

Recruitment of informers and collaborators by the security system from within the religious entities, in communist Romania

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Abstract

The article “Recruitment of informers and collaborators by the Security system from within the religious entities, in communist Romania” explores the mechanisms and methods used by the communist Securitate to infiltrate and control the various religious cults in Romania. During the communist period, the regime viewed churches and other religious organizations as potential threats to the atheist state and acted to expand its influence and surveillance over them. Through a combination of pressure, blackmail, rewards and coercion, the Securitate system managed to recruit a significant number of informers and collaborators from among the clergy and laity.

These individuals were used to report on the activities and opinions of believers, to monitor religious leaders, and to destabilize any form of resistance against the regime. The article details specific recruitment strategies, including the use of compromising files and promises of protection or career advancement. The moral and social implications of these practices are also analysed, highlighting the internal conflicts and betrayals that have undermined religious communities.

Keywords: *Securitate, Informers, Recruitment, Religious entities, Communism.*

Introduction

During the communist period in Romania, control over many aspects of social, economic and political life was a priority of the totalitarian regime. Among the main objectives of the *Securitate*, the regime’s secret police, was the surveillance and infiltration of religious cults. The communist regime perceived religion as a threat to its absolute authority and therefore implemented a number of strategies to control and manipulate religious activities. Recruiting informers and collaborators from within cults was one of the main methods used to maintain this surveillance.

Religion, in its essence, represents a sphere of influence that runs counter to communist ideology, which promotes atheism and rejects any form of power or authority that could compete with the state. Consequently, the Church and other religious organizations were systematically targeted by the *Securitate's* agents. Clergy and active members of religious communities were considered likely to direct believers against state policies, organize forms of resistance or support dissident movements. In order to neutralize these risks, the *Securitate* resorted to the recruitment of informers and collaborators from among them (Troncotă, 1999, p. 32).

The process of recruiting informers within religious cults was complex and often coercive. A variety of methods were used, from blackmail and psychological pressure to promises of protection or material advantages. For example, individuals with compromising records were often coerced into cooperating to avoid exposure or retaliation. Other times, promises of professional advancement or family protection were enough to convince certain people to become informers or collaborators (CNSAS, 2007, pp. 168-169).

The impact of these practices on religious communities was profound and devastating. First, the recruitment of informers created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust within the communities. Members of the religious community no longer knew who they could trust, and this undermining mood eroded cohesion and solidarity. Moreover, informers were often used to manipulate and control religious activities, to discredit inconvenient religious leaders, and to destabilize any form of resistance.

1. Methods of recruitment of informers

INTIMIDATION AND BLACKMAIL TACTICS

The recruitment of informers by the *Securitate* in communist Romania was a complex and often brutal process based on a combination of intimidation, blackmail and psychological pressure. The *Securitate*, the main tool of repression of the communist regime, aimed to supervise and control all aspects of social life, including religious activities. To achieve his goals, he used various methods of recruiting informers, of which intimidation and blackmail tactics were the main ones. Terror constituted an instrument of power and the *Securitate* was used as a means of repression at the disposal of the party, hitting any potential opponent regardless of where they came from (Troncotă, 2006, p. 11).

The intimidation tactics used, were varied and extremely effective. One of the most common methods was to summon the targeted person to the headquarters of a force structure or to a conspiratorial house, for repeated interrogations. The

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atmosphere in these premises was intentionally intimidating: the walls were often decorated with communist symbols and the security guards often behaved in a hostile and threatening manner. The interrogations were conducted in a way that induced fear and undermined the psychological resistance of the individual (ACNSAS, R0066822, f. 9). The agents did not hesitate to use direct threats, suggesting that refusal to cooperate could have serious consequences, including arrest, loss of job, or other forms of repression (Pelin, 1997, p. 67).

During the interrogations, agents used various psychological manipulation techniques. These included falsely accusing the person of subversive activities and creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension. Often, threats of reprisals were directed not only against the person concerned, but also against members of their family. Threats to one's spouse or children were particularly effective because they induced a deep sense of responsibility and fear (Pelin, 1997, p. 67).

Blackmail was another central method in recruiting informers. Compromising information was collected about individuals, either through wiretapping, mail monitoring, or direct surveillance. This information was then used to coerce the targeted individuals into cooperating. For example, if an individual had an extramarital affair, he could be threatened with disclosure of this information, thus destroying the individual's reputation and personal life. In cases where people had a problematic political past or family members involved in anti-communist activities, they were also used as leverage for blackmail (Troncotă, 2006, p. 98).

Another aspect of blackmail involves the use of financial debt or legal problems. If a person was involved in illegal economic activities or had large debts, he could be offered "help" in exchange for cooperation. This type of intimidation was effective because it offered an apparent solution to the individual's problems, but in reality, the *Securitate* was taking advantage of the situation and making him dependent on its protection.

They also exploited individuals' personal vulnerabilities, such as fear of torture or inhumane prison conditions. People who had already been arrested or who had lived through the experience of detention were often more easily intimidated and blackmailed. During interrogations, agents often used physical and psychological torture to weaken the individual's will and make him accept cooperation as a way to escape.

In addition to intimidation and blackmail, more subtle methods of psychological coercion were also used. For example, offering material benefits, such as job promotions, access to rare goods or opportunities to travel abroad,

were used to attract collaborators (ACNSAS, SIE fund, file 0004973, f. 2). These offers were often presented as rewards for loyalty and collaboration, and refusal was seen as evidence of insubordination that could attract retaliation.

Another way of subtle intimidation involved creating an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. They spread rumours about the activities of the targeted individuals, creating the impression that they were already under surveillance and that any form of resistance would be futile. This technique was particularly effective in religious communities, where solidarity and mutual trust were essential (Deletant, 1997, p. 83).

The recruitment of informers from among the clergy and laity active in religious life also had an ideological component. The *Securitate* tried to convince individuals of the value of collaboration to protect the socialist state and prevent “threats” represented by external influences and internal opposition. In this sense, the security agents used persuasive speeches and tried to convey a sense of false patriotism, suggesting that their acts of collaboration were a service to the nation (Troncotă, 2006, p. 99).

An illustrative example of these tactics is the case of priests and pastors who were forced to cooperate by threats against the churches they served in and their members. Some of them went as far as closing churches, banning religious services or arresting active members of the religious community if their leaders refused to become informers. This put religious leaders in a difficult moral position, forcing them to choose between protecting their congregations and betraying their own principles.

The effectiveness of these methods of intimidation and blackmail was enhanced by the general atmosphere of fear and distrust established by the communist regime. Anyone could be an informer, and the *Securitate* used this sense of uncertainty to maintain tight control over the population. Consequences for refusing to cooperate were often drastic, including arrest, torture, deportation, or other repercussions, which meant that few had the courage to resist the *Securitate*'s pressure. Cicerone Ionițoiu quotes professor Grigore T. Popa who said in 1947 that “one of the most terrible forms of ethics is the tyranny of the file... People fear and suspect each other.” (Ionițoiu, 2006, p. 50).

The *Securitate*'s recruitment of informers within religious cults in communist Romania was a complex process based on a combination of intimidation and blackmail tactics. These methods were extremely effective in maintaining control over religious activities and preventing opposition to the regime. Through the use of fear, psychological coercion and blackmail, the *Securitate* managed to create a vast network of informers to support the goals of

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the communist regime, while undermining cohesion and trust within religious communities. This period influenced the collective memory quite a lot and deeply affected the relations between the state and the church even in post-communist Romania.

PROMISES OF MATERIAL BENEFITS AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGES

The recruitment of informers and collaborators, involved various strategies designed to attract individuals from all social and professional backgrounds. Among these strategies, the promise of material benefits and social advantages has been one of the most effective methods of gaining the loyalty and cooperation of individuals. In a society where resources were strictly controlled by the state and access to goods and services was limited, such promises had a significant impact on people's decision to collaborate with the regime (Dobre, 2004, p. 56).

During the communist period, the economy was centralized and planned, and the state held a monopoly over the distribution of goods and services. This meant that access to resources was a privilege controlled by state authorities. Thus, offering material benefits such as food, better housing, rare consumer goods or even access to vacations in other countries became a powerful recruiting tool. In a society where shortages of goods were frequent and many people faced economic difficulties, the promise of such benefits could persuade even the reluctant to become informers (Troncotă, 2006, p. 99).

Owning your own home was one of the most desired benefits. In communist Romania, where property rights were controlled, obtaining a comfortable apartment was often difficult. Through the administrative network at its disposal, the *Securitate* could offer more spacious housing or apartments in better areas as a reward for cooperation. This not only considerably improved the quality of life of the collaborators, but also offered them a higher social status, in a society where social inequalities were apparently denied, but in reality, very present.

Access to rare consumer goods and imported products was another major material benefit. In the context of the scarcity economy of communist Romania, many consumer goods, from household appliances to quality clothes, were difficult to obtain for the majority of the population. Access to such goods could also be facilitated for those who were willing to collaborate, either through special stores for communist nomenclature or through controlled supply channels. These material benefits not only improved the standard of living of the collaborators, but also gave them a sense of superiority and belonging to a privileged elite.

Career opportunities and professional promotion were also used to motivate individuals to cooperate. In a system where career advancement was tightly controlled by the state and loyalty to the party was an essential criterion, the *Securitate* could offer significantly improved career prospects for those who agreed to become informers. This included quick promotions, access to management positions or transfers to better paying and less demanding jobs. For many, these opportunities were hard to turn down, especially in a context where alternatives were limited.

Social benefits offered to collaborators included access to high-quality medical services, education for children in elite schools and participation in exclusive events reserved for the nomenclature. The *Securitate* could facilitate admission to an elite hospital or arrange for the education of collaborators' children to take place in prestigious schools and universities. In a society where the quality of public services varied enormously, such advantages were extremely valuable and represented a strong motivation for collaboration.

Another form of benefit was access to privileged information. Collaborators often had access to information that was hidden from the general public, including the regime's economic and political plans. This knowledge allowed them to make better informed decisions for themselves and their families and gave them a sense of security and control in an often chaotic and unpredictable environment.

Also, collaboration with the *Securitate* could provide protection against possible accusations or persecution. In a regime where suspicion was pervasive and any deviation from the official line could attract severe reprisals, collaborators enjoyed a certain immunity and protection. This not only ensured their personal safety, but also protected their families, giving them an additional reason to engage in collaboration (Câmpeanu, 2002, p. 42).

A more subtle but equally important aspect was the sense of power and influence that the collaborators acquired. As part of a system that controlled all aspects of social and political life, informers often felt invested with indirect power. This influence gave them a sense of belonging to the regime's power structures, a rare privilege in a strictly hierarchical and controlled society.

The material and social benefits offered were not without risks and moral costs. Many who accepted these advantages were aware of the price of collaboration, often involving betrayal of friends, colleagues or members of religious communities. This created a strong internal tension and, in many cases, a sense of guilt and shame. Furthermore, once a person became a collaborator, it was difficult to withdraw because the *Securitate* could use the information they held to blackmail and maintain control over them.

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The communist regime in Romania used promises of material benefits and social advantages not only as a means to attract collaborators, but also as a way to strengthen loyalty to the political regime and dependence on the state. This created a highly effective system of rewards and punishments, where those who cooperated were rewarded and those who refused were severely punished. Thus, the regime could maintain strict control over the population and prevent the formation of significant opposition nuclei.

In many cases, collaborators recruited through these promises became effective *Securitate's* agents, actively contributing to the surveillance and control of religious communities. They provided valuable information about religious activities, clandestine meetings and critical attitudes towards the regime. This information was used to plan repressive actions, to intimidate religious leaders and to discourage any form of resistance (Pelin, 2003, p. 73).

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, many of those who had been collaborators were exposed, and the impact of their collaboration was often devastating to their reputations and social relations. The discovery of the *Securitate's* archives brought to light the extent of the collaboration and exposed the complex mechanisms through which the communist regime managed to control and manipulate Romanian society. For many, this period represented a painful lesson in human vulnerabilities and how totalitarian regimes can exploit the needs and weaknesses of individuals to maintain their power.

Promises of material benefits and social advantages were a central tool in the recruitment strategy of informers and collaborators by the *Securitate* in communist Romania. These benefits were extremely attractive in a society marked by shortages and tight control, giving individuals strong motivations to collaborate with the regime. Although collaboration brought concrete advantages, it also involved considerable moral and personal risks, contributing to the perpetuation of an oppressive system and undermining trust and solidarity within religious communities and beyond.

PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODS AND PRESSURES ON FAMILIES

During the communist regime in Romania, the *Securitate* used a wide range of psychological methods and pressure on families to recruit informers and collaborators. These tactics were an integral part of the regime's strategy of control and repression, designed to undermine opposition and maintain ideological order. In a context where fear and suspicion were omnipresent, psychological

manipulation and threats to the family became essential tools to force collaboration and ensure loyalty to the state (Tismăneanu, 1995, p. 52).

The psychological methods used by the *Securitate* were sophisticated and often insidious, based on exploiting the emotional and social vulnerabilities of individuals. One of the main tools was creating a climate of uncertainty and fear. The agents used repeated and prolonged interrogations to induce stress and anxiety. They asked trap questions, suggesting that the targeted person was already suspected or betrayed by someone close to them. Through these techniques, it was possible to undermine individuals' trust in those around them, isolating them and making them more susceptible to manipulation.

In addition to interrogations, the *Securitate* resorted to constant surveillance techniques to maintain a sense of omnipresence and inevitability. Targeted individuals were often followed and their daily activities closely monitored. This surveillance was not always hidden; sometimes it was deliberately made visible to intimidate and suggest that any attempt at resistance was pointless. The targeted persons thus became prisoners of their own fear, which facilitated their recruitment as informers.

Pressure on families was another effective method used to force cooperation. Threats to loved ones, such as a spouse or children, were highly effective in getting someone to cooperate. The *Securitate* knew that most people would do anything to protect their family from danger and suffering. Thus, agents threatened direct retaliation, such as arresting family members or restricting access to education and jobs. These threats were often strong enough to defeat any resistance.

An illustrative case is that of priests and pastors who, under pressure, were forced to collaborate to protect their families and congregations. These religious leaders were often threatened that if they refused, their churches would be closed and their parishioners would be persecuted. For many of these leaders, the moral dilemma was profound: they had to choose between loyalty to their beliefs and the safety of those they shepherded. The *Securitate* exploited these moral dilemmas to force cooperation, using manipulative tactics that placed religious leaders in a highly vulnerable position.

In some cases, the *Securitate* resorted to temporarily separating family members to induce fear and compliance. Spouses or parents were taken for prolonged interrogations, and other family members were left in a state of uncertainty, with no information about the fate of the missing. This technique created enormous psychological pressure, as those who remained at home lived in constant anxiety, fearing for the safety of their loved ones. In such conditions, the

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promise of release or protection of family members in exchange for collaboration became extremely attractive (Oprea, 2002, p. 32).

Disinformation techniques were also used to induce paranoia and discouragement. The agents spread rumours and false information about the activities of the individuals concerned, suggesting that they were already under surveillance or that they had collaborators in their inner circles. These tactics destabilized the relationships of trust and solidarity, essential in religious and family communities. People thus became more isolated and more vulnerable to the manipulation of the *Securitate*.

In the precarious economic context of communist Romania, control over resources was another instrument of pressure. The *Securitate* could manipulate housing allocation, job promotions, and access to scarce goods to reward cooperation and punish resistance. Promises of economic and social advantages, such as better jobs or access to elite schools for children, were used to motivate individuals to cooperate. Refusal to cooperate could result in the loss of these benefits, thus creating additional economic pressure on the family.

Moreover, more subtle methods of psychological pressure, such as social isolation, were also used. People suspected of disloyalty or critical attitudes towards the regime were often marginalized, and friends and colleagues were discouraged from interacting with them. This form of social ostracism created additional pressure as isolated individuals looked for ways to reintegrate into the community, and the collaboration was often perceived as the only way to regain social and professional status.

The psychological pressures on individuals and their families had lasting effects on Romanian society. The atmosphere of fear and mistrust has eroded interpersonal relationships and left deep scars in the collective memory. After the fall of the communist regime, the discovery of the *Securitate*'s archives revealed the extent and brutality of these methods, revealing the devastating impact they had on individual and community lives (Crişan, 2004, p. 29).

It is evident that the surveillance political system used many psychological methods and pressures on families to recruit informers and collaborators. Exploitation of fear, emotional manipulation, threats to the family and promises of material and social advantages were central tools in the control strategy of the communist regime. These tactics not only undermined the opposition, but also created an atmosphere of suspicion and isolation that deeply affected Romania's social structure. Understanding these methods is essential to form a picture of the

mechanisms of control and repression used by totalitarian regimes and their long-term impact on society.

EXAMPLE OF RECRUITMENT WITHIN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

They wanted to recruit an informer who held a leadership position within the church in the Bacău area. Before starting the recruitment process, detailed information is required about the activity of the person who was to be the informer within the Adventist entity. It was aimed that the people from the leadership of the cult who move through various churches in the Galați, Bârlad and Constanța Regions would not impress the believers with a line against the state. There was also the frustration that there was not enough agency to detect the counter-revolutionary activity that would be carried out under the mask of religion. That is why an informative penetration of some elements capable of discovering all those activities that would be carried out, under religious pretexts, against the state was necessary. After the situation was studied, it was concluded that the most suitable person would be the president of the “Conference” (name for the administrative area that included several counties in eastern Romania). After the life and course of the targeted person is analysed in detail and his entire activity is reported, it is proposed to recruit the person in question who showed many qualities necessary to carry out the activity of informer. Among these qualities are: the general culture that the person has, the patriotic attachment, the seriousness and the outlet that he has among the believers.

The details for recruitment are being worked out. The person will be invited to the *Consiliul Popular* to discuss issues related to worship. This invitation is the pretext to be approached and not to suspect that there are other intentions. When he gets out of there, an agent will invite the person to the Security Region residence.

In the meantime, until the actual recruitment meeting, his mail is monitored, every move he makes is tracked, multiple evidence orders are issued, he is kept under surveillance but fails to collect enough incriminating material.

A person from the *Securitate* structure is appointed to lead the recruitment process. The agent calls to the recruitment site the pastor who was to be recruited “on the basis of patriotic feelings in the Adventist issue” (ACNSAS, MFR 0002144).

The reason why this recruitment was wanted was the unmasking of the elements that carry out activity against the regime and inducing the recruited person the need to do a service to the state through this activity.

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After a discussion that lasted about 6 hours, it was found that he would not be the right person because he leans too much towards religion, but he is given an undertaking that he will not divulge the discussion to other people. After taking this commitment, he is allowed to go but is told that whenever necessary he will be called to give details about the activities carried out within the Adventist cult.

Because it was not possible to collect the compromising material and blackmail the person in question, promises were made that he would be provided with work housing, which would make his work easier.

The proposed person refused any facility offered and any commitment to work as an informer for the security service. For this reason, his activity was very carefully monitored and when a plausible excuse was found, he was called to the Security, threatened and beaten.

This is an example of resistance to threats and blackmail practiced by the Securitate. And yet there were also people who succumbed to blackmail, who accepted the promises and who collaborated with the Security organs, betraying their faith and the leaders of the churches they belonged to. (*The example is taken from the file of an Adventist pastor*), (ACNSAS, MFR 0002144).

2. Profile of informers and collaborators

The profile of informers and collaborators during the communist period in Romania is complex and varied, reflecting the various recruitment strategies used to control religious cults and ensure the stability of the regime. In the context of an oppressive and surveilled society, both clergy and laity were targeted to become informers, each with distinct reasons for collaboration or refusal.

First of all, the recruitment of clerical informers was a priority for the *Securitate*. Clerics, through their position as spiritual leaders, had direct access to religious communities and were in a position to influence public opinion. They also held sensitive information about the activities and attitudes of believers. A combined method of intimidation, blackmail and material rewards was used to force the cooperation of the clergy. Some clerics gave in out of fear, fearing reprisals, while others were motivated by opportunism, seeing collaboration as a way to gain material and social advantages.

As for the laity involved, they included active members of the congregations, administrative staff of the churches and other influential people in the religious communities. As with the clergy, the laity were recruited through various methods of pressure and fear-mongering. The personal and economic vulnerabilities of

believers were exploited, offering tangible advantages for cooperation and threatening job losses or other sanctions in case of refusal.

The motivations for collaboration were diverse and reflected the complexity of the social and political situation in communist Romania. Fear was one of the strongest motivators. Fear of reprisals, arrest, torture, or job loss leads many to accept cooperation as a way to avoid greater suffering. The *Securitate* was adept at exploiting this fear, creating a climate of terror in which even the least cooperative was forced to yield (Betea, 2006, p. 28).

Opportunism was another significant motivation. In a society where resources were limited and access to goods and services was controlled by the state, collaboration with the *Securitate* could bring substantial benefits. Promises of better housing, access to scarce food and consumer goods, professional advancement, and other material advantages enticed many to become informers. These benefits not only improved the quality of life of the collaborators, but also gave them a higher social status in a strictly hierarchical society.

Coercion was also a major motivation. Many informers were forced to cooperate under the direct threat of reprisals against themselves or their family members. The *Securitate* threatened to reveal compromising information about individuals' personal lives to coerce them into becoming informers. Threats of arrest of family members, loss of access to education for children, or other forms of economic and social repression were frequently used methods to force cooperation.

However, not all those targeted by the *Securitate* yielded to the pressure. There have been notable cases of resistance and non-cooperation, demonstrating the courage and determination of individuals to maintain their moral and spiritual integrity in the face of oppression. A notable example is that of pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, who flatly refused to cooperate and was imprisoned and tortured for his attitude. Also, priest Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa became a symbol of religious resistance, being subjected to multiple arrests and torture for his refusal to give in to the pressures of the regime (Buzatu, 1996, p. 45).

These instances of resistance had a significant impact on religious communities, inspiring many to maintain their faith and resist in the face of oppression. Although the *Securitate* often managed to recruit informers through fear and coercion, the resistance of those who refused to cooperate demonstrated the capacity of the human spirit to resist even the most severe forms of repression. These individuals often paid a high price for their courage, but they left a legacy of courage and dignity that survived the collapse of the communist regime.

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The profile of informers and *Securitate's* collaborators within religious entities in communist Romania reflects a variety of motivations and circumstances. From clerics to laymen, from fear and opportunism to coercion, these individuals were drawn into the regime's web of surveillance and control through a combination of psychological manipulation and direct pressure. Despite the effectiveness of these methods, cases of resistance and refusal to collaborate highlight the power of spiritual and moral resistance in the face of an oppressive regime. Understanding these dynamics is essential to fully appreciate the complexity of the communist period and its impact on Romanian society.

3. The activity of informers within religious entities

The activity of the informers within the religious entities in communist Romania was an essential component of the regime's strategy to control and suppress religious influence. Through a well-organized and extensive network of informers, the *Securitate* managed to penetrate deeply into the religious life of communities, monitoring sermons, religious activities, reporting suspicious activities and criticism of the regime, and infiltrating the leadership structures of churches (Ciuceanu & Păiușan, 2001, pp. 238-240).

Monitoring religious sermons and activities was one of the main objectives of the informers. They attended services and other religious events, listening carefully to sermons and observing the behaviour of religious leaders and parishioners. During the services, the informers noted down any statement that could be interpreted as subversive or critical of the regime. They also watched how religious leaders approached political and social issues, and how they urged believers to live their lives in the context of the communist regime.

Detailed reports about sermons were analysed by agents to identify potential threats and decide on intervention measures. Sermons that contained messages of spiritual resistance or criticized state policies were considered dangerous and often led to the interrogation and arrest of the religious leaders involved. This constant monitoring was aimed not only at identifying direct critics, but also at indirectly discouraging any opposition. Religious leaders were aware of the close surveillance measures, of the reports being drawn up on the activity being carried out, and in many cases, censored their messages to avoid reprisals.

Informers also had the role of reporting suspicious activities and critical attitudes within religious communities. They observed private meetings of believers, Bible study groups, and other forms of religious socializing. Any discussion or activity that could be interpreted as subversive was reported

immediately. Informers also identified and reported individuals who expressed views critical of the regime or who displayed significant influence over other believers. This information was vital to the *Securitate* in assessing risks and planning enforcement actions.

The reporting of informers was not limited to public and official activities. They also collected information about the personal lives of religious leaders and influential believers, including personal relationships, financial problems and other vulnerabilities. This information was used to put additional pressure on individuals and compel them to cooperate. In some cases, informers recorded private conversations or planted microphones in the homes and offices of religious leaders to obtain incriminating evidence.

Infiltrating the leadership structures of the churches was another essential strategy of the *Securitate*. Informers were often placed in key positions in church administration or promoted to leadership positions to influence internal decisions and policies. These informers had the dual role of providing information to the *Securitate* and manipulating the church's activities and messages from within to align them with the interests of the regime. Infiltration allowed direct control of religious activities and prevention of any form of organized resistance.

An illustrative example of infiltration is the case of religious leaders who, under pressure, were forced to collaborate and act as double agents. These leaders were required to report on the activities of their parishioners and supervise other religious cadres. Instead, they were protected from reprisals and allowed to continue their religious activity, albeit under strict control. In some cases, collaborators within the churches helped organize smear campaigns against uncooperative religious leaders, using propaganda and disinformation to undermine their authority and influence.

The impact of these activities on religious communities was profound. Constant surveillance and infiltration created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear, undermining mutual trust and social cohesion. Many believers were aware that they could be monitored by informers and moderated their behaviour and speech accordingly. This led to a form of self-censorship that deeply affected religious life and limited freedom of expression.

Although the *Securitate's* network of informers was able to control and suppress many forms of religious opposition, it could not completely eliminate resistance. In some cases, religious leaders and believers have found creative ways to continue to practice their faith and express opposition to the regime. Clandestine services, private meetings, and the distribution of surreptitiously multiplied

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religious materials were just some of the methods used to defy censorship and control.

The activity of the *Securitate's* informers within the religious entities in communist Romania was characterized by intensive surveillance and strategic infiltration. They played a key role in monitoring religious activities, reporting suspicious activities and criticism of the regime, and infiltrating church leadership structures. This activity created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, undermining the trust and cohesion of religious communities, but it failed to completely eliminate the spirit of resistance of the faithful.

4. Consequences of collaboration

Collaboration with the *Securitate* in communist Romania had profound and long-lasting consequences for religious communities and spiritual leaders. This collaboration, often forced or resulting from intense pressure, had devastating effects on the cohesion and trust within religious communities and undermined the integrity of many religious structures (Oțetea, 1970, p. 78).

The impact on religious communities was immediate and obvious. Constant surveillance and infiltration by *Securitate* created a climate of suspicion and fear. The faithful were aware that anyone around them could be an informer, which led to severe self-censorship. This climate of fear prevented the free expression of beliefs and criticism, which deeply affected the internal dynamics of religious communities. Religious services and gatherings became occasions where members felt the need to be ever careful with their words, fearing that any statement they made could be reported and used against them.

Spiritual leaders who were forced to collaborate suffered not only personally, but also had a negative impact on their parishioners. Their collaboration was often discovered after the fact, after the fall of the communist regime, when the *Securitate's* archives were opened. The revelation of these collaborations caused shock and dismay among believers, undermining trust in religious leadership and fracturing communities. Many religious leaders were seen as traitors and their spiritual authority was severely damaged. This loss of trust had long-term consequences, affecting the churches' ability to recover and fulfil their role as moral and spiritual leaders.

The long-term effects on religious structures were also significant. The infiltration and control exercised by the *Securitate* eroded the organizational integrity of the churches. Collaborators placed in leadership positions influenced internal decisions, often to the detriment of the interests of the religious

community. These collaborators implemented policies and practices that reflected the needs of the state more than those of the congregation, leading to the alienation of many believers and the loss of religious autonomy. After the fall of the regime, many churches faced the challenge of rebuilding their structures and restoring the trust of their communities.

A notable example of repression based on information provided by collaborators is the case of pastor Richard Wurmbrand. He was known for his outspoken criticism of the communist regime and his religious activism, and was arrested and tortured based on information provided by informers in his community. His brutal detention and sufferings endured in communist prisons became symbols of religious repression in Romania (Wurmbrand, 2008, pp. 32-36), and his case highlighted how the *Securitate* used the network of informers to eliminate religious opposition.

Another emblematic case is that of the priest Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa. He was a vocal critic of the regime and suffered multiple arrests and torture. The information that led to his arrests was often provided by collaborators within the church and its inner circles. His suffering underscored the enormous cost of religious resistance and the treacherous role of informers in perpetuating repression.

The collaboration with the *Securitate* also had psychological consequences even on the informers. Many who collaborated lived with a constant sense of guilt and shame, aware of the betrayal of their friends and communities. After the fall of the regime, some tried to reintegrate into society and religious communities, but the stigma of collaboration was hard to overcome. The discovery of collaboration led to internal conflict and social exclusion in many cases.

In the long run, the collaboration had devastating effects on the churches' public image and legitimacy. Many churches have experienced the loss of believers, who have lost faith in religious institutions and sought other forms of spirituality or abandoned religion altogether. The process of reconstruction and reconciliation has been long and difficult, requiring significant efforts to overcome the legacy of the past.

5. Conclusions

In the study regarding the collaboration with the *Securitate* in communist Romania, especially in the context of surveillance and control over religious cults, a complex picture of a society deeply affected by the regime's oppressive methods emerges. The findings of this analysis highlight not only the immediate impact of

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these practices, but also the long-term consequences for the religious structures, communities and individuals involved.

The communist regime perceived religion as an ideological adversary, incompatible with its materialistic and atheistic doctrine. Thus, the subordination and control of the churches became essential priorities for the communist state. The *Securitate*, as the main tool of repression, played a crucial role in the implementation of this policy. His methods ranged from recruiting informers through intimidation and blackmail, to offering material benefits and social advantages, to psychological pressure and direct coercion.

One of the major consequences of collaboration has been the erosion of trust within religious communities. Constant infiltration and monitoring created a climate of suspicion and fear that undermined social cohesion and solidarity. Members of religious communities have become reluctant to freely express their beliefs and opinions, fearing that every word could be used against them. This self-censorship has deeply affected the internal dynamics of the churches, limited freedom of expression and thought.

Religious leaders who were forced to collaborate suffered not only personally, but also had a negative impact on their parishioners. Their collaboration, often discovered post-factum, caused dismay and shock among the faithful. The moral and spiritual authority of these leaders has been severely damaged, and in many cases, communities have lost their cohesion and trust in religious leadership. This loss of trust had long-lasting consequences, making the process of rebuilding and restoring relationships between believers difficult.

In the long term, religious structures were deeply affected by the infiltration and control exercised by the *Securitate*. Collaborators placed in leadership positions influenced internal decisions, often to the detriment of the interests of the religious community. These collaborators implemented policies and practices that reflected the needs of the state more than those of the congregation, which led to the disorientation of many believers and the loss of religious autonomy. After the fall of the regime, many churches faced the challenge of rebuilding their structures and restoring the trust of their communities.

Notable cases of repression, based on information provided by collaborators, highlighted the treacherous way in which the *Securitate* used the network of informers to eliminate religious opposition. The examples of those who suffered arrest and severe torture based on information provided by collaborators underscore the enormous cost of religious resistance and the treacherous role of informers in perpetuating repression. These cases have become symbols of

suffering and resistance in the face of oppression, demonstrating the courage and determination of some religious leaders to maintain their integrity despite intense pressure.

Many who collaborated lived with a constant sense of guilt and shame, aware of the betrayal of their friends and communities. After the fall of the regime, some tried to reintegrate into society and religious communities, but the stigma of collaboration was hard to overcome. The discovery of collaboration led to internal conflict and social exclusion in many cases.

In the long run, the collaboration had devastating effects on the churches' public image and legitimacy. Many churches have experienced the loss of believers, who have lost faith in religious institutions and sought other forms of spirituality or abandoned religion altogether. The process of reconstruction and reconciliation has been long and difficult, requiring significant efforts to overcome the legacy of the past.

Collaboration with the *Securitate* during the communist period in Romania had profound and long-lasting consequences for religious communities and spiritual leaders. The impact on religious communities has been devastating, eroding trust and internal cohesion. Long-term effects on religious structures included loss of autonomy and integrity, and notable cases of repression highlighted the treacherous role of informers in perpetuating repression. This dark period in Romania's history left deep traces, which continue to influence the relations between the state and the church and shape the country's religious landscape.

Reflections on this period show how deeply the religious communities were affected by the oppressive regime and highlight the need for processes of reconciliation and moral reconstruction. It is essential that the Romanian society understands and learns from these experiences, in order to prevent the repetition of such abuses of power in the future and to ensure the protection of religious rights and fundamental freedoms within a democratic state. Only through an honest and complete assessment of the past can we build a more just and humane future for all communities.

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