

Research project

Short version

The aim of my research project is to analyse the multiple roles and functions played by the Romanian secret police (*Securitate*) in the last twenty five years of the Communist regime, the so-called Ceaușescu era. Making use of both extensive background researches on political repression in Romania after the 1956 Hungarian revolution, and new archival data concerning the 1970s and the 1980s, I would start my research by comparing the evolution of the functioning of the state security from the early Communist period until the 1980s. My hypothesis, is that the alleged exceptionality of the Romanian case within the Soviet bloc is only partially valid. I base my hypothesis on the fact that although starting from the early 1960s, many foreign policy steps taken by the Romanian regime did not fit into the Soviet blueprint anymore (economic contacts with the West, refusal of strict military cooperation within the Warsaw pact), the apparently maverick foreign policy of the Ceausescu regime never meant a complete break with the socialist camp. Furthermore, as far as the functioning of the state security is concerned, the openly brutal Securitate of the 1950s changed its ways by the end of the regime and became a highly sophisticated power mechanism. By the 1970s and 1980s, the primary goal was not anymore to kill or imprison opponents to the regime, but rather to anticipate and prevent any form of open resistance or even verbal dissent. So, my argument is that nevertheless the Securitate still practised various forms of physical repression in the 1980s ranging from physical aggression to targeted killing, on a general level there can be observed a real shift from massive physical repression against some predefined categories of the population towards a psychologically and intellectually more subtle pressure over the whole population.

I would concentrate my research on the relationship between the Securitate and the largest ethnic minority in Romania, the Transylvanian Hungarians, through the comparative analysis of archival materials collected in the Romanian state security archives (*Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității*) – especially operative files opened on potential, „silent” opponents.. After 1956, Securitate started to expand its previously weak informational network among the Hungarian community. Special attention was paid to the main cultural and educational institutions, and counter-intelligence penetration even reached the religious sphere: in 1967 about 7% of Roman Catholic priests of Transylvania, nearly all ethnic Hungarians were classified as „informers”, and this percentage continued to grow during the following two decades. One of the main scholarly results I hope to reach with my current research concerns a reassessment of the everyday relations between ordinary citizens and the state security system. By the 1970s and the 1980s, most citizens came to accept as inevitable the intrusive presence of the Securitate in their life. Abnormal situations (intercepted communications, physical surveillance, provocations) came to be part of the „normal” life of millions of citizens, who experienced state-driven terror but did not perceive it anymore as intolerable, because they had elaborated various techniques of passive resistance which enabled them to ignore it, or minimise their effects.