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*Photo: A medium sized AFP photo with six children*

## ***Romania's orphans – millions of euro at stake***



***Many European organizations make a forceful lobby for the resumption of international adoptions***

*Introduction:*

It isn't charity, it is business. The European Parliament's resolution - adopted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 and signed by 407 MEPs that asked the Romanian Government to authorize international adoptions for 1,092 children - is generated by the necessity to cut a deal. It is the result of the lobby promoted by NGOs and lawyers that used to win or that are going (or not going) to win almost 20 million euro – depending on the success of their actions. The spearhead of these interest groups is a very important person: Francois de Combret.

*Text:*

The Frenchman, whose name won't tell anything to most of our readers, is, however, a prominent European personage who has much influence in the decision-making circles of the EU. Personal advisor of the former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing and Secretary General of the Elysee Palace until 1981, Mr de Combret was in charge – in his capacity of manager of the Lazard Bank- of the privatisation of Renault, France Telecom, Aerospatiale, as well as of other key-transactions for the French state. He advised Renault to associate with Nissan, he advised Aerospatiale to merge with Matra and Daimler Aerospace (it resulted EADS) and, also, he advised Sagem to merge with Snecma (it resulted Safran). As a result for his advice work, Francois de Combret is now on the board of Renault and Safran. He is also expert advisor for the UBS Investment Bank, director for Nexans Cabling Systems and member of the Bouygues Telecom board.

As other successful Europeans, Mr. De Combret got involved in charity projects. In 1990, he founded a NGO called SERA (Solidarite Enfants Roumains Abandonnes – Solidarity for Romanian Abandoned Children), whose goal is stated in its title.

## **A SPRINGBOARD FOR TABACARU**

Six years later, SERA Romania was created. Francois de Combret wasn't officially involved in this new organization, about which the current director, Bogdan Simion, says "it was named in this way in honor of SERA, that did many things for the children abandoned in Romania". For certain, during 1996, SERA France fully financed SERA Romania. In 1997, the president of SERA Romania, Cristian Tabacaru became Secretary of State, president of the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoptions, with the direct support of Mr. De Combret. The Frenchman admitted that he interceded - *through the French president Jacques Chirac who, in return, asked president Constantinescu and prime minister Ciorbea-* for the establishment of the Authority which was supposed to supervise the export of the children, as well as for the installation of Mr. Tabacaru as the head of that institution. As a result, until December 1999 (when he resigned), Mr Tabacaru set up the famous system for exporting orphans or abandoned Romanian children through NGOs, a business worth more than 90 million dollars every year (according to official estimates). Of course, SERA Romania was never involved as an intermediary for foreign adoptions. SERA Romania has continued to undertake a number of projects regarding the improvement of the living conditions for the deserted children. The projects were financed by both private and governmental funding or with money from some international organizations (EU through PHARE and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe, the World Bank and USAID). SERA France has continued to pump money in SERA Romania, as well as in a number of NGOs involved in adoptions. According to SERA Romania site, SERA France has spent in total for its programs in Romania – starting from 1990- 115 million French francs (almost 17,5 million euro at the course calculated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2002, when the French currency was terminated for good).

## **12 JUNE 2006 – ROMANIA, GUANTANAMO IN “FINANCIAL TIMES”**

33 NGOs that are active in Romania, out of which 6 are signing “Anonymously”, buy a whole advertising page in the FT edition on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, and pay for it more than 100.000 euro. The NGOs use that page in order to publish a defamatory article about Romania, under the title “The Hidden Crisis of Child Protection in Romania”. In the article, Romania is described as a “Guantanamo” for babies, in which thousands of abandoned children are tortured. The article claims even that the state refused to finance the funeral of the children infected by AIDS. It criticizes the legislation (enforced in January 2005) and it attacks Olli Rehn the European Commissioner for Enlargement because he said that the Romanian legislation is “in total accordance with the EU standards and with the UN Convention for Children Rights”. The article also criticizes Emma Nicholson for her strong position against international adoptions. Moreover, the articles states that Emma Nicholson tries to influence the policy in the child protection field, in Romania and Bulgaria, through “The High Level Group”. Even if the authors tried to camouflage their message among other bureaucratic type of demands, it is obvious that the main request of this petitioner article is the resumption of international adoptions. The article ends with a call to help the Romanian children. It also suggests visiting [www.romanianchild.org](http://www.romanianchild.org) web site (in fact, [www.copilroman.org](http://www.copilroman.org)) where periodical reports are to be published by a group of action. Visiting

the site, we've noticed an almost complete similitude between the signature list in the FT and the list of the NGO that developed the site (*see the table at the bottom of the page*). From the perspective of the statements given to us by Francois de Combret and Bogdan Simion, the head of SERA Romania, this is a very important observation. Simion and de Combret are claiming that they had nothing to do with the protest published in FT. However, SERA Romania is on the list from [www.copilroman.org](http://www.copilroman.org). The Romanian authorities, including Bogdan Panait, the president of the National Authority for Children Rights Protection (ANPDC), have reacted to the article in FT, saying that it is an attack against Romania. "Some of the organizations that signed the document were intermediaries for international adoptions before 2005, and their goal is clear – the resumption of international adoptions", Panait stated.

### **13 JUNE 2006 – DE COMBRET'S CONFERENCE**

The next day after the publication of the manifest against Romania in the FT, Francois de Combret organized a press conference in Strasbourg, where he was accompanied by Jean Marie Cavada and Claire Gibault, two French MEPs. During the press conference, some of the allegations included in the FT article were resumed, and the Romanian Government was accused of blocking the international adoptions, especially in 1,092 cases of adoption "which were already approved". It created a huge reaction of emotion, on the ground that the children are forcefully kept away from the families that adopted them "legally". Now, Mr. De Combret says he had no idea about that article in FT, and the timing between the publication date and the press conference date "is a pure coincidence". The Government, through the Romanian Office for Adoptions (ORA), has reacted to the allegations that were stated during the press conference organized by Mr. De Combret and the two French MEPs. ORA issued an ample document to the European authorities, resuming, case by case, the explanations regarding the reasons behind the rejection of the 1,092 dossiers of adoption. A synthesis of the document was released to mass media and we are going to offer you some of the most relevant details. For certain, after reading this document and after verifying its content it is impossible to join the accusatory group of the three French petitioners. However, the campaign for gathering MEPs signatures in order to issue a resolution that asks Romania to resume international adoptions was an enormous success. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, there were already 210 signatures, and in less than a month the number of MEPs rose at 408, although only 367 signatures would have been enough to pass a resolution of the European Parliament.

### **4-7 JULY 2006 – SUPPORT FOR ROMANIA**

The leaders of the European Commission – president Jose Manuel Barroso and vice-president Franco Frattini- stated during a press conference organized in Brussels, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2006, that the Romanian authorities have tackled the children rights problem, implicit the adoption problem, according to the European Parliament's requests.

Moreover, Emma Nicholson released a press release in London, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2006, which states that her European Parliament colleagues who have signed a statement calling on Romania to lift its ban on international adoptions were misled. "The majority of those just over 1,000 children for whom the adoption request was submitted after and not before the Moratorium came into force were subsequently placed with substitute families, and, as a consequence, are not even eligible for adoption". Baroness de Winterbourne asks her colleagues who signed the statement to verify the

real situation of the abandoned children in Romania, in order to see for themselves the progress achieved after the Moratorium came into force.

### 10 JULY 2006 – THE MEPs ASK FOR THE EXPORT OF “BATCH 1,092”

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2006, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a Resolution (a written statement with the power of a recommendation) which requests for the international adoption cases “in suspense” to be authorized “without delay”. The statement was signed by 408 MEPs – including Pierre Moscovici, the *Rapporteur* for Romania that succeeded Baroness Nicholson two years ago. Moscovici was consequent to his previous position regarding international adoptions, expressed before he became *Rapporteur* for Romania. In the resolution one can find the same error regarding the moment for initiating the 1,092 cases of adoptions that weren’t finalized. The moment was placed before the Moratorium came into effect, which is until 2001 inclusive. The statement practically contradicts the efforts that were undertaken in the previous years by the same MEPs who determined Romania to change its legislation by forbidding international adoptions, excepting the cases that involve second-degree kinship with the children. On the other hand, the statement is in consonance with paragraph 23 of the Resolution regarding the degree of Romania’s readiness for the EU integration (which was adopted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2005), through which the EP asks the Romanian Government to solve the requests for international adoption that were submitted after the Moratorium came into effect. The MEPs allege that their particular request was ignored.

#### TRANSLATION NOTE (TABLE PLACED ON PAGE 4)

The list of NGOs that signed the article published in “The Financial Times” on the 12 <sup>th</sup> of June 2006, article in which Romania is considered a “Guantanamo for babies”.	The list of NGOs that are presented on the <a href="http://www.opilroman.org">www.opilroman.org</a> site, whose creation is announced in the article published in the British daily “The Financial Times” on the 12 <sup>th</sup> of June 2006.
Blythswood Banat	Blythswood Banat
Bridge of Christian Relief	Bridge of Christian Relief
Cry in the Dark (UK)	Cry in the Dark (UK)
Everyone’s Child Romania	Everyone’s Child Romania
FARA Foundation	FARA Foundation
Forget-me-not Foundation Romania	Forget-me-not Foundation Romania
Foundation for the Relief of Disabled Orphans	Foundation for the Relief of Disabled Orphans
Fundatia Casa Mea	Fundatia Casa Mea
Fundatia Casa Sperantei	Fundatia Casa Sperantei
Fundatia În brate	Fundatia În brate
Fundatia Speranta Familiei	Fundatia Speranta Familiei
Link Romania	Link Romania
Livada Orphan Care	Livada Orphan Care
O Noua Viata	O Noua Viata

Prietenii Copiilor	Prietenii Copiilor
Primavara Copiilor	Primavara Copiilor
Reach Romania Lancashire	Reach Romania Lancashire
Relief Fund for Romania	Relief Fund for Romania
Romanafectus	Romanafectus
Romanian Aid Distribution	Romanian Aid Distribution
Romanian Orphan Support Effort	Romanian Orphan Support Effort
Romanian Relief	Romanian Relief
Spurgeon's Child Care	Spurgeon's Child Care
Ungureni Trust	Ungureni Trust
Viata Noua Pentru Copii	Viata Noua Pentru Copii
Amici dei Bambini	----- -----
Save Eastern Europe's Kids	----- -----
Anonymus Charity A	Associazione Nuova Speranza
Anonymus Charity B	Hand in Hand for Romania, Inc
Anonymus Charity C	Haven in Romania
Anonymus Charity D	Hope Romania
Anonymus Charity E	<b>SERA Romania</b>
Anonymus Charity F	Smiles Foundation

**Page 5 in Saptamana Financiara**

*(continuing from page 4)*

**18 AUGUST 2006 – ONCE AGAIN, SERA GETS THE BIG SWEEPSTAKE FROM ANPCD**

The National Authority for Children Rights Protection (ANPDC) nominates, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2006, the winners of the national programs for child protection in 2006, in amount of over 3,7 million euro. The big winner of the contracts with ANPDC in this year is once again...SERA Romania. ANPDC was previously informed by the international organization “Save the Children” (Salvati Copiii) about the serious deficiencies of the regulation for the contracts assignation in the field of child protection. The regulation comes in conflict with the current legislation, it allows multiple interpretations, as well as it permits “behind the scenes” type of arrangements. In a written note that was sent to ANPCD, the leaders of “Saving the Children – Romania” makes an inventory of the NGOs that won the contracts with ANPCD in the previous years. In a leading position we can find, once again, SERA Romania.

In 2005, SERA Romania was nominated to accomplish three out of the six programs of national interest (PIN) in the field of child protection.

**PIN 2**, with a total amount of 2 million euro, should have had the following results: the reduction with 145 cases of the number of children with disabilities/handicap from placement centers; the increase with 240 cases of the number of children with disabilities/handicap who benefit from the day care services / recuperation; the reduction with 4 of the number of old type institutions designated for children with disabilities/handicap; the increase with 16 of the number of alternative services. What did SERA accomplish? It built two small houses and acquired a “Dacia” vehicle, as

well as a minibus. On the other hand, it is also true that “For Our Children” (Pentru Copiii Nostrii) organization, SERA’s partner in PIN 2, announced that it accomplished construction activities (without mentioning what kind of constructions) and acquired cars (without mentioning the number and the trademark of these cars).

**PIN 5**, with a total amount of 930,000 euro. Requirements: 1,200 foster professional workers hired in order to protect in an urgency regime children up to 2 years old who were separated from their families; preventing a number of 4,600 children up to 2 years old to get into a residential type of special protection; the increase with 2,800 cases of the number of children reintegrated in their families and in their extended families; the increase with 600 cases of the number of children adopted on the national level. Achievements: 683 foster workers were trained, and 245 children up to 2 years old were placed.

**PIN 6**, with an amount of over 660,000 euro. Requirements: the increase with 30 of the number of community social services for child and family; the reduction with 300 cases of the number of children with a residential type of special protection services; at least 300 children to benefit from community social services in order to prevent the separation from their families and to integrate or reintegrate them in a family; the increase with 100 cases of the number of children reintegrated and integrated in their families; the increase with 300 cases of the number of children and families that are benefiting from the community social services. Results obtained by SERA in partnership with “For Our Children”: 96 persons with attributions in social work; 26 services for preventing the separation of the child from its family; plans for services for 400 children; the review of the individual plans for protection for 64 children.

The comparisons between the requests stipulated within ANPDC programs and SERA achievements are eloquent. However, ANPDC has still chosen to work with SERA in 2006. We’ve asked Mr. Panait which are the reasons for this choice, taking into account that Mr. Francois de Combret is so harshly criticizing the governmental policy in the field of child protection. The answer is that “Mr. de Combret’s initiative addresses only the requests for adoption submitted during the Moratorium. Mr. de Combret’s initiative doesn’t address the topic of resuming international adoptions in general. (...) We consider that there is no relevant link between Mr. de Combret’s lobby and SERA’s capacity to elaborate and implement coherent and eligible projects in the child protection field. The results of implementing these projects speak for themselves”. Regarding “the results of implementing” the projects undertaken by SERA, ANPDC has sent us the detailed situation of these projects, which is the same with the situation described by “Save the Children”.

## **THE ANNULMENT OF A REPETITION**

Robin Nydes, the official spokesman for the 33 NGOs that signed the FT article, announced the publication of a second article in the same British daily at the end of September 2006, just before the final vote of the European Parliament on the ratification of Romania’s accession into the EU. The article didn’t come out anymore. We are wondering if there is any connection between the annulment of the publication and the fact that, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, SERA Romania won the auction organized by ANPDC. On [www.copilroman.org](http://www.copilroman.org) site there is no mention regarding the annulment of publishing a second article, but it is mentioned that, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2006, the representatives of the 33 NGOs held a “friendly” meeting with Mr. Panait, the president of ANPDC.



## EPILOGUE

*The Romanian Office for Adoptions is still waiting the post adoption reports for 178 children who were adopted internationally.*

### **The fate of “batch 1,092”**

In December 2001, not even three months after the installment of the Moratorium against intercountry adoptions, Nastase government decreed that “in exceptional situations, asked for by the best interest of the child, certain petitions for intercountry adoptions can be sent to court”. According to this decision, 1,115 such exceptional cases had been sent to court and 1,003 had been approved; in 112 cases the adoption petitions had been withdrawn.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2004, the Romanian government decided to completely stop intercountry adoptions until the application of the new law on child rights. The new law came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 and allowed intercountry adoptions only made by 2<sup>nd</sup> degree relatives. Prior to this, in a Resolution dating from 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2004, the European Parliament congratulated Romania “for answering international appeals and Parliament’s requests by introducing national standards in the field of child protection and strict rules regarding the intercountry adoption”. On the same occasion, the EP suggested the creation of an international commission in order to analyze the pending cases signaled by the families affected by the 2001 Moratorium.

The commission was never set up. Tariceanu Government preferred a local, inter ministerial “working group”. The group started its activity in 2005, and the final conclusions were presented on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2006. The conclusion was that, when the new law came into effect, there were 1,399 requests for intercountry adoptions (referring to 1,092 children). These were analyzed between January 2002 – February 2004 and it was decided that they can’t be considered exceptional cases, therefore procedures for intercountry adoptions didn’t follow. During June 2004, the soliciting families were sent letters in which they were informed that their adoption request was not approved. The situation of the 1,092 children, as presented at the end of March, looks as it follows:

- 41 children had been reintegrated into their biological family;
- 12 children had been integrated into their extended family (relatives up to the 4<sup>th</sup> degree);
- 227 children had been adopted nationally (the requests were put forward by the Romanian families according to the prior law; they had priority)
- 132 children have their procedures for national adoption on the roll (according to the new law) – including 28 children on the way of being adopted by foreign citizens living in Romania, with which they established a close bond;
- 17 children were already adopted internationally (they were included in the 1,115 cases excepted from the Moratorium)
- 8 children have their guardianship established in Romania;
- 12 children turned (or are about to turn this year) 18 and thus can be adopted as adults (by foreign families also);
- 90 children can’t be adopted anymore because the adoption requests had been withdrawn;

- 415 children are taken care of by a foster parent or are not adoptable (in most of the cases, the biological family doesn't accept the adoption or there is a relationship between biological family and child and the court doesn't consider the child adoptable);
- 83 children are in the child protection system (family type centres) and are not adoptable – including 8 children who are abroad receiving medical treatment and a child studying abroad, in the care of foreign families who solicited their adoption, with the agreement of the biological family and of ROA;
- 2 children died;
- 6 children have not been identified;
- 47 children for who requests were put in 0after the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2004, when all intercountry adoptions were stopped.

### **Text box**

#### **Moratorium with export**

The profitable sale system of Romanian children to families abroad was apparently stopped in October 2001, with the installment of the Moratorium which ceased intercountry adoptions, due to the external pressures, exercised through the intermediary of rapporteur Emma Nicholson, baroness of Winterbourne. In reality, hundreds of derogations from the Moratorium were issued and Nastase government, blackmailed by various influent Western politicians, approved intercountry adoptions in “exceptional cases”. Valentin Macovei, the former president of the Romanian Committee for Adoptions, admitted in an interview for BBC Radio that initially there weren't any criteria for determining the so called “exceptional cases”. It was simply allowing requests from families who had already invested a lot (thousands of euros) for adopting children from Romania. In most of the cases, this money took the form of bribes, therefore those investments couldn't be recuperated. And then the families organized themselves, bombarded their politicians with written petitions who, through different channels, made themselves heard in Bucharest. One of the political coups applied successfully by Traian Basescu to his opponent Adrian Nastase in the presidential run in 2004 targeted the aforementioned phenomenon. Basescu proved with documents, that Romano Prodi, president of the European Commission in that period, John Carry, former candidate for the USA presidency, the European commissioner for human rights, American congressmen, among whom Tom Lantos, Edward Kennedy and Joseph Lieberman, the former ambassador of Israel in Bucharest, Sandu Mazor, several French ministers, Canadian officials, Oliviu Gherman, former ambassador of Romania in Paris, and the Prime Minister of Andorra (successfully) lobbied so that Romania continues its child export. It seems that the disclosures made in those days by the opposition leader resulted in a reduction of the trafficking of influence happening “in daylight” towards the Prime Minister Nastase office. Nevertheless backstage arrangements went on. Don't forget, we are talking about an almost 100 million dollars market! A market without which a whole network of NGOs and lawyers whose thirst of money is not appeased by the small amount of four up to ten thousand euros that can be earned following the internal adoption of an abandoned child, without respecting the legal formalities. Until the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 (when the new law came into effect, forbidding intercountry adoption unless one of the spouses is the grandparent of the respective child) 1,092 more intercountry adoptions were initiated.



## **Francois de Combret: “Prime Minister Tariceanu is blackmailed by the triplets Nicholson-Rehn-Scheele**

*Photos. (1. Francois de Combret. 2. Emma Nicholson and Prime Minister Tariceanu.) Caption: Francois de Combret declares himself friend of Prime Minister Tariceanu and enemy of Baroness Emma Nicholson.*

We thought the easiest way to speak to Mr. Francois de Combret was to contact SERA Romania. Therefore we sent four questions on the organization’s email address, kindly asking the staff to be forward them to Mr. Francois de Combret. Which they did, and later on Mr. de Combret contacted us on the phone and made a series of interesting disclosures, that we render as follows. First of all, the questions that we asked him and which constituted the basis for our discussion:

1. How do you reconcile the fact that through SERA Romania you participate in projects undergone by the Romanian Government (generously financed with public money) in the field of child protection, with the fact that you act against the policies of the Romanian Government in child protection issues, by being the promoter of the initiative that led the European MPs to solicit the resumption of the intercountry adoptions?
2. Is SERA Romania among the signatories of the letter “Romania’s concealed childcare crisis” published in “Financial Times”, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2006?
3. Can you indicate some actual cases in which intercountry adoptions didn’t take place, although the procedures had been initiated (reaching an advanced stage) before the installment of the Moratorium regarding intercountry adoptions in 2001?
4. Do you think that Romanian law regarding intercountry adoptions is: a. Correct; b. Needs significant improvement; c. Needs minor improvement; d. Correct, but it needs derogation, in order to finalize the pending cases; e. Other answer (please detail).

In his answers, Mr. de Combret referred to questions 1 and 2, avoided question 3 with a referral to the orphanage in Brasov under the patronage of Ion Tiriac and eliminated any doubts concerning his opinions and actions: he is definitely in favor of changing the Romanian law, that he considers abusive, and militates for the unconditioned resumption of intercountry adoptions.

### **“I militate for the resumption of intercountry adoptions!”**

“I don’t take part in SERA Romania, though I have financed and still finance this organization. I wasn’t involved personally in the initiative of the 33 NGOs which published that article in Financial Times.” It is a coincidence the fact that the article was published on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June and on the 13<sup>th</sup> I hold a press conference in Strasbourg, in which I asked for the resumption of intercountry adoptions. It is also a coincidence the fact that SERA Romania is on the NGO list on the site mentioned in the article. There is no connection between me and that initiative, simply because I wasn’t invited to participate in. Had I been invited, I wouldn’t have refused, although I would have demanded certain paragraphs from that article, which I consider too harsh, to be revised, in the sense that I really think that Romanian government did make some improvements. I

am definitely in favor of the resumption of the intercountry adoptions and I militate for the Romanian law to be modified, because it is against the best interest of the children and against the Hague Convention regarding human rights.” (Here we ought to mention the fact that subsequent to our discussion with Mr. de Combret, we have been again contacted by Mr. Bogdan Simion who, this time, admitted that SERA Romania adhered to the group of NGOs signatories of the article in Financial Times, but it never signed for the publishing of the article. Simion admitted the possibility that SERA could be among the NGOs who signed in the article as “Anonymous”. He also specified that SERA Romania had benefited from 5 million euros from governmental financing and some 3 million euros of European financing for the programmes undergone in the child protection field.)

**“I’m a friend of Mr. Tariceanu!”**

*“I consider Romania as my second country. I know the Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu for many years and I consider him a friend. We met each other because we are both involved in car industry. He totally agrees with me, but I understand when he tells me he has to comply with the rules imposed from Brussels. Practically, he is blackmailed by Ms. Nicholson, Mr. Olli Rehn and Ambassador Scheele. He has to sacrifice thousands of children in order to achieve Romania’s goal to enter the EU. Once Romania is in the EU, the terms will be considerably modified. It is scandalous that Romania is the only European country that forbids intercountry adoptions although it is the country with the highest number of abandoned children. Besides, in the informal discussions with Mr. Panait (Bogdan Panait, President of the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights), Mrs. Theodora Bertzi, (President of the Romanian Office for Adoptions) and with heads of the local directorates for social assistance and child protection, I’ve realized they share my points of view and think just like me. Nevertheless their point of view does not matter in Brussels. But now things are going to change.”*

**“Emma Nicholson is crazy!”**

“Mrs. Nicholson has a personal problem. It’s widely known that she had adopted a child from Iraq, and that she had built her image upon this adoption, and that subsequently, after some ten years, when that child grew up and had the chance to speak up, he said he had been raised in poor conditions. It had been a personal failure of Mrs. Nicholson, which affected her. Therefore she decided that adoptions are a bad thing and she does everything to fight against them. Romania’s bad luck was when she had been appointed rapporteur here. Had she been appointed in Bulgaria, Latvia or any other country, be sure things would have happened in the same way. This is the truth, Mrs. Nicholson is crazy, she distorted Romania’s image. And she still harms Romania’s image. Look at what is happening with the orphanage from Brasov, under the patronage of Mr. Ion Tiriac, to which Mrs. Nicholson feels very close. You know there had been a scandal with those little girls from Mr. Tiriac’s orphanage that some families from Italy wanted to adopt. When the adoption trial reached The European Court for Human Rights, Ms. Nicholson went and testified against intercountry adoptions. In what way was she related to those cases? She went to the orphanage,

that's very good. I tried to go there as well, but I was forbid to enter the premises. And now, you see, there are serious accusations, confessions flying around, it's really revolting."

### **"The Brussels bureaucrats cover up a 150 million euros hole"**

Ms. Nicholson is helped by some bureaucrats from Brussels who refuse to see the truth. There is an official, a lady from the Netherlands whose name I can't recall right now... She is convinced that in Romania the problem of children has been solved. I went to her and explained that indeed some progress had been made nevertheless there are still many children suffering. I asked her to come to Romania and see for herself. She replied there was no need to. She said: "You are wrong. My experts state the contrary." These so-called experts are former public officials converted into consultants; they are summoned by the aforementioned lady and are told: "Go to Romania, do as you please, and afterwards give me a report in which you should say this and this." And the consultants subsequently tell that lady exactly what she wants to hear. I also appealed to that lady's superior, who is a Prince, de Lobkowicz. I arranged a meeting, and to my big surprise, when I entered the office, the Dutch lady was present as well. I asked to speak to him in private, but he refused, arguing that the lady was entitled to speak to me in the respective issue. So again I spoke in vain, the conclusion was the same. Unfortunately, these European bureaucrats are embarrassed to admit that Romania's case is seriously faulty: during seven years, between 1990 and 1997, the EU had pumped around 150 million euros in Romania, for the protection of abandoned children. And you know what had been done with that money? They painted the walls of the orphanages. Nobody knows where the money went, a big chunk of it anyway, who took profit from it. And therefore you have to claim that the problem has been solved in order to avoid answering for not checking how that money had been spent.

### **"Cristian Tabacaru was appointed at my recommendation"**

"In 1997, when Mr. Chirac came to Bucharest, I drew his attention upon the children's issue. He mentioned it to president Constantinescu, and the president asked the Prime Minister Ciorbea to contact me. When I spoke to Mr. Ciorbea, I explained that a department for child protection should be set up. He said OK, then he asked me whether I knew somebody qualified for this job, and I recommended the young, although very competent president of SERA Romania, Mr. Cristian Tabacaru. So Mr. Ciorbea appointed Mr. Tabacaru secretary of state, and he managed, during the two years in service, to change the old communist law in the field of child protection, practically taking action against the European Union. And the EU got angry and sent Mrs. Nicholson, who claims what? She claims that all Romanians are thieves and corrupt. Because why should be intercountry adoptions forbidden only in Romania, and not in other neighboring countries?"

### **"I bear a heavy burden!"**

"I admit, the fact that I didn't take action during those years (1997 – 2001) when so many abuses were committed and the adoption became a big business is a heavy moral burden that I must bear. But you have to understand that I do what I can, I really can't get involved 24 hours a day, I have my own children I have to take care of, I have various important jobs and responsibilities..."