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KGB Photography Experimentation: Turning Religion into Organized Crime

> To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power.
>
> Susan Sontag. *On Photography.*

Introduction: Photographic truths[1]

The Soviet secret police made a habit of photographing their targets and visually capturing what was meant to be evidence of their crimes. "The improvement of photography opens up a diversity of new opportunities for its use in crime investigation, both for the fixation of a crime scene and for undertaking the most complicated investigation, otherwise impossible to realize by other means," states a 1935 textbook on Soviet criminalistics.[2] Soviet police manuals carefully elaborated the use of photography in crime investigation, instructing how to produce photographs of criminals and how to capture scenes and traces of crime: murdered body, arson, firearm traces, blood, sperm, footprints, cigarette butts, etc. Police photo labs produced mug shots of suspects in custody, while field officers took photos of crime scenes and criminal evidence in addition to relevant shots in KGB prisons and courts.[3] The KGB also used photography in "agent-operational measures," deploying concealed cameras to conduct surveillance and document intercepted or confiscated materials. In doing all of this, KGB photographers were formally abiding by the standard procedures of judicial or investigative photography first developed in Europe in the late 19th century and then elaborated in detail in Soviet police manuals.[4] Whereas criminalistics manuals and KGB internal instructions claimed the pursuit of justice, professionalism and objectivity, *political* crimes were far more difficult to capture on photo, thus leaving secret police officers a room for creativity and manipulation.

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[1] I would like to thank the Irish Research Council (project GOIPD/2017/764) and the COST Action 16213 for supporting this research. This article is the result of my collaboration with the team of researchers in the *Hidden Galleries* project (ERC project no. 677355). I am particularly grateful to James Kapaló for his enormous support throughout my research on the KGB archives. An earlier version of the article benefited from vivid discussions during my stay at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Winter 2019-2020 and from critical comments from David Brandenberger and the anonymous *Kritika*'s reviewers.

[2] A. Ia. Vyshinskii, ed., *Kriminalistika.* Vol.1 *Tekhnika i taktika rassledovaniia prestuplenii* (Sovetskoe zakonodatelstvo, 1935).

[3] I use here the anachronistic term "KGB" to refer to the Soviet secret political police and intelligence agencies that underwent a series of restructuring reforms and went by different names (VChK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB) throughout the Soviet period. When talking about particular historical cases, I use the name corresponding to a given period.

[4] Jens Jäger, "Photography: A Means of Surveillance? Judicial Photography, 1850 to 1900," *Crime, History & Societies*, 5, 1 (2001):27-51; Sandra S. Phillips, Mark Haworth-Booth and Carol Squiers, *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence*. (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Chronicle Books, 1997); Edgar J. Hoover, "Photography in Crime Detection," *Scientific American*, 162, 2 (1940): 71-74.

Photographs were often subject to manipulation through techniques such as montage, cropping, overlapping, retouching, or collaging. Confiscated images, art, manuscripts, and personal photographs were also redeployed for the organs' own documentary purposes, such as when the KGB cropped and pasted images of this sort into its own photo albums and collages or re-printed them in its instructional media or propaganda publications. Regardless where they came from, all the varied visual materials that found their way into KGB hands were forced to bend to a single dominant interpretation.[5] Their purpose was to advance the cause of Soviet justice by exposing criminality, proving guilt, and keeping watch on suspected offenders.

KGB photography, however, was much more than just a tool of crime work. Unlike classic forensic and judicial photography, photographs produced by the KGB were often far from reflecting or upholding the principles of accuracy or objectivity. Whereas Soviet official documentation advocated the triumphal revelation of the truth, the images located in the former KGB archives show how intentional photography manipulation generated different photographic meanings and concealed the inherent violence. In that sense, the statement "what you can't see, you can't photograph" has little relevance when it comes to the work of the Soviet political police. But does this mean that the images of suspects and manipulation of police photography that we see below were a mere falsification? The distinction between the KGB photograph and the Soviet reality were more complicated and awkward to be able to answer yes or no. Inscribed with ideological presumptions, the Soviet political police photograph was not an objective documentation of the truth nor simple falsification, but rather an instrument designed to produce and transmit a discourse of truth, or what John Tagg calls, following Foucault, "the régime of photographic truth" whose aim was not merely to advance the KGB's case but to shape the image of the class or national enemy.[6] As Tagg continues about the institutional use of photography as evidence in 19th century Western Europe, "Here, the knowledge and truth of which photography became the guardian were inseparable from the power and control that they engendered".[7] In this regard, KGB photography appeared as material "force field" that was at the same time the product of the state machine and an element in the technologies of knowledge production – the technologies that, according to Ann Stoler, reproduced the state itself.[8] What Roland Barthes has called an "evidential force" of the photograph became repurposed as the instrument of a new disciplinary and repressive regime.[9] Thus KGB photography evolved both as a means for producing new evidence regarding the state's enemies and at the same time a justification for their continued repression. This is all the more important as the constructed imagery of the enemy provided an opportunity to enhance secret police's own authority and to create new forms of state power. By and large, the image of the enemy – a giant counterrevolutionary conspiratorial foe – was their *capital* that allowed the secret police to establish itself as an immense power and to form a vision of the chekist as a Soviet superman.

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[5] Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truth: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (Central European University Press, 2014), 51-52.

[6] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993, original work published in 1988), 94-95.

[7] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 80.

[8] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 22-28.

[9] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard (Hill and Wang. 2010, original work published in 1980), 89; John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame. Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), XXVIII.

This article examines the history of Soviet secret police photographic practices, arguing that the agency's rich array of visual methodologies helped create a lasting image of the "people's enemy" in the Soviet socialist imagination. Using photographic sources relating to a key area of KGB work, I expose how the knowledge/power nexus embedded in institutional photographs contributed to the establishment of the new Soviet social order and power and in this way became inseparable from the social and material practices of state authority. In the process, I combine the analysis of two important yet often disconnected factors in the relationship between photography and power: one is the instrumentality of state security photographs – that is, the way that photographic images were deployed to serve state goals;[10] and the other is the reality of photographs as physical objects in keeping with what Elizabeth Edward and Janice Hart have referred to as the materiality of the photograph.[11] Photographs are produced, exchanged, confiscated, or intercepted, as well as altered, published, re-published, or destroyed. Their nature as physical objects is thus inseparable from their semantic and practical function. In what follows, I focus in on the social function of a range of KGB-curated photographs and the social conditions of their production and use, what James Hevia calls "the photography complex", which involves a network of actors and a set of relationships: all of which in turn allows me to examine not only the institutions and individuals who took the photos but also the people, practices and meanings that the photographs were intended to expose.[12]

The materials in this research come from the recently declassified SBU (former KGB) archives in Ukraine. The provenance of documentation stored there, however, is diverse and encompasses not only the former Ukrainian Socialist Republic, but includes other parts of the Soviet Union. Some documents and images analysed below were produced by the OGPU (as the Soviet secret police were known until 1934) branches in Voronezh, Belgorod, Samara, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and of course Moscow. One of the schematic images below was signed by Evgenii Tuchkov, the head of the Sixth (later the Third) Sector of the Secret-Political Department OGPU responsible for all-Soviet anti-religious campaigns during 1922-1939. All these reports and model penal files circulated up and down the regional police hierarchy. Similarly, files and images produced by regional OGPU (and since 1934, NKVD) officers in Ukraine were oftentimes part of all-Union special operations, hence were due to report up the hierarchy that crowned the Kremlin and Lubianka. In order words, despite the sources for this research come from the Ukrainian archives, the locality of the documentation is blurred, and it is safe to assume that we deal with standardized and centralized photographic practices and documentation genres.

"The Ecclesiastic-Monarchist Underground"

The Soviet state had numerous enemies that its officials were expected to hunt down and bring to justice. My focus here is on religious dissent or what became known as the religious underground, i.e. religious groups that were outlawed by the Soviet state. Though religion was repressed in the Soviet Union, it was not entirely prohibited, and indeed some types of religious activity remained

[10] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*; Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (SUNY Press, 1996); James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[11] Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, "Introduction: Photographs as Objects," In *Photographs, Objects, Histories. On the Materiality of Images*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (Routlege, 2004), 1-15.

[12] James L. Hevia, "The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901), Making Civilization," In *Photographies East: The Camera and Its Histories in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. by Rosalind C. Morris (Duke University Press, 2009), 81; see also Elizabeth Edwards, "Objects of Affect: Photography beyond the Image," *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 41 (2012): 223.

legal throughout the Soviet period. At the same time, certain religious groups were considered unacceptable and banned as "harmful to the state by the very fact of their existence."[13] Followers of the catacomb True Orthodox movement, Jehovah's Witnesses, Reformed Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and a number of other believers fell within this category. Whereas mainstream religious institutions that enjoyed legal or semi-legal status (like the Russian Orthodox Church or registered Evangelical Christian-Baptists, for instance)[14] fell under the control of the Council for Religious Affairs established at the Council of People's Commissars (later Council of Ministers), banned minority religious groups fell under secret jurisdiction of the political police.[15] The section on the "religious underground" regularly appeared in annual and monthly official reports and surveys on every level of the police hierarchy.

The photographs below come from group penal cases (including, what I call, model penal cases and model indictments) against peasant nonconformist underground Orthodox communities who on the pages of secret police files were commonly referred to as the True Orthodox Church.[16] Starting from the late 1920s, underground Orthodox movements scattered from Western Siberia up to the Northern Caucuses and Ukraine were under the gaze of the secret police. The first all-union "liquidation campaigns" against popular religious movements were launched on the wave of the state's struggle against mass peasant resistance to forced collectivization and dekulakization. By then, popular resistance was imbued with religious symbolism of coming apocalypse; and priests and monastics oftentimes became vocal actors in local acts of disobedience.[17] By the early 1930s, the majority of churches in the Soviet Union were closed and monasteries disbanded. Thousands of disenfranchised priests with their families, and displaced monks and nuns were left homeless, banned from living in particular cities or were subject to immediate resettlement from areas of collectivization. They wandered from village to village, begging or doing some casual day labour, clandestinely performing rituals and preaching about the arrival of the apocalyptic Red Dragon and the Antichrist. The so-called "vagrant clergymen" brought to life numerous popular prophets and saints, *yurodivye* (holly fools), *klikushi* (shriekers), *starets* (elders), *prozorlivye* (forseers), and *bogoroditsy* (mothers-of-God).[18] The phenomenon of popular prophetism proliferated, developing new forms, like *boliaschie* (holy ills), or *spiashchie* (holy dormants). Some yelled on the streets that the communists were putting the stamp of Antichrist on foreheads

[13] Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukraïny [State Archive Branch of the Security Services of Ukraine in Kyiv] (HDASBU), f.3, op.1, spr.331, ark.206.

[14] The list of registered religious groups varied in different periods of Soviet religious politics.

[15] In 1946, there were established two government bodies: the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, which oversaw religious organizations other than the Russian Orthodox Church.

[16] The term referred to the then-underground communities who did not accept the Declaration of Loyalty to Soviet power signed by the Metropolitan Sergii in 1927 and consequently broke up with the official church. The movement, however, was far more heterogeneous and many, even loyal to the Moscow Patriarchy, chose (or were forced into) an illegal underground position simply because it was impossible to comply with newly created registration procedures and requirements for religious groups. In the context of the mass closure of churches and oftentimes the absence of official clergymen, grass-roots religious communities had no other choice but to take care of their religious needs on their own, creatively adapting religious practices to changing circumstance. Aleksei Beglov, *V poiskakh "bezgreshnykh katakomb:" Tserkovnoe podpol'e v SSSR* (Moscow: "Arefa", 2008); D.V. Pospielovsky, *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' v XX veke* (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), 174-175.

[17] Lynne Viola, "The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside," *The Journal of Modern History,* 62, 4 (1990):747-770; Tracy Mcdonald, "A Peasant Rebellion in Stalin's Russia: The Pitelinskii Uprising, Riazan, 1930," in *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, ed. by L. Viola (Cornell University Press, 2002), 89.

[18] HDASBU, f.16, op.1, spr.206, ark.184.

of those entering kolkhozes or participating in elections or the census; that men in kolkhozes would have common wives, and everybody would be sleeping under a common blanket; that children would be taken away from their parents; that aged people "would be recycled for soap production"; and "human hair, instead of wool, would be exchanged for American tractors."[19] Mushrooming "wild parishes" (*dikie prikhody*) or "hut groups" (*khatnicheskie gruppy*, from Ukrainian *khata*, peasant hut) were spontaneous and uncontrollable – they were as difficult to control as they were difficult to define.

As I argue elsewhere, Soviet record keeping, particularly the documentation created by the secret police, played specific role in the formation of the image of the True Orthodox Church as an organized, networked, and politically subversive organizational structure. When followers of these faiths were arrested, they were not charged for their beliefs but rather for their actions as would-be members of "insurgent counterrevolutionary ecclesiastic-monarchist underground" or "red-dragon-type (*krasnodrakonovskogo tipa*) organization."[20] As Lynne Viola brilliantly argues, the Stalinist state not merely created much of the political environment for resistance through its repressive politics, but "generated the lens and language of resistance" and "set the parameters of resistant behaviours, acts, and even intent"; it furthermore "produced most of our sources on resistance."[21] In this article, I further develop this point by focusing on how the Soviet system framed popular religious traditions as political resistance and counterrevolutionary conspiracy in visual terms, a process in which the secret police too played an important role.

In making their case against these groups, the Soviet organs frequently accumulated massive evidentiary files, including data from criminal records, samples of indictments and closing arguments, reports, circulars, surveys, and articles on religious dissent from internal publications. In all of this, visual material played a critical role as photographs, graphics of various sorts, photo-collages and photomontages of confiscated images became drummed into service to bolster the argument that organized political subversion lurked behind the mask of religion. The role of the photograph in the cause (along with the support of a wide range of other materials included in the case file) was to establish the typology of religious dissident as a deserving target of state repression, a figure who could be comfortably placed in a rogue's gallery alongside other stereotypical foes: the counter-revolutionary, the courier, the spy, or the terrorist.[22] In the process, the photo of the religious dissenter came to serve as a kind of "ideological blueprint," the first rendering of the criminal to be enhanced, as needed, with the help of additional visual techniques, the purpose of which was not just to expose the enemy within but to give him or her recognizable physical form.

The file stories and the photographs below date from 1930 to 1952 and cover various Stalinist anti-religious operations in the Russian and Ukrainian countryside. First, they were part of major reforms in the village during the ambitious First Five-Year Plan. This was also the time when the Soviet secret police consolidated their vast power and began to rise as an empire within a state. Hence the need to think and act with the lavish scale: to create a giant conspiracy (like the ecclesiastic-monarchist underground or the terrorist counterrevolutionary organization) to fight

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[19] A.I. Demianov, *Istinno-pravoslavnoe khristianstvo. Kritika ideologii i deatel'nosti* (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1977), 25; HDASBU, f.16, op.1. spr.206, ark. 16-17; spr.45, ark.73-74.

[20] Tatiana Vagramenko, "Visualizing Invisible Dissent: Red-Dragonists, Conspiracy and the Soviet Security Police," In *The Religious Underground and the Secret Police in Communist and Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by J. Kapaló and K. Povedák (Routledge, forthcoming).

[21] Lynne Viola, "Introduction," in *Contending with Stalinism,* 9-13.

[22] Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford University Press, 2010), 38; Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*, 56.

against; to create new paradigms, new concepts and models. The religious network schemes and collages we see below belong to this epoch of unlimited opportunities for the secret police to enhance its power. Symptomatically these images of a networked conspiratorial enemy mimicked the very structures and hierarchies of Soviet institutions, including the secret police themselves.

Another group of images from the post-war period reflects the refining of the anti-religious politics and gives a glimpse into different strategies of control of proliferating post-war popular religiosity. Once the power paradigm had been set and the rogue's gallery of stereotypical foes placed, the secret police carried out surgical-strike operations against grass-roots religious communities. Each case was thoroughly sorted according to existing categories; and images were adjusted (manipulated if needed) to make them fit into a respective "box" of enemies. This is when we start seeing faces and hear voices of individual believers and their silenced stories, yet all hugely distorted. To delve into the logic of secret police photography, I approach these images in a chronologically reversed order: we begin with individual stories and images of repressed believers from the post-war period in order to understand how they were transformed into giant faceless schemes on the eve of the Great Terror. Finally, and this is what unite them all, the photographs below reveal a twofold rationale of the Soviet secret police: to control all types of political and cultural dissent, but also to build secret police own immense power and state capacity through the very construction of the image of the religious conspiratorial counter-revolution – the enemy they forcefully fought and who might never existed.

The Social Biographies of Top-Secret Photographs

Secret police photography functioned as an extension of the textual narrative. Images in the KGB archives are not catalogued separately. Rather, all the various types of images – mug shots of arrestees, surveillance photographs, photocopies of confiscated materials – appear as inserts within standard textual files and are frequently described in detail in the file itself. Photographs were thus very much part of the story, underscoring or buttressing the textual claims. Being narrativized in this simple and straightforward way, KGB photographs represent a revealing example of a historical source that bears the mark of the mechanism of the knowledge production. Hence, our possibility to read the image as text, studying the meanings and (photographic) ideologies that were invested into it, while also reading the often conflicting textual interpretations of the image that appears in the accompanying file story. As John Tagg puts it, "every text – including the photographic text – is an activity of production of meaning which is carried on within a certain *régime of sense*."[23]

But the importance of the photograph as a historical source is not just a question of content – that is, who or what it shows, the specific story it tells or mood it conveys. As Edwards and Hart argue, "Photographs are both images *and* physical objects that exists in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience."[24] While the file was in active use, photos tended to be pasted or glued between typed sheets of paper, or they would be enclosed in an inserted envelope, where they might be marked, numbered, and cropped. Prior to going to the archive, certain photos might then be reproduced to assist with other investigations, or recycled for other purposes within the organization. In other words, photographs produced or acquired by the security services found themselves inevitably bound up as material forms in various modes of handling and presentation, all of which affected their social and historical meanings. This is what Edwards and Hart have in

[23] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 98-99.
[24] Edwards, Hart, Introduction, 1.

mind when they underscore the value of investigating the "social biographies" of photographs as material objects.[25]

Of course, given the fact that KGB photographs were top-secret documents whose circulation was limited to a small circle of agency personnel, one might wonder whether the whole question of a social life even applies. Still, despite their obvious distinctiveness compared to other types of photos, secret-police photographs indeed had social lives.

To begin with, the term "secret" in the phrase top-secret, as Cristina Vatulescu has noted building on observations by Hannah Arendt, is misleading with regard to the Soviet security services, as most of the Soviet population was fully aware of the existence of the secret police and their secret files and were in fact fascinated by the possibility of learning what these files contained. Thus it was not true secrecy but rather the "spectacle of secrecy" that made things seem secret and ultimately allowed for "the uncovering of (fabricated) anti-Stalinist plots." Vatulescu compares the social effects of the secret police file with Soviet propaganda, the largest area of state textual production, and concludes that "[t]he file won the battle over propaganda in the fascination it exerted on the public."[26] Yet the secret police file's relation to state propaganda was more material and pragmatic than the metaphoric battle over which form appeared more fascinating to the public. This is because the secret file literally extended and expanded its social life *through* propaganda as materials and images seized or produced by the KGB were recycled for propaganda purposes. Photos of crime scenes, individuals under arrest, and confiscated manuscripts and artwork featured regularly in show trials, propaganda films and media campaigns, thus becoming seamlessly interwoven within the state's propaganda design.

As for inside the secret police institutions, here, too, the photos had their own distinct social life as they circulated between case files and different offices as part of internal KGB communications and information exchange. Photographs were collaged into illustrations for primers and reprinted in sample case files or internal secret-police periodicals. They might appear in manuals for KGB officers to browse in the "Chekist library" or in exhibits on the history of the Soviet security organs such as "The Chekist's Office" (*Chekistskii kabinet*).[27] A given photograph could also take on additional meaning whenever a KGB officer scribbled a note or a date across the front on it, or wrote a brief summary about it on the back. Photos also changed meaning – that is, took on new social lives – when they were transplanted from one case file to another, or when they were purposefully altered. One could say that their social life even continued in those cases when they "disappeared" and came to exist only as an item listed as "missing" or "destroyed."

Following the opening of the secret police archives after 1989 and in Russia (for a period) after 1991, the life of these secret materials then embarked on an entirely new trajectory. Retrieved from institutional obscurity in their dusty files, KGB documents began to travel through the public sphere through exposure in museum exhibits, popular histories, and media reports.[28] Today they circulate more widely still on various social media platforms, where one often finds them completely removed from any sense of their original context and pasted into new narratives. Within these new interpretive frameworks, the documents – including photographs – not surprisingly acquire new meaning and new agency as witnesses for the prosecution, this time not

[25] Edwards, Hart, Introduction, 4; Edwards, Objects of Affect, 224.
[26] Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics,* 2-6.
[27] Despite the term "chekist" at large was ambiguous in Soviet society, it was (and still is) used as a positive self-designation for members of the KGB (and nowadays of the Federal Security Service).
[28] Many photographs published in this article were displayed in a series of public exhibitions of the *Hidden Galleries* project in Romania, Hungary, Ireland, and Republic of Moldova in 2019-2021, http://hiddengalleries.eu

for the dictatorial regime but against it. As such, the once secret documents contribute to the generation of new memories and new discourses about life under socialism, allowing post-socialist publics both to re-experience past traumas and reconnect broken historical threads. While the response to these declassified materials varies between Russia, former Soviet republics, and different states in Eastern Europe, these basic registers appear to be at work virtually everywhere, effectively shaping the way that scholars and members of the public have learned to read KGB materials in the present moment.

In his study of visual materials related to religious minorities from the secret police archives of Moldova, Romania, and Hungary, James Kapaló organizes the evidence according to the type of image in question: crime scene photos; photographs taken during surveillance operations (often with the assistance of hidden cameras); re-enactments or re-stagings of events when real surveillance photography could not be obtained; the photos of arrestees; and confiscated or intercepted photos.[29] For the purposes of this study, I divide these various photographic genres into two main categories: photos taken prior to the moment of arrest and those taken after. As Vatulescu argues, the moment of arrest was a critical turning point both in the arrestee's life and in the dynamic of power being deployed against them.[30] Upon arrest the individual ceased to be the subject of an investigation and became instead the target of a more assertive exercise of state authority. It follows that this was also when the KGB's diverse arsenal of photographic types and techniques could be applied to their fullest and the arrestee – an otherwise ordinary person staring back at the police camera – could be turned into a tool for the construction of socialist knowledge about the enemy. Once in custody, suspects could be photographed for their police file – the mug shot photo. They could also be shot at the supposed crime scene and/or in re-enactments or re-stagings of their criminal activity. In one fashion or another, arrest thus marked the beginning of turn towards using photography as a means to possess the body of the criminal, disciplining him or her through image, while at the same time redefining them as an enemy type. In what follows, I focus on these post-arrest photographs, paying particular attention to how they were made to serve the goal of defining the enemy and justifying his or her condemnation and punishment.

Framing Guilt

After the Great Patriotic War, the Ukrainian NKVD was busy in a general post-war "clean-up" of the formerly occupied territories in Ukraine, searching for former Nazi collaborators and those who presumably benefited from the occupation regime. Relative religious freedom provided by the Reichskommissariat Ukraine in the occupied territories let to re-opening of Orthodox churches and overall rise of popular religious movements – things to bring now back under control. In the mid-1940s, the NKVD discovered a network of True Orthodox underground churches and monasteries in the Kharkiv region led by a catacomb priest and hieromonk by the name of Seraphim (birth name: Shevtsov). The spaces of worship attended by the group were housed underground, either in caves or in cellars built beneath huts in the countryside. Between 1945 and 1955, the authorities destroyed over 15 such subterranean places, including a monastery in the town of Chuhuiv near Kharkiv, which the police uncovered in July 1945. At the time of the raid, the police found some thirty people worshipping at the underground site, most of whom were monks and nuns who lived on the premises – that is, they lived underground – including Father Seraphim. The police took a series of photos of the space and confiscated items that were later

[29] James A. Kapaló, "The Appearance of Saints: Photographic Evidence and Religious Minorities in the Secret Police Archives in Eastern Europe," *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief*, 15, 1 (2019): 82-109.
[30] Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics,* 36.

added to Seraphim's file. Given that the monastery was eventually destroyed, these photos are the only remaining visual record we have of the site. They show an entrance hidden behind a wooden structure within the wall of a vault. Once inside, an archway gallery then opened into a series of separate chambers, including a spacious subterranean church replete with a full altar and iconostasis.[31]

Figure 1

The images follow standard police photography principles and at first glance seem to be no more than a set of inventory photographs that routinely capture the crime and the perpetrator. Similar to Kapaló's categorization of crime scene photographs,[32] one can see here: an "environment photo" of a rural house beneath which the monastery was discovered; "overview photos" with a general view of the scene that depict the hidden entrance stairs and a ladder led to the underground monastery and the means of concealment such as the wooden structure taken out from the wall; "central photos" that illustrate key feature of the crime – an underground altar and iconostasis; "detail photos" of confiscated icons and other valuables, a subterranean stove and a mill. In one of the photos (Figure 1), we see Seraphim seated on a chair surrounded by religious habits, utensils, and icons.[33] It was a common practice to produce staged photographs with suspects sat in the middle of the evidence of the crime. Like in the Seraphim's case, such photographs were usually staged and shot after the arrest of a suspect.

All the objects here were confiscated during the raid. The photo thus neatly places Seraphim at the scene of the crime, and like all such staged crime scene photographs, aims to underscore a direct link between the would-be offender and the site of his offense in order to lock in evidence against the accused. The crime here is not in question. Its reality is simply assumed, cemented into place by the photograph, which captures both the criminal and the location of his crime along with numerous objects that appear to reinforce the commission of the crime and that would all, of course, later be used as material evidence (*veshchdok*) at trial. Seraphim sits quite literally in the midst of his guilt, surrounded by the tools of his transgression.

The production of knowledge about the crime begins right here, in this photograph, with what might be called the grammar of the image, which restructures the elements of the scene according to a new semantic register. The most important restructuring is the most obvious and therefore most potentially overlooked: the invitation to see a religious person, in this case, a priest, as a criminal. Nothing here is faked: Seraphim is pictured with the icons, crucifixes, and vestments of his religious community. The meaning of his *relationship* to these objects has been profoundly altered, however. One sees this clearly by comparing this crime scene photo with the only pre-arrest image of Seraphim that I have found in which we see him sitting with the same crosses and icons that appear in the secret police photo (Figure 2).[34]

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[31] More about the case in Tatiana Vagramenko, "True Orthodox Underground Monastery," In *Hidden Galleries: Material Religion in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. by J. Kapaló and T. Vagramenko (Lit Verlag, 2020), 16-17.

[32] Kapaló, The Appearance of Saints, 91-94. His observations are based on Hungarian criminology manuals, which, however, adopted the KGB standards.

[33] HDASBU, f.6-fp, vol.2, spr.75976. A similar type of photographs can be found in Anca M. Şincan, "The Typewriter," in Kapaló, Vagramenko *Hidden Galleries,* 44-45; Ágnes Hesz, "Forbidden Materials," in Kapaló, Vagramenko *Hidden Galleries,* 41.

[34] http://true-orthodox.narod.ru/harkov/stu/Serafim4.html

Figure 2

In this image, he wears his monastic clothing along with a monk's skullcap (*skufiia*). In the background icons hang above a homemade altar. In his right hand he holds a cross, a religious symbol of martyrdom, in his left, the Gospel. The scene evokes the image of a martyr saint. The crime scene photo by contrast utterly negates the religious meaning of the pictured objects by changing their semantic order. In the pre-arrest image, Seraphim appears in his original cultural frame – that is, a frame in which he functions as priest, prophet, and religious leader. In the police image, however, the icons in view are no longer arranged as an iconostasis but instead appear heaped together or nailed to the wall, while the vestments that Seraphim would have worn hang on a bare cord and a set of consecrated altar cloths (antimins) appears draped over a kind of cart. The altering of the authentic order of things repress their original religious meaning, thus moving them into the semantic field of criminal evidence. In the same way, Seraphim himself is no longer a man of the cloth but instead appears in the typical garb of an elderly peasant man, his hands resting helplessly on his knees. Though he remains close to the center of the image, with the attributes of his faith all around him, his relationship to the objects has been completely redefined. Once a monk, he is now a criminal, and his churchly objects and clothing are now proof of his stance against the state.

Disciplining the body

The de-contextualization of the body represented a further step in the KGB's re-casting of religious dissidents as criminals. The most obvious form this took was the criminal identification portrait, commonly known as the mug shot, which in police organizations the world over effectively defined the individual as a criminal.[35] In part, this identification occurred as an effect of the very genre of the photo. Rigid rules and guidelines applied to the taking of mug shot photos across Europe and the US, tsarist Russia and the USSR included. According to Soviet criminalistics practice, the so-called "signaletic photography" had a standardized two-shot form, one full frontal facial view paired with a view from the side, almost always shot against a light background, free of distractions that might obscure the contour of the face and with only the inscription of the arrestee's name and date of birth or the date the photograph was taken marked across the bottom.[36] The semiotic tensions we can see on Seraphim's crime scene photograph has been resolved by stripping away or minimizing every other material indicator of who the individual might be, effectively erasing his or her non-criminal social identity.[37] As such, the mug shot emasculated traces of history.

In Seraphim's case, his mug shot was taken shortly after the raid on the underground monastery (figure 3).[38] In the photo, however, he is not identified as Seraphim – the name he assumed upon ordination as a monk – but rather by his birth name, Daniil Shevtsov. Alongside the image one also finds a description of his features, including a description of the shape of his nose and ears, the colour of his eyes, and the presence of scars and other distinguishing features. Capturing this combination of the visual and the textual, the inventor of the mug shot, the French

[35] Jäger, Jens. 2001. Photography, 46.
[36] Vyshinskii, *Kriminalistika*, 52-54.
[37] Tom Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detective and Early Cinema," In *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. by Leo Charney, Vanessa R. Schwartz (University of California Press,1995), 29-31; Phillips et. al, *Police Pictures*, 19-21.
[38] HDASBU, f.6-fp, spr.75976, vol.1, ark.17.

policeman-criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, referred to these photos aptly as "spoken portraits" (*portrait parlés*).[39] Bertillon's system (bertillonage) was adopted in the Soviet police practice too.

Figure 3

Arrest photographs are perhaps the most striking of the visual materials one finds in Soviet-era penal files and dossiers. They stare back at you from the opening page of nearly every penal file, and they are clearly not meant as portraits in the traditional sense but rather as "accusatory images" whose role is to identify the criminal body or even a criminal type.[40] The "signaletic photograph" that expresses nothing – its artless power de-humanises the body, stripping the individual of his or her identity, agency, and history, and recasting him or her effectively as a non-person shorn of any identifiable social experience. Tellingly, as I will show later, in those cases when the police could not take an arrest photograph, they would occasionally resort to using a confiscated pre-arrest image of the accused, which they would then shade and alter to make it appear more like a mug shot, removing any evidence of the individual's social identity.

Yet for all that the arrest photographs were purposefully decontextualized, they were never neutral. The generic "look" of the mug shot contained its own coded representation, which ultimately did more than simply represent the criminal. As Tagg suggests, the point of this photographic form is to offer

> a portrait of the product of the disciplinary method: the body made object; divided and studied… subjected and made subject. When accumulated, such images amount to a new representation of society.[41]

In the de-personalized image of the mug shot, what we are witnessing in effect is the state's assertion of absolute power over its insubordinate subject, which in this case amounts to the disciplining of the offender's body and the reduction of his or her likeness to conform to that of a homogenized, anonymized, and generic enemy – a portrait of the dissenter captured and defeated. The mug shot betrays no violence or struggle but instead communicates a kind of eerie stillness, which is itself a critical aspect of what makes the whole composition so dehumanizing. Yet in truth, of course, these photos often were implicated with enormous violence, carefully concealed behind the mask of their form. The whole point of the mug shot was to edit out the violence. Sometimes, however, the police couldn't fit the moment to the form, and the violence spilled out, as I discuss in the next section.

"God Knows:" Resistance By Image

They never stopped singing and praying. They kept at it when the police came for them, as their arrest photographs were being taken, during the interrogations that preceded their trial, even during the court hearing. In May 1952, a group of 23 believers was arrested in eight villages in the Kiev region. No one knew much about them. Their co-villagers described them as Stundists or Baptists

[39] Robert A. Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul, 1850-2000* (MIT Press, 1999), 113-115; Phillips et. al, *Police Pictures*, 20. The use of "spoken portraits" in Soviet criminalistics: Vyshinskii, *Kriminalistika*, 45-51.

[40] Ernest Lacan, cit. by Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell,* 113; Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October*, 39 (Winter, 1986): 18-19

[41] Tagg *The Burden of Representation*, 76; Breandán Mac Suibhne and Amy Martin, "Fenians in the Frame: Photographing Irish Political Prisoners, 1865-68," *Field Day Review*, 1 (2005): 102.

and knew nothing more than the fact that, even though they displayed Orthodox icons, crosses and church books in their homes, they never went to Orthodox Church and didn't consult with the local priests. The members of the group never discussed their faith except to repeat the phrase: "God knows" (*Bog znaet*). All we know about them now is that they were poor peasants who gathered for prayer in secret in their homes, sometimes travelling between villages to pray together. Statements taken from 48 witnesses (all of them recorded nearly a month before the group's arrest) confirmed that the believers refused to enrol in local collective farms or to work at other state enterprises, never paid taxes or registered for other Soviet documents, and never used money ("the mark of the dragon")[42] or sent their kids to public school. They farmed their individual plots and occasionally worked on the side in exchange for food and clothes. Some had been arrested before and had spent time in prison. Others had had their kids forcefully taken from them and had never seen them again.

The MGB (as the Soviet security services were known at the time) predictably charged the group with conducting anti-Soviet activity and propaganda as members of the "ecclesiastical-monarchist organization 'the True Orthodox Church.'" Their arrest and trial were anything but ordinary, however. Based on the description of events that appears in the case file, the believers resisted being taken away when the authorities came for them, barricading themselves in their house, tearing off their clothes, falling to the floor, and crying and singing out loud. Their pre-trial review was brief: a mere three days of interrogations and then an additional night of twenty-two orchestrated confrontations between the arrestees and witnesses. During the review, the believers refused to answer questions, responding to everything by saying simply "*God knows*" or "*I will only answer to the Judgment of God.*" They offered no denunciations or confessions, and they continued praying and singing hymns throughout, even while in court. Following their arrest, a number of the believers went on hunger strike and were forcibly fed, as a result of which possibly as many as five of them died just a few days after sentencing. They also refused to walk, talk, or even to sleep on their beds while in prison, which meant that they had to be carried everywhere, to the interrogation rooms and the courtroom included. In the end, they were sentenced to between 10 and 25 years in the camps, though most had their sentences reduced in 1955 and then commuted altogether in 1956 as a result of the amnesty following Stalin's death. Some were rearrested in 1957, however, and sentenced to a new 10-year term.

Despite repeated pressures, all of which are described in the four-volume case file, the believers never broke. There were no confessions, no triumphal unmasking of the crime. In figures 4-7 here, we see two versions of the arrest photographs taken by the MGB officers.[43] As the photos were being taken, the believers intentionally closed their eyes, turned their heads away, or sang while the officers tried to restrain them, their hands and gloves clearly visible (Figures 4 and 6). Police officers later tried to correct these "tainted" photographs by removing the evidence of their violent intervention from the images, which one can see in the spruced-up copies with the hands of the policemen shaded out (Figures 5 and 7). The handless photos were used in the formal documentation of the case, while the smaller-size, original photos with the hands were appended to the back of the arrest questionnaires.

Figure 4

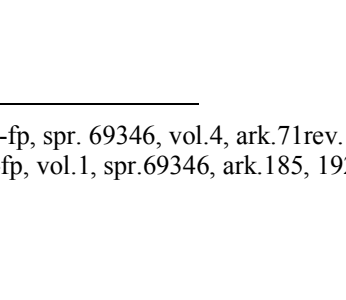
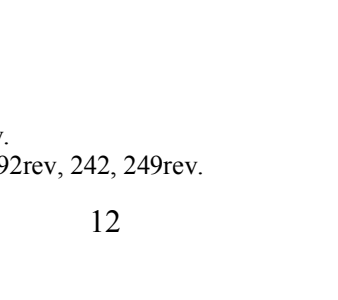


Figure 5



[42] HDASBU, f. 6-fp, spr. 69346, vol.4, ark.71rev.
[43] HDASBU, f.6-fp, vol.1, spr.69346, ark.185, 192rev, 242, 249rev.

Figure 6 Figure 7

Prisoner resistance to being photographed was not necessarily uncommon. In the broader European context, one finds instances of police attempting to photograph reluctant arrestees, such as Irish Fenians refusing to sit for their mug shots and laughing at the camera, or a female suspect contorting her face for the photographer.[44] Such candid photos reveal the hidden reality that lurks behind police photography in general, that is, as Christian Phéline describes it in *L'Image accusatrice*, the exercise of political power on the body and image of the suspect in which the camera itself operates as an extension of the law and the embodiment of the discipline-mechanism.[45]

The fact that the Kiev police photo laboratory, in a time of technological scarcity and shortages of photo paper and chemical developer, did not proceed with producing a correct set of mug shots, as required by criminalistics standards, presents us with a rare opportunity to not only to look behind the veil to see the story and violence that the MGB tried to conceal; it also allows us to see the technical approach of an officer to a photograph and the logic behind it. What could actually spoil a mug shot: the things outlined in internal manuals, such as closed eyes or grimacing faces of suspects; or rather aspects that could not be found in manuals, such as the hands of policemen violently restraining an arrestee? The somewhat crude editing of the images shown above – replete with shaded-out gloves and hands – tells us something of the techniques used by the police in their photographic work and reveals a further struggle in the domain of photography. These physical alterations, or what Edwards and Hunt would refer to as "material intervention in the narrative" of the photograph, have the power to fundamentally alter the meaning and content of the image.[46] Thus in addition to exposing the usually hidden coercion that was inherent to the arrest process, this set of MGB photos also reveal how the language of the photograph itself was prone to re-instrumentalization.[47]

The Photo-Collage as Composite Narrative

In the photographic practices of the secret police, arrest photographs were not simply a form of criminal identification. They also constituted part of a specific Soviet network-making process. According to Soviet law, citizens could not be persecuted for their religious beliefs. The infamous Article 58-10 of the Soviet Penal Code, the so-called "political" article that served as the basis for charges in most religious dissent cases, said nothing about religious belief but rather proscribed "anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation." Religious dissenters were thus tried as political subversives acting under the guise of their religious beliefs. As a result, prophets, monastics, and priests found themselves transformed into anti-Soviet agents, spies, and counter-revolutionaries, all of whom, along with their conspiracies and deceptive practices, needed to be exposed as a kind of giant pseudo-religious enemy whose true nature was that of an organized and centralized political organization hiding behind the mask of religion. Constructions like the ecclesiastic-monarchist underground, the counter-revolutionary religious organization, or "insurgent counter-revolutionary ecclesiastic-monarchist red-dragon-type organization," most of

[44] Suibhne, Martin, Fenians in the Frame, 107; Gunning, Tracing the Individual Body, 27-29; John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame. Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), XXV.
[45] Cit. by Gunning, Tracing the Individual Body, 27.
[46] Edwards, Hunt, Introduction, 13.
[47] Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame,* XXVI.

which were completely made up by the authorities, were the product of this kind of thinking. Groups like the widely distributed True Orthodox believers, many of whom literally practiced their faith in subterranean caverns, fit perfectly into this state scenario of the giant hidden enemy. Such representations of religious dissenters as part of a coordinated and centralized political underground were common in secret police documents and in numerous forms of Soviet anti-religious propaganda going back to the early post-1917 period.[48]

But how was one to put an image to this kind of enemy? How did one give form to a networked, octopus-like foe? The secret police's answer to this question was to reassemble the materials at hand – in the first order, mug shots and various confiscated photographs – in photo-collages that, by grouping various photos together within a single image, helped underscore the would-be reality of a centralized yet interconnected anti-state network. The logic behind it was similar to that of massive propaganda portrait galleries of Communist Party leaders or the Council of People's Commissars that appeared in official textbooks or printed in newspapers. It visualized the organizational structure and hierarchies – regardless whether they were real or constructed – and reinforced state-sponsored hegemonic narratives.

Figure 8

Figure 8 shows a photo-collage appended to the indictment made against a group of thirty-eight True Orthodox believers allegedly overseen by a certain Bishop Aleksii of Voronezh diocese (top row, fourth from the left).[49] This model indictment was published as a brochure by the OGPU in Voronezh in 1930. Several tens copies of the brochure were later sent to other OGPU offices, including the one in Kiev, where it was supposed to serve as a manual for local officers. The individuals on trial were Russian and Ukrainian peasants as well as a handful of priests and monks, all of whom were arrested in 1929-1931 and charged with belonging to the "counter-revolutionary ecclesiastical-monarchist organization of the *Buevtsy.*" (Bishop Aleksii's birth name was Semion Bui, hence the name *Buevtsy* or *Buevshchina* that the secret police gave to the case.) In the indictment, Bishop Aleksii was accused of heading up an organization of believers across some forty districts (*raiony*) in southern Russia and Ukraine. A show trial in every sense, the court case against Aleksii and 37 other believers was meant to expose both their individual crimes as well as their collective participation in a secret illegal network, all of which was neatly captured in the photo-collage, which, by being physically attached to the indictment, appeared to offer unassailable visual confirmation of their guilt.

As a rule, the secret police used arrest photographs for photo-collages of this sort, but confiscated photos also occasionally appeared despite the fact that police manuals counselled against making use of non-standard civilian photos. For example, several images in Figure 8 (top row, last right; third row first left; bottom row first left) seem to have been taken from a pool of such confiscated images. To make these non-police photos fit alongside the mug shots, police technicians simply spruced them up a little, shading out the background that would have identified them as ordinary portrait shots.

Figure 9

[48] Vagramenko, "Visualizing Invisible Dissent."

[49] HDASBU, f.13, op. 1, spr.390, ark.1; see also Tatiana Vagramenko, "Photo-Collage of Members of the True Orthodox Church," in Kapaló, Vagramenko, *Hidden Galleries*, 38-39.

Another photo-collage (Figure 9) presented a more complicated narrative, visualizing a hierarchical network of former monks and nuns (most of those pictured are monastics) clandestinely united around their religious leaders.[50] The collage was included alongside the text of a model indictment against the "insurgent counter-revolutionary monarchic, red-dragon-type organization" of the Samosviatsy and the Ioannites that was published as an internal OGPU (of the Central Black Earth Region) brochure in Belgorod in 1930.[51] Large-size photos in the center identify the heads of the organization, while the smaller photos represent the various believers organized like followers around them. To underscore the idea of a hierarchy of political subversion, the collage-makers have mixed generic mug shot photos with pre-arrest photos confiscated from the suspects that revealed something of their background and general social identities (for example, religious clothing). The largest of the photographs located at the center top is of Hieromonk Feognost (Pilipenko) who appears in his monk's cassock and wearing a cross. Ekaterina Titova (central column, second top), a nun and a prophetess who headed one of the underground monasteries, also appears in religious dress, while Andrei the Sickly (*Boliashchii* – that is, a holy ill person), a local charismatic figure, is pictured half-reclining, surrounded by flowers. These photographs clearly were not mug shots but rather photos from their pre-arrest life that underscored their religious affiliations. While creating the composite image of the organized enemy, the security services used the materials at hand: arrest photographs and confiscated images, as Cristina Vatulescu eloquently puts it, "a disturbing collage of found objects still pregnant with untold stories."[52]

As these images suggest, the photo-collages produced by the secret police were not intended to simply document criminals as they might appear in a more ordinary kind of printed rogue's gallery or criminal line-up. With its bricolage-like technique of cutting and pasting images of different aspect, shape, size, and provenance to create a composite narrative, the secret police photo-collage repurposed individual photographs to make them serve the cause of visualizing a collective enemy, an enemy whose individual foot-soldiers were linked together through hidden and dangerous threads.

As shown below, this technique included one additional step.

Meta-Disciplining: The KGB Panoptic Diagram

If photo-collages combined images of individual enemies into a collective picture, the ultimate next step was the complete stripping away of this individual element. Individual enemies have faces and names. They can be identified, touched, known. Abstract enemies, by contrast, are by definition untouchable, unable to be seen, all of which makes them all the more insidious and fearful. Thus as the political police further elaborated their image of the collective enemy they inclined towards representing him or her (or more appropriately: it) as an abstract form with no human features at all, an enemy without a social identity or any individual marker, in effect, the enemy as a dot, or rather as a series of dots connected to each other within an integrated enemy network. This vision of the enemy as an abstract network drew on a longstanding KGB habit of

[50] HDASBU, f.13, op.1, spr.388, ark.1rev.

[51] The *Samosviatsy* (deriving from the term for "self-consecration") were part of the catacomb True Orthodox movement. The Ioannites were the followers of John the Kronstadt (an archpriest from a town near St. Petersburg, 1829-1908) who worshipped him as a saint and a prophet. More about the case see Vagramenko, "Visualizing Invisible Dissent."

[52] Cristina Vatulescu, "Arresting Biographies: The Secret Police File in the Soviet Union and Romania," *Comparative Literature*, 56, 3 (2004): 243.

representing criminal activity in terms of social connections. A suspect would be identified, and his or her various connections – friends, family, lovers, colleagues – would then be drawn into a schema that linked the group, with this web then becoming no less important for understanding the crime than the criminal him or herself. Such schemas of social relations are found in abundance in the secret police archives in Eastern Europe.[53] Moreover, this paradigm of personality as a repository of social relations laid the foundation for the entire Soviet system. As Katherine Verdery has suggested, social connections rather than individuals form "the basic unit of [socialist] society".[54] In a context in which the individual is simply a "composite of all [of his or her] social relations," then to know the social network is in effect to know the truth.[55] The danger posed by the socialist enemy therefore was not that of the individual dissenter so much as the danger of the social networks they formed and operated.

Not surprisingly then, one of the tasks of the political police was to create visual diagrams of the religious underground, all the more so because such diagrams were a common means of picturing the connections that underpinned religious communities. Sharing the same foundational logic and even a similar design, religious network schemes resembled diagrams and charts mapping relationship within a particular Soviet structure that widely circulated as illustrative material in textbooks and official media, such as organizational schemes of the Communist party, diagrams of prerevolutionary Bolshevik party organizations or even organizational diagrams of the security service branches themselves.[56]

These police diagrams, which invariably presented religious groups as centralized subversive political organisations, could vary in their quality. Many were quite carefully drawn, some to the point of extreme precision, and were printed using high-quality techniques. Others, by contrast, were just hand-drawn sketches. As a rule, these schemas tended to be included as inserts in official reports, manuals or other internal top-secret police documents, and usually represented religious communities as vertical networks built according to a hierarchy of ascending importance in which all the links and dots of the network converged towards either the top or the center. At the bottom of the diagram one found so-called "local cells"— that is, religious groups located in villages or small towns, sometimes with the number of arrestees/followers in the locale indicated in the middle of the dot, circle, or rectangle that represented the cell. These "local cells" were then connected to each other by small lines to form larger sets of regional cells, which were then in turn subordinated to the top or center, which invariably represented a command group located in an administrative capital or housed within a foreign-based, and therefore a priori anti-Soviet, political or religious organization.

Figure 10

The network diagram of the True Orthodox Church (Figure 10), for example, which dates to 1931, "reveals" a series of branches and cells located across the USSR, with larger outlined circles

[53] Similar religious network diagrams are found in Romanian and Hungarian secret police archives: Ágnes Hesz, "Jehovah's Witness Network Scheme," In Kapaló, Vagramenko, *Hidden Galleries*, 37; Ágnes Hesz, "Network Scheme of Hungarian Catholic Underground Cells," http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item/423.
[54] Katherine Verdery, *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File* (Duke University Press, 2018), 244.
[55] Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*, 187.
[56] See for example, NKVD internal troops schemes from the Russian State Military Archives, http://rgvarchive.ru/dokumenty-chast-2.shtml-0. David Brandenberger has suggested the comparison with charts published in the 1930s mapping the relationship between economic institutions during the first Five-Year Plan.

identifying those cells and branches that were known to carry out supposedly significant subversive operations.[57] The diagram indicates two degrees or types of social connection: a direct link between cells, rendered as a full line and an indirect link, indicated by a dotted line. It is unclear what an indirect link means in this instance, but the inclusion of such a link at least allowed the diagram's designers to suggest that every group, branch, and cell in the entire country enjoyed some form of interconnection, while at the same time being subordinated to the various regional and central nodes above them, with the two oversized hexagons of Moscow and Leningrad crowning the scene at the center.

Figure 11

A 1930 brochure-indictment covering the case of the "ecclesiastic-monarchist counter-revolutionary organization" from Ivanovo-Voznesensk enclosed a more ambitious diagram (Figure 11).[58] The group on trial was the community of the Holy-Cross church (*Krestovozdvizhenskaia obshchina*) that fell under the canonical jurisdiction of Bishop Augustin (Beliaev). In 1926, Bishop Augustin was repressed (and executed later, in 1937) and the church was soon closed down and demolished. Although the group of 52 believers on trial was a parish community that was mainly charged with having church gatherings and organizing an "anti-Soviet church sisterhood" and other youth groups, the diagram enclosed in the brochure pictured a giant web. It interlinked various alleged groups (of youth, former members of the "monarchist party," traders and pogrom activists) and different parishes in Ivanovo, and expanded by including "counter-revolutionary elements" in exile and in the emigration.

Much like Foucault's panopticon as a metaphor for the modern disciplinary society, the KGB network diagram offers a laconic yet highly efficient rendering of a form of omnipresent surveillance that renders all social and individual relations visible, while at the same time disguising the gaze itself, in effect hiding it from view. The diagram thus visualizes the effects of power. We see the enemy, his subversive organization, and the many links that hold it together, all of which can now be disciplined because it can be seen. Visibility thus emerges as a guarantee of order.[59] The value of the panopticon lay in its power to expose not just the individual offender but everything that surrounded him or her, the entire network of otherwise unseen and therefore unknowable relations. To strip away the individuality of the dissenter and transform him or her into a dot or node within the KGB's panopticon-like diagram was a means of disciplining him or her and at the same time of exercising power over dissent itself. In the world of the diagram, offenders are grouped together, given a number, and the connections between them subjected to permanent surveillance. The KGB's panopticon even envisions social connections that may not exist (viz. the indirect links that we see in Figure 10), thus allowing the police to anticipate and intervene even before a "crime" is committed.[60] This habit of police diagramming – in this case, the elaboration of diagrams that underscore the apparent omnipresence of the enemy and the need

[57] HDASBU, f.13, op.1, spr.388, ark.49. See also Tatiana Vagramenko, "Model Network Schemes of the True Orthodox Church," in Kapalo, Vagramenko, *Hidden Galleries*, 35-36.
[58] HDASBU, f.13, op.1, spr.391, ark76.
[59] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (Random House Inc., 1995, original work published in 1975), 200.
[60] Cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206.

to keep him under constant surveillance – is a small yet telling indication of the disciplinary mechanisms that ultimately came to deeply penetrate Soviet society.

Conclusion

The Soviet regime developed its own iconographic tradition of visualizing the religious enemy. Anti-religious campaigns were visually rich: wide range of propaganda publications, posters, caricatures, films, newsreels and public exhibitions were massively produced and distributed to every corner of the country. Institutional practices of representation and visualization of the criminals required rigid standardization, although many repressed believers were barely literate peasants who left no name for their faiths, nor rich material traces of their subversive practice, such as religious art, manuscripts, books, or anything that could be used as visual incriminating evidence in both court and propaganda. As I argue, the Soviet political police was at the core of this process – an institution that produced, sanctioned and controlled the distribution of what became an iconic imagery of a dangerous and harmful, organized and deceitful enemy hidden behind the mask of a religious believer. KGB documentation, increasingly available in recent years due to the openness of state archives in Ukraine, Georgia, Latvia and other postsocialist countries, provides new insights into the origin and mechanisms of production of knowledge and imagery of the enemy.

The photographs shown here were not propagandistic stills, although they could appear in propaganda publications. Some of them followed Soviet police standards of signaletic photography and crime scene photographic inventories, but also many indicate a manipulative and instrumental use of KGB photography. Retouching, photomontage, collage, cropping – these techniques were either formally prohibited in the police practice or were not clearly specified. As I suggest, they were not as simple as open violations of police procedure or conscious manipulation of police photography for malevolent ends. Nor were they a mere embodiment of a disciplinary technique. As I have attempted to show in this research, the use of photography by the Soviet political police assisted the production of a new kind of knowledge. Through the repurposing of photographs into new functions by collaging or pasting them into albums, or shading elements that were considered to be out of place, the secret political police created new objects of knowledge and reinforced the regime of truth that laid a foundation of a new social order. Yet whether we describe this process as knowledge production or simply distortion, the making of the micro patterns of a new Soviet reality or merely fabrication, what secret police photography discloses is the internal mechanisms of the creation of an apparatus of totalitarian control and state violence. The attribution of enormous power (and hence disproportionate attention) to marginal religious dissent of hardly any political threat to Soviet power, their representation as subversive, extremist and even terrorist organizations allowed the state and its secret police to accumulate their own power and to legalize new forms of domination. In the panoptic religious network schemes shown above, we see the visualization of the Soviet paradigm of social control and the very structure of the totalitarian system.

But the KGB photography is not only about the exercise of power; it also reveals the fear of failure that characterized the totalitarian system – it was this fear that led police officers to compile their files, (mal)adjust their documentation to suit Soviet standards and codes, and to report their findings up the chain of command. "This was an audience existing in dangerously thin air," as Viola puts it.[61] The images from 1952 – shaded hands placed upon crying women – reveal

[61] Viola, "Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930: Soliloquy of a Devil's Advocate," in *Contending with Stalinism*, 27.

more about the fear on the part of the secret police of breaking the code of silence surrounding the use of violence and of disclosing what might be seen as a failed case of enemy unmasking. To say that the Stalinist regime was utterly and openly violent is to project our knowledge, with all the sources that we have today, back onto the past. Back then, the Stalinist constitution nominally granted all basic rights and freedoms, including religious freedom, and represented itself as protecting human rights; hence, everyday state violence and terror needed to be concealed from public and international spheres. It needed to be erased from secret police records too.[62] The manipulation of both internally produced as well as confiscated photographs, presented alongside other types of documents, allows us to glimpse the internal conflict and the weakness of the Soviet system. While trying to "unmask" ordinary believers by the means of violent repression, the totalitarian regime often stumbled in its efforts to expose the ultimate "victory" over the enemy. As a result, even today the religious beliefs of these victims of Soviet power remain obscure and hard for us to see.

[62] Beside, the memory of 1939 purges within the NKVD was still alive, when several thousand lower-rank local chekists were scapegoated for "violation of socialist legality," which included the use of violence and torture during the Great Terror. *Echo bol'shogo terrora*. Collection of documents, 3 volumes in 4 books, ed. by Marc Iunge, Lynne Viola and Jeffrey Rossman. (Moscow, "Probel 2000", 2017-2019).