

# **SURVEILLANCE AND COLLABORATION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN. THE CASE OF ROMANIAN HISTORIANS AND ARCHEOLOGISTS**

By  
Oana Fuică

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisors: Prof. Jean-Louis Fabiani

Prof. Don Kalb

Budapest, Hungary

2014

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the collaboration of Romanian historians and archeologists with the secret police using as sources the Securitate's files from the early '50's to the mid '80's. By means of a comparative reading of the records I attempt to provide a picture of the state's interferences in the production of history and of the consequences of their collaboration for the mobility of the cultural producers and other characteristics of the field, such as professional solidarity or the lack of it. This research uncovers not only a diversity of positions and attitudes associated with varying degrees of access to political and cultural capital, but also numerous cases of conversion between the two types of authority. Even though the secret police's interferences with more or less autonomous disciplines from different political regimes is commonplace, the particularities of the present case can be used to argue that the relationship between the professional producers of knowledge and the state is the defining feature of a cultural field taking a *sui generis* form.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could have never been written without the full support and constant encouragements of my supervisors, Prof. Jean-Louis Fabiani and Prof. Don Kalb, which helped me through a very difficult time of my academic endeavors. My deepest gratitude also goes to Prof. Alec Niculescu, who inspired my choice for a master degree in the social sciences and supported my interest in the production of history during the Communist regime, among other innumerable acts of kindness. I would like to thank my friend, Carmen, for her patience, encouragements and constant teasing during the writing of the thesis, which helped me to come back from the fictional realm of the Communist world. Finally, I wish to express my gratefulness to my sister, Mihaela, for her encouragements and material support when the fate of my research was uncertain and for all her help during the last few months.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology .....	4
The intellectuals and the state in a historical perspective .....	4
Methodology .....	12
Chapter 2. The intellectuals as dramatic figures: Surveillance and collaboration in Communist Romania .....	16
Surveillance, control, and “special missions” .....	18
Professional solidarity in times of crisis .....	29
Conclusions.....	38
REFERENCES .....	39

## Introduction

The content of this thesis is the continuation of my inquiry into the domain of the production of history in Communist Romania, started since I was a history student. This time the heroes of my investigation are not ideas about the past and how they have been fashioned in order to serve the producers' or the political leaders' interests, but the producers themselves, who are put in a situation which cannot be considered commonplace by any standards. By means of archival research I attempt to grasp the secret side of historians and archeologists' dealings with the state, as represented by its repressive institution, the Securitate. I attempt to analyze this "power game" from both the perspective offered by the secret police officers' aims, means, and strategies, and the historians' type and means of collaboration.

The opening of the Securitate archives nurtured the renewed interest in the nature of the Communist power, whose illusion of monolithic appearance has been exposed during the 1989 revolution. The documentation provided by these archives is also important for scientists as it can be used as a resource in order to find out the intellectual professions' members involvement in the secret affairs of the state and vice versa. Using Bauman's and Bourdieu's conceptualizations of the position and role of the intellectuals in the modern world, I aim to overcome the dichotomy of domination and resistance by focusing on the collaborative work between the intellectuals and the agencies of the state. Thus, I am not attempting to confuse the cultural and the political fields, but to observe their interactions and conversions of capital in order to be able latter on to analyze their impact on the configuration of the intellectual field. I have documented a wide range of strategies destined to ensure the scientists' collaboration with the secret police and found out that the main targets of their work were the intellectuals' only

riches, their prestige and their social capital. On the one hand, the form of the historians' collaboration with the Securitate partly corresponds to their various positions within the field and can become a means to consolidate one's position through the advantages and rewards offered. On the other, by giving their consent to become an instrument in the service of the secret police's purposes, the intellectuals acknowledged their subordination towards the state. The infiltration of the academic community with Securitate's informers who were asked to write references and reports about one another contributed to the secret police's constant preoccupation with the control of social relationships, encouraged dissolution, and perpetuated the lack of solidarity between the intellectuals.

The first chapter comprises the theoretical framework and discusses some of the problems posed by working with the Securitate's archives as sources. I attempt to use Zygmunt Bauman's and Pierre Bourdieu's conceptions on the functions and intellectuals and adapt them to the particularities of the Romanian cultural field, whose connections and interpenetration with the field of the political power is a long lasting feature. The low autonomy of the professional producers of visions of the past derives not only from the history of the intelligentsia in this part of Europe, which defined its role as the "enlightener" of the people in competition or in collaboration with the modern states' ambitions, but also from the overwhelming importance of the historical discipline for the state's manipulation of the national ideology. In the second chapter I offer an account of the interactions between historians and secret police's officers, the form of the historians' collaboration, and the possible outcomes of their choices. The historians' past political affiliations make them vulnerable to blackmail especially when the fear of marginalization becomes the second ingredient in someone's decision to accept the collaboration. However, the analysis of some the targets' files shows their continuity between

political regimes, which makes the Securitate only the successor and beneficiary of the information gathered by the previous political order. As it comes out, the Romanian historians' case of collaboration with the Securitate is only a dramatization of a more general and all too pervasive and ambiguous position of the intellectuals vis à vis the state, and of their oscillation between contention and fascination.

## Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

### The intellectuals and the state in a historical perspective

The relationship between modern states and intellectuals, seen as a distinct category which affirmed itself through polemical engagement in public causes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, has been the object of many studies. If modernity implies, among other things, the cultural estrangement between the dominant and the dominated and the transformation of the latter into an inert mass whose humanity is lacking, incomplete and in need of refinement, the resulting view of social order is characterized by instability and by a perpetual need of vigilance while society is a project and art which depends on the legislators' capacity to guard and impose it against the people's tendencies to natural anarchy (Bauman, 1992: 82-83). The historical process which gave preeminence to cultural producers is related to this view on society and has been best described by Zygmunt Bauman as follows:

It is the last precept [society as art which needs to be taught and drilled to practice] that opened a functionally significant social space for the producers and distributors of ideas. In their turn, the latter did their best to assure that the precept is assigned the most crucial strategic role in the order building and order-servicing processes. Culture as a theory of social order and as a social practice was a product of that mutual reinforcement. The *theory* assumed that men and women by themselves are unfit to coexist peacefully and unprepared to face the harrowing demands of social life; that they would not overcome that handicap without qualified help and that they must be therefore assisted by "people in the know": they ought to be educated, and educated so that they embrace the ideas and skills which the knowledgeable people guarantee to be right and proper. The *practice*, on the other hand, was to establish the rule of the men of ideas; elevate the indoctrination to the position of the decisive mechanism of production and sustenance of social order; in short, to transform social *domination* into a cultural *hegemony*, and render it firm and invulnerable in the process (Bauman, 1992: 83).

This is, in Bauman's opinion, the beginning of a "mutually gratifying love affair" between the professors and their employer, the state, as the sameness of their purposes and of



their intentions make them inseparable: “power without knowledge is headless, knowledge without power is toothless” (Ibid: 84). Thus, the self-awareness of intellectuals as a separate group appeared first in countries where modernity was embraced as a conscious goal, and whose condition can be seen as “backward” and “late-developing” only in contrast to the so-called “modern” forms of life appeared elsewhere and which have become the model for all. In Eastern Europe, the term *intelligentsia* referred to the category constructed in opposition with “the people”, and self-defined as its civilizing agent with the mission of implementing a foreign pattern which also served as a measure for the local conditions and transformed its proponents in critics of their own society. The awkward position of the *intelligentsia* may be an explanation for its critical attitude, as well as for its unhappiness:

This fate is inescapable, as the intelligentsia lives in a no-man’s land between its own society, from which it has decided to alienate itself, and the “pattern society”, which would never agree to accept it as an equal partner (one would say that the best appreciation the exotic intelligentsia may earn from the metropolitan elite, is that of a clever ape which scratches itself like a human being... ). The intelligentsia finds itself in a virtual double-bind: derided by “the people” whom it has chosen to make happy, while at best condescendingly tolerated by the elite whose authority it helped to build up and believed to be unquestionable, it may well end up wishing the plague on both houses. Its critical stance is, so to speak, over-determined; and so is its acute awareness of its own uniqueness and solitude. (Bauman, 1992: 85-86)

The feature that defined the intellectuals as a self-conscious social category is the polemical engagement that determined them to embrace public causes and defend values seen as threatened by public neglect (Ibid: 89) This collective mobilization in order to disperse throughout the social world values current in the intellectuals’ universe was founded on an authority deriving from the “unwritten laws of an ethical and scientific universalism” and allowed them to exercise a kind of moral ministry on certain occasions (Bourdieu, 1991: 658). Their polemical engagement seemed to be the only force sustaining the togetherness of intellectuals and keeping them from falling apart as members of separated professions (Bauman, 1992: 89) with an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory attitude towards the state’s power. Even if the intellectuals are not the natural enemies of power and there may be even a “constitutive affinity” between them, their relationship is one of a “perpetual contention”:

The relationship is, rather, of a *Haßliebe* type. Suspicion and dissent constantly alternate with a powerful attraction - nay, fascination - with the power of the state. Sometimes, they succeed each other with a breath-taking speed. Most of the time, they cohabit uneasily within the same intellectual community; often inside the same "split personality" of a single intellectual - even if many an intellectual does not like to be reminded of it. (Ibid: 91).

Belonging to an autonomous intellectual field and respecting its specific laws is one of the conditions of being an intellectual, according to Bourdieu (1991: 656). In his view, the diversity of the cultural producers' strategies resulting from the state of relations between the intellectual fields and their variations in time and from country to country should not be allowed to hide the "invariants", such as the same "intent toward autonomy" irrespective of the structure and history of the powers against which it must assert itself (Ibid: 659). The creation of the social conditions which make possible a "liberating" science includes the abolition of the various effects of domination existing between nations or within a given country which converge in excluding from the scientific competition those who do not accept "the tacit assumptions of the established scientific order (Ibid: 662)". The means which can be used in order to influence from within or from outside the field the results of the scientific competition include brutal and direct ones such as the suppression of scholarship and research grants, the control of scientists' contacts with colleagues from outside the country in the case of Communist Eastern Europe or more subtle ones such as academic censorship. However, the enemies of the intellectual fields' autonomy are not simply "the market" or the state's power, but they take as their accomplices the tendencies of those within the field who are less endowed to triumph according to the internal rules and who are therefore more inclined to resort to exterior powers in order to find compensation for their inferiority:

The struggle for autonomy is thus, first of all, a struggle against the institutions and agents which, inside the field, introduce dependence upon external economic, political, or religious powers, whether those who subordinate their production to commercial ends or those, such as publicists who, more subtly, make concessions to the law of success, or those who use their privileged connections with external powers (such as the State or the Party, with all their forms of

Zhdanovism) in order to impose their domination inside the field. It is through them that the law (nomos) of another field displaces the specific law of the field of cultural production. This Trojan-horse function, through which heteronomy is introduced into the fields of cultural production, falls to those producers who are least highly appreciated according to internal criteria and who are thus always tempted to draw on external alliances in order to overturn the power relations inside the field; expecting less from the field, they are the most susceptible to the solicitations of temporal power. In fact, if internal ratification is not an absolute guarantee of autonomy, it at least guards against this pursuit of compensatory power for purposes of revenge; and it can also enhance that indifference to the "grandeurs d'établissement" (as Pascal put it) which belongs to the ideal definition of the intellectual. (Ibid: 663).

Whether the forces against which the contemporary cultural producers' autonomy must be asserted are the omniscient pretensions of political powers or the increasing influence of cultural merchants manifested in the form of the "market demand" vary with every case, but the preferable alternative seems to be for some intellectuals the old dream of the "enlightened despot". This has to be "despotic enough to sweep aside the vox populi, yet enlightened enough to admit his own ignorance and humbly leave decisions to those in the know" (Bauman, 1992: 93). However, the second dimension which makes the cultural producers to become "intellectuals", the collective mobilization in defense of universal causes seems to have reduced itself to the defense of academic freedom, but, as Bauman argues, "for many professors in many universities academic freedom meant nothing more than the freedom to be academic" (Ibid: 99), and "the stakes of the holy wars are mostly nothing more "universal" than access to university funds, jobs, and house distinctions" (Ibid.).

The specificity of the most autonomous fields of production lies in the fact that they are their own market, in Bourdieu's terms (1991: 664), or that the producers have only their own competitors for consumers, which is also the mechanism through which the "progress of reason" becomes possible. The stakes of the scientific competition is the monopoly of scientific authority and the operation of the scientific field produces and presupposes a specific form of interest which can be seen as disinterested only in relation to different interests produced by other fields (Idem, 1975: 19-20). Thus, scientists have the interest of being "disinterested", but even so, the

knowledge they produce may become very interesting for people from outside their profession and one of the dangers is that they may become, wittingly or unwittingly, the allies of coercive covert agencies of the state. In other cases, the low degree of autonomy of the scientific field is both the outcome of agents' strategies and the result of the state's intervention and the final products of scientific inquiry may be influenced in totally different ways by their producers' involvement in the affairs of the state.

David Price's inquiries into the history of American anthropology during the Cold War showed how the researchers' agendas conformed to those of the funding bodies, what was their involvement in programs funded by military and intelligence agencies and how the anthropologists' collaboration has been obtained. Moreover, he uncovered the investigative and surveillance methods of the FBI against the activist anthropologists whose work was deemed subversive by virtue of their involvement as radical activists with apparent ties to Socialist and Communist organizations or parties. He also documented the American Anthropological Association's reluctance to protect its members from persecution and its failure in defending "academic freedom" (Price, 2004). As to alliances between scientists and the state's organizations, Price distinguished between four types of collaboration with covert agencies of the state: witting-direct, witting-indirect, unwitting-direct, unwitting-indirect (Price 1998, 2002, 2003, 2007a, 2007b). The first type included the activities of important anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict and Clyde Kluckhohn, the second referred to attempts to use anthropologists as undercover agents, the third involved the ways through which CIA managed to direct the researchers' work in such a way as to be useful to their goals, and the last can include virtually all anthropological knowledge on peoples of strategic interest by virtue of its public nature. His

position is made clear by the following statement, although his warnings of “not touching” the programs closely related to the secret agencies’ goals may have only limited effects:

Today, some programmes like the Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program (PRISP) and Intelligence Community Scholars Program are already openly advertising and funding students covertly placed in our university classrooms and research labs. These are effectively CIA, NSA and FBI employees inside our research environments on our campuses (Price 2005). Not knowing who we are working with, or sometimes even who we are working for, suggests that some of us may already be unwittingly engaged in activities that tarnish our academic reputation. If we do not want to go into history as collaborators with such coercive covert agencies, who may use our research to dominate and exploit the peoples we work with, then we must take decisive action now, identify and expose such programmes wherever we can, and advise our professional associations to recommend our colleagues not touch them. (Price, 2007a: 13).

On the other side of the “Iron Curtain”, Katherine Verdery’s study of the vicissitudes of national ideology in Communist Romania offers elaborated case studies on the domains of literature, literary criticism, history, and philosophy of the ‘80’s. The author’s explanations of how the debates and struggles related to the cultural phenomenon called “protochronism”<sup>1</sup> were integrated into and contributed to the intergrowth between the cultural and political domains uncovered the ways in which the competition for cultural authority between various factions of the cultural elite drew the cultural production into the sphere of use-values controlled by the state’s apparatus (Verdery, 1991: 205). Thus, the debates around protochronism are the best illustration of “how politics *within* culture became the politicization *of* culture” in this social system which privileged the political above all and undermined the acquisition of cultural capital conferred in the competition of autonomous cultural fields:

Protochronism and the opposition to it also show more than simply a conflict about nationalizing cultural production or about the problems of being a subaltern culture, as some of the terms used might suggest. They show the possibilities and constraints within which literary production unfolded in this social system. The form of this system, which gave absolute predominance to the political sector and sought to incorporate all other values under its umbrella, pressed action ultimately toward the political. It undermined the basis for the independent formation of cultural

---

<sup>1</sup>Protochronism is an idea supported by critics and literary historians during the ‘70’s and ‘80’s which encouraged the search for cultural developments that anticipated events from the cultures of Western Europe (“proto-chronos” = “first in time”), (Verdery, 1991: 167).

authority along autonomously professional lines; it facilitated mobility within political terms over mobility within professional organizations. The latter was the kind of mobility preferred by persons wishing to resist the transformation of their society into what they perceived to be an overcentralized tyranny” (Verdery, 1991: 208)

Thus, someone’s preference for the recognition conferred in the competition with peers who are both competitors and consumers is already a political statement. If the American anthropology’s dealings with the secret agencies implied the use of expert knowledge for strategic purposes, the example of the discipline of history in Communist Romania presupposed an entirely reversed position: the specialists themselves were taught by the political leaders and other guardians of political and historical orthodoxy, and they are the ones who have taken over the role of experts. Hence, the historians were fated to discover what everyone already knew, but to do this in an “original” or personalized way and bring in either new evidence from archives or reframe the existing primary sources. The ways and means through which the professional producers of visions of the past have been dispossessed of their expertise cannot be investigated without at least presuming that such an expertise existed before Communism and was produced through the existence of a field in which the cultural producers shared not only a tradition of historical writing, but also a competition for scientific authority. Therefore, emphasizing “hybridization”, taking the formula “historical front” (the creation of the Party’s propagandists during the ‘50’s) to be used interchangeably with that of “epistemic community” as if both refer to the same thing in the world, and purposing to “overcome the binary model of historians versus the party” (Iacob, 2011: 3) brings rather a normalization of the state of affairs than an attempt to search for explanations of the given phenomenon, in this case the politicization of historical writing. The following description gives little room for historians to exert their expertise. They are distributed in the role of propagandists of the Party or at best counselors, that is, exactly what those in power would have wanted them to become:

Following Nikolai Kremetsov, my claim is that history writing was the result of an essentially symbiotic relationship between the scientific community and the party-state agencies. And, the production of knowledge was therefore the result of the initiatives, responses, and realignments to the policies of the party authorities. However, the latter's own decision making was changing according to the potentialities that such an output offered for purposes of regime-reinvention in the shifting environment of world-communism (i.e. Soviet bloc). Sometimes historians anticipated the party line, providing a reservoir of potentialities in terms of ideological re-invention. (Iacob, 2011: 17-18).

The confusion becomes even more obvious when the author declares that the difficulty in drawing a line between the Party and scientists because their interaction is mediated by “institutions, persons, traditions, varying alignments of power and prestige” makes futile any attempt to distinguish between the two and if someone still considers the difference worthy of notice, that would eventually entail the impossibility to capture “the complexities of a wide system of control, co-option, negotiation, mutual influence, and ultimately of systemic reproduction” (Ibid: 13). However, it is difficult to imagine how the neglect of a basic aspect of the scientists' function, that they are in the first place members of a profession pursuing some kind of truth, and not professional propagandists, would be helpful in unveiling these “complexities”. Moreover, better reasons for confusing these two fields, according to the author's logic, would have been that historians themselves (with few exceptions) were members of the Communist Party, and not that between the Party and scientists one could find persons, as all human interaction is impossible without them:

Between the party and science/scientists there were institutions, persons, traditions, varying alignments of power and prestige, and important external influences. Subsequently, it is very difficult to draw a demarcation line between the two. Any binary model of analysis inherently obliterates the complexities of a wide system of control, co-option, negotiation, mutual influence, and ultimately of systemic reproduction. This is why the study of history, as discipline and profession, under Communism is important. In Romania, history relied on several presuppositions with crucial impact on the functioning of the communist regime: a) history was *science* – by method of historical materialism it was subject to laws and findings it produced had a truth value equivalent to that of the natural sciences; b) in being a science, history could be *planned* according to the priorities, necessities, direction, and rhythm of building socialism in one country; c) history was vitally about *identity*, it constructed the mirror of the society it was written in. Under the circumstances, the writing of history in Romania was the *production of veracities* about the collective revolutionary self. (Ibid: 13).

The distinction between concrete measures taken by the political elite and justifications provided in order to control the production of visions of the past must be made if one aims to avoid the trap of taking for granted the total submission of the cultural producers to the demands of the state's apparatus, implying that the whole production served only legitimization and "identity" purposes, and that it was some kind of mysterious mirror of society which constructed only fictitious relationships between the historical sources and their interpretations. What requires an explanation is not only the role and position of intellectuals, particularly historians, in the power system of the Communist regime, but also how contemporary historians can write about these problems without noticing that the dilemma of the intellectuals' attitude to power in authoritarian regimes is only a dramatization of the conflicts faced by virtually every cultural producer. The acknowledgement of the fact that the intellectuals' fascination with the power of the state is only one side of the problem should inhibit generalizations about the "symbiosis" between scientists and the agencies of the state and incite to the discovery of a variety of positions, even if some of them presuppose and disclose suspicion and dissent and may subsequently bring with them marginalization and/or isolation.

### **Methodology**

The following chapter is constructed on a reading of the secret police files of ten Romanian historians and archeologists over a period of more than 30 years, from the early '50's to the mid '80's. The Securitate's archive in its current form is the partial result and testimony of the institution's activity during the decades of the existence of the Communist regime and has recently become a resource used by researchers as a means to understand what the mechanisms behind the effects created by its operation were. The extraordinary heterogeneity of the material contained by these files is the result of the secret police's functioning as a repressive institution



in charge with the total surveillance of the population and with the maintenance of the effects produced by secrecy. The secret police was perhaps the most important institution of the Communist state which not only aimed at diffusing fear, but constructed the whole “mystery” of the state’s invulnerability and maintained the illusion of its monolithic power. Its relationship with secrecy has been formulated by Katherine Verdery using Timothy Mitchell’s conceptualization as follows:

Mitchell writes, “The phenomenon we call ‘the state’ arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, non-material form” – an appearance that nonetheless has concrete practical consequences. Essential to this state effect in Romania was secrecy, providing part of the “magic” that made the Romanian Party-state appear to stand as an integrated entity above and outside “the entire people”. Contrary to the perceptions of its citizens, that entity was not a coherent, unified actor. Despite the centralizing efforts of Party leaders Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu, the field of power at the center was highly fragmented among disparate competing groups – a secret amply revealed by the chaos after Ceaușescu’s fall. If that inner chaos was not apparent to most Romanians, the “mask” of secrecy – its state effect – was one reason (Verdere, 2014: 148-149).

The complexity of the informative networks created by the Securitate and the measures taken in order to protect the “conspirativity” of the intelligence work which imposed a compartmentalization typical to secret services makes difficult to make sense of the documents assembled within the files. Most of them seem to have very little in common besides the name of the person – target, informer or other kind of collaborator – written on the cover, and the officers and informers’ reports persistent preoccupation with aspects of his/her life. The files I read have been indexed both under the “informative”(for targets) and “network”(for agents and informers) documentary funds, but the roles assumed by each of the actors varies as some of the historians have been both targets and collaborators of the Securitate. Similarly, the cases of recruitment and types of collaboration are diverse, each of them having a unique history. In some of them are led to imagine themselves in a situation when they have no choice but to inform, but following the prodigious activity of other informers from the files of their targets, it becomes obvious that the collaboration with the secret police has become a means to have access to various kinds of

resources and are rewarded accordingly. The meaninglessness, dullness, and repetitiveness of most of the documents brought together under the same file suggests, as Katherine Verdery has observed, that the secret workers' aim was to show to their superiors how hard they are working and do not lead to other end than the presumptive revelation of the "truth" about someone. The investigation may gather materials of very little significance for the original aim of the inquiry and the file may be closed with the acknowledgement that the original suspicions and accusations were proved as unfounded or it may lead to the target's inclusion into the network of informers. Thus, the search for the meaning of the documents is less important than to follow their effects.

I was mainly interested in the kind of information considered important by the informers and the officers and how and to what ends they used the knowledge gathered about various aspects of the scientific life. What can be learned about someone's life from the secret police personal file includes not only his interests, opinions, and countless news about his activity, but also the content of his correspondence and how the Securitate's officers decided what can reach its destination and what needs to be detained, the content of his conversations on the phone etc. The totality of information contained within a file does not form a whole, but disparate and sometimes contradictory aspects having little or no connection with each other. As my purpose was to find out the nature of the collaboration of historians and archeologists, and, eventually, to uncover the effects of the Securitate's influence on the production of history, and not to expose the scientists as collaborators, I decided not to disclose the names of the people mentioned in the reports and replace them with capital letters. However, I used my previous knowledge of their writings to better understand their positions, and giving the accuracy of some of the descriptions or other details, the identity of some people may come to light. It is not my intention to pass

judgment on any aspect of their conduct, as revealed by the sources, and I tried to avoid the impact their exposition may have on the symbolic hierarchies previously constituted.

I employed Bourdieu's terminology as the best available means to keep separate the cultural fields from the political one and to better capture the conflicts resulted from the political leaders' ambition to control the production of knowledge. Similarly, Bourdieu's conceptualization allows to differentiate between positions within the community of cultural producers, which is not an homogeneous block, while the political processes are more complex than the simple manipulation of cultural production by Party leaders and their supporters. I am not assuming that the recognition conferred by the scientific field is less "political" than that resulted from the conversion of symbolic capital into political capital or vice versa, but the difference between them is significant. Culture and intellectual activity are inherently political because they are the result of a competition for authority within their own sphere and because they have a place in reproducing society, which does not mean neither that the values engaged in the struggles are only instrumental, nor that the differences between types of capital and their conversion are of no consequence.

## Chapter 2. The intellectuals as dramatic figures: Surveillance and collaboration in Communist Romania

*The blackmailer needs the assent, the complicity of the blackmailed, blackmailing is like a drama... that cannot be played by oneself. The oppressor and the oppressed make up a couple.*  
Nicolae Steinhardt

The fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the new visibility in politics acquired by “dissident” intellectuals after the 1989 revolution have called upon an assessment of the cultural elite’s position during the Communist decades. The political conditions have favored the apparition of a great number of works derived from the intellectuals’ need to self-justification and redefinition, and only a few of them from collective efforts aiming at objective evaluation of the effects produced by the existence of nearly half a century of authoritarianism. The dichotomy of domination and resistance has become influential especially if one takes seriously the Romanian intellectuals’ dissatisfaction with their previous mode of conduct and even frustration regarding their self-perceived lack of boldness, which is most clearly visible in the febrile search for excuses that nobody believes, not even the speaker (Culic, 1999: 62). Similarly, self-justification supplemented by nostalgia over their lost power is the driving force that can be discerned behind the writings of the members of the former ruling elite. However, both of them are useful sources for the researcher interested in the evolution of the human and social sciences in dictatorships and the history of the relationship between the intellectuals and the state.

This chapter aims to offer an account of the diversity of positions and roles ascribed by the state to intellectuals or self-ascribed as both a response to the state’s demands and as strategy

to increase one's cultural and/or political capital. It is built on a reading of the secret police's files of ten historians and archeologists over a period of more than 30 years, from the early '50's to the mid '80's. The main reason for choosing the archives of the Securitate as sources for this research is that the information they uncover may prove its usefulness in overcoming the dichotomy of domination and resistance and disclose the whole range of positions adopted by intellectuals in their dealings with the state, as they can also reveal the diversity of strategies used by the repressive apparatus, their goals and tactics in obtaining the intellectuals' collaboration. This chapter has two parts: the first is an account of the purposes and strategies of the secret police's officers in their attempt to penetrate and control the professional and personal lives of their "subjects", while the second is structured around historians and archeologists' responses to the demands made by the Securitate and other institutions of the state. After the end of the game, the restraints placed upon the historical profession as a whole and the means of evading or "living" with them frames a peculiar configuration of the intellectual field as a result of the innumerable thoughts and actions undertaken by each of the heroes of this drama. However, the picture resulting from the exploitation of these archives cannot be considered in any sense final or legible, especially if one remembers that the institution which has gathered and used it over the decades was in charge, among its other missions, with organized crime, blackmail, lying and many other types of misinformation, many of them directed against "the enemy within" i.e. (potentially) the entire population. The truth value of the records has been affected by the secret police's practices and the disadvantage can be attenuated only by a careful study of its routines, conventions, and perhaps internal contradictions.

## **Surveillance, control, and “special missions”**

The sinuous history of the Communist regime in Romania is determined by the political elite's needs to distance itself from the tutelage of the Soviet Union and by the combination of the modes of control within socialism's bureaucratic mode of domination. The predominance of coercive strategies during the '50's has been gradually replaced by a “symbolic-ideological” mode of control, which entailed strategies and “attempts to saturate consciousness with certain symbols and ideological premises to which subsequent exhortations may be addressed” (Verdery, 1991: 86). If, in the previous period the historical writings have been destined to the glorification of the role of the Slavic peoples and of the Soviet Union, the instauration of the new Communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, formalized the turn towards the recuperation of the so-called “national values” at the expense of the dogma of “internationalism”, which privileged the newly created “affinity” between the countries of the Communist Block. At the level of the organization of the repressive apparatus of the state, this shift is most visible in the reorganization of the Securitate under the impulses of an investigating committee which functioned between 1965 and 1968 with the explicit task of “unmasking the abuses, illegalities, and crimes” of the repressive institution during the '50's (Troncotă, 2003: 32). The mission of the Securitate has been reformulated from the “annihilation of the class enemy” to “the prevention of the crimes against state security” and “defense of the fundamental national values” (Ibid.). Thus, the concentration camps have been disbanded, while most of the activity of the Securitate has been redirected towards external factors, counterespionage, counter intelligence, and anti-terrorism (Ibid.).

The observation that a conclusive outline of the evolution of the Romanian intellectual field during Communism is not possible without an elaborate history of the Communist Party

and of the Securitate has been repeatedly made after the 1989 revolution by the intellectuals themselves (Mihăilescu, 1994: 99), who have assumed the mission of both clarifying and purifying the history of recent decades. However, the researchers' interest has been devoted to the understanding and unveiling of the effects of Securitate's actions in their own lives and that of their colleagues and to a lesser extent to the rendering of an exhaustive picture of the whole range of strategies used by the secret police and the impact on the overall production of knowledge and the kind of human relationships prevalent in the field. The declamatory, sad, or often vindictive tone of the authors, themselves historians who have been the heroes of this drama, demonstrates that the surprises of the archives are difficult to accommodate and the action of getting access to one's file and making sense of it can be the last challenge for the historian who becomes the biographer of his own past while trying to come to terms with it.

In this part of the chapter I will attempt to describe the means, tactics, and goals of the secret police's officers who have shadowed the public and private activities of historians and archeologists and thus have become part of their lives and have influenced their careers. The presence of the Securitate and its activities served multiple purposes. All the actions mentioned in scientists' files have been directed towards the prevention or reduction of political opposition, getting control over the relationships between scientists and over the production of ideas, and aimed at redirecting the intellectuals' prestige and work in order to transform them in useful means for the legitimization of the Communist Party and its politics.

The strategies of the secret police officers in order to gain control over people and knowledge and to ensure the scientists' collaboration ranged from surveillance from a distance through the infiltration of their environment with agents to the control of their work and political opinions through the notes delivered by their colleagues and/or friends, the listening to their

conversations on the telephone and the copying their correspondence, to direct interventions in the form of flattery, enticement, or even blackmail, as methods of establishing a collaboration.<sup>2</sup> Among the most interesting aspects for a secret police officer dealing with a historian or archeologist were related to his past, and virtually in everyone's past one can find sources for blackmail. This is true especially in the Romanian intellectuals' case because their interwar political affiliations with positions opposed to that of the Communists are notorious. Every file contains a detailed mention of previous political options and records events and actions which may have influenced someone's view on class relationships and politics. As the social origin of scientists and their pre-socialist past as supporters of the Communist cause constituted valuable capital after the instauration of the Communist regime, the opposite stance – bourgeois or aristocratic origin and/or rightist, royalist, and liberal affiliations determined either marginalization or, in the worst case, imprisonment. Similarly, someone's past has become a political resource to be manipulated according to the actors' interests – the faults of the past increase someone's vulnerability to blackmail, but does not determine his/her attitude towards the actual demands made by any of the institutions of the state, included the secret police.

The actions of the Securitate in order to gain control over the production of historical writings created mistrust between scientists and encouraged dissolution. The state's "will to know" is best exemplified by the Securitate's infiltration of every collectivity with agents whose main task has been that of reporting the thoughts and actions of his/her colleague/neighbor, irrespective of their relevance for its declared mission, that of defending the "security" of the state. Retrospectively, the officers and informers' actions make sense only if "the enemy" is the whole population and every attempt to question the "official" truths is labeled as "inimical" to

---

<sup>2</sup> Out of the ten historians and archeologists whose files have become accessible to me, six of them have collaborated with the Securitate's officers in different forms. Five of them have been included in the network of agents, while the sixth has been asked for his expertise in several "missions".



the state's security. Thus, this logic has encouraged the exposition of aspects from the life of the scientific "communities" which otherwise belong to the realm of gossip and envy and have very little to do with scientific products per se. However, they occupy an important place in the economy and politics of surveillance, as practiced by the Securitate during the entire period of its existence. The officers' methods of gathering information about a scientist include the use of "characterizations" made by the personnel administration of the Romanian Academy of Sciences and "references" from agents and informers. The last has the advantage of producing a "subjective" map of relationships – the way one speaks about his/her colleagues also offers important clues about the personality of the informer and suggests further strategies and interferences. For secret police's officers, "objectivity" in the narration of an event was attained when accounts written by different informers, with distinct interests and positions in the field, coincided and contributed to the formation of a unified view. Permanent suspicion is a characteristic of the relationship between officers and informers as it is acknowledged that some of the informers' accounts are produced by the fear of the consequences of refusing to inform the secret police and may have different degrees of relevance.

The control of social relationships appears as one of the main targets of the officer's work. Many of their efforts aim at gathering information about a person's contacts and towards obtaining a portrait designed by acquaintances, friends or colleagues, if possible. This is the simplest way of getting information about some aspects of someone's life and following his/her work, intentions, and ideas is the next step. The "quality" and quantity of accounts found in a scientist's file depends on how many of his contacts are informers and how much they can find out about him. In most cases, informers' accounts are made at the request of the Securitate's officers, who offer indications about the most interesting aspects, but the betrayal can also

happen from the informer's initiative. The most common types of accusations refer to ideological "guilt" – the historian shows a critical attitude towards the Party's leadership and the Communist state's achievements, does not employ with sufficient skill and conviction the "materialist method" in the interpretation of the past etc, but are not reduced to them. One of the functions of ideology, according to Securitate's files, is to serve as motivation and constraint. The employment of the Marxist jargon in historical texts is a condition for a work to be published, but can also be a proof of loyalty and adherence to the regime's "truths", while it may function as a cover for the allocation of resources to its most faithful supporters from the historical profession. For example, in one instance, the officer guides the informer to convince an archeologist to give a more "Marxist orientation" to his writings after the informer's example, who has been able to travel abroad because it seems that his works have been appreciated by political leaders. In reality, the informer's mobility is the result of his collaboration with the Securitate, which is also the institution which gives acceptance for going abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The surveillance of the academic "communities" has as its main objective the control of the intellectual production especially at the beginning and the end of the period covered by the historians' files. The power struggles within the academic field find their way into the informers' notes during the whole period, but they appear to be taken seriously by the Securitate especially during the '50's and '80's, when the sensitivity of issues related to the interpretation of the past is increased by the regime's legitimization needs, disguised as the "defense of the nation" against internal and external denigration. The guardians of historical orthodoxy appear to be the historians themselves, which are the first to notice and to report to the Securitate their colleagues' transgressions of the "official" dogmas describing the nation's past. Similarly, the Securitate's campaigns to counteract hostile propaganda coming from the Romanian immigration

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives*, I 3609, vol 2: 72.

or the Hungarians' arguments for the secession of Transylvania find support from historians, who are asked to write documented papers as part of "special missions" also including the dissemination of these materials through journals and international organizations such as UNESCO. For example, one such mission involved a well known historian and politician during the interwar period, who has been "recuperated" by the Communist regime after spending five years in prison during the '50's and several years in unimportant positions in different institutions of the state. His defense of the Romanians' rights over Transylvania is part of a complex action undertaken by the Securitate as a response to a "slandorous" article published by *The Observer*, which appeared to have questioned the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. The "mission" also included the dissemination of an article written by a Hungarian member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, describing the Hungarian minority's situation, and using examples and statistics. Both articles were intended to be published abroad (in France, Great Britain, United States, and Turkey), where they were most needed. In addition, the Securitate took measures to find out the author of the article published by *The Observer* and discredit him/her, while the Romanian Embassies from abroad have been instructed to find support from the Romanian immigrants and thus create disagreement among their organizations.<sup>4</sup> The success of the "mission" depended on the historian's expertise and intellectual authority and it is a case when the interest of the state coincided with that of the historian, as he was asked to write from the perspective of the national history.

The collaboration of historians and archeologists has been rewarded according to the importance of their missions and the quality of their support. As the possibility of going abroad was strictly controlled during the whole existence of the Communist regime by the Securitate, some of the secret police's actions profited from the fact that historians' work required traveling

---

<sup>4</sup> ACNSAS, SIE 28401.

abroad for research and conferences, which meant that they can be used both to create contacts with foreign specialists and convince them of the progresses made by the Romanian historiography under socialism and to search for important documents in the archives. Both actions were under the close supervision of the Securitate, which is another argument in favor of the importance of the past for the Communist order of things. In some cases, the historians' collaboration is not satisfactory, which calls for the development of new strategies and systems of rewards.<sup>5</sup>

The use of the intellectuals' cultural capital in support of the Communist regime and the control of their relationships with specialists from abroad have been among the most important objectives of Securitate's actions. Participation in the intellectual life of the country by publishing is an indication of a historian's compliance to the regime's demands, but the key element in establishing someone's adherence is the response to the proposal of collaborating with the Securitate and the form taken by this collaboration. The recruitment of a new informer usually came after periods of careful study of the "candidate" and the verification of his intentions by means such as the installation of recorders at home and/or using informers whose truthfulness has been tested. In the first instance, his political opinions are an indication of a possible response to the proposal of collaborating with the Securitate, but the officers seemed aware that someone's critical remarks concerning state's politics do not always imply the courage of refusing a tempting proposal. In most cases, the proposition is related to particular missions, but once the commitment has been obtained, the informer may end up giving information that he had no intention to disclose at the beginning and may find himself in the situation of no longer finding retreat paths when the collaboration with the authorities involves serious moral compromises.

---

<sup>5</sup> ACNSAS, SIE 76: 50.

In the following I will compare two attempts to attract historians' collaboration - one of them has been successful, the other failed. In both cases, the Securitate's officers carefully planned the action: they obtained from the Romanian Academy of Sciences their subjects' curriculum vitae, and prepared the strategies of addressing the questions. In the attempt that failed, the historian who received the officer's visit has been selected because he was in contact with someone who, for reasons unknown, raised the suspicion of the secret police:

Professor A. will be visited at home after lunch, between 4 and 6 o'clock, where it will be discussed from the beginning about ARLUS's<sup>6</sup> activity in his institution, about the activity of the assistants who are under his guidance, about the contribution of each of them. Then, he will be asked to comment on each assistant: what type of person is he, professionally and politically. It will be talked about A.' contribution, *reminding him about his past, which is known to us*, about his activity in P.N.Ț. [Peasants' National Party] and in P.M.R. [Romanian Workers' Party]. In case he will give us the adequate answer regarding his activity and attachment to the regime and the party, he will be asked about each of his subordinates, including S. If A. is in contact with S. and there is a possibility to give us information about him, we will propose collaboration with the Securitate, *through persuasion*. If A. will give sufficient information about S. during our conversation and his contacts will stand out, we will not ask A.'s collaboration, following that someone from S.' nearness will be studied and nominated for recruitment. [6 April 1953]<sup>7</sup>

In the second, the "candidate" is nominated for collaboration because, through his education, personal qualities, and contacts abroad, he was considered to be the best possible agent in a particular situation:

M.'s recruitment is useful and through it we expect to obtain the following:

- information about the political and professional activity of some of the fugitives from Italy and about some of their contacts in Romania
  - the surveillance of the family of M.S. – the father-in-law of the fugitive M.D. and of their kin
  - getting in touch with some Romanian professors who have fled across the border with the help of some agents who are going to Italy and sending them letters through these agents on behalf of M.
  - M.'s guidance in order to get in touch with some of the fugitives from Romania on the occasion of scientific congresses from abroad.
- After establishing a connection with the professors, it is possible that some of them will try to involve him in their hostile activities.

<sup>6</sup> ARLUS – Asociația pentru Strângerea Legăturilor cu Uniunea Sovietică – a cultural organization funded by leftist Romanian intellectuals in October 1944 and devoted to the dissemination of Soviet literary works and various propagandistic materials, among its other purposes. It functioned until 1964, after the Romanian Worker's Party declared its "independence" from external interferences, especially Soviet ones.

<sup>7</sup> ACNSAS, I 3826: 19. The language of the original document and the topics show that the author has only basic skills in writing. In my translation I have tried to capture the meaning rather than to preserve the "spirit" prevalent in the document's writing style.

From the study we made, we have found out that M. has a vast cultural training, is an intelligent man, and has a good orientation in diverse situations. He is sociable and possesses the talent to gain quickly the confidence of the persons who meet him. He is attached to his family and loves his profession, as he is a passionate archeologist. He has no vices. For his behavior in society, he is respected and appreciated by both colleagues and neighbors.

His recruitment will be made *on the basis of inveiglement* to collaboration with us, without mentioning his hostile activity from the past. In order to bring him to the place of recruitment, he will be invited at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to give information about some of the workers from the archeological site where he has been working during the summer. After that, he will be told that the real cause of the invitation is that some Western circles which have nothing to do with scientific research have begun to inquire about him relying probably on the basis of his past activity. Regarding this, we will make him understand that even if *we know about his past*, we do not intend to discuss it. We will emphasize the trust bestowed upon him by our regime and by the Romanian Academy of Sciences by assigning to him the great responsibility of the sciences investigating the past of our country. He will be told that we also offer him our trust and it is on this basis that he will be asked to report on whom he knows from abroad and in what kind of relationships they are engaged in. Then, we will talk to him about the support given to the Securitate by honest citizens of our country, in our struggle against the enemies from within and from abroad. We will make him understand that given the interest shown to him by some hostile bureaus from the West, he can be helpful to our work. After the recruitment he will receive instruction about the way he must behave among his friends and acquaintances. At subsequent meetings he will be guided around the family of the fugitive M.D..

If, during the discussion, it will become clear that he refuses collaboration with us, he will be asked only to give an account on the people from abroad that he knows and to give information about them and their relatives from within the country.

We propose that the recruitment be made by comrade... (12 November 1958).<sup>8</sup>

An account from the personal file of the agent offers details on the success of the recruitment's mission:

The above-mentioned has recognized during the discussion, without being asked, that he has been in the U.S.S.R. between 1941-1942, in Odessa, whence he has brought in Romania some important cultural artifacts looted by Antonescu's regime. Moreover, he has confirmed entirely the information we have regarding the periods of his travels abroad, the people that he knows and who have left the country. Seeing that someone from the direction already talked to him, we have approached directly the problem of his collaboration with us. He agreed from the beginning, but was reticent about his employment around people from within the country (e.g. M.D. who is watched and verified by us). We can keep in mind that he has a bad opinion about the Party members and the people of working class origin who have been propelled among intellectuals. After he has accepted the collaboration with us, we took his signed agreement, and he has been instructed about the general behavior and about the practical aspects of the collaboration, and he has been given a secret name. Because he had an urgent work to do for the Introduction to the history of the Popular Republic of Romania, we established a first appointment for Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> February. (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1959).<sup>9</sup>

What is common to both cases regards a combination of strategies using subtle blackmail, flattery and enticement. The appeal to someone's past during the '50's and early '60's usually

<sup>8</sup> ACNSAS, R 150680, vol 1: 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> ACNSAS, R 150680, vol 1: 8-9.

referred to some kind of political activity on the side of forces opposed to Communism and looking for a guilt was not difficult in those times, when the Securitate had only to cultivate the fear produced by the arbitrary exercise of power against people labeled simply as “class enemies”. Later on, during the ‘80’s one can notice that the sources for blackmail are extended to include one’s moral behavior.<sup>10</sup> The appeal to the attachment due to the regime and the Party is not yet juxtaposed or identified with that to one’s motherland, and the officers tend rather to emphasize the benefits that the Communist regime has bestowed upon intellectuals and the new importance conferred to the sciences investigating the past and to their practitioners. Their strategies in gathering information about people involve categorization,<sup>11</sup> the use of multiple sources and their confrontation in order to figure out the truth about someone. The final test for the officer’s skills in knowing people is how they react when asked to collaborate. Self-reliance and the impression of omniscience are created through the subtle appeal to the institution they serve and to its mysterious knowledge reservoir. If the recruitment is successful, the new informer undergoes an initiation rite which aims at accommodating him with the new role. The new informer is instructed how to behave in society in order to conceal his newly received identity and to what kind of aspects he must pay attention and then report to the officer guiding his activity. A key symbolic element in accepting the collaboration, besides the signed agreement with the role of contract, is the secret name. The acceptance of the name means the inclusion in the network of agents and the opening of a personal file recoding the informer’s activity.

The possibility of traveling abroad has been used many times as enticement for scientists, who have been kept in isolation during the ‘50’s. It was recognized that only the intellectuals trusted by the regime have been given the opportunity of traveling abroad for

---

<sup>10</sup> This refers, for example, to accusations or suspicions of adultery.

<sup>11</sup> The question “what type is s/he?” can be found repeatedly when inquiring about someone, usually in the preliminary stage, before contacting the person and asking his/her collaboration.

research, conferences and congresses, which have become political arenas for the confrontation between Western scientists and their colleagues from the countries of the Communist Block. In the case of some notes written by long term informers of the Securitate, who are also key actors within the historical profession, one can find the appearances of rather cordial relationships with the Securitate's officers, which are obvious from the kind of information they can convey at their more or less regular meetings. In these occasions, the informer reports on the subjects indicated by the officer, who gives instructions for further action. The close supervision of the relationship with foreign specialists is obvious from the fact that the responses destined for them are sometimes composed during these meetings, when the informer also receives instructions on how to behave if he will go abroad. In some cases, the Securitate tried to use historians as undercover agents for espionage missions in foreign diplomatic circles, or has suspected them for espionage for Western powers.<sup>12</sup>

The exclusion of an informer from the network occurred when the quality of the information offered was unsatisfactory or irrelevant, when the person's possibilities and abilities were greatly reduced due to old age and retirement, or when the informer obtained an important position within the state's apparatus, which made him incompatible with his previous role.<sup>13</sup> In some cases, the failure of the initial mission for which the informer has been selected and his reticence in collaboration with the authorities bring the closing of his personal file, but not after the Securitate's officers took measures to increase his efficaciousness:

When he was recruited, F. was reluctant to accomplish some of the missions involving people from within the country. Subsequently, after he was worked upon [prelucrat], and he gave information related to this kind of people [despre astfel de elemente], which is of some importance for our work. According to our guidance, he succeeded in getting in touch with some fugitives from Italy and with some important Western scientists (personalities from the historical profession). Even if until now we have no indications that he deliberately deceives us, it seems that in some situations involving either his acquaintances or his person, he is reluctant when

<sup>12</sup> ACNSAS, R 054508: 1-2; I 1447: 118-121.

<sup>13</sup> ACNSAS, R 240406: 5.



reporting about them. This attitude is related only to details and does not involve important problems or matters of principle. Initially he showed a tendency towards the undervaluation of our institution and of the officers in connection with him. We discussed the fact in such a way that he was led to believe that there are many important sectors and *we emphasized his shortcomings in the Marxist interpretation of historical events*, shortcomings which are easily noticed by us. In this way, he got rid of his tendency to underestimate the officers who keep in touch with him. His attitude towards us has radically changed when we led him to believe that he got back his house as a consequence of our intervention. He is not well prepared politically and has some tendencies towards intrigue at his workplace. After the discussions we had at our regular meetings we noticed his preoccupation for the study of Marxist-Leninist theory and the tendency to fight against the attitude at his workplace. Thanks to his connections from abroad and from within the country, we consider him a useful agent especially because the nature of his work allows going abroad. However, it is necessary to educate and control him permanently. For his verification I believe that it is necessary to install technical means in his house (13<sup>th</sup> March 1960).<sup>14</sup>

After three years, the agent has been excluded from the network because he would not accomplish his missions: “Being that the agent F. has been ineffective during the collaboration with us, by showing indecision and reluctance, and given the fact that at present he is no longer useful to our work, we propose the exclusion from the network without taking his signed agreement.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Professional solidarity in times of crisis**

In this section I will describe the intellectuals’ range of attitudes and diversity of the collaboration with the Securitate and ground them in the peculiarities of the Romanian intellectual field, taking into consideration the pre-Communist relationship between the holders of cultural capital and the power elite, as determined by the cultural producers’ most important element of their collective identity – the national one. The case of the so-called “generation of the ‘30’s”, which includes personalities such as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, and Eugen Ionescu, may be useful in framing some of the most relevant features of the intellectual field as they can be deduced from the way intellectuals contrived their professional identity.

<sup>14</sup> ACNSAS, R. 156680, vol 1: 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 86.

The claims of the young generation of the '30's have been expressed using the nationalist frame and addressing issues related to the specificity or emphasizing the universality of what they considered to be "Romanian ideas". Every position taken, whether denigrating the "weakly values" of the previous generation of intellectuals (Boia, 2011: 2004), arguing for the "salvage" and continuation of the most valuable traditional elements, or adopting a more nuanced attitude, made use of the same framework and the diversity of opinions expressed can be reduced to the complex interplay between the nationalistic content of the intellectuals' ideas, their political ambitions, and objective possibilities of becoming more than the dominated fraction of the dominant class. Thus, the intellectuals' search for identity is driven by their perceived position in the international academic field and on the political scene and finds expression in the formulation of evaluations of the country's current situation and propositions concerning its "modernization" as to transform it into a great power. The political aspirations of the intellectual elite determined its members to imagine themselves as "saviors" of the nation, modern Messiahs of their people with the mission of rescuing it from mediocrity. The articulation of these ideas into a creed of their generation corresponded both to their dominated positions within the field and functioned as an instrument destined to modify their position inside that space. The national identity shaped the young intellectuals' perception and products in many ways and their mission, as it was formulated, could have been accomplished only in a strong relationship with politics. Therefore, the interwar intellectual life is doubly politicized: the inherently political aspect of any scientific competition was supplemented by the national component of their struggle which brought about an enlargement of the "audience" and a low degree of autonomy of the field. Recognition has been gained by the three intellectuals mentioned above only with the price of leaving the country and of detaching themselves from their previous political attitudes, while the exuberance of the

debates organized during this period has been mere provisional. The intellectuals' regimentation in a political party or the concretization of their political sympathies destroyed their possibilities for creating a space for discussing ideas and creating solidarities between them in favor of a political sectarianism which did exactly the opposite – it created only distrust and hatred (Ibid: 40-43) and perpetuated their state of subordination towards the state. The lack of solidarity between intellectuals and the low degree of the field are interrelated phenomena ultimately leading to very limited possibilities to confer recognition unless the scientist has not been already consecrated by a different instance (frequently from outside the country).

The instauration of the Communist regime in Romania and the attempts to subordinate the whole production of ideas by such means as the reorganization of the Romanian Academy of Sciences and of the universities under the system of planned science produced an immixture of criteria in the evaluation of a cultural product, whose main assessors have been selected according to their political capital. The situation of intellectuals in authoritarian regimes, as compared to democratic regimes, has been described by a Romanian sociologist as follows:

I believe that under a democratic system the intellectual has two principal alternatives: (i) to divide himself into two separate and almost irreconcilable figures, each independent of the other: the political expert and the cultural expert; or to become a politician and nothing else (that is, to renounce his other vocation). The usual way for an intellectual to acquire political power is to convert his cultural capital – chiefly consisting of his expertise and credibility – into political capital. Totalitarian regimes favored the opposite course, however: one had to enter the field of politics in order to gain recognition in other fields (for example, culture). In this way, two different types of criteria were confused, or both roles were adopted alternately, so generating a strategy which was impossible to control: on the one hand, one could obtain a position of power enabling one to impose the (more or less aesthetic, more or less ethical) criteria of evaluation and authority; on the other hand, one could follow the (ideological or other) prescriptions of the authorities, in terms of which aesthetics was eluded, and only brutal political propaganda counted as a cultural achievement (Culic, 1999: 56).

The multitude of the intellectuals' choices in response to concrete situations and demands of the state have influenced not only the cultural products, the struggles over criteria and representations, but also the relationships between positions within the field. The intellectuals'

collaboration or the refusal to collaborate with the secret police is one aspect from what has been sometimes called “the confrontation between informal spiritual authority and formal worldly authority”(Mungiu-Pippidi, 1999: 78), which had a distinct dramatic character and its specific rules and stereotypes shared by “the players”, be they dissenters, secret police’s officers, and various kinds of collaborators:

This [...] is genuine theater... But there is no reason why the game between the intellectual elite and the power elite should be bitter and barbarous, even in those states of Eastern Europe where there is less room for maneuver. It can be civilized and even sporting affair, relative to the level of political sophistication of the players (Konrád quoted in Mungiu-Pippidi, 1999: 78).

Some of the marks and elements of this “drama” have found their way into the Securitate’s files and have become indices not only of what kind of information was suitable to report, but also of what the informers’ motivations and profits have been. They unveil a peculiar conception of what an intellectual is, and although the place where we can find this self-conception is unusual, I will argue that it is no less relevant, but on the contrary, the fact that it was formulated in secret and destined to the political authorities exposes some of the aspects which in other instances are difficult to discover. The Securitate’s obsession with gathering as much information as they could about a person and drawing a map of his contacts determined the production of many “references” written by historians about their colleagues in which they compose a psychological profile, describe career strategies and intellectual choices, while in other notes they even advise the authorities on how to obtain their colleagues’ collaboration and/or commitment to the politicians’ purposes. This is one example of such a portrait:

Like many other young members of the petty bourgeoisie who became intellectuals during their university studies, he was attracted to socialism and Marxism during the ‘20’s and ‘30’s. He expressed his political commitments in private and in public during the above-mentioned period, while he drew himself away from the influential nationalistic stance. He was and still is considered until today an intellectual with leftist views. He received a solid philological training (he teaches both ancient Greek and Latin), but also a historical and philosophical one. His subtle mind and his curiosity nourished his ambition to become an outstanding intellectual through his own efforts, which made him individualistic to a certain extent, after the example of the intellectual in the ivory tower, just because of his high and “superior” culture. This explains why he chooses to distance

himself from people, attitude which is also explained by his lack of vices (he does neither smoke, nor drink, and he is not lecherous), and by his cultivation of true and close friendships, based on intellectual and spiritual affinities. He is a man of great sensitivity and affection, with a warm heart, but within the limits of his intellectualistic personality, of his self-construction and affinities. His ideal, which he served with an uncommon efficiency, industriously, and with all his intellectual capacities, was and still is that of being a great intellectual and a widely known scientist. He is always thorough and precise in all his professional and private duties, and he has a well trained critical thinking and independence, which prevented his [political] affiliation. His tenacious willpower prevents the manifestation of any weakness or emotiveness and his behavior is always filtered by critical thinking and is reflected by his major purposes. Thus, he is not the man of violent exhalations or bitter disputes, which he can easily avoid, without giving up and tenaciously following his purposes. He has an extraordinary capacity for discretion because he considers wise to know as much as possible without using this knowledge in chatters or friendly services as informer, but envisaging a certain goal. For all these qualities and through his perfect courtesy, he is a perfect diplomat. At the same time, he is not the man of rigid principles, but rather realistic, and I have never seen him in any concrete situation crossing the line towards opportunism. For T. all is well when he is allowed to demonstrate his talents and his scientific capacities at a good level. This is his life's ambition and his pride, but this is also the cause of some of his imperfections e.g. a certain "academism" – a certain pose – the distance he sets between students and himself, his lack of interest and inclinations for personal sacrifice in helping young people etc. Lately, these traits have been considerably attenuated. He can be determined to leave the ivory tower if he will be asked to contribute according to his inclinations and if he will be involved in the administration of the scientific work. Because of his rejection of any dogmatism, he is one of the few people that I know from these circles who formed deep, personal, and sophisticated dialectic and Marxist convictions, even since we were students until today. (17<sup>th</sup> April 1964)<sup>16</sup>

Two of the recurrent themes from these files are related to possible stances on Marxism as ideology and as theoretical tool in understanding the social world and to alternative visions on the role of intellectuals. If the first can be considered an aspect deriving from the political atmosphere and ideological constraints characteristic of the '50's and '60's, the second is closely related to the structural transformation of the academic field due to the insertion of new members according to different criteria than those defended by the intellectuals trained in the pre-Communist period. These new criteria included social origin, loyalty to the Party and compliance to the dictates of leaders, whose authority in cultural matters superseded the one conferred according to the logic of scientific prestige gained in the competition for symbolic capital. Thus, the struggle is deployed in terms of two competing images and roles of the intellectual: the one is the intellectual from the "ivory tower", the specialist devoted entirely to his scientific endeavors,

---

<sup>16</sup> ACNSAS, I 1447: 137-138.

and the other is constructed in opposition with the first and emphasizes the participation to the political life of the country through the popularization of scientific works and their production according to the canons requested by the managers of cultural production. The portrait quoted above captures the tensions and pressures put upon those considered as representatives of the first model, as the author of the characterization employed the clichés suggested by the ongoing struggle for power within the academic field and uses a false critical tone when writing about his friend, whose faults – a certain “academism” and the distance between himself and others i.e. “the people”, when associated with the reluctance to conform to the demands – are exactly what the political leaders would have objected. If serving “the people” is the main purpose of the intellectuals, according to the new Communist logic, then what must be accomplished is finding a way to involve them in activities wherefrom they try to escape, for example the administration of scientific work or writing for a less specialized audience. The advice given by the informer, to allow the historian to contribute “according to his inclinations” can be seen as a subtle suggestion for the authorities to give more room to intellectuals. Moreover, the appeal to someone’s “deep, personal, and sophisticated dialectic and Marxist convictions” is a significant detail connecting claims to power with the qualities and skills most encouraged and expected, at least officially, by the authorities. What is most interesting is that the appreciation of someone’s ability in the manipulation of Marxist theory varies according to author and can be an indication of the relationship existing between the informer and the person talked about, as well as proof of intention.

What the Securitate’s files offer abundant details on refers to power struggles within the field, which aim at the direction of scientific work or other possibilities giving power over the allocation of resources. This is the reason why someone’s quality as informer of the Securitate

can become a means of establishing one's position, but that may not always be the case. What historians write about their colleagues is rarely flattering, but sometimes the accusations and denunciations involve conspiracy theories which have very little chance to be taken seriously by the secret police's officers, even if they are in charge with discovering and thwarting conspiracies. The following description refers to a long term informer whose eagerness in writing reports about other people's lives is astonishing through its fruitfulness:

*References about Professor H.:*

*Qualities:* Very tough and hardworking. His work is methodical and carefully ordered. He has a normal intellect, with nothing out of the ordinary. Forbearing. A good organizer. Remarkable practical skills.

*Faults:* He is an unrivalled opportunist. Insincere. Mercenary. Unscrupulous careerist. Abusive to dishonesty. Even his scientific works lack probity. His career is full of inaccuracies, since he was a student until he became a professor. He possesses a rare talent of adjusting to circumstances, to make himself accepted and become close to those whom he has not managed to fell through slander and machinations, by defeating their outrage with his patience and bearing without complaint their reactions.

*Scientific authority:* Real enough to a point. Very productive. He has published a lot. He has the ambition of being not only original, but also amazing. His faults and qualities are perfectly reflected by his works. He made incontestable contributions to the progress of Romanian archeology. But in his works we can find, besides useful facts and valid conclusions, also inaccuracies, omissions, theories hastily assembled, speculative ideas, arbitrary assessments. His style is frequently prolix due to his haste of writing a lot and especially due to the tendency to split hairs in each issue, however clear. He does not hesitate to adjust his conclusions in order to reconcile them with the viewpoints of those he needs for his practical purposes. He is known abroad, where his contributions are appreciated. He is frequently in conflict with young people because of his egoist tendency and of his lack of generosity.

*Political attitudes:* He has always modeled his convictions after people or circumstances. When he sought to set himself right with the philosopher Y. he wrote a piece on idealist monism, and pleaded against Marxism. Then he succeeded in winning B.'s attention, from whom he obtained real benefits. During the war he has written flattering words about Hitler and Mussolini. Immediately after 23<sup>rd</sup> August he sought the attention of Professor K., which he acquired for a long period since then. He became a member of the Socialist Party and then of the Romanian Worker's Party whence he was excluded on the occasion of the clearances. He sought to put butter on bacon with his demagogy in professing Marxism, often showing an insufficient knowledge of the Marxist principles. He was the only Romanian archeologist to let himself get caught in the toils of Marxism, even if reluctantly and even awkwardly, only because of his opportunistic nature. With passing of the years, now he turns out to be sufficiently experienced in Marxist-Leninism. His manifestations are now more modest and balanced as compared with the past.<sup>17</sup>

The variety of information contained by the Securitate's files derives from a diversity of positions, and every example of collaborator is a unique case. There are people for whom offering information to the secret police about the activities and thoughts about one's colleague

<sup>17</sup> ACNSAS, R 156680, vol 1: 22-23.

or neighbor is de-demonized and perhaps justified as doing one's duty, even serving one's country, especially when the opinions expressed may seem unorthodox and can be easily transformed into political guilt. The ideological vigilance of some historians transformed them into their colleagues' judges, and notes such as the following can be considered typical for the end of the '50's and beginning of the '60's:

During the session of the collective working on the Treatise of Romania's History, which took place at the Institute of Archeology of the Romanian Academy of Sciences in 27<sup>th</sup> August, W. had a reactionary attitude. He defended the idealist opinions of G. and of other historians and archeologists from the past who considered that the Roman domination in Dacia had a "civilizing" character. Afterwards, he took position against the Marxist teaching about class struggle and intended to show that, through these religious organizations (called colleges), they reached the harmonization of class conflicts. Moreover, he intended to show that slaves did not form a class in Antiquity, at least not in Dacia. He talked about equalization and harmony in Dacia's society under the Roman domination, also giving a false interpretation to the historical event of the withdrawal of the Roman army and the civil administration, which have been accompanied by all those who have exploited the local population and the slave brought here by the Romans... W. does not know, or pretends not to know that comrade Gheorgiu-Dej has described Dacia's conquest by the Romans as an invasion. He has been criticized from a fair position by comrade P., who is the head of a department of the Romanian Academy's branch from Cluj. Tasks: the agent has been instructed to discover W.'s hostile activity and who are the people who endorse W.'s opinion. A copy of this note will be sent to the Second Quarter because W. is their agent. (3<sup>rd</sup> September 1959).<sup>18</sup>

Some of the notes and reports may have been written after the author was threatened and/or blackmailed, as the officers' reports show, but others, especially from the beginning of the '80's seem to be the result of the informer's desires. The collaboration of important historians was sought through multiple strategies, and the tasks assigned to them, once it has been obtained, involved not only the "supervision" of their colleagues' work, but also important missions abroad, such as the discovery of historical sources in archives, writing, espionage missions, and obtaining information about the Romanian immigrants and their organizations. The profits derived from the collaboration with the secret police included traveling abroad especially when the possibilities were severely restricted, money, a better position, small "gifts" for a good service, such as a bottle of whiskey etc, but all of them depended on the mission. Some of the

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 35-36.



historians have more than one personal file as collaborator of the Securitate, and some of them have both “informative” and “network” file(s), which means that they have been first watched and studied, and then recruited for a mission or for many. Traces of the informer’s “drama”, if we can speak of such a thing, have become the officers’ laughing stock as they found worthy of mention in their reports that some historians did not want to accept the rules of the “secret work”, such as signing a note with their pseudonym, but with the real name, and preferred to write the reports on the typewriter and not by hand, out of fear of being “ever” discovered that they have collaborated with the Securitate. Sadly, the typewriter could not hide anything, and giving the current situation of the secret police’s files, which have become historical sources, his cautiousness can only be ironical.

## Conclusions

The intellectuals' image as depicted by a careful study of the archives of the Communist secret police is the outcome of both self-presentation and of accounts written by the employees of the state's most important institution, as part of their daily work of control and surveillance. These sources provide rich information not only on the ways the intellectuals managed to increase both their cultural and political authority in their relationship with the Communist state, but also on the things they were impelled to do at the demands of politicians and perhaps in exchange for their privileged positions. The complex interplay between them ultimately contributed to the intellectuals' mobility in social space and affected in innumerable ways the final products of their inquiry i.e. the visions of the past. The historians and archeologists' collaboration with the Securitate is just one episode from the "mutually gratifying love affair", to use Bauman's terms, between the state and the intellectuals, which has ambiguous beginnings and may not have a predictable end. The particular form taken by this collaboration is both the result of constraint and blackmail, as well as the intellectuals' desire to consolidate their positions in the field. The historians' alliances with forces from outside the field and the various cases of conversion of political capital into cultural one perpetuate a low degree of autonomy of the field and accentuate the intellectuals' dependence on the state, which is a long lasting feature of the Romanian cultural space. Additionally, the state's omniscient pretensions and investments into the cultural domain make the tendencies and choices of those more inclined to pursue other ends than those suggested seem anti-political, "ivory tower" retreats, or even obsolete. As in the

past, the intellectuals' political affiliation and the compromises they make with the Communist power decreases their chance to create a space of professional solidarity.

The Securitate's archives are the records most relevant for the intellectuals' politics of accommodation with the evil, but they also contain the silences of those who have refused the collaboration. This time I have been more interested in the mechanisms through which someone's collaboration is sought and obtained and to what ends. I discovered that the prestige of the scientists and their relationships with other people were among the most persistently sought targets. On the other side, the informers' agency manifested itself not only through their actions, but also through the kind of material offered to the Securitate, ranging from what they considered to be harmless information to messages containing explicit or disguised political messages in their defense, which sometimes also included their colleagues. In this "autistic game", to use Mungiu-Pippidi's formula, the Marxist ideology has become the means of contention used for the justification of both positions. Many of the historians' requests and suggestions were addressed using as justification their ability in the manipulation of the Marxist framework in the interpretation of historical events. Similarly, the historians' reluctance to employ the Marxist jargon in their writings was an indication of their political positions and became the guilt to be exploited whenever it was necessary.

## REFERENCES

## Sources:

*Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (ACNSAS).*

## Secondary literature:

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1992. "Love in Adversity: On the State the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals." *Thesis Eleven* 31 (1): 81–104.

Boia, Lucian. 2011. *The Pitfalls of History. The Romanian Intellectual Elite between 1930 and 1950*. București: Humanitas (*Capcanele istoriei. Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950*).

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1975. "The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason." *Social Science Information* 14 (6): 19–47.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. "Fourth Lecture. Universal Corporatism: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World." *Poetics Today*, 12 (4): 655-669.

Culic, Irina. 1999. "The Strategies of Intellectuals: Romania under Communist Rule in Comparative Perspective". In Bozóki, András, *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. New York (N.Y.): Central European University Press, 43-71.

Iacob, Bogdan Cristian. 2011. *Stalinism, Historians, and the Nation: History-Production under Communism in Romania (1955-1966)*. (A dissertation in history)  
<http://goya.ceu.hu/record=b1153824~S0>.

Mihăilescu, Dan C., 1994. "L'intellectuel roumain de 1950 à nos jours: terreur, complicité, illusion du cheval de Troie, frénésie de la pêche en eaux troubles et perfidie du système de soupapes", in Catherine Durandin, *L'engagement des intellectuels à l'Est*, Paris : Éditions L'Harmattan, 99-114.

- Price, David. 1998. "Cold War Anthropology: Collaborators and Victims of the National Security State." *Identities* 4 (3-4): 389–430.
- Price, David. 2002. "Interlopers and Invited Guests: On Anthropology's Witting and Unwitting Links to Intelligence Agencies." *Anthropology Today* 18 (6): 16–21.
- Price, David. 2007a. "Buying a Piece of Anthropology: Part 1: Human Ecology and Unwitting Anthropological Research for the CIA." *Anthropology Today* 23 (3): 8–13.
- Price, David. 2003. "Subtle Means and Enticing Carrots: The Impact of Funding on American Cold War Anthropology." *Critique of Anthropology* 23 (4): 373–401.
- Price, David. 2004. *Threatening anthropology, McCarthysim and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Price, David. 2007b. "Buying a Piece of Anthropology: Part Two: The CIA and Our Tortured Past." *Anthropology Today* 23 (5): 17–22.
- Troncotă, Cristian. 2003. *Duplicitarii. Din istoria serviciilor de informații și securitate ale regimului comunist din România (1965-1989)*, Editura Elion. .
- Verdery, Katherine. 1991. *National Ideology under Socialism : Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Verdery, Katherine. 2014. *Secrets and Truths. Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police*. Budapest, New York: Central European University Press.