

**Inside the Romanian Communist Party Apparatus:
An Anatomy of the Institution of Censorship in the 1960s**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the censorship operating in communist Romania in the 1960s from an institutional point of view. It aims to establish the legal framework which set up the censorship mechanisms and to provide an insight into the everyday activities of the censorship institution. As such, it places special emphasis on the personas of the censors, their background and their training. The thesis links censorship with the ideology of the regime by highlighting the importance of the concept of “state secret” in justifying the censoring activity. Finally, the examination of the relation between center and periphery provides further evidence concerning the dynamics of the institution’s activity and suggests the degree of its effectiveness.

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Introduction

In 1842 the twenty five years old Karl Marx being in an active battle against Prussian censorship contended that “the radical cure of censorship is its abolition” for “it is a bad institution, and institutions are more powerful than men”.¹ For the young Marx, the censorship is the opposite of free expression, is unnatural and consequently an “arbitrary administration of mind”.² Height of irony, over the years, when communist regimes were set up in the name of Marxist ideology, liberal political tradition used the theme of free speech as one of the main arguments in criticizing communism. Moreover his communist disciples found necessary to expurgate Marx, in Soviet Russia parts of his works being published censored in aspects regarding the analysis of the Asiatic mode of bureaucratic control, or denouncing the irrationality of official censorship.

But, visible also from the Marx’s diatribes, censorship was not only characteristic to communist or totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Not the existence of censorship is questionable but the intensity or specificity of it, the rules and conventions. In other words, like Sue Currie Jansen suggested, the distinction might be made between constituent censorship and regulative censorship. While constitutive censorship is a feature of all enduring human communities (even those communities which offer

¹ Karl Marx. “Remarks on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instructions” in Karl Marx. *On Freedom of Press and Censorship*, Karl Marx Library. Vol. 4 (New York: Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, 1974), 98, 108.

² Ibid.

legislative guarantees of the freedom of the press), regulative censorship is shaped by the specific canons of censorship which vary in space, time and severity.³

Speaking about censorship, analyzing it, and revealing its pejorative meaning is not a recent task of reflection. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *censorship* corresponds to “official supervision” and to the “office or function of a censor”.⁴ Obviously, this definition draws attention to the official act of prohibitions which implies the existence of two antithetical and unequal instances. Given the broad implications of the term, an exhaustive definition of censorship is difficult to set forward. Censorship can take several forms, being either explicit or implicit. The latter includes self-censorship, a practice by which the censored subject internalizes the norms of censorship.

While censorship has been intrinsic to human communities of all times, the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of communications and control technologies which made censorship considerably more efficient. The authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century excelled in the application of censorship, which in their case often complemented propaganda. After the Second World War, under Soviet control, Eastern Europe witnessed the emergence of censorship. Not in all cases, however, was this practice institutionalized. Communist Romania was one of the countries in which censorship acquired an official status.

The “ground zero” of Romanian communist censorship was the Armistice Convention signed by the Romanian government and the governments of the United Nations. It established an Allied Control Commission (ACC) which in reality was entirely Soviet. (Similar ACC’s were set up also for Hungary and Bulgaria). Article 16

³ Sue Curry Jansen, *Censorship: The Knot that Binds Knowledge and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7-8.

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. <http://dictionary.oed.com>. Last entry: March 14, 2009.

of the convention signed in September 1944 officially sanctioned the introduction of censorship in Romania, having as a direct result the establishment of Allied control over publications, theatres, movies, postal and telephone services, official and private correspondence also came under vigilant control. The Department of the Press and the Printed Materials was created within the Ministry of Arts and Information and was rendered as a functional department beside the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Romania. Among its responsibilities one could mention: the authorization of publishing for all the printed materials, newspapers, magazines, posters, the printing of books as well as the supervision of the bookshops, of antiquarian and second hand bookshops and of public libraries. Each region, and later, each county had its own Department of the Press and Printings subordinated to the central institution designated with a similar name in Bucharest. Undergoing only slight reconfigurations this control institution existed until 1977 when it was officially abolished. But the institutional abolition of censorship did not automatically result in the *de facto* abolition of censorship. The new strategy consisted of the replacement of the strict law enforced by means of decrees and government decisions, with self-censorship. The fear of making mistakes and suffering the consequences seemed to have been a much more efficient device than the regulations imposed by the central agencies.

Research into censorship under communists has developed sporadically since 1989 in Romania. The field of Communist censorship was first explored by Bogdan Ficeac in his book *Cenzura comunistă și formarea omului nou*.⁵ The main thesis of the book is that for the totalitarian communist regime, free (thinking) knowledge represents the most dangerous and subversive agent acting against the authority. The book

⁵ Bogdan Ficeac, *Cenzura Comunistă și Formarea Omului Nou* [The Communist Censorship and the New Man] (București: Nemira, 1999).

concentrates on the incipient stage of censorship and its institutional becoming. Noteworthy is the fact that the author is not familiar with the primary sources as a result of the restrictions deriving from the policies of the national archives from Romania. Works utilizing states archives – and not the entire archival materials due to state restrictions - began to appear only in late 1990s. Relevant in this respect are the books of Paul Caravia, *Gandirea interzisa. Scrieri cenzurate. Romania 1945-1989* (The Forbidden Thinking, Censored Writings. Romania 1945-1989)⁶ or Radu Mocanu, *Cenzura comunista (documente)*, (The Communist Censorship <documents>).⁷ Caravia's work comprises the list of the authors and their works which were banned from the public intellectual life. It begins with the cleansing of the public libraries which started immediately after the World War II. Due to the fact that the author was unable to do archival research unfortunately the lists of books given as evidence by Caravia remains incomplete. Actually the entire book is a collection of lists with censored authors and censored books. Radu Mocanu edited a collection of 102 documents but the volume does not convince because the lack of any editing criteria which makes the book chaotic. But he came up first with the idea to extract from the censorship normative documents those directives that might be most telling to the way censorship functioned on a daily basis. Even in the Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, considered to be the most comprehensive study undertaken on Romanian communism, censorship is downplayed.

The thesis intends to fill the gap by addressing the mechanisms of the institution. One has to define the institutional mechanism and the ideological motivation which set it up in order to generate a coherent image of the censorship practices. Accordingly the

⁶ Paul Caravia, *Gandirea interzisa. Scrieri cenzurate. Romania 1945-1989* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000).

⁷ Bogdan Ficeac, *Cenzura comunistă si formarea omului nou* (București: Nemira, 1999).

first task will be to draw a short history of Communist censorship in Romania, essential in our opinion for the proper understanding of the research issue. The examination of the censorship activity deployed within the Department of Press and Printings emerges as a natural continuation of this inquiry. What were the internal mechanisms leading to the process of censoring? The daily life activities of the censors and their rank in particular areas are a key point in this thesis. What were the internal instructions regulating the everyday life of the institution? The image of the censor agent as a low cultured individual must be revisited. His cultural background was ideologically oriented, basically shaped by compulsory readings imposed by the central structures: decisions, official reports, or official bulletins. The reconstruction of the image of the censor will emphasize all these aspects. Which were the relationships between the central institution and the county departments? In trying to reveal it I will focus on the analysis of a local branch, its daily activities and its relations with the center. This exercise in comparative perspective will reveal information about the centralization of the censoring process or, on the contrary, about local specificities of censorship which will prove useful for establishing typologies.

Which is from the point of view of censorship a period of relaxation? Was there really an ideological relaxation? Did the number of internal documents decrease? To what extent did censorship follow the political line?

As I have previously emphasized my theme has not found fertile ground in Romanian historical research. The scarcity of studies and volumes representing collections of documents confirms this assertion. Therefore the recourse to the archival stacks is compulsory. There are some reasons for which this happened, namely the restrictions in accessing specific archival fonds. The archival fond gathering the files of the institution of censorship is called “The Committee for Press and Printings” and it is

held in The National Archives of Romania. Secondary literature contains mainly books on Soviet Union models of censorship, the Romanian case being poorly treated. But in many aspects the logic behind the functioning of Romanian censorship was similar to the Soviet pattern, which at the very beginning provided the archetype.

Theoretical Models

In approaching censorship the literature is scarce. By and large I see two main trends dealing with censorship, a liberal one and a post-modernist one.

Liberal academic approach regards censorship as a peculiarity of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and opposes it to freedom of expression. According to the liberal tradition, the primary enemy of free speech is the government's attempt to perpetuate its own power through the suppression of expression deemed subversive, dangerous or immoral.⁸ This pattern is used by the majority of works examining censorship in totalitarian Communist states. The authors are either émigré scholars, artists remembering personal experiences, or Western scholars who are using theories of totalitarianism in their analyses of censorship.

The terms “totalitarian” and “totalitarianism” were coined in the 1920s and initially referred to fascist Italy.⁹ They entered in academic debate in late 1940s and beginning of 1950s, being first used for scrutinizing Germany. They gained popular and academic currency during the Cold War and in relation with Soviet Union.¹⁰

The first influential scholarly study on totalitarianism was provided by the German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt. After analyzing Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, she concluded that totalitarian regimes aim to break down civil society in

⁸ Ruth Gavison, “Incitement and the Limits of Law,” in Robert C. Post, *Censoring and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulations* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 43.

⁹ See Michael Halberstam, *Totalitarianism and Modern Conception of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

order to create lonely, atomized individuals with no private space for their own, who can be easily used to serve the state's interest:

“Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capacities. But totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man.”¹¹

The most influential paradigm in defining totalitarianism was advanced by Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. In 1956 they defined totalitarianism in terms of a six-point “syndrome or pattern of interrelated traits”: an ideology consisting of an official body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of society, a single party typically led by one man, “the dictator” and consisting of a relatively small percentage of the total population (up to 10 percent), a terroristic police directed not only against the enemies of the regime but against more or less arbitrary selected classes of the population, a communications monopoly in the hands of party and of the government, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy through bureaucratic coordination.¹² This model of interpretation became widespread among scholars.

In 1969, Friedrich reevaluated the theory by adding two modifications. First, the monopoly control was extended to embrace “all organizations, including economic ones”. Second he emphasized that this monopoly control need not necessarily be exercised by the party, but could be in the hands of whatever elite ruled the particular society and thereby constituted its regime.¹³

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 476.

¹² Carl Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 21-22.

¹³ Carl Friedrich, “The Evolving Theory and Practice of Totalitarian Regimes”, in Carl Friedrich, Michael Curtis, Benjamin Barber, *Totalitarianism in Perspective: Three Views* (New York, Praeger, 1969), 126.

Friedrich's and Brzezinski's definition is similar to French sociologist Raymond Aron's attempt to explain what constitutes a totalitarian policy. Also for Aron totalitarianism acted as an enemy of democracy (and implicit of freedom of expression) encompassing a single party regime armed with an ideology which confers it absolute authority, a double monopoly (the monopoly of the means of force and the monopoly of the means of persuasion), and a terror rooted in both ideology and the repressive apparatus of police.¹⁴

Even if extensively used during the Cold War, mostly by political scientists, the theory of totalitarianism also met with substantial critiques, mostly among historians. The most common attack against the theory posited that the concept of totalitarianism was nothing else but a product of the Cold War discourse and as a result, academically suspect.¹⁵ Moreover, being essentially static it cannot underline changes of the regimes in time. In Robert Tucker's words, it was formulated for a specific period and then lost its applicability because "it made no provision for the possibility that a totalitarian regime might embark on a course of detotalitarianizing change by curbing total terror following the death of the dictator".¹⁶ Another objection against the theory of totalitarianism was formulated by the school of social historians (Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stephan Cohen, Arch Getty and others). They put totalitarianism under fire considering that the perspective in terms of "state" and "society" cannot devote sufficient attention to the transformation of society itself, which is simply depicted like a victim of the state and its reaction is a mixture of "covert hostility and passive acceptance of *force*

¹⁴ Raymond Aron, *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 213.

¹⁵ Peter Grieder, "In Defense of Totalitarianism Theory as a Tool of Historical Scholarship," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion*, 3-4 (2007): 566.

¹⁶ Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Reinterpretation* (New York: Norton, 1977), viii.

majeure".¹⁷ So, the society is reduced to an inert object which is shaped and manipulated by the action of the totalitarian regime.

The post-modernism system of interpretation departs from the apparently simple question of what the term "censorship" actually means, and how censorship could be analyzed. In defining the term, the recent scholarship stands for a more subtle understanding of censorship in detriment of the conventional approaches which arguably concentrate on institutional acts of prohibition. The opinions of authors such as Richard Burton, Michael Holquist, Annette Kuhn or Sue Currie Jansen coagulate around the argument that the conventional conception of censorship focuses on external constraints enforced upon a subject who is always approached as uncensored.

Annette Kuhn argues that models which examine institutional prohibition serve to escape appreciations of the complexity of censorship into a reification of the censored object considering it into a position of completely subordination to the institution. Her redefinition emphasizes that censorship always involving repression and that mechanisms of production should be brought to light. In her formulation censorship is rather a process than an object, which manifest by employing different censorious forces:

"Censorship is not reducible to a circumscribed and predefined set of institutions and institutional activities, but is produced within an array of constantly shifting discourses, practices and apparatuses. It is an ongoing process embodying complex and often contradictory relations of power".¹⁸

This perspective on censorship stressing the involvement of different discourses and practices is reiterated also by Sue Curry Jansen's. She puts forward an alternative

¹⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick "New Perspectives on Stalinism," *Russian Review*, 4 (1986): 359.

¹⁸ Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909-1925* (London, New York: Routledge, 1988), 4.

definition of censorship from a sociological perspective, consequently much broader than the definitions linked with the free-speech theory. Jansen's definition comprises:

“all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images, and other messages through a society's channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority. It includes both overt and covert proscriptions and prescriptions”.¹⁹

Constitutive censorship is also highlighted by Michael Holquist. He argues that censorship may be unavoidable and that the legislation highlighting the freedom of expression or standing against the repressive institutions is a simple makeshift: “To be for or against the censorship as such is to assume a freedom that no one has. Censorship *is*. One can only discriminate among its more and less repressive effects”.²⁰ In Holquist's view, the desire of those who are eager to control cultural activity may be the characterization of the censorship as an imposed and therefore repressive.

In fact, the definition of censorship as a productive force dispersed in society as a whole owes much to the work of Michel Foucault who suggested the escaping from the limited field of the State institutions, and to anchor the analysis of power on the study of techniques and tactics of domination.²¹ It is not an overstatement to say that any recent scholarship which presents censorship's constitutive nature has its genealogy in the examination of Foucault's networks of disciplinary power and discursive practices.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu also regards the role of censorship as a structural necessity. Moreover he argues for a need of explicit restrictions imposed by authorities through which the internal personal restrictions are attenuated.

¹⁹ Sue Currie Jansen, *Censorship: The Knot that Binds Knowledge and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 222.

²⁰ Michael Holquist, “Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship,” *Publications of Modern Language Association* 1 (1994): 16.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 102.

“Censorship is never quite as perfect or as invisible as when each agent has nothing to say apart from what he is objectively authorized to say: in this case he does not even have to be his own censor because he is, in a way, censored once and for all, through the forms of perception and expression that he has internalized and which impose their form on all his expressions”²²

In accounting Romanian censorship I assume only the legal-institutional framework. On the one hand, the recent scholarship debates about censorship, which reiterated during the last years, have a disputable point in their own positioning in relation with conventional perception of censorship. In doing so their approaches seek to soften the perception of censorship as unyielding by integrating it in a complex debate. Conducting the analysis from the legal-institutional point of view entails a risk. Only an incomplete image of the censorial process can emerge from such an approach. To be more exact to refute one of the two above theories by drawing on Romanian case it is impossible, a single case study does not having the necessary authority to refute a theory.

²² Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991).

I. Institutional and legal framework of Communist Censorship in Romania: Historical Overview

1. The Phases of the Communist Regime

Romania's position after August 23, 1944, was established by the Armistice Agreement signed on 12 September 1944. Bessarabia and Northern were lost in the favor of the Soviet Union and the Vienna Award concerning Transylvania was declared null. War criminals were to be handed-over and Fascist-type organizations dissolved. Until the planned conference of peace, an Allied Control Commission was established under the authority of the Soviet Union.²³ In practice, the article of this Convention served as basis for imposition of the Communist rule in Romania.

In spite of its insignificant number of members but having the support of the Soviet Union, RCP entered the first scene of the Romanian politics. Three separate centers coexisted in the party. The group of those from exile, coagulating around Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker, the group of those who were in prison in Romania, having Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej as incontestable leader, and the group of those communists not being imprisoned but living in illegality under Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime. In November 1944 Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker returned to Bucharest from Moscow and shared in the leadership of the RCP, participating in the actions for the installation of a communist govern. Between August 1944 and March 1945 Romania had three governs:

²³ See for the condition of the armistice Marin Mocanu (ed.), *Romania - marele sacrificat al celui de-al doilea razboi mondial. Documente* [Romania – the Great Martyr of the World War II. Documents] (Bucuresti: Arhivele Statului, 1994), 310-315.

the first government of Constantin Sanatescu (August 23 – November 2 1944), the second government of Sanatescu (November 4 – December 2 1944), and the government of Nicolae Radescu (December 6 – February 28 1945).²⁴ At March 6, 1945 with substantial help from the Soviet Union, the government lead by Petru Groza, the leader of the Ploughmen’s Front (*Frontul Plugarilor*), a party being under the control of the Communists, was installed. With an increased political authority, holding the most important ministers (Justice, Internal Affairs, Communications, and Propaganda), the Communists entered the road for complete domination.

The first period of the political evolution of the Romanian Communism regime is generally perceived as corresponding to the interval 1944-1958. In the terms of Kenneth Jowitt, it marked a “breakthrough”, namely “a decisive alteration or destruction of values, structures and, behaviors ... perceived as comprising or contributing to the actual potential existence or alternative centers of political power”.²⁵ In this period of “unbound Stalinism” the aim was to construct the dictatorship of the proletariat by transplanting the Soviet model. That meant a radical transformation in all domains: the imposing of nationalization and development of a heavy industry in the realm of the economy, abolishment of the private ownership and imposing the collective farms through collectivization in the realm of agriculture; the annihilation of the creativity in the intellectual and cultural realm.²⁶ The violent methods employed by the Communists in establishing the new order were associated by some authors with the lack of a social

²⁴ *Raportul Comisiei Prezidentiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din Romania* [The Report of the Presidential Commission for Analyze of Communist Dictatorship in Romania], http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf, 38 (last accessed May 25 2009).

²⁵ Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of Romania, 1944-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 7.

²⁶ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 107-110.

base and legitimacy, a direct consequence of the Party's opposition in the interwar period to the major questions of national unity and sovereignty.²⁷

By 1952 Gheorghiu-Dej acquired a position in the Party which allowed him starting the elimination of his rivals. With Stalin's approval, Gheorghiu-Dej, eliminated the group coagulated behind the authority of Ana Pauker (Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu) under the pretext of deviationism. Gheorghiu-Dej tried to promote this victory as one of the national, indigenous wing of the Party. In reality there was no ethnic connotation, being nothing more than an internal struggle within the party, a *modus operandi* specific to the Stalinist logic.²⁸

After Stalin's death in March 1953, a period a relaxation characterized Eastern Europe. But Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania did not undertake a process of de-Stalinization. The turning point in the evolution of the Communist regime will come later, with the opposition to the Soviet foreign policy. The process was gradual. Although the Twentieth Congress of Communist Party of the Soviet Union with Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and cult of personality made Romanian leaders "confused and traumatized",²⁹ Gheorghiu-Dej had the ability to recover from the moment and to prevent de-Stalinization. By miming the "New Course" and formally introducing the "collective leadership" the Romanian leader institutionalized what Michel Shafir called "simulated change".³⁰

By actively participating at the suppression of the Hungarian uprising from 1956 and proving his loyalty in front of Soviet Union, Gheorghiu-Dej was rewarded, in 1958,

²⁷ Mary Ellen Fisher, *Nicolae Ceausescu. A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), 34.

²⁸ Tismaneanu, 178.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁰ Michael Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1985), 68-69.

with an unexpected retreat of Soviet military troops from Romania, a unique favor in the Soviet Bloc. Nevertheless, the Romanian leader tried to resist the de-Stalinization imposed from the Kremlin by keeping tight to concepts as industrialization and especially national pride and autonomy in an attempt to gain the support of the people.³¹

The event that put Romania in direct conflict with Soviet Union was the Khrushchev's plan, applied in August 1961 by the Council for Economical Mutual Assistance (COMECON). According to the plan, COCECOM was intended to supervise a supranational planning economy, which "if accepted by Romania would have obliged her to remain a supplier of raw materials and to abandon her program of rapid industrialization."³² Romania rejected the plan, but shortly, in 1962, COMECON adopted a document entitled "Principles for the International Division of Labor" which reiterated the division between the industrialized north and agrarian south.³³

The Romanian communists' answer to this was the Declaration from 1964 that affirmed the Romanian policy of independence and non-interference in internal affairs. Following this moment was period of rediscovery of the "national values" and national history, with the communists seeking to accumulate internal legitimacy. In this atmosphere Nicolae Ceausescu came to power in 1965, by trying to impose a personal image of a defender of socialist democracy. In the first stage of his rule (1965-71) he attended to this imagine, culminating with the condemnation of Czechoslovak invasion, but later and especially after 1971 the situation changed dramatically.

³¹ *Raportul Comisiei...*, 84.

³² Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule* (Bucuresti: Academia Civica, 1998), 142

³³ Tismaneanu, 179.

2. Initial Stages of Communist Censorship

After the Second World War, Romania entered under a strong Soviet tutelage. In the first post-war years, a type of military censorship was introduced operating under the basic "Soviet rule," vast institutions being established to control information. It was a moment comparable to that of 1831 a period in which the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were put under Russian control and a severe censure was introduced under Russian General Kissleff.³⁴ Common to both these periods was the fact that censorship was introduced and formalized by a foreign power.

Although brutal in its purposes and means, Soviet policy in the occupation zones in Eastern Europe after Second World War had the aim to consolidate its "conquests".³⁵ Organized in the process of the Communist seizure of political power, censorship in Romania was among the most severe between the former allies of Germany, and occupied an important role in the Soviet regional strategy.

The "Zero moment" of communist censorship in Romania was the Armistice Convention signed between the Romanian government and the governments of the United Nations. The Convention establishes Allied Control Commission, which in reality was under full Soviet control. Following the signing of the Convention on 12 September 1944, Article 16 officially sanctioned the introduction of censorship in Romania, having as a direct result the establishment of Allied control over publications, theatres, movies, postal and telephone services, official and private correspondence also

³⁴ Adrian Marino, *Cenzura în România. Schiță istorică introductivă* [The censorship in Romania. Introductory Historical sketch] (Craiova, Aius, 2000), 62.

³⁵ Alexandru Zub, *Orizont închis. Istoriografia română sub dictatură*, [Broken Horizon. The Romanian History under dictatorship] (Iasi, Institutul European, 1999), 17.

came under vigilant control. In the years to come this Article 16 would guide and justify the actions of censorship and censors.

Pointing out the rules on censorship, the Decree of the Council of Ministers adopted on 27 September 1944 prohibited from participation in the press those persons who have propagated fascist ideas.³⁶ In fact it was an ambiguous decree issued for the purposes of the Communists, with the aim to remove their opponents from public life. Following the Marxist-Leninist thesis according to which Nazism was but a species of fascism, which in turn was nothing else than a stage in the development of the capitalist system, the decree could ban from public participation all those who were not communists.

On October 20, 1944, censorship was placed under the control of the Council of Ministers, the new chief being Colonel Gheorghe Marinescu from the Romanian Army Headquarter. In early 1945, on the background of a political Communist campaign against Prime-Minister Gheorghe Radescu, newspapers of the main opposition parties, *Justitia* (The Justice), published by the Peasantry Party, and *Viitorul* (The Future), the official of National Liberal Party, came under attack. The aim was to prevent any response from the opposition to the Communist attacks. This aim was fulfilled on the one hand through censorship and on the other by printers' refusal to produce these papers, because many of them were blackmailed by Communist trade union leaders with withdrawal of salary rights. Finally, on March 1, 1945 the two newspapers cease operations.

Under the Communists attacks and with determinant help from Soviet Russia, on 6 March 1945 Gheorghe Radescu was overthrown, and replaced with a Communist

³⁶ Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, Daniela Bușe, Beatrice Marinescu, *Instaurarea totalitarismului comunist în România*, [The instauration of the Totalitarian Communism in Romania] (București: Cavallioti, 1995), 21.

prime-minister. Petru Groza's government intensified censorship. Following pressures by the communist-dominated government, on May 1945 a royal decree decided "immediate withdrawal from circulation of publications and periodicals, plastic reproductions and graphs, videos, disks, medals and badges, metal, with a fascist-Hitlerist character or containing elements which can deteriorate the good relations with the Soviet Union."³⁷ For this purpose a committee was established by the Ministry of Propaganda with the mission to draw up a list of periodicals and books since January 1 1917 to August 23, 1944 containing, fascist, chauvinist, racist ideas or passages which could damage relations with the Soviet Union.

Until the end of the Second World War, the existence of censorship could be justified somewhat easier by the existence of a state of war. The prevailing justification was that of compliance with the Armistice Convention under which Romania continued to remain until 1947. Besides, censorship was enacted in all belligerent countries, for example the United States, being justified by two reasons. Firstly to become "immune" to enemy propaganda who would not have access to internal information; secondly, the "offensive" carried out by monitoring mail and the phones.³⁸ In other words censorship was seen as an important component of war operations.

After the war, censorship was reorganized and acquired new political functions. It is very telling in this respect that on March 5, 1946 the Ministry of Propaganda was reorganized, turning into the Ministry of Information (with the power to manage, organize and control all the press, radio, film, being also the coordinator of propaganda

³⁷ *Publicații scoase până în 1 august 1945* (Issues published until 1945 August 1), Ministerul Propagandei, București, 1945.

³⁸ Byron Prince, "Governmental censorship in war-time", in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 36, nr.5, p. 838.

in the country and abroad.³⁹ Explaining the functioning and organization of the Ministry of Information, its leader, PP Constantinescu-Iasi, denied the existence of censorship, but acknowledged the existence of "provisions and regulations in the media necessary in this period after the war."⁴⁰

3. Towards a Legal Framework of Censorship

As every communist regime, Romania has the same poignant particularity for the situation of the institutions: the double subordination, both to the party and to the state. In this compound situation the place of DGPT and censorship has to be considered. Ideologically, DGPT was subordinated to the *Secția Propagandă și Agitație*⁴¹ (The Section of Propaganda and Agitation) which besides censorship oversaw the pursuance of the PMR's decrees by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Arts and Information, The Academy of Romanian Popular Republic, The Committee for Cinematography, The Romanian Writers' Union, and The Romanian Association for Tightening the Relationships with USSR.⁴² Politically, the institution was subordinated for a short time period to Ministry of Art and Information and later to the Council of Ministers.

At the very beginning, in the Ministry of Art and Information had been set up a Direction of Press and Printings Materials. Shortly it was transformed into the General Directorate of Press and Printing Materials and subordinated as a functional department

³⁹ The National Archives of Romania, Branch Mures, *Fond Ministry of Information*, file VII, 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The Section of Propaganda and Agitation was innitially called *Secția de Educație Politică* (The Section of Political Education). Soon after the congress which marked the unification of RCP with Social-Democrat Party, in 1948 February, the denomination was changed in *Direcția de Propagandăși Agitație a CC al PMR* (The Direction of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of Romanian Workers Party). Finally, its final denomination was coined at once with the reorganization of Romanian Workers Party from 1950, January and resulted into *Secția Agitație și Propaganda*.

⁴² Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură. *Stalinizarea României*. (București: All Publishing House, 2001), 232.

to the Council of Ministers of the Popular Republic of Romania.⁴³ Accordingly to the Decree no. 218/1949, the General Directorate of Press and Printing Materials (DGTP) had the following attribution: edited the Official Bulletin of the Popular Republic of Romania, authorized any printings materials, newspapers, magazines, programs, posters, the books printed in Bucharest and in country; authorized the distribution of books, films, and the import and export of newspaper and books or art objects; regularized the condition of activity for bookstores, antiquarians, public libraries, and newspaper deposits; composed the official press releases for the Council of Ministers; coordinated the work of press services belonging to ministers, departments, and public services.⁴⁴

The intensification of censorship was ideologically justified by the introduction of the principle of class struggle and the fight against legionaries, racist, and chauvinistic ideas but also by the fight against the bourgeois literature, and public materials with anti-democratic character.⁴⁵ In comparison to the previous years there is a shift in official language. The word “censorship” is replaced by a phrase which will become well-known in the future years: “the control of the press, publication, and printing materials”. In fact it is a common mystification for a language which, as French author Françoise Thom pointed out, served as a prime vehicle for ideology.⁴⁶

Ideological justifications apart, Soviet censorship was that which represented the archetype for the post-war Romanian censorship. Soviet censorship took the form of a complex system of monitoring and evaluation *ante* and *post* publications, including a large number of people. The Department for Literature and the Press, *Glavlit*, played the

⁴³ *Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române* (The Official Bulletin of Popular Republic of Romania), no. 23 from May 1949, decree 214, art. 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, decree 218

⁴⁵ Arhivele Nationale Istorice Centrale ale României [The National Historical Archives of Romania] (follow up ANIC), *Fond Comitetul pentru Presă și Tipărituri* (The Committee for Press and Printings Materials), file 5\1949, 6.

⁴⁶ Françoise Thom, *Newspeak: the Language of Soviet Communism*. (London: Claridge Press, 1989), 42.

main role.⁴⁷ Lenin regarded censorship as a temporary measure in the revolutionary events, and as a precondition for rebuilding Russia on a Marxist basis. But the "temporary" lasted until June 1990. The Soviet leaders' view on censorship had its roots in their concepts of freedom of the press and circulation of books. For Lenin, press freedom was a concept semantically "corrupted" in the capitalist system, because the press cannot be neutral, it can only serve the interests of either the capitalist or socialist forces. The press had for him to play a pro-social role in the development of socialism. In other words, the press does not filter out all the criticisms, but prevents those which are concerned with the goals of establishing socialism.⁴⁸

When the Council of Ministers decided to reconfigure in some aspects the institutional responsibilities of censorship it operated according to Leninist distinctions. Thereby, Decision no. 273 from 23 February 1954 stipulated that the General Directorate of Press and Printings Materials using its authority for defending the state secret and also to political control the content of all propagandistic materials and printed materials supposed to be widespread in public sphere. The attributions remained by and large the same: control over newspapers, magazines, periodicals, the content of the books, brochures, printing houses, libraries, radio stations, and materials to be exhibited in museum and exhibitions. The new regulations extended the control of DGPT over theatres as well. The only sectors that DGPT did not check were the secret documents of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Army Forces, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁹ Together with the other states organs, namely Militia and Prosecution, they were

⁴⁷ Michael S. Fox, "Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural Affairs, 1922-28" *Soviet Studies* 6 (1992): 1405.

⁴⁸ Peter Kenez, 36.

⁴⁹ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 5/1949, 14.

following the “removal of inadequate materials” sanctioning those responsible.⁵⁰ To come under the sanction meant not to have on the printed material the stamp “good for print”, or to import in Romania books not authorized by DGPT.⁵¹ The Decree no. 291 from 1949 stipulated such sanction as prison from six months to two years and severe fines. The relapse could double the sanction.⁵²

Prior to year 1974 no official laws on censorship had been issued. This did not mean an institutional stagnation; in fact, internal regulations were preferred to official norms. I will discuss these internal regulations and the everyday life of the institution of censorship in the second chapter. A debate moment in the history of communist censorship was the adoption of the Law of the Press on March 28, 1974. In its introduction, the Law called upon to “fight without cease for the implementation of the Romanian Communist Party policy, of the lofty principles of socialist ethics and equity, unabatedly to promote progress and progressive ideas in all fields of life and of social activity.”⁵³

The law was divided into eight chapters. The first chapter explains the role of the press both as an instrument of propaganda and as a platform for public expression; its secondary role can also function in the propaganda sphere by spreading “valuable ideas to encourage initiative” in the masses. The law defined the freedom of the press as “a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution. The right is guaranteed to all citizens, and the necessary conditions have been created for them to be able to express, through

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 20, 187.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Buletinul Oficial* (Official Bulletin), no. 48 from April 1974, law no. 3, my translation.

the press, their opinions in matters of general interest and of a public character, to be informed in all domestic and international events.”⁵⁴

Chapter three made clear that the right to publish is granted to political, state, mass and public organizations, and other legal entities. All such publication must be registered with the DGTP.⁵⁵

The last institutional reconfiguration took place in 1975, ten years after Nicolae Ceausescu came to power (1965-1989). A new denomination for the institution of censorship was adopted: *Comitetul pentru Presa și Tiparituri* (*The Committee for Press and Printings Materials*). The first article from the Decree of the State Council of Socialist Republic of Romania no. 53 from May 30, 1975 defined the role of the newly established Committee for Press and Printings Material as following: “to contribute through its entire activity to the imposing of Party and state policy in the domains of press, radio, television, editorial works, live performances, films and other form of imprinted or recorded graphic, audible or visual, designed and used as means of expression and public information.”⁵⁶ The third article underlined the new tasks: prevention from spreading and publication of those printed materials which, in conformity with law, were unpublishable; the registration, in conformity with law, of the authorization for editing newspapers, magazines, or other periodicals.⁵⁷

But this reorganization was for short lived, the Committee for Press and Printings being abolished in 1977.⁵⁸ To a considerable extent its responsibilities were taken over by the The Council for Socialist Culture and Education (*Consiliul Socialist pentru Cultura si Educatie*). The organization, part of the central government apparatus, had the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Buletinul Oficial* (Official Bulletin), no. 51 from May 1975, law no. 52.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See *Buletinul Oficial* (Official Bulletin), no. 57 from July 1977, law no. 472.

same powers as its predecessor and was intended to “guide the publishing houses and exert control over their output.”⁵⁹ The Council was further responsible for political and ideological censorship of all imported films, books and records as well as for all performances within Romania. The Council was also a proscribing agency, issuing to editors of print and audiovisual media lists of unacceptable news and feature topics. Basically, it ensured that writers and journalists conformed to the laws, all designed to support the state and its policies.

Many perceived the moment as a transition from censorship to self censorship. In the words of Romanian dissident Paul Goma, “Ceausescu killed two birds with one stone. On the one hand, he blinded the West with his ‘abolition of censorship’; on the other hand, he erected a form of censorship that is more effective than any other in the past: namely, mutual censorship”.⁶⁰

Adrian Marino regarded the abolishment of the censorship as “an entirely cynical movement. At one level, the party was ‘sure’ that after three decades of totalitarian rule, people were conditioned to be self-censors, checking everything they wrote against everything they had imbibed; mutual surveillance could replace professional censors. At the same time, however, it was clear that the party had by no means such a high opinion of human nature; left to police themselves, people would beg for a return to the old system where at least you knew where you were.”⁶¹

De facto the problem of censorship was transferred from bureaucrat to “creative artists.” Publishers, editors, authors, and journalists were to be responsible both as individuals and in their collective committees for what appeared. Most of the old censors

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Paul Goma, “The Rumanian labyrinth” in *Index on Censorship*, 6 (1978): 42.

⁶¹ Adrian Marino, “Romania” in Derek Jones (ed.), *Censorship: a World Encyclopedia* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), vol. III, 2046-2047.

were absorbed by the system and relocated into the new managing councils set up throughout the media. The claimed abolishment of censorship meant in reality a duplication of its mechanisms.

Scrutinizing the legal framework of Romanian censorship after the World War II, some conclusions can be drawn. In the first years after the war, censorship was often retrospective in the sense that communists focused their activity on destroying work that had already existed. All the public libraries had been expurgated of books or any other data considered against the “new order”. That was made concomitant with primary task of censorship, to take over the public space by silencing the other voices. With the consolidation of the regime, censorship was gradually transformed from a instrument with large propagandistic prerogatives into a institution with large control attributions, with strictly and precisely internal regulation, with branches in all the regions and counties.

II. Establishing the Mechanism

1. *Administrative Setup*

“The work of censorship in the Communist spirit requires a correspondingly political and ideological level, a broad sphere of general knowledge, a constantly enriched and refreshed cultural horizon, and above all our the censor must be committed to the policy of our party”.⁶²

This phrase, quoted from a speech delivered at a DGTP closed meeting by one of the participants, highlights the most important component of a censorship authority: the human resources, the censors who are called to apply the party ideology and practice and to dissociate what can be published without affecting the party credibility and legitimacy from what cannot be published.

The Romanian Communist Party had no blueprint for censorship when it came to power. Their methods derived from a peculiar combination of circumstances and the challenges they had to confront. The political and technical conditions of the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s were significantly different from those of the 1950s. If in the first years after the communist takeover censorship mainly devoted its activity to a limited number of daily newspapers issued only in a few towns, later, along with the increasing number of daily newspapers, literary magazines, publishing houses or printing houses the tasks of the censorship multiplied accordingly.

⁶² ANIC, *Fond CPT*, file 1/1967, 15, my translation.

The best insight into how censorship adjusted its priorities is provided by an exploration of the dynamics of its internal organization. At its very beginning the mechanism of DGTP encompassed five services but with some significant differences among each other. In 1949, the principal branch was the Service for the Press in Bucharest which surveyed the activity of the press activity of all public institutions, the daily newspapers, and the press agency RADOR. Its activity was completed by the Service for the Press from the Counties and Periodical Publications (*Serviciul pentru Presa Locala si Publicatii Periodice*) - concerned with the local press activity and the activity of the printing houses outside Bucharest -, the Control of Press and Printings Materials (*Controlul Presei si Publicatiilor*) - publication of the press and printing materials in good conditions -, the Service for the Evidence of Foreign Press and Printings Materials (*Serviciul pentru Evidenta Presei si Tipariturilor din Strainatate*) - authorizing the printings materials eligible to enter the country -, and the Service of Publication in Foreign Languages (*Serviciul pentru Publicatii in Limbi Straine*) - editing the publications in foreign languages, translating the documents necessary for the central ministers and controlling the distribution of Romanian magazines abroad.⁶³ It is important to stress that in its first years of existence DGTP encompassed also a bureaucratic activity devoted to state or other institutions. Apart from translating documents for different ministers through its Service of Publication in Foreign Languages, DGTP played an active role in setting the prices of diverse publications, regulating the antiquarian commerce, issuing the Official Bulletin of the Popular Republic of Romania, or even organizing monthly conferences with an ideological character.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., file 5/1949, 79.

The institution was based on a vertical structure of subordination. At the top was the administration composed of the general director assisted by two deputy managers. All leaders of sub-directorates were directly subordinated to the general director. The local branches of censorship were under the control of the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control; after 1973, they were transformed in the Direction for Personnel-Education and Secretariat. The importance which the communists attached to the institution of censorship is revealed by the profile of the person whom they appointed as the chair of general director: Iosif Ardeleanu, who led the institution from its establishment in 1949 until 1973, was an old Hungarian from Transylvania communist militant from the interwar period (on his real name Döme Adler) who spent several years of imprisonment in the Targu-Jiu political prisoners' camp together with the virtual leader of RCP, Gheorghiu-Dej. As general director of censorship, Ardeleanu was supposed to report on institutional issues to the chief of the Agitation and Propaganda Section of Central Committee. It is interesting to note that, despite his important position and prerogatives assumed as chief of the censorship, his knowledge of Romanian was rather poor.⁶⁵

Within this heterogeneous structure, a paramount role was assigned to the Council of Administration as a mediator between the administration and the sub-directorates. The Council was set up exclusively from employees of DGPT, namely the general director, the two deputy managers and the chiefs of the sub-directorates. It debated a large spectrum of internal issues, from the application of diverse official decrees concerning the activity of the institution, the political-ideological preparing of the employees, the forms of control carried on, to issues regarding the work discipline and its violation. The Council met periodically and institutionalized the practice of inviting to its sessions employees from the local branches of DGPT.

⁶⁵ Tismaneanu and Vasile, 84-85.

The reorganization of DGPT in 1973 opened the floor for a new Council of Administration which was intended to be “a deliberative organ which decides the activity of the general directorate”,⁶⁶ doubled by an Executive Bureau. The new Council of Administration was considerably enlarged, its members attaining 45 people. All the chiefs of sub-directories gained membership in the new organized council; in addition, a number of employees and people from outside of DGPT were also included. The external members comprised editors of newspapers, representatives from the Committee of Education and Socialist Culture (CESE), the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Interior, the Union of Communist Youth, and all the chiefs of publishing houses.

Some authors account the extinction of the DGPT primarily with this political context, arguing that “when someone from outside the institution comments and judges its attributions, otherwise secret and intangible ... this means the beginning of the end”.⁶⁷ I regard this approach as rather simplistic and ambiguous. A more comprehensive explanation should take into consider the context created by the famous Ceausescu’s speech from July 1971 (hereafter referred to as the July theses) and furthermore by the so-called “mini-cultural revolution” from November 1971 and the establishment of the Committee of Education and Socialist Culture. The speech from July established the new ideological coordinates of the regime, highlighting the dominant role the Party should play in all spheres of society. The thesis also launched an attack full of dogmatism against those who sought to relate the Romanian culture to Western patterns: “Comrades, an inadequate practice has developed, that of seeking only

⁶⁶ ANIC, *Fond CPT*, file 5/1971, 60.

⁶⁷ Liliana Corobca, “Declinul Cenzurii Comuniste” [The Downhill of Communist Censorship], *Asymetria. Revue Roumaine de Culture, Critique et Imagination*, March (2009): <http://www.asymetria.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=711> (last accessed on May, 28 2009).

towards what is produced abroad... We are against the prostration (*ploconire*) in front of all that is foreign.”⁶⁸

The Plenum Meeting of the Central Committee of RCP from November 3-5, 1971 consecrated the ideologization of all important sectors of social life. As Miron Constantinescu, a former Ministry of Education, unquestioningly put it: “The socialist conscience does not form by itself alone, it develops as a reflection of social existence, under the direct instruction of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard working class.”⁶⁹ For applying the new directives, the Committee for Education and Socialist Culture was invested with a powerful authority and an increasing role was assigned to the party *nomenklatura* in guarding ideological conformity. These new poles of power were also expounded by internal debates within the DGPT. It is probative in this sense the case of a DGPT lecturer who, trying to ban a text from publication, faced the refusal of local party’s organ from Iasi which decided to pass over the lecturer’s advices and published the text. The same situation occurred in the Committee for Education and Socialist Culture: a book which did not received an authorization from DGPT was nevertheless published with the approval of the Committee for Education and Socialist Culture.⁷⁰ By way of these examples, I argue that the dissolution of institutional censorship in Romania has to be regarded the context of the interplay between the DGPT and other state institutions, with the DGPT gradually losing part of its authority in favor of institutions which doubled its prerogatives.

⁶⁸ Nicolae Ceausescu, *Propuneri de masuri pentru imbunatatirea activitatii politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninista a membrilor de partid, a tutoror oamenilor muncii, 6-9 iulie 1971* [Proposals for Improvement of Politico-Ideological Activity, of Marxist-Leninist Education of Party Members, of all the Workers] (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1971), 205.

⁶⁹ ANIC, *Fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie* [Central Committee of Romanian Communist Party – Common Room], file 127/1971, vol. II, 149.

⁷⁰ ANIC, *Fond CPT*, file 1/1972, 139.

2. The Key Actor: the Censor and his Educational Activity

Structurally, the entire system of censorship entrenched itself in the figure and activity of the censors, or as they were defined by the institutional language, the lecturers. But not all the lecturers were at the same level and had the same attributions. The lecturer, the person commissioned with the reading of printed materials proposed for publication, had two main professional duties. On the one hand he was demanded to permanently care for his political-ideological development and to gain knowledge of all the political documents issued by the RCP. On the other hand, after reading the printed material he had to present it to the administration of the sub-directorate or local branch to which he belonged. These two professional duties faced the censor with a double institutional subordination. For improving his political education, he was subordinated to the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control; as far as his daily current issues were concerned, he acted under the authority of the direct chief.

The local branches were administered by a chief of the collective whose main duties were to be in permanent touch with the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control and with the regional organ of the RCP which had to be informed about the activity of DGPT's branch. The local censors were denominated commissioners (*imputerniciti*) and also had to consult the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control in the problems overstepping them.⁷¹

The Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control, as the one responsible for the “political-professional growing” of the censors evidently played the most important role. As Iosif Ardeleanu pointed out:

⁷¹ Ibid., file 1/1966, 23-40.

“We cannot refer only to the professional capacity ... It is sure that a person devoted to the party and to its policy will make a better qualitative work in comparison with a political neutral person, who even if knowledgeable is not devoted to the party.”⁷²

In other words the main task of Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control was the shaping of the censor qualities, the formation of a “perfect” censor who could solve all the tasks proficiently. The qualities were unequivocally defined:

- 1) A political-ideological level according to the tasks and a constant concern with its improvement.
- 2) A divers spectrum of general knowledge.
- 3) The knowing of all the internal dispositions and working methods.
- 4) In his activity and in his relationships he must prove ideological firmness, militancy, vigilance, high attention and discipline.⁷³

How could someone be employed as a censor? At the very beginning the aspirant for this position had to pass an examination in which his politico-ideological training and general knowledge were assessed during a discussion supervised by the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control. Afterwards, the conclusions were presented to the chief of sub-directorate or branch interested in employment. This process finished with a verification made by the Service of Personnel in collaboration with the local or central organs of RCP.⁷⁴

After employment, the process of institutional integration began. Once the acquaintance with the internal regulations of DGTP passes, the new censor was placed under the authority of an experienced censor to guide and “qualify” him. The process of qualification encompassed two layers: the professional education, and the politico-

⁷² Ibid., 317.

⁷³ Ibid., file 84/1966, 2, my translation.

⁷⁴ Ibid., file 78/1967, 194.

ideological and general culture education.⁷⁵ In the phase of professional education, the censor had to divide his time between studying together with his mentor the interventions made by the sub-directorate or local branch to which he was assigned, and reading printed materials banned for comprising numerous political mistakes. The phase of politico-ideological preparation took place in parallel with the first one, and consisted of the study of political materials with ideological content and enrollment into a form of education conducted by the RCP. For filling the gaps in the general culture of the censor, the mentor guides his disciple in performing readings from history, literature, art, or sciences.⁷⁶ Naturally, the books studied mirrored the official ideology. Titles such as “Lenin About Literature”, Mihail Sadoveanu’s novel *Mitrea Cocor* or Leonte Rautu’s famous dogmatic article *Impotriva Cosmopolitismului si Obiectivismului Burghez in Stiintele Sociale* (Against the Bourgeois Cosmopolitanism and Objectivism in Social Sciences) were mandatory bibliographical references for censors in the 1950s.⁷⁷ Later on, and due to the ideological shift to a more nationalist ideology, the requirements changed. Essential became books focusing on such themes as the gaining of Romanian independence, Romania’s exceptional national history, and so forth.

After a trial period of three months, the candidate’s direct chief decided if the aspirant for a censor job was good enough or had to be transferred elsewhere. The process followed the same lines for those selected for working in local branches as well. The only difference consisted in the trial period, which they had to spend in Bucharest at the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control before being positioned in the new jobs.

But finding suitable persons for such key positions required sustained efforts. At the beginning of the 1950’s the recruitment of a censor often took the form of a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., file 14/1950, 3-9.

conspiratorial action. The secretful and urgent tone of a note sent by the one of DGTP employees is a case in point:

On November 11 1951 I travelled together with an activist from Timisoara Regional Committee to Jimbolia (a small town near Timisoara) in order to recruit censors for the control of radio stations which are on the air both in this area and in Jugoslavia. Facing many obstacles we hardly found the necessary cadres whom we will guide to Bucuresti for a course of political-ideological preparation. We did not reveal to them the specificity of our work.⁷⁸

Otherwise, in the first years after the establishment, DGTP had a heterogeneous body of employees, evaluated later as “improper from political and professional point of view”. Prior to the year 1967, almost all the lectors were “transferred” from DGTP to other state institutions only five of them surviving in the institution.⁷⁹ In institutional the transfer meant expelling from institution and the movement to an another one considered properly. These transfers had certain political connotations, in the period between 1952 and July 1953 twenty five persons being removed from DGTP. The reasons invoked were: they “worked on a wagon lit and for this reason visited all Western countries”, “had relationships with dangerous elements”, “has inadequate relatives”, “cosmopolite ideas” or “bourgeois origins” being ideological justified through the dictatorship of the proletariat. The internal battles for power within the RWP and the defending of the “right-wing deviation” also provoked removals, along the victims being one deputy-manager of DGTP.⁸⁰

In the period after 1950, DGTP embarked on a complex operation of constructing a new collective. The recruitment was based on young high-school graduates and even

⁷⁸ Ibid., file 21/1952, 18, my translation.

⁷⁹ Ibid., file 1/1967, 26.

⁸⁰ Ibid., file 14/1951, 21.

students, and was carried on with the support of central and local organs of RCP.⁸¹ Those who joined the institution between 1950 and 1955 constituted the core of the lecturers. The internal statistics show this clearly: in 1967 the percentage of the lecturers employed in the mentioned period was 44⁸², while for the year 1974 was 39 from a total number of 251⁸³

Throughout the 1960s, the number of the lecturers fluctuated around 400. If in 1964 the scheme of personnel comprised 311 lecturers in 1967 the number decreased to 256.⁸⁴ This decrease may be explained in two ways. First, a considerable amount of those who left the institution were professionally unfit and were transferred. Besides this, another part chose to go and teach in different party schools or at Party's leading Academy, "Stefan Gheorghiu."⁸⁵

From a total number of 264 lecturers, 191 graduated a university, 18 from them were pursuing courses in higher education, and 47 had only high-school or gymnasium studies.⁸⁶ The process of professionalization of the body of lecturers was accelerated after 1967. Since then on, an internal regulation stipulated, all lecturers were required to have undergraduate studies.⁸⁷ The politics of recruitment changed accordingly. From 35 lecturers employed between 1967 and 1970, 32 of them were graduates and 3 in the final years.⁸⁸ Majors in liberal arts prevailed in the censors' intellectual formation. The departments of History, Philosophy, Literature and Stefan Gheorghiu Academy for Socio-Political Education were the most popular.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., file 1/1967, 27.

⁸³ Ibid., file 34/1974, 80.

⁸⁴ Ibid., file 1/1967, 39.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁶ Ibid., file 78/1967, 125.

⁸⁷ Ibid., file 1/1967, 44.

⁸⁸ Ibid., file 1/1970, 261.

In spite of these efforts, around 25% of the total number of lectors were still without university studies. Even cases of lectors with elementary studies persisted. In 1970, there were 10 such cases but their “great politico-ideological experience” and the years spent in the institution secured their jobs.⁸⁹

But regardless if they did or did not graduate from university, the completion of diverse political and ideological courses was mandatory for every censor, as part of politico-ideological education. The complete politico-ideological education of a DGTP’s employee had two components: individual study and collective study. The former consisted of reading the updated internal administrative regulation, diverse documents issued by RCP, or previous interventions made upon texts considered to have a high level of difficulty. For a better comprehension the organization of debating circle was a favored method in institution.

A distinct practice of professional education was participation to conferences organized by the administration of DGTP. The themes of these conferences coagulated around topics such as the history of RCP, the history of the international workers movement or the internal and external politics of RCP. The lecturers were prominent members of RCP as Andrei Stefan (member of the Central Committee of RCP) or Titus Georgescu (from the Institute of Historical and Socio-Political Studies).⁹⁰

For stimulating the study, a commission for establishing a general bibliography for lectors was setup during the period 1970-1971.⁹¹ The commission was abolished shortly, since its attributions were overlapping with the attribution of the chief of sub-directorate and local branches (whose responsibilities also integrated the task).

⁸⁹ Ibid, 262.

⁹⁰ Ibid., file 78/1967, 10.

⁹¹ Ibid., 12.

The historian Peter Kenez explained the logic of the political education and political schools:

“With their catechism-like method they transmitted a way of thinking, which assumed that there was one and only one correct answer to any question. The schools taught a language in which Party activists were expected to express themselves.”⁹²

The case of the DGPT’s lecturers presents a particularity. They were at the same time both students and teachers: They were students for their ideological instructors and teachers for those from outside the institution who entered in contact with them. If an ideology requires a system of propagating itself and all alternative discourses need to be prohibited in favor of the official political discourse, then the censor was trained to be the perfect person for this.

3. Safeguarding the State Secret

The principle of “state secret” legitimized the activity of the DGTP. The control over printed materials was justified through the notion of state secret which was vaguely defined as “prevention from publication of all dates, objectives, and products which once published could prejudice state interest”.⁹³ The DGTP’s attribution of defending the state secret was supposed to be regulated by the general director, which led to an ambiguous and broad definition.

⁹² Peter Kenez, *The Birth of Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 133.

⁹³ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 12/1965, 121.

After 1965, DGTP made efforts to systematize the general director's regulation about defending state secret and created the Documentary-Regulation Service whose role was to keep a so-called "Notebook of Internal Disposals". The method was not a DGTP invention. It was used in all censorship institutions in Eastern Europe, following a pattern borrowed from the Soviet model. Well-known for its strictness in this respect, Soviet censorship went as far as prohibiting even irony and Aesopian language, which were in fact almost impossible to prove.⁹⁴

The DGTP disposals comprised prohibition of publication from all domains, ranging from industry to culture. The close scrutiny of the disposals asserts the ambiguity of the definition of the state secret: "do not publish information about the fact that Romania produces Persian carpets", "do not publish information about any Romanian person who lives abroad" or "do not publish absolute numbers about the industrial production of the year 1969"⁹⁵, "do not publish by any means favorable appreciation about the movie *Reconstituirea* (director Lucian Pintilie)".⁹⁶

The same ambiguity dominated the notion of state secret in the first decade after World War II. Instructions about keeping the state secret given to DGTP recalled Soviet pattern and emphasized only the problems of industrial production and development, "the problems of party life" and "social cultural problems".⁹⁷ Finally, in December 1971 the Law of the State Secret was issued. Even if the law was issued in a year considered decisive in the political "closing" of Romania, the debates and project of the law were not new. DGTP, which vigorously activated in preparing the text of the law, drafted the bill since the beginning of 1968, which proves that the process of re-Stalinization

⁹⁴ Boris Zaks, "Censorship at the Editorial Desk" in Marianna Tax Choldin and Maurice Friedberg (eds.), *The Red Pencil. Artists, Scholars, and Censors in the USSR* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 163.

⁹⁵ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 1/1970, 68-69.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, file 4/1969, 115.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, file 18/1951, 76.

emerged even before August 1968 and Ceausescu's famous balcony speeches of condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact intervention.⁹⁸

For DGTP, the law of the state secret did not produce any mutations. The law required DGTP to ensure its own secrets of service and to prevent from publication through radio, press, television, information or documents which could constitute secrets of state in the economic, technical-scientific, military, and politic domains.⁹⁹ Functioning as a closed institution never opened to the public and already using the principles of state secret in its daily activity, for DGTP the law of the state secret was nothing more than a legal consecration of its status. The only impact of the law can be seen in the reopening of discussions regarding the "Notebook of Internal Disposals" desired to be "a sole document which to encompass all the categories of dates and information prohibited from publication".¹⁰⁰ But the discussion did not come to an end and the dream of an all-comprehensive "Notebook of Internal Disposal" remained unattainable until the abolishment of DGTP in 1977. Indeed, due to its standardized formulation, the notebook was more relevant for those who dealt with the press than for those who acted in other sectors of DGTP.

There is no better way to describe the effective methods of work of a lector than quoting Alexander Zinoviev words: lectors "are trained to write Reports about everything. It is an indispensable element of the Communist organization of work. Monthly Reports, Quarterly Reports, Yearly reports, Five-yearly Reports".¹⁰¹ The report was at the center of the practical work of a censor. For every intervention made in a text, the control made to a printing house or a discussion with someone from a publishing

⁹⁸ See Ibid., file 1/1968.

⁹⁹ Ibid., file 1/1971, 101.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., file 1/1972, 123.

¹⁰¹ Aleksander Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1982), 14.

house, the lector was required to write a report. The official account of this practice was that writing the report helps the virtual documentation of the lector.¹⁰²

Basically there were two main categories of reports: reports to be sent outside the institution and reports for internal use. In the case of the reports sent outside the institution, the lector had to explain his decision in rejecting or accepting the material sent for approval. The censor's prerogatives were twofold: observations and interventions. The former category was determined by small errors in the process of redaction, translation considered to be wrong or misused words. The interventions were cases in which the lector decided the elimination of an article, the retraining of a book or postponing or banishing a TV or radio program. The principle which governed was that every book, magazine, newspaper must be controlled by a single person for having a view as a whole and continuity.¹⁰³

The stability of the above presented structures attests the maturity of the institution. The emergence of television represents the single new important addition to this framework. Even if the degree to which television contributed to the official propaganda was probably the highest, its presence in the censorship's activity was disproportionately low. The reason why television did present challenges was that transmissions were recorded and verified well in advance. The claim of DGTP that it safeguarded the "state secret" should be reevaluated, the "state secret" being nothing more than a predetermined set of standard expression and figures defined as undesirable. Within the limits of the definition of the "state secret", safeguarding it was one of the DGTP's least demanding tasks.

¹⁰² ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 18/1974, 67.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, file 1/1965, 53.

III. Extending Control: Center-Periphery Relations in the Mechanism of Censorship

1. *Shaping Forms of Authority*

The local branches of censorship functioned as direct and exclusive organs subordinated to the General Directorate of Press and Printed Materials. As in the case of the mother institution, all their activities were secret. The internal organization of the local branches followed exactly the same lines as in the case of the central institution, more exactly as a sub-directorate

Having at its base the system of vertical subordination, a local branch was led by the chief of the collective (*seful colectivului*) who subordinated usually between four and nine lectors. Due to the reduced number of employees, a local branch could not maintain internal specialized divisions and consequently a lector had diverse attributions, from controlling printing houses and verifying the printings which entered the country to reading newspapers and literary magazines. In comparison to the censors from Bucharest's Directorate they did not have among their attributions the releases of authorizations for newspapers, magazines, religious publications and books.¹⁰⁴

The territorial-administrative organization and then reorganization of the country determined the number of the local branches. The 1952 Romanian Popular Republic's Constitution introduced the Soviet model of administrative organization, based on

¹⁰⁴ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 45/1964, 86.

regions (*regiune*) and districts (*district*). In accordance with the Constitution, Romania was split into 18 regions;¹⁰⁵ in 1956, their number was reduced to 16 and 150 districts.¹⁰⁶ The last administrative-territorial reorganization, which took place in 1968, abolished the regions, replacing them with 39 counties plus the capital city region, Bucharest.¹⁰⁷ Politically, the aim was a more centralized administration. As Ceausescu stated: “The essential positive result ... is that the central leadership will be closer to the basic units, to the place where the Party and state decisions are directly implemented”.¹⁰⁸ So, if until 1968 the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control subordinated 18 local branches, afterwards their number more than doubled. Needless to say, for DGTP the problem was not extending its authority as it was the redistribution of its human resources within the system in the conditions in which the number of daily newspaper and magazines almost doubled. Accordingly, almost 40 lectors from Bucharest were sent to set up the new branches.¹⁰⁹

Within this framework the present chapter assumes that the relationships between center and periphery were based on an authoritarian type of interaction and surveillance. In time, however, this type of explicit authority turned into a latent authority.

There was a permanent communication between the central administration and the local branches. The connection was maintained through the Sub-directorate of Instructing and Control and its instructors. The instructor was called to supervise the politico-ideological education of the censors from the local branches, to work together with them in reading diverse printed materials and to verify the relationships between

¹⁰⁵ See Article 18 of the Constitution in *Monitorul Oficial* (The Official Monitor) from September 1952.

¹⁰⁶ *Monitorul Oficial* (The Official Monitor) from May 1952, Decree no. 18.

¹⁰⁷ *Monitorul Oficial* (The Official Monitor) from February 1968, Law no 2.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Mary Ellen Fisher, *op. cit.*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 1/1968, 39-47.

the local organs of RCP and the branches of DGTP.¹¹⁰ In essence, his task was twofold: to inform and to control. To inform meant sending to local branches the latest internal directives containing the restriction for publication, or reports with abstracts about discussions conducted during professional meetings in Bucharest. But the most important in this respect were the lists containing interventions made at the Directorate and considered to be models for the regional lectors.

The most common form of explicit authority was the control pursued through the method of correspondence, the method of inspections in the territory (*deplasarea pe teren*), and the method of post-control. As I have already indicated, censors had to fill in a report for every activity. In the local branches the reading of the press was put at the top of the daily activity of a censor. Only those considered to be at a high level of professionalism could work on literary magazines, and in most of the cases that was the chief of the local branch.¹¹¹ All the reports constituted means for instructors to control the local censors.

Even if it was an old practice (established in 1951) the method of correspondence based on the feedback gave by the center for every decision of local lector fell into disgrace after 1965. The explanation offered by DGTP was not very complex: it was considered an obsolete method, a relic from the old times of the institution.¹¹²

None of the above methods was as authoritarian as the method of post-control. Established also somewhere at the beginning of the institution, the post-control was, as its name clearly shows, a second control conducted by the center. More precisely, all the publications or recordings of local radio stations were prior sent to Bucuresti for receiving the second approval. In the year 1965 this method was abolished too. I argue

¹¹⁰ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 28/1968, 13-14.

¹¹¹ File 4/1967, 89.

¹¹² File 1/1966, 60.

that this happened not as a consequence of the political climate after Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej's death, and the abolishment of the second control did not constitute a sign of an ideological relaxation. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, DGTP's body of employees was very heterogeneous in the first decade after establishment. Many of them lacked work experience and had a low level of culture and political indoctrination. After the professionalizing of the lecturers through intensive political courses organized by DGTP and organs of RCP, the abolishment of the second control came as a natural consequence of trusting the new institutional establishment. One year before the method had been revoked the annual control of the Sub-directorate of Ideology and Control detected only ten mistakes in performing the post-control operation.¹¹³ In analyzing the activity during the year 1967 a report of the Council of Administration of DGTP confirmed:

“It is a positive aspect that during the year 1967 no big political mistakes occurred in any of the sectors controlled by DGTP. This result transparently also from the low number of sanctions given to the censors”¹¹⁴

The single method which continued to express the authority of the center remained the inspection on the territory. For instance, by means of only 8 inspections, the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control could comprise all the 18 localities with the DGTP institutions.¹¹⁵

At the middle of the 1960's, the local branches won a relative independence. All dispositions issued by the center were automatically sent to the territory as well (in contrast to the old method of sending memos) and the daily press was their duty alone. An exception still persisted. Considered to be “problematic”, the literary magazines were

¹¹³ File 48/1964, 226.

¹¹⁴ File 78/1966, 136.

¹¹⁵ File 1/1965, 59.

discussed by the local lector in parallel with the instructor from Bucuresti.¹¹⁶ The fear of instructors was that local lector would not be able to grasp the mistakes derived from redaction process; most importantly, his lack of experience could prevent him from perceiving the structural mistakes of a text.¹¹⁷ It can be considered that once the right of decision over issues concerning the daily press (the most important part of the work) won, the explicit authority of the central structure turned into a latent one, consisting only of periodical controls and the reading in parallel of the local magazines.

After the year 1965 the methods of latent control diversified. Following the line of the contact between lector and instructor, the method used was that of periodical meetings between the lectors and their instructors from the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control. In institutional language they were called counsels (*consfatuiri*), and usually lasted for three days. These counsels had a double character: political and professional. During the first day of a counsel, the lectors were introduced in current political problems (issues of external politics, of socialist economy etc), the second day was reserved for the report concerning the situation in local branches made by the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control, and the third one was for debating urgent institutional issues and for final discussions.¹¹⁸ Other counsels included in their programs visits to the Museum of the History of the Communist Party, viewing a theatre performance or a film, for accustoming and integrating the local lectors in the work undertaken by those from the central institution.¹¹⁹

A method deriving from counsels was that of organizing experience changes (*schimburi de experienta*) about the parallel reading of the literary and socio-

¹¹⁶ File 28/1966, 60.

¹¹⁷ File 1/1966, 94.

¹¹⁸ See for instance the program of the counsel from April 22,23,24, 1965 in ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 36/1965, 4.

¹¹⁹ File 1/1966, 225. my translation.

political magazines issued outside Bucuresti. The Ninth RCP Congress held in 1965 inaugurated a major ideological shift. From now on, for Ceausescu's appeal to the national values and to the historical heroes will enter in the currents discursive practices. He called for a publication of a History of RCP and tried to emphasize the negative aspects of the interwar domination of the Comintern over the Communist Party from Romania:

"In evaluating party activity during the years of illegality, we must remember the difficult conditions under which it had to operate, the influence exercised by certain elements in its leadership which were opportunistic, sectarian, and foreign to the working class and our people, as well as the effect of certain negative phenomena in the international communist and workers' movement of that time. We must analyze critically the decisions of the congresses and other party documents from that period"¹²⁰

Demonizing the politics of the Comintern and trying to re-evaluate the position of the Party in interwar period, Ceausescu indirectly reopened, even if he made no clear reference, the problem of Bessarabia, one of the most sensitive and contentious issues between Romania and the USSR.

I employ this example to point out that political and ideological constraints sometimes made the atmosphere of the professional meetings to resemble as an Orwellian one. For instance, the interventions of the censors which could have been justified in 1964 were only tolerated after 1965. A censor from one local branch got a sanction for "not being responsible in studying the political documents of PCR" because he did not agree with a text containing allusions about Bessarabia and its belonging to

¹²⁰ Quoted in Mary Allen Fisher, *op. cit.*, 95.

Romania.¹²¹ In 1964, another censor was given as example for preventing the publication of an article subsuming the same allusions.¹²² The concern with the history of RCP and the history of the workers' movement was reflected in the activity of control carried by the DGTP too. The fear of committing ideological mistakes in this sense determined the DGTP to start cooperation with the Institute of Historical Studies and Social Politics (*Institutul de Studii Istorice si Social Politice*). In all the issues referring to the history of the RCP and sometimes in other historical issues, DGTP employed the authority of the above mentioned Institute.¹²³

Following the directives of the same Ninth RCP Congress, the social sciences were called to:

“continually enrich the national patrimony with works of synthesis in the fields of history, economy, law, sociology; produce valuable studies in close relationship with the practice of building socialism; approach courageously the issues linked with the social-political thought of our country's past ... “¹²⁴

Albeit Ceausescu stand up for the “free manifestation of creators' individuality, boldness and innovative spirit, discarding of any rigidity, and bluntness of values” could have been the sign of a political relaxation, in reality, at the level of censorship things did not change.

The obsession with the literary magazines determined a new method, that of exchange of experience between two local branches. The Cluj and Iasi branches were the first ones which experimented with the new method. The project was organized with the Cluj branch in the role of teacher for the lecturers from Iasi, considered inexperienced. The

¹²¹ File 64/1966, 54.

¹²² File 22/1964, 83.

¹²³ File 25/1966, 79.

¹²⁴ Quoted in ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 37/1966, 151.

ascendant of Cluj was settled in the experience already gained by reading the local magazine, *Tribuna*. The Iasi collective sent lecturers to Cluj for one or two weeks.¹²⁵ Later, the exchanges continued between other local branches, but were always mediated by instructors from Bucuresti. Moreover in several towns considered as having the most difficult duties in reading magazines, as Cluj and Timisoara, professional circles of debates were organized. The common subjects of debates were the formation of the Romanian language and people, Romanian literary currents in the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th, the esthetics of Titu Maiorescu etc. These debates were conducted either by professors came from universities or by the chief of the collective.¹²⁶

2. Integrating the Local Censor

The year 1965 witnessed the set up of the most functional method of control (in the opinion of the DGTP), namely the supervising brigade (*brigada de control*). In the Soviet practice every brigade needed a leader. After the leader was established, the brigade elected a council which comprises top workers. The council established the internal norms, and supervised their fulfillment. The collective control exercised by the brigade was seen as a tool of disseminate good working practices among workers. The aim of the brigade was to link the performance with the rewards, and the work discipline of the brigade was seen as the most proficient method to achieve this.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ File 23/1966, 174.

¹²⁶ File 56/1968, 67.

¹²⁷ Bob Arnout, *Controlling Soviet Labour. Experimental Change from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998),

The DGTP's supervising brigades were built up after the above described practices too. The members of a DGTP' brigade "deny the bureaucratic style of working, and consider themselves as political activists. A healthy spirit of brigade supposes camaraderie, strong relationships, focused and assiduous work, ideological assuredness, and unstinting intellectual efforts in critical moments".¹²⁸ The leader had to be one of the instructors working at the Sub-directorate of Instruction and Control and the members of the council were elected among the lectors with significant work experience from other sub-directorates, mainly from the Sub-directorate of Literature, the Sub-directorate of Press, and the Sub-directorate of Imports-Exports. The concept of performance corresponded for the members of the brigade with the complete conformation of the local censors to the political and ideological requests, and this could have been achieved only by active actions of control.

The *modus operandi* of a supervising brigade regarded first of all local branches from towns which had not only daily newspapers but also weekly and monthly magazines, whose reading was considered, as I have already indicated, the most difficult part of the censor's job.

Every action of control pursued by the supervising brigade began with a preliminary documentation which lasted for around one week, and consisted primary of reviewing the reports and working plans sent by the local branches to Bucharest.

The main objectives to be analyzed were: the content of the reading and control activity of the lectors, the organization of work together with the style of work imprinted by the chief of the collective, the relationships of the institution with the other institutions, especially with the local party organs, the methods employed for increasing the politico-professional level of education, the general and individual level of

¹²⁸ ANIC, *Fond CTT*, file 84/1966, 15.

preparation for work and the cooperation with the Sub-directorate for Instruction and Control.¹²⁹

The insinuation in the everyday activity of the two institutions and participating in working together with their lectors was the practice chosen by the brigade to verify the professional level. At the same time the lecture notes of every lector were requested in order to prove that he had read the political materials sent by the central institution.

To have good professional results meant for the brigade to “have valuable intervention” and the interventions made upon literary magazines to coincide with those undertaken by the center during the second control.

In spite of the camaraderie atmosphere emulated by the interaction between the members of the brigade and the controlled lectors, sometimes the sanctions were tough. After a visit of a supervising brigade, four lectors, two from Craiova and two from Arad, were replaced by their own position for “lack of vigilance” and “lack of interest in professional education”.¹³⁰ Other received an administrative fine and was disciplinary moved because approved the printing of a book with a mistake in the Declaration of RCP from August 23, 1944: in place of saying that Romania’s engagement in the anti-Soviet War was a great historical error, the approved book had replaced anti-Soviet with anti-Hitleristic war.¹³¹

The previous analysis emphasized the importance of the relation between center and periphery and questioned the centralization of the system. The centralization of the system developed methods to control the periphery. Assuming that every center is defined by its relation to its periphery, the center’s methods of control were intended to perpetually transform and renew the periphery’s practices. For the DGTP to renew

¹²⁹ File 1/1966, 332.

¹³⁰ File 28/1966, 34.

¹³¹ File 2/1970, 88.

practices meant the application of political instructions in current practice. It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the system. But at a panoramic glance it can be concluded that at some levels as the control of the daily newspapers, the results were those expected by the center. In the domain of cultural magazines, on the other hand, the results did not always satisfy the center. The relation between center and periphery was thus not characterized by uniformity. Variations and deviations from the norms established by the center occurred in spite of its vigilance. The characteristics of the center-periphery relations entail implications for the analysis of censorship at large, questioning its inflexible and suppressive character.

Conclusions

The reality of day to day censorship escapes the rigidity of the theoretical models used to approach it. Accepting the existence of constitutive censorship as inherent in every type of discourse and being an internal part of every subject, means automatically to deny the role of the state in articulating a censorial mechanism to be used against its potential enemies. Moreover the type of censorship that the communists carried out - conducted by the state in all public spheres - being central to the nature of the regime, can be easily trivialized by explaining it according to the constitutive model of censorship. Censorship implies the existence of a power relationship between two institutions, a leading instance and an instance which is subordinated to it. The leading instance has a dominant position and tries to impose its system of criteria by prohibiting the message of the opposite part. Totalitarian theory assumes that the leading instance – namely the totalitarian Communist state - had a complete monopoly and always imposed itself. Consequently, the use of the totalitarian theory in accounting for censorship could entail a reductionist perspective.

In the temporary boundaries of the 1960's and conducting comparisons with others periods, I have examined the General Directorate's for Press and Printings Materials (DGTP's) formulation of policy, internal workings, dealings with other institutions and the public. The focus on internal documents, on the directives insisting

on which words, phrases or books should be banned has revealed the structural complexity of the institutional censorship and has led to further questions. My findings are relevant in two directions. Firstly, its relevance lies in the contribution to the institutional history of Communist Romania. Due to the restrictive policies practiced until the near present by the National Archives of Romania for the documents of the Communist regime, research concerning the history of the institution has been scarcely documented. By combining archival materials held in several fonds I can provide a framework for the internal dynamics of the institution of censorship. For instance the moment of the abolishment of the institutional censorship in Romania is often debated as a moment corresponding to the change of official censorship with self-censorship, because of the effectiveness of the former (Ficeac, Goma, Caravia). The futility of the argument is obvious if one considers the historical context. The starting point of such an inquiry should be the year 1971 and the new “mini-cultural” revolution. In the aftermath The Council for Culture and Socialist Education (CSSE) was established and together with other organs of the Communist Party, doubled the attributions of the DGTP. The dissolution followed logically for DGTP whose attributions were partly assumed by CSSE.

Secondly, following the political context and the internal evolution of the regime from the perspective of censorship, some historical paradigms can be revisited. It is common for historians of Romanian communism to assume that the 1960s can be divided in two periods: a first period of cultural liberalization, marked by Ceausescu’s quests for internal legitimacy and external independence, and a second one characterized by the return to the ideological dogmatism which shaped the period before liberalization.

Scrutinized through the everyday institutional practices the distinction between the two periods looks less clear. The number of censors employed in daily activities did

not change, their attributions remained the same, and quantitatively their reports of interventions on printed materials did not decrease. Furthermore, the period of the 1960's is the period in which the institution reached its maturity and the professional level of the censors increased. The ideological indoctrination of the censor reached high standards because of the diverse methods developed in the institutional practice: many periodical meetings, experience changes, and setting up of supervising brigades. Moreover the maximum attention was paid to the area of cultural production, considered the duty of the best censors. A visible shift in censorship was in the domain of history. From the middle of the 1960's taboo subjects as the relations between Romania and Russia and the problem of Bessarabia were allowed but not because of the censorship's permissivity. Censorship only fulfilled its propagandistic aim, following the nationalistic and legitimizing discourse of Nicolae Ceausescu.

In spite of his strong ideological education and adherence the censor was sometimes an imperfect agent because he could not be entirely loyal. To be so, he would have to have an exact idea of what he was asked to forbid, and the state (despite its bureaucratic web) could not always provide one. Caught in the persuasive process of education (indoctrination) undertaken by the institution, the censor was sometimes victim of the ideological shifts of the regime.

Being institutionally centered, my examination covered only a part of the censorship mechanism. Although the most important one, further relevant exploration could be undertaken. Because of the scarcity of the methodological approaches to censorship and of the solutions they provide, a possible methodological framework could emerge from the new institutionalism theory. While problematic because of its focus on the environment in which the institutions function and on their need to acquire legitimacy, less vital concerns in the case of communist institutions, the institutionalism

theory's emphasis on the institution's impact on the external individual can nevertheless be retained. The application of this theory would thus provide a complementary perspective to the one undertaken in the present study.

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