

*Ruxandra Cesereanu*

## **Political Police in Communist Romania: the Totalitarian Dystopia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study, in its first part, is a documentary summary concerning the establishment of Communist Romania's Political Police (Securitate), by applying an analysis of the structure, operation, strategies and language used in the official documents by the repressive body. The second part of this study focuses on a former communist torturer's portrait, as illustrated in the relatively official confession he made.

### **KEYWORDS**

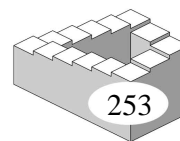
Romania; Securitate; State Terrorism; Informant; Confession; Sadism; Communist Torturer; Atonement; Theatricality.

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### **Securitate's strategies and "language"**

Historian Marius Oprea has anthologized and commented on several of the most important documents relating to the creation, the structure and the operation of communist Romania's repressive body, in his work *Banalitatea răului. O istorie a Securității în documente (1948-1989)* [*The Banality of Evil. Documentary History of the Securitate (1948-1989)*]. Marius Oprea speaks primarily about the "Soviet-communist occupation" which had a decisive role in the birth of the Securitate, Romania's repressive institution being deemed an "instrument of state terrorism" (Oprea, 2002, p. 12) by reason of the dictatorship of the proletariat dogma. "The analysis of the political police control mechanisms in the Romanian totalitarian regime indicates that brutality advanced to the rank of state politics, in the name of the «class struggle» and caused a long-term reflex, a 'trivialization' of evil, maintained with assistance from the apparatus of the political police" (Oprea, 2002, p. 14). The purpose resided in instilling and sustaining fear among the people, their intimidation and the branched, calculated administration of terror. The Securitate made use of extreme physical brutality in

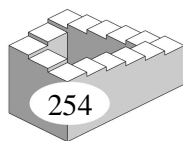


the first stage of its operation (1948-1964), while later, in the second period (1964-1989), it chose an insidious form of Pavlovian persuasion, even though this time interval, too, saw enough cases of physical aggression against the opponents of the communist regime. Whereas the first stage was dominated by “lumpenproletarian” agents – mercenaries, some of them illiterate, acting as frenzied tormentors (Oprea, 2002, p. 137) –, the second stage was dominated by the educated Securitate agent, the wannabe intellectual. But even in the first stage, during 1952-1953, communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and the heads of the Securitate promoted the idea of the training, specialisation and improvement of the intellectual skills of the repressive body’s personnel; this action had in view the decrease in the numbers of the existing lumpens, who found themselves pressed and advised to complete their studies; the courses would last ten months and the subject matters were political sciences, foreign languages, instruction, broadcasts, fight techniques etc. Until 1948, when the Securitate was created and discretionary powers were granted to it, there hadn’t been a void of terror, because a prior secret police had been functional, albeit not impeccable, a former Security reformed and infiltrated by Soviet agents, Romanian communists and mercenaries.

At the time of its creation, the structure of the Securitate was rather impressive; it included ten clearly focused directorates, which monitored socio-politically the entire country, in the following manner: Intelligence, Counter-sabotage, Counter-espionage in penitentiaries and Police, Counter-espionage in the army, Criminal investigations, Ministry protection, Technical Operations, Staff, Party Politics, Administrative Section; additional to these main directorates there were secondary sections, specialised in interception, tailing, supervision. The Securitate diagram included thirteen

strategic regional directorates; the initial number of active officers was two-three thousands, but it doubled and even tripled in the following years. For stimulation purposes, the Securitate agents had huge wages (the managing staff had wages five times higher than the common workers) and benefited from various types of product stamps. Over time, the number of directorates increased both structurally and regionally. In 1949, adjacent to the Securitate, the Securitate troops are created, which included several tens of thousands of armed forces.

Historically, in the first phase of the Ceaușescu era, in 1967 and 1968, the Securitate is partially disturbed by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s attack against the regime of Gheorghiu-Dej and of the minister of interior (operating since 1952), Alexandru Drăghici; the former played the role of the “father” who had to be killed symbolically and ideologically, the latter was the rival “sibling”. The excuse is provided by the liquidation of the communist (intellectual) leader Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, deemed an abuse of the Gheorghiu-Dej regime: based on it, Ceaușescu attempts to rebuild the internal image of a reforming leader. In the second phase of Ceaușescu’s era, the Securitate was modernised, but suffered an important blow, at the level of its administration, when Ion Mihai Pacepa (assistant to the head of the External Intelligence Directorate in the Ministry of Interior) decided to remain in the Occident in 1978, disclosing the Securitate structure and purposes as a repressive institution. On this account, Ceaușescu reorganised it later harshly, in a manner evocative of the 1950s, granting to it special, omnipotent condition. In the last phase of the Ceaușescu period, the Securitate staff numbers had gone up to 15,000, who were making use of the impressive number of 137,000 active informants – which was an outstanding increase as compared to the initial stage of the



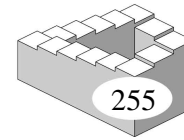
Securitate, when the institution was operating via 3000 employees and 42,000 informants. The 1970s saw the beginning of the increase in the numbers of intellectual collaborators – the institution of the Political police was beginning to part with the rural collaborators; in the same period, the Securitate discontinued recruitment by coercion and blackmail; instead, it chose to relate to the patriotic feeling, in keeping with the Ceaușist nationalism. Three types of links were used: classic informants, collaborators (support people who did not inform, but helped the Securitate) and the residents – hosts of the houses where the Securitate officers and the informers met.

Below follows an analysis, at the level of mentality, of the strategies and purposes of the Securitate, as directly or indirectly revealed by the discourses of its leaders. First, I am going to note that all the documents relating to the activity of the Securitate are marked by the tendentious presence of several verbs directed against the “enemy of the people”: these are “to crush”, “to repress”, “to wipe out”, “to unmask”, “to destroy”, “to liquidate”, “to exterminate”, “to shoot down”. Minister Teohari Georgescu was stating in 1949 that “the Securitate is the body that strikes” (Oprea, 2002, p. 74), in an attempt to prevent the omissions and deficiencies of the institution he was leading. “The strikes will be ruthless”, the same minister would restate in a conference held on February 28, 1950, “Because while we have the law, as discussed earlier today, we will strike” (Oprea, 2002, pp. 120, 131). Three years later, investigated in his turn and blamed with not being vigilant of his class hatred, Teohari Georgescu was declaring that he had led “an apparatus young at first, which has grown, becoming today a powerful instrument in the Party’s hands, full of hatred against the enemy, devoted to the Party. Short of class hatred, I couldn’t

have contributed to the creation of such an apparatus” (Oprea, 2002, p. 256).

The frenzy attached to the fight against “the enemies of the people” is reiterated in counterpoint at the same conference in February 1950 by Gheorghe Pintilie (his real name was Pantiușa Bodnarencu, Soviet agent), sinister look of a career-oriented agent, assassin of Ștefan Foriș (former leader of the Party, Gheorghiu-Dej’s rival): “we should brace, to be able to strike the enemy as hard as possible, perhaps even three-fold”[...] “We cannot say the fight is over, while we said we stroked the enemy hard, we may say that only now do we begin to strike him harder. Only now is the enemy enraged [...]”; “The Party decided to strike with all might and with all might we shall strike” (Oprea, 2002, pp. 133, 160). Even merely by looking within the Securitate, Pintilie discovers the enemy’s omnipresence; hence, he proposes a kind of hara-kiri with a possible remedial effect “We must shake ourselves free of a series of weaknesses, we must eliminate them pitilessly from our body” (Oprea, 2002, p. 133).

Another part of Gheorghe Pintilie’s discourse centres on the necessity to apply physical aggression against the “enemy of the people”; however, this should be done methodically, rather than in a sadistic, undiscerned way: the enemy must be stricken “with full hatred”, but orderly. For this reason, the agents themselves must be innocents who purify themselves first: “let us remove anything foreign to our organs, our organs hold high, specific tasks, we must fight and eliminate anything rot” (Oprea, 2002, p. 146). Vigilance is deemed hygienic, because it engages the agent in a process of self-re-education: “My intent is not to see the Securitate investigated, but rather to help the comrades, to remove everything that is rot in us” (Oprea, 2002, p. 161). On the one hand, Pintilie criticises the abuse of arrests and investigations (of innocent men);



on the other hand, he indicates the necessity of putting the “enemies” in detention, a necessity without which the Securitate would no longer have meaning: “The Party decided that we build labour camps, let’s say camps, labour colonies, labour detachments, the form is not yet established, it’s yet to be gnawed at, so that we are fair politically also and, perhaps in one or two weeks, we’ll have camps, as established now, labour colonies. And we need to put someone in there; you didn’t think they’d be empty!” (Oprea, 2002, p. 148).

The informant’s portrait is most emblematic and most graphic owing to its grotesque and to the inner logic Pintilie seeks and finds; the informant is the Securitate agent’s tool, a sharp tool (related, as we will see, to the razor or to the lathe), but a living one, a man-tool: “each workman, each doctor, any man has a tool and he takes care of his tool; and which is our tool here, in the agency? We said we also have a tool. While the barber has a razor and the turner a lathe, we have our informants, so that we know how to work, to see who we deal with. The worker takes care of his tool; likewise, we take care of the informants – we, too, need to care for our tool a lot more” (Oprea, 2002, p. 134). Attentive to the procedures of touting and processing the informant, Pintilie can guess that the agent without an informant has no arms and no legs, which would make him an invalid. This is why he emphasises the informant’s role of “tool”, respectively that of “living tool”: “the barber’s is a dead tool, so is the turner’s, but ours is a living tool, we need to pay more attention to them” (Oprea, 2002, p. 151).

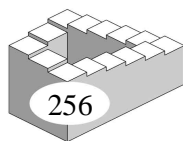
Incidentally, *Banalitatea râului* includes very interesting in the series of theoretical texts from the Archive of the Securitate, regarding the way in which it operated. For instance, the informants’ recruitment is a conceptual text dating back to 1948: could it be that the agency had

Romanian policymakers and theorists or that text

was sooner a translation of a similar document of the Soviet NKVD? Could it have been a conceptual inheritance from the former Security, which the communists had changed only in name, while other (sufficient) characteristics remained the same? At any rate, throughout the years subsequent to the creation of the Securitate, the directives relating to the network of informants and its operation will become increasingly more accurate and toned. Those who had drawn these texts and the subsequent reports insisted on being rigorous, “scientific”, a kind of “hermeneutists” of communist Romania’s secret and political Police. For these texts were meant to resemble the “the tablets of testimony”.

Another key-moment in Gheorghe Pintilie’s discourse is the praise paid to the Securitate, seen as superior thought, as accomplished intellect: “Our body, in its entirety, is pure brain, we don’t have any bone, anything. We are *mind* and this is how we must think” (Oprea, 2002, p. 150). Formulated in this manner, the intrinsic praise of the agent suggests that the latter could be some kind of superman (“*we don’t have any bone*”, emphasis mine). The end of the demonstration is meant to be revealing and self-triumphant: “we are brain from head to toe” (Oprea, 2002, p. 151).

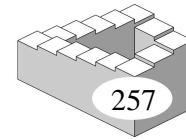
In the same February-March 1950 conference, major Gheorghe Petrescu asserts the need to discipline, order and transform the detention system in something like Mendeleev’s table, disapproving of the chaos caused by disorganised arrests: “today we are still unable to order the detention in the country, we don’t know even now who was arrested, who remained free, what their situation is, all these because the beginning was anarchic” (Oprea, 2002, p. 172). This is not just another self-criticism of the Securitate’s heads; this is the actual fact that the



repressive body was operating deficiently at the level of rigorous self-control. Major general Alexandru Nicolski (real name Boris Grunberg), artisan, among other, in the years of the brutal Pitești student re-education (by physical, mental, moral torture): “We must do it better and faster” (Oprea, 2002, p. 190), he states, i.e. the repression should become impetuous and accelerated. “We must take offensive measures, we must not keep our hands in the pockets, we need to anticipate, without mistake, where the enemy will try to act. And we must work informatively, not keep our hands in our pockets” (Oprea, 2002, p. 191). Nicolski acknowledges also other weaknesses of the department of state security, for instance, bureaucracy, but concludes with an assertion of the viability and vivacity of the repressive body, in an unabashed formulation: “The rust of bureaucracy has begun eating into us. Our apparatus cannot be eaten, but this is an aspect” (Oprea, 2002, p. 191). The Securitate cannot be “eaten” – this is one accurate formulation, because the repressive body was and intended to be a cannibalistic institution, swallowing the others.

On the same occasion, a theorist of the Securitate also speaks; he is colonel Guțan, who projects in the enemies of the people a multiform and even anamorphote monster: “This is our main, general objective, the objective we need to accomplish. The liquidation of the enemy in all his shapes and aspects” (Oprea, 2002, p. 198). As an orator who also wants to be inspired, Guțan pleads for acumen and for impetuosity. The following quotation is long, but illustrates flawlessly the agent’s yearning for discussion or even for cordial polemics, as if the governing body (structure) were a spiritual institution: “I want to remind our comrades, [that] to enter the Securitate, to wear blue shoulder straps, to be invested with powers to monitor, to investigate, to bring people to

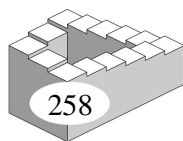
trial, to arrest, to hold others in detention are extremely important things. Who entrusts this power to us? The class to which we belong, our Party gave it to us, the Government. To what end? So that this power should be directed against the class enemy. Such a right entails considerable thought, perceptiveness. You need to know how to skilfully handle such a right. It’s an edge, this right has us dancing on a razor edge” [...]. “But when we judge a situation properly, another quality is wanted from us, the firmness of unflinching execution. Sharp strikes against the enemy we have defined well, mercilessly, and we hit him so that he can never stand up again” (Oprea, 2002, p. 202). The logic of this self-founding discourse is to reach the origin and the birth of the Securitate: “We did not come on our own, we were sent by the Party, and when they sent us they checked us” (Oprea, 2002, p. 202). Because of this matrix, the Securitate agent must behave exemplarily, he must not be immoral (womaniser, alcohol addict, corrupt – precisely because these vices were frequent among the agents’ manners); instead he must be meticulous, active, exemplary. The “prude” colonel Guțan stresses the way in which an agent must acquire these qualities. Between theory and practice, however, the difference was categorical: the Romanian Securitate agent was, most often, harsh, Grobian, unprincipled and a mercenary. “Practically, the Securitate officer’s profile, like the Soviet Chekist’s portrait, described by Proletkult literature [...] was often altered by vices and worldly passions, by ambition, infatuation and contempt for the other staff, as they are promoted. Thus, despite the hundreds of thousands of hours spent in meetings and analysis, the Securitate was shaped in its staff’s image, while among officers and orderlies too few were those who had acted as political agents only on the unalterable belief in a just cause” (Oprea, 2002, p. 199).



**Case study: a former communist torturer**

Doina Jela put together a very necessary dictionary of the members of communist Romania's repressive apparatus. *Lexiconul negru. Unelte ale represiunii comuniste [Black Lexicon. Tools of Communist Repression]* lists succinctly or amply the portraits of several thousands of guardians, political officers, investigators, torturers, prosecutors, detention physicians, party activists involved in the repression, leaders of the Securitate and of the Ministry of the Interior, members of the communist system. Regardless of the inherent flaws of such an ambitious work (obviously, it was impossible to enter all the members of the Romanian repressive apparatus, even only on the account of the fact they were tens of thousands during 1944-1989; then also because it was impossible to disclose all of them; third, because a large part of the information was gathered from testimonies by the victims, whose memory was, at times, confuse and subjective), the work is defining for the Romanian Gulag, since it provides, as stated by the author herself, "a type of protean puzzle, begun from all sides at once, tending to become a cosmoid, a map, a globe of horror and destruction, and at the same time a national history of infamy" (Jela, 2001, p. 11). At least seven hundred of the people illustrated in this thesaurus are of torturers, which cannot be ignored. Prior to the publication of this summary work, Doina Jela wrote a spectacular book, namely the annotated confession of a former communist torturer, Franț Țandără. Based on *Drumul Damascului. Spovedania unui fost torționar [Damascus Road. A Torturer's Confession]*, I will carry out below a case study of this communist torturer, who was anonymous, but extremely representative of the repressive apparatus in Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania.

In his first confessions, Franț Țandără admits that, in the prime of life, he fell in love with communism, that it "entered" him, enveloped and fascinated him. "The party was my parents, the party was everything to me, the party me raised me, educated me, prepared me for the future" (Jela, 1999, p. 8) – he states in a confession of his symbolic and, at the same time, real adoption. Then, an official from the Party, Pavel Ștefan (local party activist, and later leader at central level, promoted up to the rank of minister), provokes him to kill his (anti-communist) father. Against family disputes, Franț Țandără commits the parricide, seen as beneficent by the people of the Party. As a common-law prisoner, he becomes the political prisoners' unconcealed supervisor, being the head of several torturers in one of the labour colonies at the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Then he is moved to a psychiatric hospital, where he is trained as a torturer by a woman: she shows him the ways to inflict torture on testicles by tapping them with the pencil. "The Teacher" foretells her "apprentice" that he will soon become an expert: indeed, Țandără becomes an expert after three victims (from among the fighters in the mountains), on whom he learns everything there is to learn on inflicting pain on genitalia, with the first of the victims dead shortly after the torture session. After he describes the ritual and its outcome, Franț Țandără admits his dependence on the maleficent activity: "many times I found myself satisfied, in all sincerity, I had become an automaton, a brainless, empty robot... Or perhaps I was paranoid, schizophrenic, I don't know what I was, I was working like there was no tomorrow" (Jela, 1999, p. 17). On the one hand, he acknowledges an automation of his mercenary torturer activity, on the other hand, he talks about a form of schizoidia, aware of his transgressions.



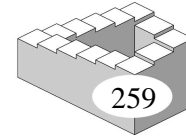
The recollection goes on: once he had become a torturer, Țandără benefited from special privileges, he confiscated anything he wanted from the other prisoners' parcels, he chose women (from among the prisoners) for his sexual pleasuring etc.; but he wanted to be rehabilitated and become a party member. Nevertheless, at the core of his being, the evil he was perpetrating was crushing him: this is how he decides to kill an informant brigadier, so that his former mentors think he is insane and then they abandon him. But the Party believes that Țandără can be retrieved, and thus he is sent, after psychiatric treatment, as useful tool in the investigations of the Ministry of Interior. He is also used in other horrid actions of the Securitate, which, however, he does not want to reveal: "But will I be the one to carry all of them, all the corpses, all of the dead, was I responsible for all of them?" (Jela, 1999, p. 22). In his belated confession, he rebels against the heads of the Securitate, acknowledging nevertheless that he was a compliant and practical instrument: "there's a lot on my conscience, a lot on my conscience" (Jela, 1999, p. 23). Once again in a labour colony, he is released and sent for admission in a hospital in Bucharest, in a psychiatry section. And, after four years of practicing torture, he manages to get out of the system.

Why does Franț Țandără give this confession? Because he feels and knows that he has to pay for what he did; because he acknowledges he is a witness from the other side, from the executioners' side, and thinks that their confession is necessary; because his son is gravely ill, and he, the father, the former torturer, equates this illness with a divine punishment. Because, for a drop of salvation, he needs to talk about the evil he perpetrated; atonement would mean, perhaps, forgiveness of half of his sins. He needs a moral and symbolic court, since in

the real, worldly court of law, nobody wants to judge him: "I wanted to be judged [...] I want to be judged, but where should I go? [...] I should do some good, because I had done enough evil [...]. I want to be judged. I cannot be my own judge" (Jela, 1999, p. 37).

Franț Țandără guesses, in his own way, the idea of *catharsis*, because his confession will be a Dostoyevskyan confession, adapted to postcommunism: he yearns for redemption from sins and for forgiveness. *I* must confess, Franț Țandără repeats obsessively, *I* am the key witness in a process of communism; the victims are not the only ones who need to bear testimony, the executioners should testify, too. There is obvious pride and there stubbornness in the way in which Țandără insists on confessing. There is a nearly religious drive in the way in which he wants to be heard. Cain wants to speak to the crowd and describe how he did wrong. But he does not want to speak only about him, he wants to disclose the entire system. In his opinion, communists relied on an unprincipled transgressing and interlope humanity; this is why they managed to rule the people, by fear. Franț Țandără was also a part of this world, in the first stage of Romanian communism, the unreserved, primitive and savage stage. Because he wants to disclose the entire system, Țandără intends to ask other torturers to confess, too; but they refuse him, labelling him a psychiatric case.

Following a brief report, Franț Țandără takes his time with his confession. As a common-law inmate, enrolled in the communist regime in order to persecute the political prisoners, he admits he had lost his faith completely and that the Party had replaced God: "I believed in God no longer, I believed in nothing. I only believed in the party" (Jela, 1999, p. 76). As an apprentice in the system, he had understood that being a mercenary was hazardous, but he had



accepted the path of communism. At the Danube-Black Sea Canal, he receives, as a brigadier, discretionary powers, on account of which he abuses the political prisoners, he persecutes, he commits cruelties etc. He admits he was embittered, that the authorities were trying to stimulate in the common-law inmates, by all means possible, the class hatred and that the political prisoners' extermination (the accurate term was "liquidation") was a directive. Țandără admits he did things pertaining to the pathological: for example, accompanied by other brigadiers, he defiled the political prisoners' corpses, stripping them to the skin and putting the dead in indecent positions. The former torturer admits: "we were giant beasts" (Jela, 1999, p. 89). At times, he talks also about the psychiatric hospitals where political prisoners were admitted: they were submitted to pharmaceutical methods and to electric shocks, until they really became insane.

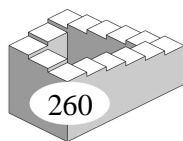
Țandără does not circumvent self-incrimination; on the contrary, he exalts it: he admits, as former torturer, that nobody forced him to torture, that there had been no pressures, that he had begun to enjoy torture (it is not in vain that Doina Jela speaks about the "intoxication with cruelty", a form of doping with violence). The system would have mercenary torturers available at any time, like in a football team, where there are always reserves, explains Țandără. The former tormentor is not ashamed to admit everything (concretely), but he is ashamed in front of God. This is why a process of communism is necessary, he concludes: "A process of communism, at least a moral one, should have taken place, for I've seen the Romanians are lenient [...]. Communism is sadistic and in no other country was it as sadistic as in ours" (Jela, 1999, p. 98). The former executioner admits his role of instrument, of the bully attached to the investigator (making the already established torturer-investigator pair): this is how he is

used throughout his passages in the Ministry of Interior. Throughout the years he acted as a torturer, Țandără gets to know other confederates, whom he mentions. He says that each torturer had a preferred method, that they were betting on inventiveness, that originality in torture was interesting and valuable.

"This is what communism was: it needed sadistic people. It needed them and it created them!" (Jela, 1999, p. 108). For his role as a sadistic torturer ("idiot", "insane", this is how he describes himself), Țandără asks for hell: "I should burn in hell. I'd like it there. I've suffered so much" (Jela, 1999, p. 109). He then admits that hell, for a former cruel and pagan torturer (his own words) is in the heart. He laments, in counterpoint, over his destiny and, often enough, his confession breaks its coherence and becomes fragmented and stuttering: "Cruelty, cruelty, mind-boggling [...]. I did not cut flesh from people, to feed the others, but it was difficult. Unimaginable torture. Unspeakable" (Jela, 1999, p. 111). The former torturer's yearning is the "monastery cell" he mentions every now and then, but his direct audience lets him understand that his confession and atonement were too easy and that God wanted a harsher way, the way of complete confession, of overwrought atonement.

Asked whether he was not tempted to run, ashamed, from people, given the guilt of torture, Țandără answers: "No. Why should I hide? Hide from people? I search for people. It's from God you cannot hide, I think. That's what I think..." (Jela, 1999, p. 119). Obviously, his confession requires an extended audience, he wants it to be a polyphonic, disseminated atonement. He rejects the stance of the good thief saved by Jesus, deeming it minimizing; however, he admits he wanted to become an evangelist, that he was a believer, but he was disappointed.





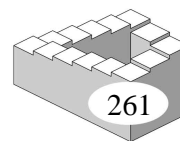
That he lost his faith and became a communist atheist, and now, with the confession, he scrapes to regain his faith. Compared or teased with Apostle Paul, Franț Țandără is partially accommodated by this posture, even if he rejects the role. His confession peaks: "I thought that, this way, God will be closer to me. He will supervise me all the time and help me do no more wrong, he would have more time for me, if he saw I'm searching for him everywhere, restless, like a man mad about him, I'm running, I'm searching for his light ..." (Jela, 1999, p. 122).

Recalling his employment as a torturer in psychiatric hospitals, Țandără states that torture on political prisoners was carried out there since the 1952-1953 of the Gheorghiu-Dej regime; it was not an innovation of the Ceaușescu regime. The former torturer says that many of those admitted in psychiatric wards and discovered in 1990 (after the Romanian revolution of December 1989) were actually former political prisoners who had gone insane because of the tortures and had been abandoned there for decades, while their former classification had been forgotten!

Franț Țandără speaks about a particular cruelty he applied to his victims: defecating in cans, so that the prisoners would be disgusted and no longer eat. He had conceived this torture on his own and was amused by it: "I was vigilant and inventive" (Jela, 1999, p. 134). He admits, however, that he was intoxicated with evil and he was on the verge of insanity: he was used as a torturer-slave, in concentrated episodes, as if his supervisors were "in love" with him, or, more exactly, with the manner in which he conducted his job of applied, prolific torturer. He was producing the largest number of victims. He was a recognized expert: he states unabashed that he had tortured and killed one hundred people!

Franț Țandără's bouts of asking for punishment are not at all scarce: "I wanted to be judged. I want it now. I'd rather have it in front of a court. No matter. In all honesty, I wouldn't like to be the only one judged. I'd feel bad. It's not me who was the leader of this country. Was I its leader? The head of this filthy secret Police? [...] The work done was so conspirative that it's impossible to trace them. Unless some collaborator comes and confesses" (Jela, 1999, p. 144). Further along, he states: "I am an ill man. Mentally and physically ill. This I why I hate communism! Communism destroyed everything. It had found a good tool in me. And how long was a tool going to work? A tool, in iron, metal, whatever, has a point of expiry. It wears out. They use it until it wears out. [...] The man, his life had no value. Nor did the purpose he served. As long as they used him, he was good. And they used man against man. Like a tool. Now I'm ill" (Jela, 1999, p. 161).

The former confessing torturer's theatricality is suffocating. The very fact that he was admitted as a simulating patient in the psychiatric hospitals where he would torture suggests that, perhaps, at the certain time, Țandără became mentally ill, a torturer high with his fervent work. That he became mentally ill precisely because he was a torturer. Țandără is a former executioner who has dreams of his victims (like the majority of the torturers, even if they admit it only rarely); the victims are only undefined faces or voices letting him know he will be forgiven if he has faith. But what are faith in God and its retrieval to a former torturer? The obsession with atonement? The fervour of being judged by the former victims? Tempered hell? The desire to recover from the madness of the times that had him obedient? Asked whether he could forgive Țandără, Fronea Bădulescu (former political prisoner) answers that he would; asked whether he feels compassion for the former



torturer, Fronea Bădulescu says that between victims and torturers the limits must always be kept morally, humanely, religiously. Forgiveness is one thing (it is a Christian thing to do), compassion is another one.

A former torturer and his “metanoia”, is this how things should be understood? How much of this torturer’s confession is a role taken, performed assuredly and how much of it is reality? How much is mask and how much is guise afflicted by atonement? Saul turned tino Paul, persecutor turned into persecuted? Franț Țandără is a torn conscience, a necessary confessant, a former executioner who repents, feeling guilty on behalf of all the communist executioners. But he is not a crusader, nor is he a hero, martyr, saint, apostle. Having failed and disappointed as evangelist in God’s service, he wants to be an evangelist of atonement and remorse. Nevertheless, he is nothing more than a former torturer who confesses.

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