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Chronicling the Underground: The Diary of an Old Calendarist Monastic Brother*

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The secret police archives present the life of the religious underground as seen by the secret officers who were seeking to facilitate those communities' destruction. The state's official narrative about these clandestine groups is mirrored in alternative documents and narratives. This article focuses on the Old Calendarist Orthodox monastic community of the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in the Strada Televiziunii in Bucharest at the end of the communist regime. It showcases the life of the monastery as described in the diary of a monastic novice whose written account of becoming a monk described the last days of the monastery before its destruction by the secret police in 1983.

Keywords: *Religious underground, Old Calendarists, Romanian communism, Romanian Orthodox Church, Evloghie Oța*

The religious underground of communist Romania resembled those in other East Central European countries.[1] Researchers have shown that its minority status impacted the way the religious underground was constructed both by the state and the religious community itself.[2] Underground/illegal religious communities had difficulty supporting a centralized organization because splinter groups surfaced often, faced fragmentation into smaller groups, placed importance on communication, and were impacted by charismatic leaders.

The religious underground was a fertile environment for heterodoxies and heteropraxies, and a space where orthodoxy was internalized in stricter adherence to religious norms. The underground's orthodoxy and heterodoxy were enforced by the political context and the geography

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[1] James Kapaló and Kinga Povedák, "Introduction. Reframing the religious underground," in *The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and post-Communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Kapalo and Povedak (London: Routledge, 2021), 1–36.

[2] Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the margins. How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach about it* (Oxford: University Press, 2014).

of the communities (the absence of a nearby center to enforce religious rules, correct behavior, and teach) and was aided by the political and religious hostility directed against it. The religious underground faced the double enmity of the state and the majority denomination, the one they splintered from and the one they competed with by proselytizing.[3] Faced with a religious enemy that contested their very existence, religious practices and dogma, as well as with a competitor for the allegiance of their believers, the underground religious communities adopted stricter practices, becoming more aware of theological requirements especially when confronted with an unfriendly environment that prevented practice of the faith.[4]

This article outlines the characteristics of the underground as performed in the Old Calendarist monastic community of the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Strada Televiziunii, Bucharest, at the end of the communist regime from the end of the 1970s to 1989. It showcases the life of the monastery as described in the diary of a monastic novice whose account of becoming a monk was written before the monastery was destroyed by the secret police in 1983.[5] The article uses the diary of Petre Murgu, later brother Teodosie, as an account that parallels the official narrative preserved in the secret police file on the leader of the Bucharest monastic community, Archbishop Evloghie Oța, and his followers.[6]

This article uses the description by the secret police of the leader of the Old Calendarist community as well relying on the diary of Petre Murgu as a first-hand account of the everyday life inside the monastery. I argue that secret archives do not depict the community life but often are

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[3] Kapaló and Povedák, "Introduction," 16.

[4] Anca Șincan, "În clandestinitate: minorități religioase nerecunoscute de lege în arhivele Securității", *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio Umane*, Tîrgu-Mureș XXII (2019): 218–32.

[5] "Events and stories from the everyday life happening in the Bucharest monastery Dormition of the Mother of the Theotokos, in Televiziunii street, 13" signed by the newly inducted hierodeacon Teodosie Murgu, manuscript, copy in possession of the author received from the archives of the Intercession of the Theotokos Monastery, Șelimbăr, Sibiu.

[6] The Archives of the National Councils for the Study of Securitate Archives (ACNSAS), Files I161963 vol. 1–4, I161965, I 161966. The Archives of the Secretary for Religious Affairs (SSC), File Evloghie Oța and Monahism (not processed in the archives).

anti-histories of the group and hostile biographies of the individuals[7] that answer the questions and interests of the secret police. One should be wary of making the secret police's narrative of these communities and individuals public since it is often constructed to help in destroying them.[8] However, this is, in many cases, the only narrative that reflects the history of the community and thus we find ourselves in the position of not being able to ignore it.[9]

By contrast, the diary offers a direct and unmediated look into the life of the community from a personal viewpoint. Diaries were common in late communism in Europe as ways of situating the individual in a historical narrative, and dealing with the past and the present.[10] For individuals from underground communities, diaries acted as community archives that superseded the individual and described the community in antithesis to the state. This article discusses the significance for the individual and community of a diary that chronologically presented events in the final years of a monastic community under communism.

This discussion of the religious underground also rests on autobiographies found in the secret police file that complement the narratives in the diary and the secret police biography of religious community members. Autobiographies describe the life of the individual from a different angle than the diary or the file biography. Since the autobiography follows a preexisting structure enforced on the person by the secret police at a time when the individual is under police pressure, the elements that make up its narrative differ from those in the diary/memoir, thus offering a separate viewpoint that, while personal, is constricted by the environment where it was written (under arrest/in prison).[11]

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[7] Alison Lewis, "Reading and Writing the Stasi File on the Uses and Abuses of the File as (Auto)biography," *in German life and letters* 56, no. 4 (2003): 377–97.

[8] Şincan, "Ethical Questions in Researching the Religious Underground in Romania's Secret Police Archives, Part I and II," https://jordanrussiacenter.org/news/our-story-ethical-questions-on-researching-the-religious-underground-in-the-secret-police-archives-part-i/#.YmBFZC8Rq3U, accessed February 24, 2022.

[9] See the Introduction "The Archives of Eternity," in Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom, A Russian Folktale* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1–10.

[10] Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[11] See discussion on autobiographies in Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul, Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

This three-way look into community life through the life narratives of two members, the elderly charismatic leader and the young would-be monk, is more comprehensive than an examination based solely on secret police narratives about the life of individuals and communities placed under surveillance. Juxtaposing these narratives that offer different accounts of the same history bypasses the canonicity of the archival discourse.

Old Calendarists in the underground

The Old Calendarist Romanian Orthodox Church separated from the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the early 1920s, when that Church adopted the new secular calendar.[12] The Old Calendarist communities, scattered throughout Moldova, saw the adoption of the new calendar as a peril of modernization and proof that the secular realm was becoming increasingly involved in religious life. By contrast, for the ROC the Old Calendarists demonstrated the danger of fragmentation of a new national church seeking to unite and centralize regional Orthodox communities into a coherent institution that, along with the institutions of the new Romanian state formed in 1918, would legitimize and define what it was to be Romanian. The ROC's attempt to bring the Old Calendarists into the fold were at times forceful, and seconded by state actions. Religious leaders, clergymen and laymen were arrested, imprisoned, exiled[13] or forced to flee to nearby provinces where the old calendar was recognized (Bessarabia). Violent clashes with the state militia resulted in church burnings and pillaging of communities.[14] As the Old Calendarists were not officially recognized in the new state, membership in the community was punishable by law and religious celebrations using the old calendar were forbidden. The sole trait that distinguished them from the ROC was the calendar.

Until the start of World War II, the Old Calendarists retained the same status in the new Romanian state. Both the state and the ROC attempted to do away with the community by integrating it into the ROC

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[12] Roland Clark, Sectarianism and Renewal in 1920s *Romania The limits of Orthodoxy and Nation Building* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 80–6.

[13] Sfântul ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul, *O viață pentru Hristos, Viața, pătimirile* și *minunile Sfântului Ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul*, Second edition (Slătioara: Editura Schimbarea la Față, 2012).

[14] Iuliana Cindrea, "Mugshot of Old Calendarist leader Glicherie Tănase Romania," http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item/19, accessed February 21, 2022.

by force, if need be, because for them the Old Calendarists' existence challenged a conception of national identity rooted in Orthodoxy. The Old Calendarists obtained official recognition for a short while: "after a short period when the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church was recognized legally by the Romanian state in 1945 under the title The Traditionalist Christian Denomination (Cultul Creștin Tradiționalist) the new communist framework for religious life introduced in 1948 no longer recognized the Church."[15]

Except for this brief recognition, from the beginning of the 1920s to the end of the 1980s the Old Calendarist Church remained underground. Their behavior was shaped by the context in which the community was forced to exist. The context impacted communication between communities, hindered access to clergy and church buildings, and influenced the practice of religion by interrupting cyclicity. Secrecy influenced attendance. Discrimination and illegality imposed a developed awareness of religious behavior. These specificities were soon part of the inheritance of religious practice between generations and between regimes. The high significance of charismatic figures, the importance of martyrdom for the faith, the existence of antinomies between religious and secular and between religious beliefs were features the Old Calendarists retained both during the interwar period and the communist one.

The imposition of communism did not change the behavior of the state and the ROC towards the Old Calendarists. For a short while the state and the ROC acted separately against the Old Calendarist communities. The ROC continued to survey their religious activities and several ROC clergy joined the Old Calendarists when confronted with problems within the ROC.[16] In 1948 the state reintroduced the Old Calendarists on the list of illegal religious communities. Within a decade the state and the ROC joined efforts in suppressing the underground religious communities, especially splinter groups like the Old Calendarists. The dialogue between the state and the ROC regarding the Old Calendarist Church is reflected in the archives of the Ministry of Religious Denominations in letters asking for sanctions of various Old Calendarist clergymen and

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[15] Cindrea and Şincan, "Old Calendarists," http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item-set/173, accessed February 21, 2022.

[16] Elena Zodieru, *Mitropolitul Galaction Cordun, apărător al dreptei credințe* (Iaşi: PIM, 2018); Florian Bichir, *Dosarul "Mitropolitul Galaction Cordun" – Un aventurier* în *reverendă, un agent secret sau o victimă a comunismului* (Sibiu: Editura Agnos, 2012).

communities who practiced their faith in ROC parishes, sanctions against proselytism, attempts to distance themselves from the Old Calendarist religious activities or informing the state of the correspondence from the Old Calendarist clergy and hierarchs that was received by the Holy Synod.[17] In its letters, the ROC also informed the state about potential theological mishandling of practice or dogma in an effort to educate state employees on the distinctions between the ROC and the groups that splintered from it.[18]

The Old Calendarist Church only minimally changed their behavior under communism. In the 1950s, an attempt was made to create a canonical hierarchy with the help of clergymen who defected from the ROC. Their integration into the community led to a petitionary drive. A dialogue was attempted all throughout the communist regime with both the state and the ROC by some Old Calendarist leaders to legalize that Church. The present case study is focused on one such community created around a charismatic leader who joined the Old Calendarists after leaving the ROC, Archbishop Evloghie Oța.

The community of Old Calendarists in Bucharest was a relatively new one. Centered around the charismatic Archbishop Evloghie Oța (1909-1979), it dated from the mid-1960s when he founded the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in a house atStrada Televiziunii 13. The first mention of the community in state documents is found in the archives of the Ministry for Religious Affairs[19] and the secret police. The Ministry started to trace the activity of Evloghie Oța in the 1940s when he returned to Romania from Mount Athos and became the abbot of the Râmeț monastery in Alba County; the secret police placed him under surveillance on and off from the beginning of the 1950s, when Oța was defrocked by the ROC and joined the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church. Thus, the two state institutions and the ROC described Evloghie Oța and later the Bucharest Old Calendarist monastery in three narratives that offer different views of the life of the community. Correspondence between community members and outsiders intercepted by the secret police, autobiographies written by community leaders and monastic brothers placed under arrest, writings that survived the destruction of the community in

[17] ACNSAS, I161963, vol. 2, 142; ACNSAS, I161963, vol. 3, 3.

[18] SSC Archives, File Evloghie Oța (not processed in the archives).

[19] *Decision to open the verification file regarding Oța Sabin, called Evloghie*, CNSAS, I161963, vol 1, 3.

1983, photographs and the journal of the young Petre(Teodosie) Murgu at his entry into monastic life piece together the life within the monastery walls.

Archbishop Oța - the charismatic leader

In 1940, monk Evloghie Oța came back to Romania from Mount Athos, where he spent two decades.[20] Because of the war he was unable to return to Mount Athos, being instead appointed by the ROC as abbot of Râmeț Monastery. His journal described his settlement in Râmeț as guided by the Virgin Mary in a dream he had in Jerusalem and the Holy Land a few years prior. As the Râmeț Monastery was in ruins, he started a monastic community there by reviving the old place. The change of regime found him at Râmeț digging for the remains of Saint Ghelasie and restoring the old 17th century church. At the beginning of the 1950s in the turmoil that took over the ROC's monastic life that had problems adjusting to the life in the new regime, the new religious policies of the communist state, and the new communist sanctioned hierarchical leadership of the church Evloghie Oța's name began surfacing in several church files.[21] Creating problems in the relationship between the state and the church hierarchy was swiftly punished, and the church considered defrocking him. After his arrest, Oța stood trial for accusations of undermining state authority and sexual promiscuity (accusations that came from within the bishopric and were seen as credible by state authorities).[22] Released after the accusations were disproved, he joined the Old Calendarist Church at the invitation of Fr. Glicherie Tănase (later Bishop/ Archbishop). [23] He was among the first two bishops of the Old Calendarist Church. Arrested again in the late 1950s for proselytizing, unauthorized use of clerical vestments and undermining state authority, Oța was sentenced to 10 years in prison and released in 1964. He moved to Bucharest to Strada Televiziunii

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[20] Evloghie documented his return from Athos in his memoir/diary that he kept during the 1940s while in Râmeț, Oța, *Diary* (manuscript, copy), author's personal library. A shortened version of his travels can be found in his correspondence with the communist authorities (CNSAS, I161963, vol. 1, 17) and the autobiographies written for his secret police file.

[21] Characterization of Evloghie Oța in SSC Archives, file Monahism, not processed in the archives.

[22] *Report regarding the proposal to arrest Sabin Oța* (Evloghie), in: ACNSAS, I161963, vol. 4, 5.

[23] Sfântul ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul, *O viață pentru Hristos*.

13, where he served as bishop and from the mid-1970s Archbishop to the underground Old Calendarist Church and led a fervent community around an underground chapel.[24] Oța often petitioned the state to legalize his church. Followed closely by the secret police, he was repeatedly arrested. The church in Televiziunii street was destroyed following his arrest and was rebuilt after he was released from prison. During religious services, when the secret police could have arrested everyone, especially when praying,[25] Bishop Evloghie used to barricade himself in the altar using shiplap to cover the entrance. This way, in the time it took the secret police to take it down he would be able to consume the Body of Christ so the religious service could not be desecrated.[26]

The church that was rebuilt for the fourth time also housed his grave. In 1979, just months after he endowed his church with bells, Archbishop Evloghie died and was buried underneath the altar in his episcopal garments. Four years later the secret police destroyed the church, dismantled the community, dug up the grave, and removed the body of the archbishop. The monastic community was arrested, indicted and imprisoned, while the area in Strada Televiziunii 13 was plowed and given over to agriculture.



Fig. 1: Photograph of Old Calendarist community surrounding Archbishop Evloghie at Dormition of Mother of God Monastery in Bucharest (ca. 1979)[27]

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[24] ACNSAS, I161963, vol 1, 3

[25] ACNSAS, I161963, vol 1, 182

[26] Bishop Flavian Bărgăoanu, interviewed by Șincan, Bucharest, June 10th, 2019.

[27] Image from the online FB group of the Old Calendarist community, "Imagini de Arhivă ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil," vechi posted on April 9, 2019.

Hidden Chapels, open secrets

The secret police archives contain a rich six-volume file on Evloghie Oța covering the period starting in the early 1950s until 1979, when he died, and 1983, when he was reburied. The documents paint a complex picture of overlapping layers – biographical/ autobiographical, monitoring his mail, notes from informants, his petitionary activity to the state and the ROC, activity reports of secret police officers. There is a thick description of his clerical activity and the entire file recognizes Evloghie with his title (Bishop of the Stilist [Old Calendarist] Church).[28] His activities were known to the secret police, the Department for Religious Denominations and the ROC, and Bishop Evloghie took pains to make them known to these state and religious institutions. The file includes several theological writings and letters to the Old Calendarist communities in the country on the practice of the ritual, spiritual guidance, and administration of parishes in his bishopric.

The file contains several pictures of Archbishop Evoghie Oța, his followers (clergy, monks, believers) and his underground chapel. Not all pictures are dated, and by reading the file one finds that the secret police thrice tore the chapel down during Archbishop Evloghie's life, each time also arresting him. After leaving the prison, he took the long road to building/restoring the church and asking for permits to which he never received an answer,[29] collecting money[30] and rebuilding his parish. His Sisyphean work repeatedly got the same result: a new church was built but destroyed when the secret police found out about it.

Initially the underground chapel was hidden in the house where Evloghie lived in Strada Televiziunii, but after the 1970s the church was raised separately from the house which served as residence for the small number of monastic brothers present in the monastery. The hidden church remained open to the members of the underground community. The neighbors noticed both the influx of believers attending religious services[31] and the monastery brothers who either lived on those premises or shared living space with the bishop. Religious services were held daily,

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[28] Similar files of underground bishops use the titles with a qualifier: clandestine.

[29] *Request for approval*, ACNSAS, I161963, vol 4, 250.

[30] Şincan, "Images of Old Calendarist underground church in Bucharest," http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item/24, accessed February 24th, 2022.

[31] ACNSAS, I161963, vol 1, 250.

being interrupted only during secret police raids. Outsiders came often. The bishop was a sought-after spiritual advisor who kept in touch with his followers. Workers came inside the compound, especially during construction of the church building. By the end of the 1970s when the third church was completed, the activity of the community was well known to the secret police, and therefore the community and by then Archbishop Evloghie no longer attempted to hide. Some provisions were put in place by the bishop like the possibility to barricade the altar on short notice to allow the community to function and avoid the desecration of the services.

In an interview, the current religious leader of the community in Televiziunii street, Bishop Flavian discussed provisions to safeguard religious services and ensure continuity of religious life inside the monastery during the 1970s, when he belonged to the community. The continuous study of religious teachings, the immediate integration of visitors into monastic life, learning singing through practice, induction into several models of monastic life, strict adherence to orthodox practice and behavior[32] were characteristics that can also be found in the documents collected by the secret police regarding the life in the community.[33] These features are specific to underground communities, and they further include the orality of transmission, the influence of the charismatic leader on the transmission of religious teachings, the emphasis on behavior and religious praxis.[34]

The second half of the 1970s normalized religious life in that Bucharest monastery. The secret police surveyed the archbishop, but its inference into the life of the community was less noticeable for several reasons. The secret police knew the archbishop was severely ill,[35] and believed the community's survival depended on him. Benefiting from this status quo when the monastery finished the building of the church, the painting, and contracts for the manufacturing of the church bells, with the awareness of his death approaching, Archbishop Evloghie engaged in a teaching project. The archive does not have access to this project,

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[32] Bishop Flavian Bărgăoanu interviewed by Șincan, Bucharest, June 10th, 2019.

[33] ACNSAS, I161965, 1.

[34] See the conversion to orthodoxy of Vera Iakovlevna and her description of Fr. Serafim in: Wallace L. Daniel, *Women of the Catacombs Memoirs of the Underground Orthodox Church in Stalin's Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Northern Illinois University Press, 2021), 1–80.

[35] Bărgăoanu, *Scurta mea biografie*, ACNSAS, I 161963, vol 4, 273–74.

on whose success the archbishop based the existence of the community following his death. One can assume the reason the archbishop asked a young man who joined the monastery during this period to write a memoir/ diary of his life inside the community was connected to this transmission of knowledge prompted by his approaching death.[36]

Writing a diary during the last decades of communism

At the end of the 1970s, a young man of 19 was asked to keep a diary of his monastic experience in the Old Calendarist Orthodox Monastery "The Dormition of the Theotokos". The underground community built by and around Metropolitan Evloghie Oța was about to complete the third reconstruction of the church after its last demolition by the state and secret police in 1969.

The diary – a personal, individual exercise meant to form or sediment an identity – was born out of monastic duty and obedience as a way to give voice to the community's charismatic leader in his final years. The diary is not only about the young man's life but about those moments of life he spent in the monastery and the community. He excludes the periods when he is not in the monastery, attending school, visiting family, fulfilling mandatory army service.[37] This raises the question of how private this personal exercise was and how much it reflected the metropolitan's effort to describe the activities of the monastery for posterity. Metropolitan Evloghie is familiar with what a journal signified for his work and for illustrating the life of the community. He kept a diary in his youth,[38] while an ROC abbot at Râmeț where he chronicled the rebuilding of the monastery. The building effort in Râmeț was similar to the stage that the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery was going through at the time when Brother Teodosie began his diary. Someone was needed to chronicle everyday life during those years that the bishop thought important.

Moreover, individualism was not encouraged within the confines of the monastery. The individual was part of a whole and Teodosie's diary reflected this. The reader is faced here with something similar with the way in which diaries and autobiographies were constructed during the

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[36] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories".

[37] *Ibidem*, 83–84.

[38] Oța, *Diary* (manuscript, copy), article author's personal library.

Stalinist period when "I" was replaced by "we" (the collective, communist self).[39] The individual turns into the collective, changing into what ideology or, in this case, monastic life required. "The enlarged life of the collective was seen as the source of true subjecthood. It promised vitality, historical meaning, and moral value, and it was intensely desired."[40] The same could be said of the religious community, where belonging provided purpose and a way of life.

Finally, the diary is about what is written and what is self-censored. The personal life outside the monastery, for instance, was left out. That the diary was more than a personal exercise was revealed by the fact that the diary was left in the monastery while Teodosie was drafted into the army. How much was the author going to investigate his innermost thoughts if his private reflections would belong to the community? Where did he draw the line between what he mentioned and what he kept for himself? Was this text a diary when written with the knowledge that privacy was lacking?

Self-censorship could also appear in the historical context in which the monastery was functioning. The diary was a dangerous piece of writing[41] since the secret police was extremely interested in this genre, as seen in many such documents found in secret files and the objects requisitioned (diaries, memoirs, notebooks, letters, personal notes). The community was aware of the importance of the diary. It chronicled the life of the monastery during one of its most troubled periods. Indeed, it was saved from the secret police during the destruction of the monastery by being buried in the garden.[42]

Growing up in the monastery

Why does one keep a diary when such writing is dangerous? Irina Paperno noted that in the last years of the Soviet Union personal accounts, memoirs and diaries became more frequent.

> Russian memoirists, she noted, are driven by a need to claim their survival, commemorate the dead, provide historical data and ethnographic

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[39] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Boston MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), xi.

[40] *Ibidem*,10.

[41] *Ibidem*, 8.

[42] Informal discussion with Fr. Ghelasie from the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos on April 8, 2019.

> material, talk through their traumatic past, repent, accuse, and denounce. There are also the writer's imperative to write about himself, the scholar's urge to make his life into an object of investigation, the public demand (or publisher's commission) to disclose the lives of celebrities—all encouraged by the new possibilities to speak, from the political ethos of openness during Gorbachev's glasnost to the availability of unrestrained publishing opportunities in post-Soviet Russia.[43]

However, in Teodosie's case the author (and Archbishop Oța on whose advice the diary was written) was interested not in the past but in the present. They understood, or at least Archbishop Oța did, that they lived in significant times for the life of the underground church. The diary was written because its relevance was more important than the danger of writing it. This was Teodosie's monastic obedience (*ascultare monahală*), a job/request from an elder, a rite of passage from his secular life to his monastic vow. A similar dilemma about writing a diary was raised in the case of Vera Iakovlevna Vasilevskaia who, while converting to the Russian Orthodox Church at the height of the Stalinist anti-religious repression, debated keeping a diary with Fr. Serafim, the church elder who was her confessor. Writing the diary became possible for Vera only when it acquired a significance beyond the individual need in the eyes of Fr. Serafim.[44]

The diary titled "Events and stories from the everyday life happening in the Bucharest monastery Dormition of the Mother of the Theotokos, in Televiziunii street, 13" was signed by the newly inducted "hierodeacon Teodosie Murgu," who with "the blessing and encouragement of His Eminence Metropolitan Evloghie [was instructed] to write the events happening in this monastery that are important as much for the present as for the future: to remember."[45] The significance of the writing was thus spelled out in the title page. The title leads the reader to consider this a chronicle more than a personal excursion in one's private life.

The diary's first 30 pages recounted the entry into monastic life of Petre Murgu, who became monk Teodosie (1974–1977). His entry into the monastery was encouraged by his mother, who gave him the monastery's address and the name of the bishop when he came to school in Bucharest.

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[43] Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet*, 1.

[44] Daniel, *Women of the Catacombs*, 1–80.

[45] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories", second cover.



Fig. 2: Photograph of young brothers at Dormition of Mother of God Monastery in Bucharest on November 30th, 1977, among them the newly hierodeacon Teodosie and monk Flavian[46]

He started his journey as a boy and went through the stages that prepared him for a monastic life that he described in naïve undertones, he related his fears when joining the order, his surprise at being chosen for priesthood, his frustration over his shortcomings, his joy when the archbishop helped him try on an under cassock and a kamilavka (the hat) and sent him to the church's tailor to have his measurements taken for his own monastic clothes.[47] This joy was interrupted when the secular life intervened brutally through his thoughts about what he left behind ("what will die with me when I'll die as man and will be born a monk").[48] The diary accounts for the prayers he is taught, the literature he is advised to read by the archbishop. He remembers the details of his growing up as a monastic brother. He was announced by the archbishop on 5 August 1975 after dinner that he was suited for monastic life. Another day at 4.50 pm he was dressed in monastic clothes. On 11 January he found out

[46] Image from the online Facebook Group of the Old Calendarist community, "Imagini de Arhivă ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil vechi", posted on May 30, 2021.

[47] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories", 5v.

[48] *Ibidem*, 8v.

he was to be called Teodosie in the monastery. All these dates and hours are cloaked in symbolism and become his new biography.

This first part is dominated by the figure of the Metropolitan, who was present as a mentor, educator, and father figure for the adolescent. Archbishop Evloghie selected the readings, prayers, services, clothes, moments in time the young Petre Murgu took part in. He patronized events, presented his own entry into monastic life as an example, and inducted the boy into the life of the monastery and of the church. They joined other underground Old Calendarist communities, and took part in their religious services. Snapshots of a rich religious life were introduced into this narrative of Petre becoming Teodosie. Surprisingly, an uninformed journal reader could hardly observe the clandestinity of life in the monastery.[49] The secrecy that surrounded the community is made apparent by random comments: the contact with the community was made through initiated church members, the secular and religious lives are completely segregated, Petre was in high school and then had a job, but also had an entire life beyond the walls of the church. The two lives do not meet. The obsessive counting (hours of service, people coming to church, services performed) are facets of the underground. The religious life works on a different calendar than the secular one, on different hours and events, night becomes as significant as day, religious feasts and ceremonies break the way in which the week is structured in the secular realm. Petre/Teodosie lived in both.

Training took years. Petre was now 19. The archbishop gave final pieces of advice that he received himself while at Mount Athos: Pray to God so He would choose you among his monks "for many come to the monastery but few of them stay. So, I think you will fit, and I have a beacon of hope that you will be useful to me. Better you should think hard now than regret your choice later."[50] Petre's ordination was fast approaching. Because these events are closer in time from the moment Petre started his diary, and more significant for the author, they are more nuanced, he gives them more space in the economy of remembering his past.

> In the meantime, my monastic clothes were ready, and I went to pick them up. Two more weeks till the event and the days flew with the

[49] A similar image can be seen in Vera Iakovlevna Vasilevskaias diary where the life of the religious convert in the underground superseded the war, the secular life (job, family), the communist repression. See Daniel, *Women of the Catacombs*, 1–100.

[50] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories", 7–7v.

> speed of light. When I was thinking of that short time left, I was feeling that all my worries will end that day and I will end too. I was thinking and then I asked His Holiness whether everybody lives the same fears. And he told me that everyone that makes this same step has these fears because they'll have their whole life to live on that one decision. I was sent to the Archimandrite Pahomie who was to be there for the ceremony. I went, but I was terrified to tell him the reason [he was the monk to induct Petre into the order]. When he was supposed to arrive that evening [before the ceremony], every hour my fear grew, and I'd have given anything for him not to arrive. I was flinching every time I thought about it. And yet he came at 8.30 and the metropolitan received him with love, like he did with anyone arriving at the monastery, a brotherly love. They were filled with joy. It was something else […]. We sat at the table and after they went to sleep, and I went into the church as is customary for anyone preparing to become a monk. Morning came with the Matins [Utrenia] and while I was reading the prayers, I reached the highest point of my fears. The metropolitan calls me to him and I kneel before him and read the prayer. It was a short one, but frightening, awaiting to see what was to be my name when he reached the lines: The servant of God Teodosie is tonsured […]. What followed is hard to describe.[51]

I allowed Teodosie's words to describe his "birth into monastic life" for, while this part is the prequel to the diary, it sets the tone for his writing. Personal inserts populate the diary, intimate forays into feelings and questions of choices. The monk opens up his inner world to the pages of the diary from time to time. Amid descriptions of religious services, communal living, meetings, dinners, talks, descriptions of people (visitors at the monastery), his brothers, his hierarchical superiors the reader gets glimpses of intimate incursions into his own thoughts and questions, his petty jealousy of the successes of others, his hero worship stances when metropolitan Evloghie takes over entire pages of the diary. It is really a battle between I and WE, between Teodosie's journey and Teodosie's chronicle of monastic life.

[51] *Ibidem*, 9v–10.



Fig. 3: Photograph of Archbishop Evloghie between monk Flavian (right) and hierodeacon Teodosie (left) at Dormition of Mother of God Monastery in Bucharest in August 1978[52]

Trauma

The diary was meant to present life in the monastery at its apogee by finalizing the painting, enlarging the monastic collective, and entering into a routine that was unfamiliar for the underground community. One intercepted letter from Evloghie in those years talked about a dream he had of God who told him that if he built the monastery this third time the monastery will survive. It is perhaps one of the reasons he was bringing new brothers into the fold. It is a possible reason for this chronicle written by Teodosie.

The secret police files reveal something that Teodosie does not mention in his diary. He might not have known. Evloghie had cancer. The medical file appears in his secret police file. His health problems were

[52] Image from the online Facebook Group of the "Old Calendarist community Imagini de Arhivă ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil vechi", posted on April 9, 2019.

touched upon but treated lightly. However, coupled with the information the secret police had one can see he knew his end was near. The newly built church had his burial place under the altar. One of his visitors writes an informant note with a description of the place.[53] Death seemed omnipresent. In his diary, Teodosie made no note of it until it happened. Teodosie and Fr. Flavian were present when the metropolitan died, in the middle of the night. Teodosie was left with the dying Evloghie, his teacher and spiritual father. The pages of the diary captured this in vivid imagery, last words, the fear, the hope against hope, the struggle, the description of the actions taken by Fr. Flavian after Evloghie's death.

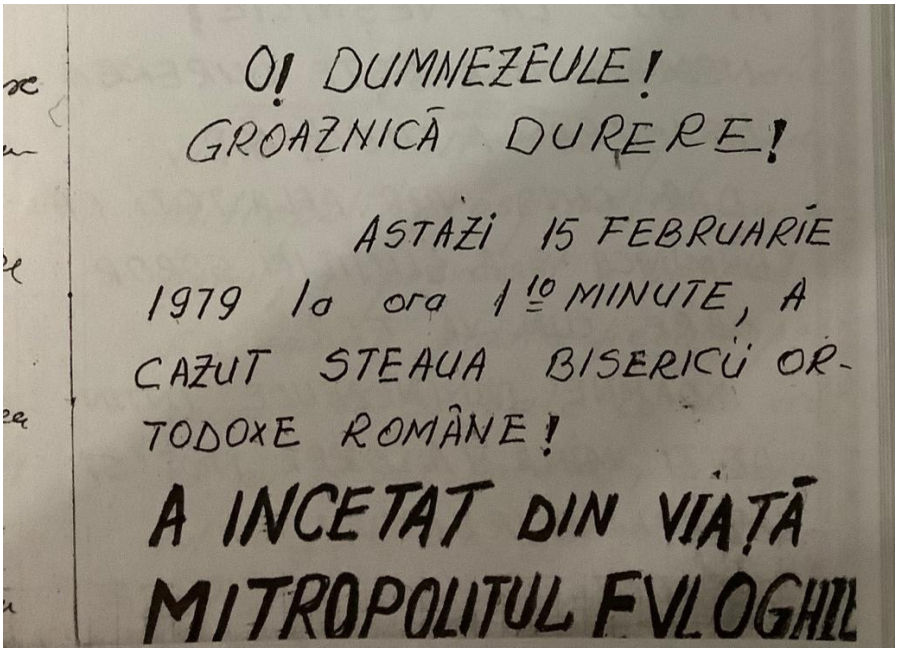


Fig. 4: Snapshot of page 34 from Teodosie's diary announcing Metropolitan Evloghie's death[54]

There is no description of Evloghie's death in the secret files on him. The Department for Religious Denomination has a description of the wake that was held three days after his funeral.[55] The secret police ended his file believing that the community would disappear with his death.

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[53] ACNSAS, I161965, 40, 46–7.

[54] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories", 34.

[55] SSC Archives, File Evloghie Oța (not processed in the archives).

The diary shows the trauma brought about by the death of the hierarch, which had to be recorded for the future. Teodosie wrote about the death and life of Metropolitan Evloghie on several pages of information from Evloghie's accounts and others.[56] A month later the journal reads: "I have no one to tell of my sorrow but God, but now I 'avenge' myself on this notebook. Maybe in the future I'll be happy rereading these things or maybe they will make me sad, remembering what used to be."[57] A week after, he noted: "A month has passed since we buried his eminence, and all is saddened by the great departure. Indeed, now that I haven't seen him in such a long time, I start to realize that he is gone forever. My soul is filled with sorrow."[58]

Teodosie returned to his journal to heal himself, he talked about his stages of grief, he talked about the mourning process, he counted the days and described the services for the dead, he looked for evidence unseen that the metropolitan was still there, he felt his spirit, saw him in birds, and sudden gusts of wind. In writing the diary he dealt with his trauma. The diary was no longer about posterity but about the present, it became a tool.

In conclusion

The religious underground reflected in the secret police and other state archives is often a constructed image, a distortive mirror that shows pieces that create a narrative sufficient to justify its destruction. Knowledge was not the end result of such a collection of information on underground religious communities, destruction was, at least in theory. The image about the past the researcher obtains from these archives is skewed, constructed by the state to help in the demise of the underground religions. At the same time, the history of the underground is seldom preserved elsewhere. Their own attempt to narrate their past in a community archive was haphazard, always impacted by their illegal, secretive status, their lack of institutions and people capable or willing to risk creating a paper trail that could offer the state a reason to arrest them. The secret police was also a collector, requisitioning elements that would make up the community's archive (photographs, theological and personal writings, correspondence). Writing a history of the underground that is not tributary of

[56] Murgu (Teodosie), "Events and stories", 42–6.

[57] *Ibidem*.

[58] *Ibidem*.

the narrative of the secret police relies also on chance. Documents from community members, oral accounts, images, literature create a mirror that could be placed in front of the state archive to challenge it.

In this case reconstructing the life in the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the last years of communism owes much to the preservation of a diary that chronicled the events written by Petre Murgu during the time he became the monk Teodosie. The diary is not only a personal excursus of the young Petre Murgu but also a chronicle of daily life in the monastery. Its readership was never intended to be the author. Instead the diary was meant to preserve the community for posterity. Written as an exercise in obedience at the request of Archbishop Evloghie, the diary narrates the history of the Old Calendarist community in Bucharest independently from the narrative recorded by the secret police.

An important part of the diary is Teodosie's self-revelation; his constant oscillation between personal need and duty, between autobiography and chronicle offers the reader entry into the life of an underground monastery. The diary chronicles the journey of self-discovery of a man of God, of his coming of age in the church. The omissions speak also. The oppressive state, the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the secular life are excluded, mentioned in passing or not at all. Was this a conscious effort by the author or were they less central than researchers might think based on the secret police files? We're faced in the files with a clandestine community and yet Teodosie's journey was very much an open one.