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## The Securitate Versus Dracula, Tourism and Ideology in Communist Romania

Valentin Gheonea  
*University of Bucharest*

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## The Securitate Versus Dracula, Tourism and Ideology in Communist Romania

### Cover Page Footnote

Valentin Gheonea is a counselor at The National Council for the Study of The Securitate Archives in Bucharest, Romania and a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of History at the University of Bucharest, where he prepares a thesis on the relations of communist Romania with Interpol.

**The Securitate Versus Dracula, Tourism and  
Ideology in Communist Romania**

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The present study focuses on the methods by which the Romanian Securitate intervened in the management of a tourist activity – the Dracula itineraries – considered to threaten the country image of communist Romania. To create this material, we used combined working methodologies: We started from the historical context of the studied problem, showing the origin of the Dracula myth and how it appeared in Romania. After identifying the archive funds within the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, we selected the relevant material for the subject. In conducting the study, we used the descriptive-analytical method - the information being presented and then analyzed. Finally, we tried to offer a theory as pertinent as possible on the Securitate's motivations regarding the intrusion in aspects related to the ideology of the communist regime in Romania.

The most valuable contribution to the

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relationship between the myth of Dracula and tourism in Romania belongs to Duncan Light, senior lecturer in Tourism at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. Since 2007, Duncan Light has written a series of articles, later reunited in a book on Dracula tourism developed in communist Romania. In these studies, the author gives us a correct picture of the problem, but, due to the nature of the sources he used (interviews or several publications of the time), the historical reality was captured, often, only partially. Our study, by introducing original archive materials, aims to nuance and complete certain statements of Duncan Light.

### **Introduction**

The state, by means of its policies, plays an important role in the development of tourism, not only through the legislation it elaborates, or through the planning measures it imposes, but also by way of the cultural and ideological meanings it imprints in this field. States will try to promote forms of tourism that suit their cultural or political identity. In the field of tourism, by choosing the places offered for visiting, the states try to create and promote the national identity, the local and national forms of solidarity. Tourism has also become a component of foreign policy and international relations. Through this leverage, countries seek to promote a positive image in the world and ensure international recognition and appreciation of the unique cultural character of their identity.

States can also face tourism demands that

they do not agree with but that get out of their control, as we have the example of sex tourism in some Asian countries. (Light “Dracula Tourism” 747-748) If in democratic countries we can speak, rather, of interventionist economic policies, made through fiscal or financial support measures, in the communist regimes the planning in any field was coordinated by the state, the economy being totally guided. In the case of Romania, the Dracula tourism, initiated in the ‘70s by some foreign tourism companies, is an example of a challenge to which the communist state had to respond. Based on the vampire myth, on an archaic land of Transylvania, full of superstitions, the Dracula itineraries did not correspond at all with the image of a progressive country that Romania wanted to offer to the world.

The novel *Dracula* by the Irishman Bram Stoker was published in 1897 and has enjoyed great success since its publication, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. It has been published in hundreds of editions and dozens of films have been screened. In the West, literary societies, amateur clubs, and even academic journals dealing with the study of the novel have appeared. The novel is the story of Count Dracula of Transylvania and his attempts to take over the civilized world, starting with Great Britain. Although only the beginning and end of the novel take place in Transylvania, this land was inextricably linked to the name of the vampire Dracula and gained a status in the Western world as full of superstitions, magic and vampirism.

### **The beginning of the Dracula problem**

The communist regime in Romania never led a crusade against the Gothic novel or the books on a barbaric and vampire-populated Transylvania: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley appeared in Romanian in 1973, *Le Château des Carpathes* by Jules Verne enjoyed many editions, and in 1981 *Les Mille et Un Fantômes* by Alexandre Dumas is published - which has as protagonist a vampire, descendant of the Wallachian voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu. According to Duncan Light, in 1970, even the novel *Dracula* was ready to appear in a Romanian translation (Light "When Was *Dracula*? 45), but the scandal that followed abruptly put an end to this editorial project. What happened?

It all started with two American teachers of history, one of Romanian origin, Radu Florescu, and the other of Irish origin, Raymond McNally, an expert in the history of Russia and Eastern Europe. In 1972, they published *In Search of Dracula: A True History of Dracula and Vampire Legends*. In that book, the two authors advanced the idea that Bram Stoker, when he created the character *Dracula*, had as a model the Wallachian voivode Vlad Țepeș (Vlad The Impaler), seen as a cruel, psychotic, mentally disturbed man, obsessed with violence, and bloodshed. Vlad Țepeș was a prince of Wallachia from the 15th century, nicknamed *Dracula* (son of the Devil), known from medieval German and Russian stories as a cruel prince whose favorite punishment was impalement. That work, certainly a conjuncture book, intended to take advantage of the popularity of the vampire *Dracula*,

caused a stir among the American public and was a big commercial success.

If until the publishing of the book, fans of Count Dracula believed that Stoker's work was pure fantasy, considering that Transylvania is a fictional land, with the publication of the work, they had the revelation that the story could have a grain of truth. They wanted to travel in the track of the vampire Dracula and visit Transylvania to compare the descriptions in the book with the natural landscapes. Some tourists sought the literary roots of Dracula, and to this end, in 1973, *The Dracula Literary Society* was founded in London, led by two British actors Bernard Davies and Bruce Wightman. American and Japanese tourists were looking, in particular, for the supernatural side of the story. Immediately after the publication of the book, Florescu and McNally created a tour package on Dracula's footsteps in Transylvania. A New York travel agency, *General Tours*, organized these tours, called *Spotlight on Dracula: An Adventure in Transylvania*, and contacted the head of the Romanian Tourist Office in New York. It was an 18-day route through the places where the novel's action took place. The first group of American tourists arrived in Romania on September 9, 1972.

However, the communist regime in Romania viewed these Western initiatives with distrust. What was actually the problem of these tourist itineraries and what were the grievances of the Romanian authorities? In fact, the itineraries established by the western travel agencies were based on the book *In Search of Dracula* and were designed by Radu

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Florescu, being a mixture of geographical places from the novel *Dracula* and historical landmarks related to the voivode Vlad Țepeș. This practice was inconceivable for the Romanian side, which considered that it produced a confusion between the vampire *Dracula* and Vlad Țepeș. According to a note to the Securitate of the informant “Leonte” (a conspiratorial name), an official of the External Tourism Directorate of the Ministry of Tourism, Romanian officials responsible for organizing the tourist route did nothing to correct misconceptions about the figure of Vlad Tepeș and his identification with the vampire *Dracula*, who subsumed the itinerary conceived by Florescu. (ACNSAS. R 303601/2. 77)

### **Vlad Țepeș: History and propaganda**

Ever since the book of Florescu and McNally appeared, the communist authorities have conceived an intense propaganda campaign to fight the confusion between the vampire *Dracula* and the Romanian voivode, viewed as a defamation of Romania and its history. Romanian tourist offices abroad began to print tourist leaflets emphasizing the historical figure of Vlad Țepeș. To this end, professional historians were called upon to document the problem. Matei Cazacu, a specialist in medieval history, wrote a study for the Ministry of Tourism and Constantin C. Giurescu, a famous historian, gave a lecture on Vlad Țepeș during a conference tour at US universities (Giurescu 320-335). Also for the purpose of foreign tourists, propaganda materials were published in the



magazine *Holidays in Romania* that promoted tourist routes in search of Vlad Țepeș, always emphasizing that there is no connection between the vampire Dracula and the Wallachian voivode. In parallel, the State began the propaganda activity for the Romanian citizens, although they did not know much about Bram Stoker's book. As a consequence, the Romanian authorities suddenly discovered an interest in Țepeș, and in 1976 it was decided to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his last reign, which lasted only 2 months. If until then, the regime had published only one 50-page brochure about Țepeș, (Popescu), in 1976 were published several monographs signed by Ștefan Andreescu, Manole Neagoe and Nicolae Stoicescu, the last published in English and Japanese editions, clearly addressed to tourists from those countries. All the books had a final chapter about the false connection between Dracula in the novel and the real historical voivode. Regarding Țepeș's extraordinary cruelty, it was stated that he was a man of his time, violence being part of the era. An edition of the medieval stories about Vlad the Țepeș is also published, in which were emphasized the exaggerations of the authors regarding the cruelty of the voivode and the reasons that determined them (Stăvărus). There was as well many articles about Vlad Țepeș and his deeds of heroism in newspapers and magazines popularizing history. Likewise, in 1979, was released *Vlad Țepeș*, a historical motion picture directed by Doru Năstase, produced in collaboration with the Ministry of National Defense and promoting the image of a right prince who defended his country

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against the Ottoman Empire. The movie has been planned since 1974 and was one of the most requested films to be screened abroad. Before the official premiere, the film was watched by Nicolae Ceausescu, who granted his consent for the release. The film company contacted Radu Florescu to facilitate its sale in the United States. The film has been distributed in several Western countries, including the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Australia (Epure).

This home and abroad conjugated propaganda offensive, started in 1972, leads us to the conclusion that the communist regime's obsession for Vlad Tepes comes from the initial intention to counter the vampire Dracula, and not from Nicolae Ceausescu's desire to identify himself with this voivode, as considered by Romanian historiography. There were much more important historical figures who were called upon to create a national mythology and to be associated with the figure of the Communist Leader: Mircea the Old, Stephen the Great, Michael the Brave. Of course, this primary cause was unintentionally hidden during the celebration of Vlad Țepeș, which lasted until the end of the communist regime, its origin becoming unclear, only the self-reproducing festivity of the regime remaining.

### **The Securitate versus Dracula**

How did the Securitate get involved in the Dracula myth? As early as 1972, the Third Securitate Directorate, which dealt with counterintelligence issues, opened a file called *The*

*Dracula Problem*, which included information on the Dracula-Țepeș dispute and data on foreign tourists and their potentially harmful concerns toward Romania. To collect this data, the Securitate appealed to informants – the guides from the ONT (National Tourism Office) – whose role was to supervise foreign tourists and to make them official propaganda. The most diligent Securitate informant, who worked on this line, under the conspiratorial name “Leonte” was really passionate about the Dracula problem. In this sense, after 1989 he opened his own association for the promotion of Dracula tourism – *Transylvanian Society of Dracula*, still trying to separate the vampire from the real Vlad Țepeș.

“Leonte”’s activities on the Dracula issue lasted for 18 years at least, from 1971 to 1988. This endeavor brought him professional satisfaction and allowed him to impose his views on Dracula tourism. Taking advantage of the status of an informant of the Securitate, “Leonte” tried to transmit information that served his interests. Thus, in an informative note from August 1972, “Leonte” drew the attention of the Securitate that: “Our only tourist product that really interests the Anglo-American market is the Dracula – Vlad Țepeș itinerary.” Although he proposed a tourist itinerary to the Ministry of Tourism – the informant complained – ministry officials preferred to use the program designed by Professors Florescu and McNally, being tempted by American money. This American program, said “Leonte,”

is of very poor quality and will lead to the

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ruin of our only tourism product for the American market. . . . The source drew the ministry's attention in writing to this foreign interference in Romania's tourism policy, criticized the American program and counter proposed a program. The Dracula program is thus torpedoed with or without science: foreign exchange earnings comparable to those brought by our entire littoral in the good years, but without so much investment, are lost. (ACNSAS. R 303601/2. 76)

Here we see the skillful attempts of “Leonte” to make his agenda accepted, using nationalist themes for this purpose and leading the Securitate officers to propose measures to monitor the correctness of the complainers.

A year later, however, in May 1973, “Leonte” lamented the poor quality of the Dracula route, made by Romanians, and praised the American one. To this end, he also conducted a *pro domo* opinion poll among foreign tourists:

In April, a group of 130 American high school students arrived in the country, accompanied by some counselors. They made a five day trip Bucharest – Curtea de Argeș (Poenari fortress) – Sibiu – Sighișoara – Brașov – Bucharest, on the small route Dracula – Vlad Țepeș. According to the line established by ONT Carpați, the guides focused their explanations on Vlad Țepeș's life. At the end of the trip, the source initiated an opinion poll. The general,

unanimous conclusion was that this is not a Dracula's itinerary, that it has nothing to do with the image that Americans have of him. That it is a Vlad Țepeș itinerary, new and separate from Dracula.

The Securitate Officer, who coordinated “Leonte”'s work, pointed out that there is a danger of compromising this tourist route. The reasons why the value of this itinerary decreased is, according to the officer, the lack of thorough training of guides who do not know to explain the tourists how the legend turned Vlad Țepeș into Dracula. In his resolution, the chief officer proposed that these issues be discussed with the ONT leadership in order to prevent the total compromise of the tourist route, which in the form presented in the American leaflets attracted many hikers (ACNSAS. R 303601/2. 104).

In a synthesis of the Dracula problem, made by the same informant “Leonte”, he presented the essence of his dissatisfaction, all dressed in a national-patriotic language to capture the attention of the Securitate:

From 1897 to 1972 the novel *Dracula* did not involve seriously the history and culture of our country. Florescu and McNally documented themselves in Romania with the help of our institutions. In 1972 they published the book *In Search of Dracula*, in which the explicit connection is made between the vampire count Dracula and the voivode Vlad Țepeș.... Florescu got rich based on sacrificing the history of his

country for the sake of the expectations of the American public. The book has inspired dozens of novels and films that blacken the historical figure of Țepeș - and more recently of other country leaders from Burebista to the president of RSR. A growing trend is the identification of vampirism with communism (the folklore of our country does not know vampirism - which is a category of English-Irish origin). Irredentist circles use the pretext of Dracula to make statements in their favor, to denigrate Romania's historical past and the present image of socialist Romania. . . . There is a tendency to vampirize and denigrate our entire history, with clear irredentist accents. The Ministry of Tourism initially rejected some Dracula itineraries, composed by Florescu in vampirist style, then entrusted the exploitation of a Dracula itinerary - legend and truth to ONT Carpathians Bucharest. Traders from ONT, ignorant of our history and culture, came to make propaganda against our country out of ignorance, vampirizing the Țepeș route, launching Țepeș objectives under the title of Dracula, which means exclusively vampire in the west, neglecting any kind of correct external propaganda. (ACNSAS. D 16319/20. 43-44)

Despite appearances, the Securitate did not allow itself to be manipulated by the agenda of the informant "Leonte," who was trying to impose his

tourist route and destroy the others. When it seemed to the officers that he was exceeding his duties, he was shown what matters he had to deal with: Thus, in a note dated August 21, 1979, "Leonte" proposed to the Securitate to hold a conference entitled "Fiction and History in the Name of Dracula," on the occasion of the International History Congress in Bucharest, from August 1980:

The occasion will be utilized for the same double purpose, to present the historical truth in the Transylvanian question and to fight the identity between fiction and history in the name of Dracula. The colloquium will also attract a large press and television.... The organizers would be the Institute of History[,] Nicolae Iorga and the Ministry of Tourism. Verified journalists and TV teams will be invited, who should accept in advance the presentation of the Romanian point of view in the representation of the Dracula problem. All Romanian tourist presences abroad will have as a mandatory element Transylvania . . . to search for opportunities to propagate the historical truth, under the pretext of tourist propaganda.

Proposals to which the liaison officer replied: "The source was advised to refrain in the future from prescribing solutions in such a sensitive issue and to limit itself only to the possibilities of tourism propaganda to counteract the adverse external effects of irredentist retrograde theories" (ACNSAS. R 303601/2. 302).

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As we have seen, to capture the attention of the Securitate officers, “Leonte” used the theme of irredentism by linking it to the Dracula problem whenever he had the opportunity. Thus, dissatisfied that the British Dracula Society proposed itineraries based only on the landscapes of the novel *Dracula*, and hence contradicted his touristic conception, “Leonte” drew attention to the Securitate, in December 1976, that the Dracula Society is an irredentist organization employed by the British intelligence service (ACNSAS. D 16319/20. 21).

With the permanent task of combating irredentism, the Securitate paid special attention to this subject. A note from the Third Counterintelligence Directorate, in January 1980, on the influence of Hungarian irredentist propaganda abroad on British and American citizens stated that Western irredentist circles continue to use the Dracula pretext to denigrate and falsify the history of Romania. Sustained activity in this sense is carried out by the members of The Dracula Society. Founded in 1972, as a literary society based in London, [their] stated goal is to study the novel *Dracula* and its sources of inspiration. Showing interest in identifying the residence of Count Dracula, the Society organizes annual trips to Romania, for which purpose its management updated the map of Transylvania from 1880-1890, the period of action in the above-mentioned novel. On this map, the localities appear with



Hungarianized names, and the borders were marked according to the old routes, mentioning that the region is an integral part of Hungary. Bernard Davies, secretary of The Dracula Society, tried in 1974 and 1975 to introduce in our country, for the use of British tourists, a pamphlet with clearly irredentist content, written by him, entitled *The Country of Count Dracula*. Following the firm position of the Ministry of Tourism, which forced him to correct the brochure according to the historical truth or to give up bringing it to the country, Bernard Davies has not come back to Romania until now. (ACNSAS. D 16319/20. 63)

Considered a potential irredentist danger, the groups of tourists brought to the country by the Dracula Society were placed under informative surveillance during the trips, the Securitate appreciating that it is necessary “to identify all the people they will come in contact with during their trip”. In this regard, in a report from October 1979, of the Bistrița Năsăud county Securitate to the Third Directorate, it was reported that a television operator, who was part of the group, during the visit of the city stopped, at random, on the street, citizens whom he interviewed. The persons contacted in this way were verified, thus establishing that the interviews conducted referred to the legend of Dracula. Throughout their presence in the country, both the group of tourists and the representatives of West German television were accompanied by people from the Securitate informative network.

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Trusted informants from national minorities were also brought in, and some tourists were verified at the hotel accommodation by placing microphones. (ACNSAS. D 16319/20. 57)

The document indicates that the Securitate implemented a large enough device to control tourists, by recruiting informants, by involving people apparently going by the street, people forced to send a message of influence, or by placing microphones in the hotel's rooms.

### **Dracula - A secret public relations operation**

Another significant episode of the Securitate interference in Dracula's tourism took place in April, 1987, during the visit of a production team from ABC American television. According to a letter of intent, ABC wanted to produce material about Transylvania and the legend of Dracula, which was to be broadcast on the show *Good Morning America*. The program was to be called *Haunted Europe* and focused on some macabre topics: The Bog People of Denmark (mummified corpses in swamps), the catacombs of Paris, haunted castles in England, the Loch Ness Monster, etc. The team wanted to visit and film in Bucharest, Snagov, Braşov, Bran, Sighişoara and Târgovişte. The itinerary and the documentation of the program were made at the proposal of professors Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally, who also made recommendations regarding the Romanian specialists to offer consultancy - Ştefan Andreescu from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History, Mihai Pop from the Folklore Institute and Professor Virgil

Cândea from the *Romania Association* (an organization in charge of cultural propaganda abroad). The delegates of the Ministry of Tourism proposed that the team be joined by a specialist from the Ministry of Tourism, who happened to be the informant "Leonte." The film crew's visit was of particular importance to the Securitate since its members included Ronald Prescott Reagan, the son of the US President at the time. To this end, the Securitate units in the domain of foreign intelligence and counterintelligence were activated and measures were requested to install microphones in the hotel where the reporters were to be accommodated.

It is interesting that, if in the letter of intent, sent by the show's producer, the title of the program was *Haunted Europe*, in the information between officials from the Ministry of Tourism, in charge of preparing the itinerary, the title of the show became *Vlad Țepeș / Dracula - Legend and Truth*. Also, the American intentions to film sinister places in Europe were transformed by the officials from the Ministry, who appreciated that the television team will make a detailed report about Vlad Țepeș / Dracula. To obtain the approval of the visit and filming from the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, it was said, in a laudatory way, that Romania is one of the four countries in Europe where reportages will be made based on exceptional facts and historical figures (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 1-4). This distorted vision of reality also reached the Securitate, which considered that ABC television is coming to

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Romania to make tourist reports.

The tourist services provided in Romania were to be supplied by the National Tourism Office and the organization of the itinerary – the propaganda part – would be the responsibility of the International Tourism Directorate of the Ministry of Tourism. On April 9, 1987, the International Tourism Directorate requested the New York Tourist Office to persuade the ABC producers, to add Bistrița - Năsăud and the Bârgău Pass (Tihuța) to the route, in order to better differentiate Vlad Țepeș from the vampire Dracula. We recognize here the interference of “Leonte,” an official within the International Tourism Directorate, to impose, once again, his vision on the Vlad Țepeș-Dracula tourist route. The intervention will eventually be unsuccessful, with the film crew pretext a lack of time.

Regarding Ron Reagan, the person of interest, the Securitate appreciated that he has a reserved attitude towards our country, following that through the excellent conditions provided during his stay, this conduct will change. Given that the relations between Romania and the US were in full crisis, due to the subject of respect for human rights imposed by President Reagan as a condition for the renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause, the Bucharest regime thus naively wanted to win the goodwill of the US government. In this sense, through the collaboration of several Securitate departments, it was proposed to initiate an action of positive influence and misinformation of the television team (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 9-18).

The Ministry of Tourism considered that the topic chosen by ABC “allows us to present to the American people Romania and its history, the achievements of the Romanian people during the years of socialism and in this context, our tourist and cultural values.” It was also appreciated that, thanks to this film, the Romanian tourist itinerary *Truth and Legend, Dracula*, will benefit from “massive publicity” abroad (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 21-22).

To carry out the propaganda action in good conditions, on April 21, 1987, the Securitate developed a plan of measures codenamed “The Filmmakers”: “In order to carry out a proper informative supervision of this group and to prevent the undertaking of unfavorable actions to our country .... the group will be informatively framed with the source ‘George,’ interpreter guide at ONT.” The guide was prepared to provide appropriate answers to any questions Americans may have and to have a positive influence on them. In addition to the group, the informant “Leonte” was interposed, in charge of propaganda within the Ministry of Tourism, together with informants journalists from the Agerpres news agency. At the hotel in Bucharest, the film crew was accommodated in rooms equipped with microphones.

As a result of the action plan, measures have been taken to prevent the contact of group members by citizens known as protesters or who want to hand them complaints. All the Securitate units of the counties through which the television

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team would pass were informed by telex. The militia was asked to *sanitize* the accommodation places, tourist attractions and all environments frequented by the American reporters, by getting rid of “parasitic elements, those without occupation, or immoral” (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 25-26). The complete program of the visit is made including the detailed itinerary of the team and the filming places and the necessary approvals for the filming and for the participation of the requested experts are obtained in the shortest time.

Upon arrival at the airport in Bucharest, Ronald Prescott Reagan was greeted by the head of the New York Tourist Office, who welcomed him on behalf of the directorship of the Ministry of Tourism and interventions were made to “exclude any deficiencies in the execution of customs formalities.” The action plan of the Securitate also provided for the discreet guarding of the accommodation rooms and the taking of measures for good serving at the restaurant and in other places where services will be requested. The two Securitate informing guides had to accompany the group at all times. Through them, the “correct” version of history regarding Vlad Țepeș was placed to the group, through a documentation provided by the “D” Securitate Service (a department that deals with actions of influence and misinformation). The First Directorate (dealing with foreign information) of the Securitate provided counter-information training to both Ștefan Andreescu and Mihai Pop, specialists expressly requested by the members of the group to accompany them throughout the

filming (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 43-45).

The Securitate Plan will eventually prove effective. In a note from informant "George," it is specified that the leader of the filming team, the producer Jeff Simon, was pleasantly impressed by the solicitude and kindness of those who welcomed him: "Regarding Romania, Jeff Simon seemed benevolent, praising hospitality, artistic program and meals served. At the beginning of the artistic program at the restaurant, he said that in Romania there is a freer atmosphere than in Russia." The most significant matter for the Romanian officials was for the son of the American president to be satisfied as well. The informant "George" presents a characterization of Ron Reagan, which shows especially his modesty:

Ron Reagan seems quite modest, does not try to impress or stand out from other members. From the airport, he said, "I'm the man behind the camera, the boss is Jeff Simon." As for clothing, he is less conformist and his clothes are of a sought-after negligence. He hardly drinks alcohol (I understand that he prefers beer). From the moment he arrived, he seemed tense, but towards the end of the evening he relaxed. He doesn't seem very intelligent or erudite, I don't think he knows much about Romania or Dracula. Excessive attention should not be paid to Ron Reagan, to the detriment of others, because the leader of the group is Jeff Simon, which has been emphasized both verbally and by his modest behavior so

far. (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 54-56)

The positive influencing of the television team was also done with great care, taking place in friendly discussions around meals served at the restaurant. In that uninhibited setting, the specialists requested by the filming team, prepared in advance by the Securitate, will guide the guests regarding the official vision on the Dracula-Vlad Țepeș relationship. In this regard, the informant "George" describes how a working meeting was held at breakfast, which was attended by several officials including the informant "Leontes," historian Stefan Andreescu and Professor Virgil Căndeă.

The specialists explained to the film team the superstitions and popular traditions related to Vlad Țepeș, many of which have disappeared and are considered to be related to ignorance and lack of culture. The Americans were informed that the image of Dracula, the vampire from the western culture, is completely unknown in Romania and they were explained the psychological and psychiatric profile of the voivode Vlad Țepeș - Dracula from the Romanian culture. But this prosaic, demystifying vision of the Romanians contradicted the goals of the American filmmakers, who wanted to produce a more captivating material. According to informant "George", the Americans understood the truth about Dracula, but they could not fully reflect and accept it so as not to compromise their film project. Jeff Simon said his boss ordered a simple, affordable movie. But, according to the biased testimony of "George", who wanted to emphasize that the mission of influencing



was finally successful, the film crew will still comply with some Romanian requirements: "It was established that in the producers' conception ... substantially modified following the discussions with the Romanian side, the film will start with the presentation of the picturesque relief of Transylvania, after which it will present the legendary figure of Vlad Țepeș. The comment will emphasize that the character created by the English writer Bram Stoker is a real one, but not in the Homeric way in which he was presented, but he was a leader of these places hundreds of years ago"(ACNSAS. D 16319/16 79-80).

In a real propaganda action, the filming itinerary of the television team was enriched by the Romanian authorities with many other unsolicited tourist points, located on the route. Thus, the filming team was greeted in each city along the route by officials of the Ministry of Tourism who took them to visit various museums considered important for Romanian identity. They were introduced to the folk traditions of Romania, they were offered meals at restaurants with popular performances and even participated in a peasant wedding. The Securitate documents note with satisfaction the positive effect that this special treatment had on Ron Reagan, who, enthusiastic about the festive atmosphere, offered gifts to the bride and groom and was filmed in their midst. These scenes like the Potemkin Village had, according to the Securitate, a major effect of positive influence, all the more effective as it gave the illusion of naturalness and spontaneity. If in the

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beginning, the president's son had a reserved attitude, he gradually engaged in discussions, being surprised by the falsity of the images created about Romania. He was impressed by the spontaneity of the locals contacted and by the hospitality of the Romanian people. The Americans were pleasantly surprised by the support they received during their presence in Romania. Wanting to verify the beliefs of some old peasants about Dracula, when they denied that such a thing existed, the Americans came to the conclusion that the myth of Dracula is the creation of Western folklore and has nothing to do with the real Vlad the Țepeș (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 90-91).

The entire operation was set up by the Securitate and the Romanian officials with perfect discretion and fine dosage of the degree of interference from the outside. Thus, it was said in a note of the Securitate from April 28, 1987, on the occasion of filming in the medieval city of Sighisoara, the entire program was left to the guests, the hosts briefly presenting only a few facts about the “historical truth” about Dracula - through a museographer, prepared in advance, especially for this purpose. The film crew was allowed to ask the locals about the vampire Dracula and draw their conclusion that the bloody character Dracula is a fantasy Western creation. In conclusion, it is specified in the document,

the whole filming action took place in good conditions, without agitation and noise, the guests not asking any questions, not being interested in any sensitive problem. Before

they arrived at the Sighișoara fortress, measures were taken to remove some unwanted persons from the area expected to be visited. Cleaning and order measures were taken in the affected area. Discreet security and safety measures were taken for the group and the cars they came with, without them being noticed by the guests. (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 101-102)

Finally, the person for whom this staging was intended, Ron Reagan, concluded that Romania is a beautiful country and expressed his regret that the filming action was over. At the end of the visit, Securitate officers reported with satisfaction that “the appropriate framework has been created for the positive influence of the opinions of American filmmakers regarding the voivode Vlad Țepeș and, in general, about the Socialist Republic of Romania. With the support of external intelligence services, we will follow how the reportage will be written and broadcast in the USA” (ACNSAS. D 16319/16. 98).

### **Conclusions**

The Securitate's interventions on the Dracula issue had, in general, a control and prevention role; the institution was not interested, in fact, in the ideological or historiographical debates related to this subject, but only in their effects on the policy of the communist state. For this reason, the Securitate officers reduced the issue to their familiar things, for which they had clear instructions to solve - we refer to irredentism (Hungarians' claims on

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Transylvania), Romanians' ties with foreigners, or the corruption prevention of Romanian officials. The issue so important for "Leonte" of the Dracula routes and the separation of the Dracula-Țepeș figure was not in itself an interest for the Securitate, but only in terms of the implications on the country's image. The Dracula tourists were pursued by the Securitate not for vampirizing the image of the voivode, but because they were considered agents of irredentism, and because their maps and leaflets presented a Hungarian Transylvania as a hundred years ago. Historical propaganda was left to the regime's historians, who were sent abroad to hold conferences while tourist propaganda was made by the Ministry of Tourism through guides or tourist offices abroad. Despite the general opinion of an almighty Securitate, it could not make decisions about the political or economic direction to follow, but only made proposals to the political forums or oversaw the implementation of the decisions already taken.

Concerning the visit of the filming team from ABC television, the Securitate's actions had a public relations character, designed to create a positive image of the political regime in Romania, and the Dracula topic was used as an ancillary one. The importance given to the son of the American president Ronald Reagan, in this act of influence, clarifies only the patrimonial conception about the power, shared by the Romanian officials in the '80s, an image derived from the exacerbation of the cult of personality of Nicolae Ceaușescu, who had placed his family members in significant positions

of authority. In this way, the Romanian officials came to consider that Romania's relations with the USA could be improved by influencing Ronald Reagan's son.

Throughout the communist regime in Romania, the Dracula tourism operated in a gray area, with imprecise regulations, designed by so-called specialists, either from the Ministry of Tourism or from local decision-making levels. In this sense, we have the example of the informant “Leonte”, a middle-level official, who tried to impose his vision on the Dracula tourism itineraries, based on his relations with the Securitate. In designing the Dracula routes, tourism officials had to take into account a certain national-patriotic spirit, imprinted from a higher level by the ideological structures of the state. The strong ideas of these guidelines referred to Transylvania as an ancient Romanian land (although until 1918 it belonged to other states), to the richness and diversity of the local popular culture, and to the glorious history of the country. All these topics had to be presented to foreign tourists travelling to Romania. For this reason, Dracula journeys, based exclusively on the legend of the vampire count, could not be accepted by Romanian officials and were combined with itineraries containing monuments of national consciousness, places of historical memory of the communist regime. The identity created around the vampire Dracula and Vlad Țepeș could not be managed satisfactorily by the Romanians, in order to clearly differentiate the two characters. Unable to accept that myth and the

irrational fundamentally define human existence, in an impossible struggle with fiction, the communist regime tried to rationalize the imagination and subject it to its ideology.

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