

Bibles and Other Weapons



The Hekman Group

Medical Management Ingenuity

4623 Forest Lane, Suite 100
Holland, Michigan 49423
(616) 335-5700

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by Kenneth M. Hekman, MBA

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Entering Romania during the period of Communist control was often a treacherous experience. Soldiers were especially on the lookout for two items of contraband: weapons and Bibles. Each represented a unique threat to the way of life the dictatorship desperately sought to preserve.

Despite the risks, Christians from the West smuggled Bibles into Romania by the thousands. Each mission was marked by clandestine intrigue, surrounded in prayer. One such mission carried out in the mid-80s by a handful of American college students caught my attention. The group included a young woman we'll call Autumn, whom I met in 2000. By that time she was serving as a missionary in another former Iron Curtain country where her identity still requires protection. Autumn and her friends carried several suitcases of Bibles into Romania, connecting with Christians by divine appointment. No contacts, locations, or prior arrangements were known before they arrived, but time after time, the smugglers encountered Romanian operatives who were accustomed to worshiping in secret under the cover of remote forests, who knew exactly what to do with the contraband.

They delivered the second-to-last suitcase of Bibles to a family of beekeepers in Pitesti. Two generations of this family had distributed smuggled Bibles by carefully wrapping them and placing them in their beehives, which were then transported to and from the villages and countryside to aid the farmers with pollination. Honey is the natural by-product of keeping bees, which the family sold to sustain themselves. The beekeepers thanked Autumn and her friends with a gift of a few jars of honey. Glass jars were plentiful, but lids were not, so the smugglers had to hold the jars upright as they continued their trip and distributed the last suitcase of Bibles.

As they headed out of Pitesti, the weather began to change. The route into the mountains soon became impassable because of the storm, forcing them to turn around. Another route out of the city was too bumpy, so they returned to the city a second time. A third route was blocked, but this time they were stopped for an inspection. The armed official told the American students to get out of the car, and began searching each suitcase. By this time, the occupants of the car, and their luggage, had become marked by honey, spilled from the uncovered jars as they bumped along the rugged roads. The soldier methodically inspected every suitcase - except the one with the Bibles. As he prepared to search it and uncover their true mission, the guard became irritated with the sticky substance that hindered his work, and simply dismissed the group - and their last un-inspected suitcase - freeing them to leave undiscovered.

Autumn told me this account after she learned that I was involved with missions in Pitesti. I shared the story with a friend at the clinic in Pitesti, and uncovered yet another dimension to this incredible experience. The family of beekeepers, it turned out, were the same ones who sold the property to the Luke Society upon which our clinic now stands, and a sister of one of the bee-keeping brothers is now our Director of Nursing.