sister lived in Corabia, he couldn't remember where.

Nevertheless Rîmaru seems to have a close relationship with both of his parents. Although they were now separated, his mother came to Bucharest twice every month to receive an allowance from Florea. On these occasions she would visit Ion. His brother and sister also made regular visits. At the same time his father seems to have been monitoring his progress quite closely, but Ion's behaviour was now following a familiar pattern.

> "As far as I remember, my son lived in a student hall of residence situated on Splaiul Independenței. Studying in year 2, that is university year 1967-1968, my son did not pass the grade and repeated the year. After having asked about this at the secretariat, I asked him what his plans were and he said the university was difficult but that he would attend re-examination in the autumn. He failed re-examination as well. Thus, during university year 1968-1969 he repeated year 2, which he graduated with a mediocre qualification.
> During this year my son had obtained accommodation and meals, moving to Mărăști Boulevard in the halls of residence within the Nicolae Bălcescu Institute. In a discussion with the faculty secretary, she told me that my son was behaving badly towards people around him, he was dour and that it was because of

this that he lost his scholarship.
In year 3, namely 1969-1970, he failed the grade again. I don't know what he did to repeat the year. I paid monthly the sum of 460 Lei for my son's canteen and residence, and I was striving to give my son a sum of pocket money monthly for his expenses, around 150 Lei. Besides this, my mother in law was also sending 50 or 100 Lei from time to time.
In the discussion with the faculty secretary at veterinary medicine, she informed me about my son's bad behaviour, that he was not learning, that when he was questioned by professors he stood up and did not reply. She also said that, because she saw him very tired, she suspected he was working somewhere at nights, as a waiter, or that he had a woman with whom he was living. In addition, Professor Bica told me to my face, in the presence of my son, that he did not learn, that he was unruly and that he had bad behaviour."
(28th of May 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

Rîmaru's classmates had a different impression of him. Florea Fulga was a schoolmate of Rîmaru's from Corabia. He was admitted to the Institute in 1968.

"Regarding Rîmaru Ion[4], I can say he had a closed personality during Lyceum, he was always reserved, and wouldn't converse with anybody. He treated me the same, even if for one trimester I stayed in the

4 In official documents - such as Militia records - Romanian names were listed according to the formula - family name followed by the Christian name. We kept all the names in the same formula, e.g. Rîmaru Ion, in quotations from official papers.

same bench as him.
Although we had been colleagues during the Lyceum, and we were colleagues again at university, Rîmaru tried to avoid me most of the time, especially when we were in a group with colleagues and women colleagues.
Sometimes when he needed money he came to me, calling for me from the hallway and asking for money, and, at the mutually agreed date, he would give them back to me."
(10th of June 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

Ioan Luca was another student who knew Rîmaru well, without getting close to him. He remarked on the fact that, even though they shared a room and went out together, Rîmaru always maintained his reserve. He mentioned also Rîmaru's reticence about women, a feature which became more and more pronounced.

Pitagora Constantinescu also shared a room with Rîmaru for about a fortnight in 1968.

"Rîmaru Ion had already repeated the year when he became part of the group I was in. I saw he was withdrawn and I put this attitude down to the fact that he had repeated the year. The professors asked us to get closer to him so that he would become more sociable. But, with all our efforts, we could not make him get together with us. He stayed like that, withdrawn, silent, and pessimistic.
Around the month of November, I went to sleep in that room, with him, Ciucă Constantin, and another

> colleague. I remember that he used to wake up in the night with such starts that he woke us up as well.
> During the period of time I stayed in the room with him he was out many times. To be precise he went out around 11 pm, coming back in the morning around 4 am. Upon being asked where he was going, he gave evasive answers.
> Normally he wouldn't return through the door. He knocked on the window, we would open and he would climb inside the sleeping chamber. We would get dressed and go to classes and he would either go to sleep or come to class later."
> (29th of May 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

After Pitagora left the room, Ciucă told him that one night Rîmaru had become nervous about the noise coming from the next room, and begun to pace around. In the process he walked over a broken bottle which was lying on the floor, cutting his feet and legs, but without showing any sign of pain.

In another episode Rîmaru responded to the hazing of some colleagues who accused him of having syphilis by taking out a scalpel and cutting himself to show them that his blood was not syphilitic.

All of these accounts of Rîmaru's behaviour might have been the sort of stories which attach themselves to a character who was notably unpopular. On the other hand, the testimony of another couple, who knew him throughout his student career, was more targeted and illuminating, especially in regard to Rîmaru's attitude towards women.

Dan Dosinescu also came from Olt County. He was a year ahead of Rîmaru at the Institute, but he was happy, at first,

to encounter another boy from the same region. They met casually on the campus, as students do, and became regular acquaintances.

> "In the beginning, Rîmaru was a communicative type, a good colleague, but I noticed along the way that he had started to become more withdrawn. We, his colleagues, put this attitude down to his failing to pass the year.
> Although I did not personally consider him a friend, I was surprised when he came to ask me, in the month of October 1970, to move into his room with him. I hesitated to reply. Furthermore, I asked my room mate – Cratov Vasile – to say that he did not agree to this. As far as I can remember, Rîmaru's room mate had agreed to this change because Rîmaru was treating him badly and he wanted to get rid of him."
> (2nd of June 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

Dan's evasiveness was based on something more than a casual distaste. By this time Rîmaru had alienated most of his colleagues, and Dan Dosinescu's girlfriend Doina Tămășoiu is more explicit about her dislike and the reasons for it.

> "I became a year 1 student in 1967, Rîmaru Ion being in year 2. In 1968 the three of us became colleagues in year 2. During that time I did not have close relations with Rîmaru because I was in year 2 A, group 3206, and Rîmaru in year 2 B, group 3210. I can say I knew him only through Dosinescu Dan. In the years 1967

– 1969 Rîmaru was a quiet man, inclined to help out his colleagues with money. In the same time, he was not socially remarkable, I don't know if he had any friend or a relationship among the girls.
Starting from 1970 his attitude changed. I saw him with a preoccupied face, frowning, gazing downwards without looking at me, he didn't greet anyone and he had isolated himself completely. He was going around looking unkempt, had a tired look and was missing from classes, due to this fact he didn't pass the grade.
I want to note that during year 1 (1967) Rîmaru asked me about a colleague of mine, Rodica – now a year 4 student, whether she had any boyfriends. Because our relationship did not justify such a question, I gave him an evasive answer.
In 1968, around March, I was in the boys' hall of residence and Rîmaru came to me and asked, my boyfriend being also there, to go for a coffee with him. I did not like this thing at all, first of all because I was with Dan, secondly because of the manner in which he had approached me. I had never conversed with him, except on occasional meetings in the context of school. What struck me especially was his brusque attitude when Dan tried to explain to him that the normal conditions for this situation were non existent."
(1st of June 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

Another story which emerges from these early years, and, later on, was widely circulated, concerns the time when one of his neighbours in the student residence received a visit from a girlfriend. Rîmaru was thrown into a state of extreme

tension and excitement by the event. He was unable to sleep and for the remainder of the night prowled around outside, 'like an animal', muttering to himself and staring fixedly at the window where he knew the girl to be staying.

None of this was lost on Rîmaru's teachers. The veterinary doctor Octavian Bica, workshop chief at the Faculty, took the opportunity to alert his parents.

> "In the year 1971 the student Rîmaru Ion did not pass the grade and repeated year 3. I got to know him better on this occasion, noticing that he has an unsociable way of being and that his character is wanting, because he was coming to school messy, unwashed etc. On numerous occasions I told him to get a shave, but he invoked the fact that he'd had eczema on his face, saying that was the reason for not shaving.
> With regard to his education, that area is also wanting. In the winter session he did not pass any of the three exams. In this situation I invited the student's parents over and discussed the inappropriate behaviour of their son with them. During these discussions Rîmaru Ion did not say a thing… I told him to start learning because otherwise he would be expelled. Personally, I have tried to make him be closer to me but he was impossible to understand. He used to lower his head, and stay silent. He led people to believe that he'd understood and then he did precisely what he wanted to."
> (29th of May 1971, Militia file 751/B/1971, vol. 1)

Rîmaru had one obsession which escaped notice. The bus

and tram network in Bucharest was a perpetually moving river. Like the waters of the Danube, it carried a million strangers every day to destinations whose names were a half familiar poetry – Șoseaua Grozăvești, Calea Dudești, Piața Dorobanți, Piața Scânteii, Calea Victoriei, Gara de Nord.

On many of the nights when Rîmaru disappeared, and reappeared exhausted and fatigued, he was travelling, exploring the city from the solitary vantage point of a bus or a tram. This was how he came to know the city. Later on, it would be obvious that each of his crimes took place in the neighbourhood of a busy terminus, like Calea Dudești or the Gara de Nord, but for the moment his preoccupation with the transport system was a hobby, solitary and unremarked.