CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	If sex were a factor... The Securitate Archives and issues of morality in documents related to religious life
Authors	Șincan, Anca
Publication date	2021-08-13
Original Citation	Șincan, A. (2021) 'If sex were a factor... The Securitate Archives and issues of morality in documents related to religious life', in Kapaló, J. A. and Povedák, K. (eds)., The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe, Routledge, pp. 302-315. doi: 10.4324/9780429331466
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	http://www.routledge.com/9780367279998 - 10.4324/9780429331466
Rights	This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe on 13 August 2021, available online: http://www.routledge.com/9780367279998
Download date	2026-11-02 14:49:04
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/11425

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

If sex were a factor… The *Securitate* Archives and issues of morality in documents related to religious life

Anca Șincan

Orcid.org/0000-0003-2588-2532

Abstract

The issue of morality is a vector in the analysis of the archival documents related to religion in communism. When the veil of privacy is lifted and the secret is no more, a rich picture unfolds for the researcher. Blackened names, the minimal protection offered to the actors that surface in surveillance files will do little in affording the subject of such files the privacy his/her actions were thought to have been acted in. For clergy and church members alike the moral stick they are measured against is higher than for the rest. It was self-imposed in many cases.

Documents of the CNSAS archives on religion abound with stories about sexuality in many forms. Judges of the morality of the life of "God's men" the *Securitate* officers will highlight the failures of the clergy based on guidelines that pertain to the church rather than the Securitate.

This article is an overview of the way in which morality permeated the Securitate documents on religious life in communist Romania. How it was used and the reasons behind it. It answers questions related to the disappearance of the morality standard in other archives that dealt specifically with religion in communism.

The issue of morality represents an important factor in the analysis of the archival documents related to religion in communism because morality formed an important element in the construction of Secret Police case files on individuals connected to religious life. This chapter presents an overview of the way in which morality and sexuality permeated the *Securitate* documents on religious life in communist Romania, how morality and sexuality was used in designing individual files and the reasons behind their use. It seeks to answer questions related to the disappearance of the moral standard in other archives that dealt specifically with religion in

communism (i.e. the Secretariat for Religious Denominations, Church archives) and what they were replaced with.

When the veil of privacy is lifted, and the secret is no more, a rich picture unfolds for the researcher. Privacy was non-existent for the officers and informants and there is little that cannot be unearthed from their reports and documents. Access to mail, surveillance recordings, notes from informants in networks that surrounded the surveilled individual in gradually wider circles (family, neighbors, co-workers), visual elements (photographs and more seldom videos, maps, drawings) all present aspects of private life that grant the reader (the officer and nowadays the researcher) power over the individual. The opening of the Secret Police archives controversial as it was with files used for political agendas and show trials (Stan, 2002, 2004) provided a public reenactment of the materials found in surveillance files. Blackening out of names, the minimal protection offered by the archival institutions to the actors that surface in surveillance files, does little to afford the subject the privacy he or she believed his or her actions were carried out in.[1] In the case of the clergy and church members alike, the moral stick they are measured against in relation to their case files is higher than for the rest as moral integrity was a requirement of their position. This made surveillance files of religious actors an even more powerful instrument of blackmail and control by the secret police when needed. They also made these files key instruments in the public debates on the relationship with the secret police of the clergy. (Turcescu, Stan, 2005)

The Romanian Secret Police was one of the most comprehensive apparatus of repression in the Eastern bloc. It was used in two chronological stages, as Dennis Deletant describes, "first to eliminate opponents in the drive to consolidate power and secondly to ensure compliance once revolutionary change had been effected." (Deletant, 1995, 1) The extensive surveillance was all encompassing including elements of private life and constructing narratives about the subjects of investigation. Files that were "constructed" (made-up) were frequent and the image of the person was most times distorted, an inverted Dorian Grey like image where the mirror of the document only showcased the evil and the grotesque. (See Katherine Verdery's ethnography of her individual file for a close up look at the techniques and tropes introduced by the secret police in constructing her biographical narrative of the time she spent in Romania as a researcher, Verdery, 2018)

This overview of the way in which morality permeated the *Securitate* documents on religious life in communist Romania is viewed through three case studies. They were selected to exemplify the way in which sexual behavior played into the construction of the individual files regarding religious life. Morality related to sexuality played a significant role in shaping secret police responses to recalcitrant clergy as it was an easy means of control. In this sense, it was one of the first tropes the Secret Police and the inspectors for religious denominations went for alongside political affiliations or leanings. Most of the personal files of spiritual leaders, important clergymen and church hierarchs have short inserted characterizations that discuss sexual preferences or peculiarities of behavior, such as *Îi plac mult femeile* – [he likes women very much] in the form of brief notes in the margins of the document asking for more information or to add information respectively (ACNSAS I95070, 1). Often one finds 'unknown' inserted regarding sexual life. This kind of entry in itself reflects a moral judgement on the part of inspector/ *Securitate* officer as it does not imply that the clergyman is morally correct but rather that the officer has not yet able to discover the particular preferences or promiscuous acts that would complete the file.

Researching questions of religious life in communist archives, I have noted that with few exceptions the issue of morality remains important mainly to the Secret Police. Morality as found in the documents created by the Department for Religious Denominations personnel had a wide definition covering but not restricted itself to honesty, trustworthiness, and religious orthodoxy. Sexual behavior on the other hand is less present. It is almost entirely absent from Church archives. Letters from parishioners could contain complaints that refer to sexual behavior. However, issues arising from problems of sexual behavior are addressed with silence and were frequently solved by external authorities.

Understandings of morality in communist-era archives on religion

There are several archives that host documents related to religious life in communist Romania. Some of them are state archives that have different degrees of accessibility for the researcher. The National Archives (both the central and local archives) preserve the administrative view of religious life. Similar documents can be found at the archive of the State Secretary for Religious Affairs that has inherited the archival collection of the Communist Ministry for Religious Denominations, later the Department for Religious Denominations. However, these archival

materials offer a more thorough view of religious life both at local and central level. The Ministry/Department for Religious Denominations documented the relationship between state and church at an administrative level as the state institution was responsible for imposing new set of rules and regulations on religious life. In order to impose the new legislative requirements on religious communities and supervise their administration, the Ministry for Religious Denominations retained a significant number of inspectors, both locally and centrally who worked collecting information on religious life (Șincan 2017; Csongor 2017), imposing the state regulations, monitoring problematic situations in religious communities and ensuring a link between the local religious community, institutional religion and the state. Based on the information collected by the inspectors and information coming from the Secret Police, the ministry designed and redesigned religious policy.

Morality played a significant role in the tableau of collected information that the inspectors sent to the center. However, aspects of private life and sexuality rarely made their way into the definition of morality. There were two types of morality, conflictual in their nature, that make their way into these documents. One was based on ideology, was new and required explanation and understanding for the state employee as much as for the supervised religious communities. It was connected for instance with the break with traditional roles and values, the position of women in society, and the relaxation of promiscuity regulations in relation with family life (Field 2007).

At the same time, because of the area of interest of the ministry, the other type of morality that the documents refer to was religious. The descriptions of the characteristics of communities, biographies of clergymen and hierarchs and descriptions of potential problematic situations all include religiously defined judgments. Respect for religious rules and regulations were imposed by secular authorities as well, especially with regard to splinter groups from the legally recognized denominations that the central administration of religious denominations could not reach. In the 1960s for instance when the Department for Religious Denominations' inspectors supervised the administrative and religious local meetings of the legally recognized religious denominations, they made sure any potential religious slights were eliminated beforehand from the discussions. In a letter to the Department a local inspector from Brașov described his act of censure the presentation on the Orthodox Liturgy made by a lecturer at the Lutheran church Deans meeting on account that

the subject could be regarded as inflammatory by the Orthodox Church and also insulting. "Discussing such subjects, the note said, from the Lutheran position could be seen by the Orthodox believers and clergy as attacks on their faith and could lead to frictions and tensions between clergy and believers. We recommend tactfully that the subject should be replaced" (ASSC DP 88, vol. 4, 1961, 71). Punishment was imposed on members of religious groups, sanctioned by the ministry or by local inspectors, on issues related to moral and religious deviations.

In the author's experience, privacy and sexuality rarely make their way into the archival documents created and preserved by religious institutions themselves.[2] Morality carries a religious definition in such archival documents and while the information in the document may be biographical, they shied away from details of private life and were concerned rather with public behavior and orthodoxy of religious practice. In the rare cases when privacy was discussed in these documents it was masked behind religious language.

The relationship between private life and morality in the Secret police archives, however, is markedly different. In her analysis of the distinctions between state archives and the secret Police archives, Katherine Verdery noted that while in state archives people try to be preserved, in the documents of the Secret Police archives "(…) rather than resisting their exclusion, most people who find themselves in this archive would much rather not be there." (Verdery 2014, 36). This particularity of the Secret Police archives is exemplified by their treatment of morality for it is the Secret Police archival material that preserves and gives access to a wide range of private matters that people would really rather not be present there. In the case of the documents on religious life, morality has a new definition that is neither ideological nor religious, although it has elements of both. The use of the problem of morality was the driving force behind collecting information on an individual's private life. While the purpose of discussing morality in the documents collected by ministry employees and those from the archives of religious institutions is to correct behavior that is deemed morally wrong (irrespective of the definition of morality, religious or ideological) the purpose of the discussion of morality, privacy, sexual life in the documents created by the *Securitate* officers was for coercion. In contrast, for the ministry and for the central administration of the church, the documents led to sanctions that could translate into salary reductions, personnel movement, or being demoted down on the hierarchical ladder. In many cases, information on moral

misbehavior could bring together the state and the church hierarchy in employing punitive measures. The contents of the Secret Police documents that discussed morally corrupt behavior lead to different very outcomes. Their value was in their secrecy, their use was not in correcting behavior but rather in maintaining said behavior in order to be used as blackmail. When the veil of secrecy is lifted the purpose again was rarely correctional. In most cases, a moral problem became known as part of a slander campaign. Physical abuse, especially, was not corrected and there are instances when sexual violence was encouraged, or sexual acts were staged to entrap the individual into collaborating with the secret police in order not to receive legal punishment for his/ her acts (ACNSAS D69, vol. 35, 110-128).

Another type of morality relates to the behavior of the communist inspectors for religious denominations and the secret police officers charged with the supervision of religious life. The regulations that norm the private life of the communist man or woman become more restrictive even when it regards the state administration of religious life. There is a moral behavior that is sanctioned by the communist ideology. Chronologically the type of morality that was imported from the Soviet blueprint was a constricting one, a traditional view of the sexual behavior and family life and while this came on a wave of women empowerment with access to education, the expanse of divorce, help in child rearing all in an effort to expand the work force the private life values remain in the conservatism of the earlier decades. Even the involvement of women within the process of building communism entailed jobs that linked them with the private sphere. (Hoffmann 2003, 24).

For the communist private life of the 1950s an ideological code of behavior was imposed where *tradition* and *progress* collided:

> […] instilling Communist morality, a much-propagandized code of morality and behavior was supposed to govern all aspects of life. It required political loyalty, hard work and the proper conduct of private life. Professionals and moralists in a variety of fields determined which attitudes and behaviors constituted a correct Communist private life, putting forth specific instructions about sex, love, marriage and child rearing. Again, trade unions, the party, the Komsomol and voluntary organizations were supposed to help enforce these

> standards. Communist morality resembles a screen window: slightly pliable with holes that allow some permeability (Field 2003, 5)

Deborah Field quotes The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism from 1961 where family life, moral purity, simplicity and modesty in social and personal life, concern for the upbringing of children were among the tenets that the Soviet system was imposing upon its cadres (Field, *The Moral Code*). This code of conduct, at least at the level of discourse, is interiorized by the communist cadres dealing with religious life. Requirements were made by superiors that the inspectors that have to deal currently with issues related with religion, religious communities, clergy, church hierarchy should adhere more to the moral conduct required by the party.

Case Studies

With access to secret police surveillance and informers' files on individuals belonging to religious communities (either legally recognized or underground religious movements), it is possible to illustrate the various approaches that the secret police and the Ministry/ Department for Religious Denominations had in dealing with moral issues, sexual life and privacy. My first case outlines a story fabricated by the Secret Police where the morally corrupt act may or may not have happened but was gradually constructed by the *Securitate* officers with help from informers selected from within his entourage through blackmail and corruption. This type of file, which constructs doubt through innuendos, was a last resort when all else failed to ensure control over the individual. My second case study relates to the involvement of the *Securitate* in the story, and the use of the findings to create an environment of distrust for the surveilled clergyman that had been accused of sexual relations and sexual perversions. The behavior of the *Securitate* employees as moral censors that decided what type of punishment the clergymen received for his sexual exploits. In this case no legal actions were taken even if the file discusses instances of violence. And finally, I am discussing the moral code enforced on the state employee dealing with religious denominations, and the consequences of the break of said moral code for the secret police offices or state inspector for religious denominations.

The Constructed File

The secret police archives have been described as "a staggering tableau of human depravity and woe" (Kotkin, 2002: 36). The files demonstrate how the regime was often caught up in its own internal falsifications (Kotkin, 2002: 36). Any analysis of the file needs to include a discussion on "the function of the file under the communists, with its current usages under the radically different economic and political conditions of a late-capitalist global economy" (Lewis 2003, 380). Some of these files could be looked at as a form of "hostile biography" (Lewis, 2003) where the highlight was to a darker behavioural side and when that was missing to a manipulation of facts and, indeed, fabrication. Especially with regards to morality, privacy and sexual behavior, in these particular documents one needs to follow different guidelines in reading them. The use of the file during communism is sometimes very similar with the use of the same file by the researcher in post-communism and therefore a discussion on the researcher's objectives, a self-analysis should accompany a thorough investigation on the file itself.

To showcase this precise problem, my first case study refers to a "constructed" file of an Orthodox Church hierarch accused of engaging in homosexual behaviour. The personal file illustrates the way in which morality is used by the *Securitate* officers when they put together the file to achieve control over the individual it refers to (ACNSAS I005555, vol 1-3). Even after triangulating the data in the file and placing the documents in comparison both chronologically – the individual profile that was created by the interwar Secret Police – or with similar individuals and situations, I cannot be certain that this was a fabricated accusation or that the image that surfaces from the file does not represent, at least partially, the reality. I can, however, when discussing these documents talk about a constructed story. The file does not present a neat sequence of events that the Secret Police came across in their normal surveillance process but rather one that is put together by the Secret Police by blackmailing/rewarding the associates of the individual when every other means of control available to the Secret Police had failed (ACNSAS I005555 vol. 3, 1).

The individual about which the file speaks, who was high in the leadership of the Orthodox Church escaped, through various networks he had joined and/or created along an impressive career in the public sphere, the ideological restraints put in place to regulate the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the immediate aftermath of the communist regime coming to power.

The person in question has two other files, one produced by the Serviciul de Informații Externe (the Foreign Intelligence Service) and one opened by the Siguranța (the Interwar Secret Police) and taken over by the Communist Secret Police. The three volume Informative File that was taken over from the Interwar Secret Police was dedicated to the biography and activity (public and private) of the hierarch until the early 1950s. From the three volumes, the first two discuss his past and present public political and religious activities and his connections with the communist political environment. The third file was dedicated to the alleged sexual life of the individual. The usual accusations of collaboration with the Iron Guard and/or with interwar political parties do not appear at all. In the first pages, the Secret Police officers offer the reason this file is constructed: their failure to control this particular church personality (ACNSAS I005555 vol. 3, 1-2) as he had negotiated his hierarchical position directly with members of the political administration.

The file describes a sexual triangle and is composed strictly from confessions of three persons directly linked to the individual. The accounts are overly detailed (dates, descriptions of meetings, description of sexual encounters, characterizations of the persons involved). The file spans several months chronologically in 1953, it refers only to the present with no incursions into the past activities of the person and it concerns only the three persons and the individual under surveillance. However, no actual surveillance took place to corroborate or verify the accounts of the three informants. The accusation refers to homosexual acts and the descriptions are given by two persons that are presumably involved in the acts and an outsider who witnessed and corroborated parts of their story. While the file does not contain any document that would clarify whether this is a real story or a constructed one (a false account) there are several ways in which the researcher can ascertain that we are dealing with a false constructed story.

Firstly, the story is never used in any attempted blackmail over the individual. That in itself would not say that much. However, when taken together with the informant/collaboration files for each of the three informants that offer this particular story, and given the fact that they quickly advanced up the hierarchical ladder of the church in the years that followed, this suggests that the files may have doubtful contents.

Neither of the other two files on this person discuss possible sexual misconduct. The person in question was at the end of his life at the time and the descriptions suggest that there was a participant involved. The chronology of the file does not match the parallel surveillance file that was kept by the officers of the Secret Police. As far as one can tell, the information on this file had no repercussion on the activity (religious or public) that the individual conducted after the file was created and it is highly doubtful the person was ever made aware of the contents of the file.

The direct involvement of the Secret Police in the documents in the file is nonexistent. Their only role appears to be one of couch psychologists that lead a discussion gradually into progressively revealing activities going on from a scholarship offered to a poor young orphan to attend the Seminary (ACNSAS I005555 vol. 3, 12) to sexual intercourse that was never admitted by the informant but was only implied (ACNSAS I005555 vol. 3, 83) and was described by the other informant in the file.

Why would a file discussing the sexual life of this particular individual need to exist? Why use a story about his private life and not one connected with the political life of the individual that would have been sufficient for the Secret Police? The answers are problematic. However, because of the moment when this file was put together, so close to the end of the individual's life, this could be a file that speaks more about the three informants than about the individual after whom the file is named. That would also explain why homosexuality was used in place of sexual relations with women. The public repercussions would have been greater for the individual but greater would have been the risk for the Secret Police that the story would have been made public because of it being so distinct from the information the public had on the church hierarch. However, because the informants confessed to these illegal acts, it that the Secret police had complete control over them. The control the Secret Police and the state administration had over at least one of the informants in the file and his rapid ascension, after the death of the hierarch, in the administration of the Church could account for at least one use of the documents found in this third volume. Moral judgment does not play a role in constructing this file. The acts described are illegal under the communist legal framework and thus an ideological judgement is imposed rather than a religious one in this case.

Using 'moral deviancy'

Of the efforts that the secret police put in to control the activity of oppositional religious groups, blackmail and rumor spreading make up an important part. Private life was an inexhaustible source and in the case of clergymen, the secret police paid particular attention to morality and sexual behavior. The *Securitate* had multiple uses for this type of information. As noted in the previous case, this information could serve to coerce the individual into collaborating, it could also be an insurance for the *Securitate* agents and not be used at all, it could help the agents to discredit the individual, feed rumours and create situations where the morally deviant behavior would be revealed.

This was the case with an individual member of the hierarchy of an underground religious group who was outed to the secret police by the new partner of his former presumed lover. The informant spoke of sexual perversion detailing sexual positions and sexual acts that his partner, the former mistress of the religious leader told him in confidence. Upon discovering this sexual relationship between the religious leader and one of the women of his close circle the secret police local office created a surveillance plan that included placing the woman under surveillance to ascertain whether her relationship with the religious leader was ongoing and what that relationship entailed, and to thoroughly check of the information received so far from the woman's new partner to verify his claims of sexual perversion (ACNSAS I3470 vol. 3, 280). A surveillance microphone was installed immediately and with it confirmation of the relationship. A new plan was drawn up on the basis of the findings which included the use of the information and the steps the secret police officers needed to take. Encouraging the continuation of the sexual behavior of the individual served their purposes. Thus, their findings remained unknown to the individual. Gradually information was released reaching through informants to members of the religious leader's network and through them it spread out to his close community (ACNSAS I3470, vol. 3-4). The reasoning of the secret police is outlined in the various action plans regarding the individual. The plans talk about discrediting his religious activity and encouraging a distance between him and his community.

This file reveals the position that the secret police took towards the deviant moral behavior itself. One can see here how morality is used by the secret police officers to discredit the individual.

Outing the individual is seldomly the case. The information of his sexual activity is important on several levels. It speaks of dishonesty, the moral authority of the religious leader challenged the secret police can work on replacing him with their own informants, it could lead to dismantling underground communities that rely on trust and moral authority to survive the actions of the totalitarian state. Also, it is important to note that their use of the file was not correctional. The woman that was supposedly involved in a "deviant sexual act" was not protected by the state official. Moreover, the agents tried to ensure the continuation of the said behavior so they could continue using the elements of private life to construct their policy towards the underground community.

A moral code of conduct for the state employee dealing with religious life

The final example is a case study that offers an insight on how morality became a requirement for communist state employees whose job it was to monitor religious life. It seems from this case that the moral behavior required for the position they filled was a mirror of the ideal morality of communities they were employed to supervise and control. I suggest that this represents an expansion of the ideological morality to encompass traits found in religious morality.

Gheorghe Nenciu was an inspector and the acting director of the Department of Religious Affairs in the late 1970s. Set to become the next director he was fired from the Department and after an inhouse trial the Communist Party cell in the Department for Religious Denominations excluded him from the Party. He was accused of helping an orthodox monk climb the hierarchical ladder to the position of auxiliary bishop in exchange for a large sum of money (Șincan 2017b, 317). His story as a state specialist in religious life that became entangled in corruption and blackmail is in itself important as it stands in for the decay of the Party elite itself in the final decades of the regime in Romania. However, I am using Nenciu's example here to illustrate the importance of morality and a clean family life for the communist state employee in general and the one dealing with religious life in particular.

The file on Nenciu (ASSC fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Gheorghe Nenciu).[3] contains several autobiographies and biographies of him that were used in the trial for his exclusion from the Party and they create a portrait that should have been "of a communist success story for the communist

administration" (Șincan 2017b, 325-326). He started from the bottom of the hierarchical ladder, a Party intellectual when the Party had few such men, he managed to climb the hierarchical ladder over the 25 years he was in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and later the Department for Religious Denominations. However, the biographies bring forth an ideologically corrupt individual that was "too friendly with the religious communities he was supposed to supervise," and who was inclined to compromise and negotiate away the problems and infringements of regulations committed by religious actors. He was also "becoming bourgeois" having a car and a network of well-off friends and having sent his daughters to study in the West (ASSC fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Gheorghe Nenciu, 7). While the main accusation was the acceptance of a bribe, these other accusations made a compelling argument for his exclusion from the Department and from the Party.

One of the final accusations in the biographies that his colleagues wrote in the file that contributed to his demise relates to his family life and his adulterous relations with several women. Placed among the most important accusations in the process that led to his exclusion from the Party and found in most of the character references offered by his colleagues, his adulterous life was brought forth to show that a morally correct life was of the upmost importance for a leader of the party but mostly for someone in charge of controlling, regulating and administering religious life.

Two complaints about sexual encounters with women while the inspector was on delegation, coupled with several complaints of partying and drunkenness over more than 15 years surfaced to be integrated into the biographies and led to the questioning of his private life and the accusations of blurring the lines between being a state official and cohorting with members of religious communities.

In this particular case study, the reader of the file is faced not just with Nenciu's breaking of the communist the moral code discussed earlier but also with the public vilification of the person breaking the moral code. One of his colleagues when discussing Nenciu's private life complains: "We had no idea whom we sat next to all these years" (ASSC fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Gheorghe Nenciu, 30). *Securitate* officers and local inspectors informed the ministry on at least two separate occasions that the behavior of the inspector went against not only ideological requirements for morally upstanding citizens but also for cadres dealing with religious life (ASSC

fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Gheorghe Nenciu, 28). They were supposed to mirror the communities and individuals they were administering and having authority over.

The power of this accusation is evident in the file not only because of its omnipresence in the biographies and the minutes of the trial for exclusion from the Party and the Department but also, given the opportunity to defend himself, this was the accusation he chose to start with. This speaks of the impact of morality on the construction of an upstanding and committed communist for Nenciu's trial was first and foremost about his exclusion from the Party.

In his defence, Nenciu gives value and meaning to morality and speaks of the Party using religious terminology. He admits certain lapses in judgement with regards to the accusations of corruption hoping to be able to preserve his position inside the Department:

> I told you from the very beginning that there is plenty to be said. You should know that I understand with communist piety [*evlavie comunistă*] and paid great attention to everything that has been said [during this meeting]. I understand that I have to keep stoking this fire that burned inside of me this evening. […] On the one hand, it is fair that for everything that I have done, deeds incompatible with the position of a communist tasked with political work, I should not be with the Department for Religious Denominations anymore. On the other hand, it would be great if I could serve my punishment here, so I could be controlled by the people who showed me the truth. However, I know that the party is everywhere and my only possibility of rehabilitation […] is to work so that the party can judge if I overcome the mistakes I made in my work and if I honored my pledge to give to the party everything I have good in me (ASSC fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Nenciu Gheorghe, 41).[4]

The only real challenge he brought to the accusation is the one related to moral accusations. He based his defense on the personal relationships he has within the Department. "Here there are people that know me so well I cannot hide my sins from them" […] "I have lived in your midst for over two decades, you know me and my family life, how can you think I could have done the things you accuse me of" (ASSC fond Departamentul Cultelor, file Nenciu Gheorghe, 26). One can note also, a hybridization of the definition of morality that includes religious elements and religious language. Nenciu spoke of sins and not mistakes, he spoke about the fire of truth burning

inside of him, the communist conscience, his self-criticism builds upon the confession within the church with a hierarchy of sins where his defense of his moral behavior was left for the final part of his argumentation for keeping his job, but, more importantly his place within the party. The importance of a morally correct behavior was paramount for the inspector, and he defended the *orthodoxy* of his moral conduct to the end.

Conclusion

What are we researchers to do with this "tableau of depravity, this den of iniquity" (Kotkin, 2012) that is the secret police archive? What can anyone use from these files considering the manipulation and distortion of the facts that is often times clear and abundant. I suggest that there are indeed several important avenues worth exploring in relation to questions of morality and sexual behavior that surface in the documents created by the *Securitate*.

As the selected case studies suggest, morality and sexual behavior has a prime role in the construction of the secret police file with regards to religious life. The understanding of morality is primarily connected with sexual behavior, promiscuity, perversity (as it was understood in the communist legal framework). Moral behavior was important for the secret police mainly because it was important in society. The religious communities with their traditional outlook upon morality would react to any misconducts with regards to moral behavior. This in turn would help the secret police for knowing of the sexual misconduct and immoral behavior through surveillance they could force the individual in cooperating with the secret police. Also, as the first case suggests, the moral component was so important that the secret police will when all means of controlling the individual are exhausted construct a story of sexual misconduct and when needed use it to compromise that persons standing in society.

However, many of these files were used since the opening of the archives in Romania as information source for biographies that loosely can be called "popular history" where the private and even sexual life of the actors was romanticized, and innuendos helped in bypassing the regulations regarding private life in secret police documents in Romania. One such example is Tatiana Niculescu's biography of the monk Arsenie Boca that is a fictionalized close-reading of

the file of worshiped saint-like figure in today popular culture that questions, following the secret police officers his relationship with a woman close to him. (Niculescu, 2018).

We also learn that the secret police's surveillance is particular. The officers do not surveil the person to correct behavior according to legal enforcements or to prevent violence against other individuals. As seen from the second example the secret police encouraged and created the environment for a possible violent act to continue when it served their purpose.

The final example brings about the understanding of "communist morality", the moral guidelines that impact the behavior of the state employee, the secret police officer or, as this case offers, the inspector for religious denominations. One can see that the conduct of the communist administration is regulated strictly by a code that was imported and implemented from the external center, the Soviet Union. One can also note that there is a hybridization in the definition of morality that imports religious elements and terms.

Another important discussion should revolve around definitions of concepts like privacy, morality and sanctioned religious behavior. When the *Securitate* officers took on a role of moral censor, are we faced with a personal definition on morality or is this is a definition that comes from a set of communist regulations that the officer learned beforehand? Was this a personal judgement call or was this judgement taught and required? The role of the *Securitate* officer as moral censor and judge is in itself telling and the hybridization between religious, ideological and personal morality norms offer us a window on discussions on communist orthodoxy. Moreover, as the current readers of these files, are we imposing similar personal definitions of good and bad, moral, and immoral onto behaviors and narratives in the archival documents? Are we behaving as moral censors ourselves? Self-reflection on the part of the document reader's in terms of her/his objectivity, whether a *Securitate* Officer or a present-day researcher, is paramount, especially in the case of the regulations regarding the access to files of CNSAS researchers which are offered access to the file in its entirety.

Archival Sources

Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității [The Archives of the National Council for the Research of the Archives of Securitate] (ACNSAS), D69; I 95070; I005555; I3470

Arhiva Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte [Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations] (ASSC), fond Departamentul Cultelor (DP), file 88; file Gheorghe Nenciu (at time of writing this file had not yet been processed by the archive)

References

Burton, Antoinette. 2010. "'Small Stories' and the promise of New Narratives." In: *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources,* edited by Nupur Chaudhuri et. al., i-x. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Carter, Rodney G. S. 2006. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria* 61 (Spring): 215-233.

Csongor, Jánosi 2017. "Path Finding in the Communist Regime: Árpád Mózes Szabó (1927–1987)." *East Central Europe* 44: 128-147.

Deletant, Dennis. 1995. *Ceaușescu and the Securitate. Coercion and Dissent in Romania (1965-1989)*, London: Routledge.

Field, Deborah A. 2007. *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia*. New York: Peter Lang.

Field, Deborah. 2017. "The Moral Code of the Builder of Communist." In: *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An on-line archive of primary sources*. Available at: http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1961-2/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism/ (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

Hoffmann, David L. 2003. *Stalinist Values, The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.

Kotkin, Stephen. 2002. "The State-Is It Us? Memoirs, Archives, and Kremlinologists." *The Russian Review*. Vol. 61 (1): 35-51.

Lewis, Alison. 2003. "Reading and Writing the Stasi File: on the Uses and Abuses of the File as (Auto)biography." *German Life and Letters* 56 (4): 377-397.

Niculescu, Tatiana. 2018. *Ei mă consideră făcător de minuni. Viața lui Arsenie Boca.* [They see me making miracles. The life of Arsenie Boca]. Bucharest: Humanitas.

Stan, Lavinia. 2002. “Moral Cleansing Romanian Style.” *Problems of Post-Communism*, 49 (4): 52-62.

Stan, Lavinia. 2004. “Spies, files and lies: explaining the failure of access to Securitate files.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies.* 37: 341–359

Șincan, Anca. 2017a. “Stuck in the middle: The Inspector for Religious Denominations as mediator between the religious community and the state at the installation of the communist regime in Romania.” *East Central Europe*. 44: 128-147.

Șincan, Anca. 2017b. “The portrait of N. Departing the Communist Orthodoxy” [“Portretul lui N. Despărțirea de ortodoxia comunistă”]. In: *Ne trebuie oameni’ Elite intelectuale și transformări istorice în România modernă și contemporană*, edited by Cristian Vasile, 317-36. Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun.

Turcescu, Lucian. Lavinia Stan. (2005) “The Devil’s Confessors: Priests, Communists, Spies, and Informers.” East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 19, (4): 655–685.

Verdery, Katherine. 2014. *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Verdery, Katherine. 2018. *My Life as a Spy. Investigations in a Secret Police File*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Notes

[1] In the case of the Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the *Securitate* (here forth ACNSAS) the researcher receives the entire file without the privacy mechanisms put in place (blackened names for instance). The privacy mechanisms are activated only on the copies of the documents.

[2] I have conducted research in the Archives of the Patriarchal See of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Archives of the Romanian Orthodox Church Archbishopric of Alba Iulia and the Romanian Orthodox Church Deanery in Tîrgu-Mureș.

[3] At the time of writing, this file had not yet been processed by the archives.

[4] Biroul Organizației de Bază PCR, Stenograma adunării generale a Organizației de bază din 26 XII 1977.