

HISTORY AND MEMORY IN INTELLIGENCE

THE ARES PENDULUM: AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The expansion observed, in the last half-century, in the theorisation of intelligence activity has magnetically attracted the need for an ethical topography of intelligence services' behaviour and states. Drawing on the fundamental concepts and theories of this discipline, the article applies a complex evaluation grid to a recent case, subsumed within a less popularized operation in the history of the intelligence service of communist Romania.

By accumulating evidence from open sources, books, studies and corroborating all available records in declassified archives, the paper presumes that the investigations and measures undertaken by the State Security Department (Securitate) in the sphere of the cinematographic environment are suitable for an analysis from an ethical angle.

Attempting to answer some fundamental ethical questions, the article includes a brief presentation of the main theories in the field of intelligence ethics, followed by a historical illustration of the main milestones in the issues addressed, during Ceaușescu's rule (1965-1989). Then, the combination of the two results in the ethical judgement, which is the fundamental subject of the article.

The ethical perspective is enriched by the author's proposal of a theoretical model for evaluating and deciphering the case under inspection. The model has an adjuvant role and does not imply its dissociation from the pre-existing theoretical foundation. Its purpose is to contextualise the ethical interpretation and create a scale applicable to the subjects and facts examined.

Keywords: *intelligence ethics, communist Romania, just intelligence theory, cinematography, censorship.*

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Introduction

A space naturally reserved for unrestricted expression (whether it be contrary to the orientation of the political system to which it belongs), art has become, under the auspices of totalitarian leaderships, a universe of significant utility for a regime based on consolidating the legitimacy and adherence of the people. Communist Romania of the 20th century faithfully reproduces this principle, in which the Department of State Security (hereafter Securitate) intrusively interfered in the creative process of local artists. Obviously, the pre-eminence went to that art form with the largest audience and, in many ways, the most accessible to en masse influence: cinematography.

There is a possibility that an investigation of the ethical dimension of the Romanian Securitate could appear absurd and useless to a public that, more than three decades after the fall of the communist regime and after the public release of some of the institution's archives, has already become aware of the monstrosity of that controversial governmental body. Nevertheless, the present article claims to offer a scholarly analysis of a marginal phenomenon in the machinery of the Securitate's operations, but whose framing within a modern theoretical framework can sharpen understanding.

After having outlined the main ethical theories that populate the current academic environment of intelligence activity (as well as considerations subscribed to ethics itself), I proceeded to briefly outline the main historical landmarks that marked the operations of the Securitate in the artistic and, more specifically, cinematographic field of communist Romania.

Alongside this axis, which governs the direction of the research, additional questions will be explored, designed to give depth to the theme: "Which of the major theories of ethics in intelligence can be considered programmatic for the behaviour of the Securitate? To what extent can this behaviour be analysed from multiple ethical perspectives? What might be the causes of intrusive behaviour in a seemingly innocuous field?"

In order to try and complete the current paradigm, the paper launches a theoretical model for further evaluation and decoding of the case at hand, whereby attention will be paid to clarifying possible unique

characteristics that segregate a category of state entities (totalitarian states) from typical ethical analyses – the ethical pendulum model.

In order to reach the detailed points and meet the main objectives of the paper, we mainly used qualitative methods; the focus was on collecting, analysing and integrating data and information from the areas of interest. The information used in the writing of the paper consists predominantly of secondary but also primary data, extracted from multiple scientific articles, books, research papers, journalistic investigations, historical analyses, archives.

Preamble in the territory of ethics. Ethics in intelligence work

The debate on ethics and non-ethics is highly nuanced – in fact, it is a conference of sketches and approximations. Invariably, any subject that is, voluntarily or not, derailed from its path to exhaustion in the realm of its ethos ends up oscillating between the two extreme points (the absolute ethical and the non-ethical counterpart), without, however, being able to reach them. The thesis that emerges indicates the alternation of evaluation; it is assumed that appreciation is periodically subscribed to a positive outcome (confirming the ethicism) or a negative one (disavowing the conduct). Such considerations, however, describe an ambiguous territory, not even subtly located in any perimeter of the real world. To delimit one behaviour or another in certain areas of judgement requires, first of all, the establishment of a reference map on which the cartographer can exercise the authority acquired through empiricism and knowledge.

In the world of intelligence, the discourse on ethics is rigid. This is only natural, given the particular stake of this subsystem that engages the vital functions of the state – national security. The literature in the field of ethics in intelligence work is abandoning the folds of a purely theoretical, disinterested consideration and focusing pragmatically on concrete dimensions, which it verbalizes with precision. Ethics itself has taken up an increasingly large space in the academic dialogue in the field as a direct result of the events of September 2001 and the war on terrorism, which generated a series of controversial measures justified by the need to preserve national security.

As a result of the multiplied interest, various definitions have been issued for the notion of ethics applied to espionage and intelligence. A recent conceptual delineation considers ethics in intelligence work as “an attempt to determine what forms of intelligence are morally permissible, under what circumstances, and for what purposes” (Vrist Ronn, 2016). Vrist Ronn’s definition does not disentangle the frequently invoked distinctions between ethics and morality, instead it addresses a triad of parameters that characterize intelligence work: object (what?), context (how?), objective (to what end?). These are linked and develop support for auditing the moral legitimacy, accountability, and ownership of both the intelligence officer and the organisation per se as a unitary entity.

Often regarded as an oxymoron, the phrase “intelligence ethics” does not describe an intangible desideratum; the general view that dissociates the moral upright from espionage omits the fundamental developments in this spectrum that have occurred over the last century. Unlike the practice of World War II, where recruitment itself was conditional on the candidate’s willingness to use forgeries and murder, today’s public discourse (including intelligence services) consistently adheres to international law, human rights, demonstrating a natural insertion of authorized institutions in ensuring national security within the common, regulated public apparatus (Omand & Phythian, 2012).

Despite the undeniable progress reported in an area often subjugated to the elusiveness and absence of external inferences, the difficulties have not reached a full resolution. The same Mark Phythian (2012) notes the divide between national security demands and (international) human rights as the most significant current ethical hurdle in intelligence work, which presses for a widening of public debate to set the conditions for “democratising dirty hands” (Omand & Phythian, 2012). Even in democratic states, where the fundamental unit is the citizen whose rights are guaranteed, intelligence services acquire, by strictly determined legal means and under delimited conditions, the ability to restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizen in order to achieve national security. The imperative of achieving a balance that satisfies the two opposing driving forces lies also in the adaptation of intelligence activity, which has become carnivorous – described by Charles Cogan as the transition from “gatherer” to “hunter” (Cogan,

2004). The anthropological association is a natural corroboration of Phythian's observation of the metamorphosis in the intelligence world – the intelligence officer becomes aware of the comparative advantage of undertaking active intelligence-gathering measures, even if they intrinsically involve intrusion into spaces previously considered inaccessible.

However, the priority is not only to establish a reliable security context but also to avoid the formation of the *social panopticon* proposed by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century (Bentham, 1995) and revitalised by Michel Foucault at the end of the last century (Foucault, 1977). In other words, intrusive action requires a regulatory, limiting component that pre-emptively conditions and calculates the cost-benefit ratio that such a measure assumes. In relation to these issues, a set of academic theories emerges that demand exposure.

The contemporary architecture of intelligence activity is based, from an ethical perspective, on a tetra atomic structure, with each theory emphasising a distinct focus on the regime in which an operation can be justifiable or, quite frankly, ethical. The four prominent theories of intelligence ethics are represented by the realist theory, the utilitarian theory (consequentialism), the deontological theory, and the just intelligence theory.

The affiliation between the realist doctrine of international relations and its version of the ethical spectrum is undeniable. In fact, the adaptation is minor: ethical realism operates by virtue of an established mechanism, established through the contribution of Thomas Hobbes (1651/2020) and Niccolò Machiaveli (1513/1998) to the genesis of a *modus vivendi* that is still relevant today. Toni Erskine's exercise, therefore, as a theorist who has tackled the subject, is one of simply polishing a quasi-finished material. Essentially, the theory concludes that state interests are intrinsically justified and that the state is the main subject of international activity (Erskine, 2004). Defending the state and protecting it and its interests are the duties of *civitas*, in the name of an accepted social contract that provides for the use of aggressive means to achieve this moral obligation (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651/2020). The theory has drawn criticism from Vrist Ronn (2016, p. 769), who has complained about the absence of a proportionality angle that any state's

endeavour must account for, prior to the conduct of an operation, and the multiplicity of Hobbesian “moral duties”, which dissolve from the solidity of the obligation to protect the state.

Utilitarianism proposes a partial reframing of the perspective, absorbing some elements from Machiavellian philosophy – for example, a reconfiguration of the dictum “the end justifies the means”. The central idea of the utilitarian theory lies in the assumption that the optimal action is the one that produces the most good, placing the evaluative factor over the consequences (hence the term consequentialism). With a significant tradition in political philosophy, the theory has become the subject of academic objections because it legitimises permissive, indeterminate behaviour. Prompt intervention is given by the same Toni Erskine (2004). The Manichaeic view, which charts the verdict in proportions of right and wrong, is inevitably prone to error – not only the approximation, but the very definition of these concepts varies and can become the instrument of excess.

Fundamental to the deontological theory is the Kantian categorical imperative. Seen as a jarring contrast to utilitarian theory, Kant’s guiding statement is that some actions are intrinsically wrong, regardless of the consequences. In contrast to the former, the deontological theory is restrictive – the responsibility of the decision-maker arises from the acceptance of a set of immutable values that direct the verdict. Erskine argues that deontology faces an imminent paradox: on the one hand, it deliberates in the tone of a principle that condemns lying and sham behaviour (deception); on the other hand, the nature of intelligence implies the use of these tools routinely (Erskine, 2004). The position that I, through the present paper, advance emphasises the ultimate purpose of the deontological theory, which is not to determine a final, ultimate Decalogue that anchors intelligence activity, but to demarcate a range, a territory of the acceptable.

It is precisely this insufficiently determined restrictiveness that has been imputed to deontology that polarises with the fourth ideology coexisting in the dogmatic whole of intelligence ethics – the theory of just intelligence. Imposed by the acclimatisation of a theory of ethics applied in the military sphere to the sphere of intelligence activity, just intelligence crystallises through the transition from the original notions

of *jus ad bello* (justified initiation of war) and *jus in bellum* (ethical behaviour in the course of war) to the concepts of *jus ad intelligentiam* and *jus in intelligentia*.

Concretely, the theory proposes the determination of tangible parameters, a grid of principles that can become the benchmark of intelligence activity. Provoking the interest of outstanding academics in the field of ethics, the theory of just intelligence has sparked solid debates, especially in the difficult task of translating the agenda of principles proper to an extraordinary state – war – which honestly claims parameters of exception, towards a phenomenon placed in the continuum of state existence – intelligence activity (Omand & Phythian, 2012).

From the vast range of such adjustments that have been carried out (Bellaby, 2012; Omand & Phythian, 2012; Gendron, 2007), I will turn to Angela Gendron's synthetic exposition (the versions exhibiting similarities in the directions addressed), a vocal defender of the theory. Accordingly, the hexalogue of just intelligence is built on the following precepts:

- the principle of last resort – the ultimate spring of action being self-defence against a threat¹; the benchmark does not indicate strict adherence to overt, non-intrusive means, but a careful attunement to objectives, time-space and the permeability of the target to the methods employed;
- *right intention* – the presence of a constant and permanently aligned motivation to the initial objective;
- *proportionality criterion* – the decision-maker will engage in an analysis of the ratio between the ethical harm caused and the benefits of the operation;
- *probability of success* – operations should only be started in the context of a consistent indictment that signals timeliness;
- *attention to human consequences* – measures taken should start progressively from the least intrusive to the most intrusive;

¹ Of interest to this notion turns out to be the risky slippery slope that Drexel Godfrey's double standard describes: "What is unacceptable human behaviour at home or in one's own society can be forgiven when it occurs in foreign societies or with foreign representatives of those communities." (Godfrey, 1977-1978)

- *discrimination* – conducted voluntarily, between combatants and non-combatants, with any operations preferring to target the former in favour of the latter.

Adapting these principles and operationalising them has demonstrated a number of fractures that have prompted objections from specialists. On the one hand, it was considered that the theory was not definitive, and therefore ambiguous and unsatisfactory for current use. For example, the last criterion, that of voluntary discrimination, considered to be utilitarian in nature, has led to deliberations on the definition of the notion of combatant. In general, it has been accepted that this vulnerable category includes individuals who are not formally integrated into military or intelligence activity, but who take part in the 'national security game' (Pfaff & Tiel, 2004). The challenge lies in distilling the malign from the benign, as the major expansion of the national security arena in recent decades has marked the involvement of a broad portfolio of individuals with roles related to the security dimension. Phythian (2012) also points to the profiled discrepancy between the concept of last resort/last solution and the essential component of intelligence work – prevention and knowledge. In this respect, the just cause invoked by Gendron (2007) alleviates the confusion: the steps taken are not only required in the context of imminence, but as an assumed solution balancing the weight of the human rights codex with the paramountcy of the state's national security.

A final combative remark addressed to just intelligence theory derives from Sir David Omand's (2012) assessments. According to him, it is precisely the rigour and delimitative nature of the theory that generates an operational difficulty, described by the need for an equilateral triangulation of three competing and opposing principles. In the first instance, states have an active obligation to protect their citizens in situations requiring state intervention. One of the characteristics of the defensive act is the willingness, in some contexts, to resort to force or violence to ensure security (an appeal to the Weberian perspective which proposes the state entity as the wielder of the monopoly on legitimate violence). However, causing (physical) harm or damage is generally accepted as ethically wrong. The accumulation of these theses

creates a vulnerability that requires careful management in order to perfect the theory of just intelligence and its operationalization.

The four theories rival each other in acquiring primacy. The impossibility of establishing hegemony across this spectrum is due to the diversity of social, geopolitical and, security contexts in the global security environment – states can become consciously inconsistent with themselves and their own precedents in order to identify legitimacies for hostile actions taken. After all, the central column of ethics in intelligence cyclically returns to Admiral Stansfield Turner's motto as the universal rough test – the ability of the decision-maker to justify the operation to the citizenry, should it become public (Turner, 1985).

At the same time, some conjunctures call for additional clarifications to support the ethical theories put forward, precisely because of their local impracticality. In the final phase of the paper, such a model is proposed to unlock the unexplored regions of the case examined in the following chapters.

A panoramic view of political interference in post - 1965 communist cinema

The main subject of the present paper will oscillate over the territory of communist Romania. Naturally, the successive analysis will only constitute an extension of a metaphysically located superior pendulum that eludes the landmarks of longitude and latitude; the latter constitutes an electrocardiogram of the ethical valences that the content of the analysis exerts.

In order to contextualize the status quo of the period, whether it is focused on a single region of the entire amalgam of socio-political phenomena that took place during the period, a series of general observations on the climate existing in Romanian society during the Ceaușescu period is necessary.

Since his rise to power in 1965, Nicolae Ceaușescu has succeeded in crystallising his own policy of managing the main dimensions of the state. As far as art is concerned, the communist leader stood out both by continuing some of the directives taken on by his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and above all by the changes he made.

In the first sense, the similarity lies in the initial perpetuation, from 1965-1971, of the liberalisation tendencies that the Dej regime allowed in art, a liberalisation observed by various authors and also called “relaxation” (Cârnelci, 2000). Co-production agreements were concluded with major Western industries, visits were made by famous exponents of Western cinema (Kirk Douglas, Orson Welles), and filmmakers felt, for a while, the free rein allowed by the regime.

The second sense is highlighted by Ceaușescu’s much more open interference in the inner workings of the artistic world in general, but especially the cinema. Evidence of the existing interest abounds: the Communist Party meetings held under the agenda of discussing the future orientations of the film industry (23 May 1968, 5 March 1971), Ceaușescu’s explicit statements about the role of film in society (Jitea, 2021, p. 17) and, last but not least, the open treatment of the cinema issue through the July 1971 theses (point 13), which officiated the process of censorship towards the film creative act.

In the context of the absolute subjugation of the intelligence service by the political elite of the period and its exhaustive use in all areas of interest to it, an insertion of the means of the Securitate into the cinematic habitat was inevitable.

Perversion of the artistic impulse. Securitate’s investigations in the film world

In the spirit of the trajectory instilled by the Party’s political leaders, the Securitate did not shy away from developing its own version of mapping the cinematic phenomenon and setting its own objectives for the medium. Once the “target perimeter” had been clarified, the intelligence service began the necessary efforts to gain control and reposition the liberal movement in the only mould allowed by the party: the propagation of social realism and official message lines. Thus, the main milestones of the investigations carried out by the intelligence service in the film world were delineated: the files subordinated to the “Cinema” objective (Jitea, 2021, pp. 353-354).

The approach that the Department of State Security had towards the cinematic medium is totally dissociated from the possible artistic-subjective understandings that an ordinary consumer of the final

product – the film – might possess. An eloquent sample of the perception that the Securitate had towards the art of cinema emerges from Bogdan Jitea's (2021, pp. 355-399) excavations in the archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS). A May 1977 report by an officer (Nicolae Vintilă, lieutenant colonel at the time) renders the objectives of the Securitate in relation to the dynamics of cinema and the missions that both the art itself and the filmmakers perform. From Vintilă's radiography, it appears that the seventh art is exclusively a means of propaganda, "sanitizing" the film of any artistic valence: "an object of republican importance [...] which [...] makes a substantial contribution to the process of political-ideological education of the masses".

As for the themes explored by the Securitate in the cinematic environment, the same work reproduces, through an extract from the CNSAS archive, the overall vision assumed by the intelligence service: from exploring possible links with foreign citizens (a ubiquitous objective, which haunted the agenda of communist intelligence officers for decades) to directly influencing the content of the artistic act: "in order to prevent the appearance of political inadvertencies (misinterpretations of political events, leaving possibilities of interpretation)" (Jitea, 2021). Indeed, the film was stripped of any ability to suggest or stimulate in a less than obvious way a message that was not aligned with party rhetoric. In particular, a selection of categories of films demanded further efforts from the Securitate: those with political content or potential interpretations of such, those that were inappropriate because of an imagistic approach too bold or inappropriate for the political leadership, and those that were co-produced with foreign entities. Under this vague breakdown, the overwhelming majority of films created by filmmakers could be targeted.

Over the years, the Securitate opened numerous files on the subject of cinema. Some of these were of a general nature and were aimed at monitoring the whole (the "Art-Culture" film *Meandre* (1971, Săucan) by two Securitate officers (Filippi, 2017).

After the July 1971 theses, the resources of the Securitate were progressively expanded, by broadening the intelligence apparatus and the number of human sources. In a report from the summer of 1985, it is

highlighted how there were 329 human sources in the film environment, 88 of which were directly involved in the movie production environment (Jitea, 2021). In addition to the attempts to establish control over the entire environment, the Securitate's investigations included direct approaches to the main filmmakers involved in acts of dissidence (Dan Pița, Mircea Daneliuc), through which they were conveyed, in multiple forms, the consequences of continuing to behave in a way that was not in line with the regime's dogma. If the filmmakers did not respond positively to the Securitate's requests, they were expatriated, a solution that was often convenient both for the intelligence service (which removed from the equation a public, visible factor that could not be *tamed* by other methods) and for the artist (who had to relocate to an environment, usually Western, conducive to the development of his artistic expression).

As for those who did not leave the national territory, Jitea shows that the results of the Securitate's efforts oscillated between recruitment as informers (for example, Alexandru Tatos or, with a dose of uncertainty mentioned by the author, Sergiu Nicolaescu) or the total refusal to collaborate or to quell dissident tendencies (Mircea Daneliuc). Regardless of the final visible effect, the memoirs and diaries published in the post-communist period by filmmakers have highlighted the internal, psychological repercussions of the unmasked interference that the Securitate assumed in the cinema (Tatos, 2000; Daneliuc, 1997; Pița, 2005).

Ethical evaluation exercise

Both the Securitate archives and the testimonies of filmmakers who decided to publish their own experiences during their artistic careers testify to the persistent and determined involvement of the Securitate in influencing the artistic act and neutralizing any cinematic impulse that, even unintentionally, might evoke a message that was not wanted by the system. Quantitatively and qualitatively, the Department of State Security can be directly linked to several consolidated efforts in the film environment. In this historical context, a number of questions naturally emanate: how ethically legitimate is it to engage an intelligence

service in reshaping the fundamental parameters within which a vocational, artistic act is performed?

Ethics is a lax space, which does not admit the rigours of the intangible absolute – it admits the range of conduct, of benchmarks by which the individual and, by extension, the institution are guided. There can be no questioning the relevance of the fact that the Securitate was an institution subordinate to politics – in fact, it was an extension of the political will and an instrument that offered some of the most generous possibilities (Final Report, 2006). However, beyond this legal absoluteness, it does not avoid opprobrium and ethical analysis.

The ethical pendulum that now dominates its own ethical paradigm is significantly distinct from that which animated the communist vision of the 20th century. In fact, the current ethical exercise can be extended to other political systems and other similar societies of the period, especially as evidence of political police involvement in cinema existed in many communist states (Jitea, 2021). Physically, the forces projecting the pendulum into the realm of the communist non-ethical have led to a reconfiguration of the notion of the ethical. In fact, they have become permanent, they are fundamental parameters of the environment, without which it loses coherence; the pendulum never leaves the communist non-ethical half. One observes the re-segmentation of the previous non-ethical division into a new configuration, also dichotomous, but implying a new Rubicon – considered extreme by today's Westerners and the limit of the normal for the real followers of communist ideology. A new point of equilibrium, a new amplitude, is being established.

In reality, the feeling of the omnipresent enemy, the fear of dethronement, of losing power, the desire to avoid social instability have reorganised the ethical constitution that the intelligence service and its political leadership have accepted. The Western, democratic option was ruled out *ab initio*, as it was not compatible with the objectives and concrete coordinates of the doctrine governing the entire functioning of the regime.

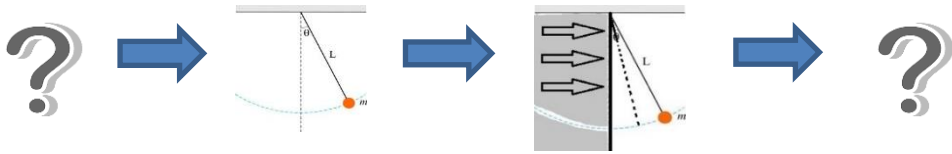


Figure 1: Graphical representation of the ethical pendulum as a theoretical model (diachronic perspective) (Source: author's idea)

Realism is a simple decoder that effectively but not completely exploits a broad context. From the point of view of the other permissive theory in the ethical framework delineated in the initial part of the paper – utilitarianism – overlapping manifests similar fits. In fact, investigative operations (including all measures, of varying degrees of aggressiveness) can be likened to an offensive strategy with defensive purposes (Lundy & al, 2019). In order to prevent the materialization of those perennial, often hypochondriacally risks, Securitate resorted to “prophylactic” measures, which provide a justification in compromising the independence of the artistic act and nullifying the creative impetus to achieve a quantitatively superior general good. The utilitarian angle is reduced to an examination of the consequences, and the avoidance of a possible national collapse under the influence of foreign agents (in Securitate’s most extreme assessments) overtakes in strategic and security relevance a possible approach which, assessed in the ether, is massively contested.

The Kantian perspective that generates deontological theory obviously has a disapproving verdict on a case such as the one under debate. The categorical imperative itself denies a series of actions that cannot be justified under any circumstances, and the invasive measures taken against persons not included in the war proper fall into this category of reprehensible actions.

The assessment that calls for the highest degree of complexity and meticulous analysis occurs when relating to the conglomerate of principles and doctrinal support of just intelligence theory. In this analytical paradigm, the tools are multiple and the conclusions exponentially more complicated.

A first point that can start the analysis from this angle relates to the hexalogue mentioned in the theoretical chapter of this paper. By consulting the facts available in open and official sources, and integrating them into the perimeter of the evaluation, it is concluded that there are fractures in the possible justification of the operation.

The first principle of the last (intrusive) solution is not fulfilled, since the enormous size of the Securitate's intelligence apparatus (328 sources in 1985, as we have shown) cannot be justified. Such an intelligence regiment does not lend itself to the reality that the cinematic environment offered during the communist period.

The criterion of correct intent is also invalidated, since the objectives of the Securitate, at their core, were to reduce the film medium to artistic irrelevance and to metamorphose it into a vehicle for propaganda. The assumptions on which the Communist intelligence officers relied were exploited as pretexts for gaining de facto control over the creative act and exploiting the films' mass appeal.

In terms of proportionality, a historical analysis of potentially "dissident" films cannot justify the measures taken. Films considered deviant represented, in the total economy of the industry, a harmless fraction of the vast mass of films that were amputated by the Securitate.

Gaining total control over the film environment, when examining the likelihood of successful operations, is unlikely, as the Securitate recognized the reluctance of filmmakers to collaborate with the Securitate (many of whom were connected to Western culture and the Western *modus vivendi*).

In terms of human consequences, the operation differed from others of a much more offensive or violent nature that the Securitate resorted to during the communist period; the archives reflect a relatively progressive approach, which often allowed for a common compromise between the objectives of the Securitate (elimination of dissidents) and the aspirations of the filmmakers (frequently to leave the country).

Under the lens of the latter condition, voluntary discrimination, it becomes clear that filmmakers cannot be assimilated to the combatant camp, and the unethical argument becomes particularly consistent with this criterion. The available archives have not revealed any involvement of filmmakers in espionage, and this is also due to the simple fact that

they do not constitute a category of people who are involved, even at a minimal level, in that “national security game” mentioned by Pfaff and Tiel. However, the belief of the system was that the enemy’s offensive was so broad that any individual could become a pawn in this battle that could be fought on infinite (often fictitious) fronts.

The conclusion of the analysis from a just intelligence point of view is that the Securitate operation of monitoring filmmakers and perverting the act of filmmaking does not stand up to an ethics test. Nor, as public opinion formulated after the fall of the regime proved, does it stand the Stansfield Turner test.

In the branching model proposed by Robert Frisk and Linda Johansson on the ethics of intelligence work and the eight strategies for action in security contexts, the Securitate procedure and the operations carried out in the cases in question fit a Spartan type O, P, U (Frisk & Johansson, 2020). The framing is argued by the obviously offensive character of Security (O), which allows causing harm to targets in order to accumulate influence, but by virtue of a dogmatic principle (P), but does not, in this case, resort to committing acts of violence in order to prohibit and prevent the manifestation of a risk (U). The succinct description that the authors offer for this type of approach – *Fighting as a way of life* – accurately reflects the dictum that the communist system publicly promoted in its discourse regarding the West.

Conclusions

Current ethical theories can explain, to varying degrees, the behaviour of entities operating in the international environment. Historical analysis and available precedents from related sources help to delimit possible generalisations, but the permanent changes of the contemporary world are pushing them rapidly into obsolescence. The theoretical model of the ethical pendulum that the paper has put forward is intended to supplement the degree of comprehension that a receiver can possess in the mission of elucidating the contrasts between one’s own referential system and the environment under analysis.

In the present study, an ethical analysis of the operation of the secret service of communist Romania regarding the cinematographic environment of the Ceaușescu period was carried out. After setting the

main theoretical considerations and framework ideas, the article continued by describing the main historical events, from a progressive perspective from the macro-dimensional plane of the political context of the period to the concrete situation of direct influence of the creative act in the film world. Following these factual observations, a personal ethical research exercise followed, in which the conceptual elements invoked by the academic world about ethics in information work were applied, adapted, and correlated. The innovative character of the article is based on the attempt to transplant concepts with a diversified degree of novelty to a situation currently investigated only from a historical perspective.

As to the extent to which the objectives outlined in the incipit have been met, it can be concluded that answers to the main topics and issues proposed have been identified. Naturally, these are not definitive, and the very variation between validating and invalidating behaviour (depending on the theory applied) confirms the absence of finitude. All four theories used have amply demonstrated their usefulness, but the greatest interest has been given to the just intelligence theory, through which advanced conclusions and observations could be dislocated.

The limitations of the paper are the native difficulty of adapting the case to a classical exercise of evaluating an intelligence operation. In general, such assessments are operated on situations where the offensiveness is of a higher order, often between separate state entities. Nevertheless, I believe that the article stimulates the investigation of the operations of the Romanian Securitate from a distinct perspective, of ethical analysis, which would participate in a more qualified evaluation of the activities of this intelligence service in the historical mapping of communism in Romania. Also, in the context of the theoretical developments that will be issued in the academic environment in relation to the theories invoked and operationalised in the paper, a revisiting of the ideational content and its adjustment is required.

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