

# *Marietta Sadova: Fascist Identities and Political Compromise in Communist Romania*

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**Abstract:** After a brief period of liberalization in 1956, cultural politics in communist Romania went through an ideological radicalization between 1958 and the early 1960s, which led to intimidation campaigns, arrests, trials, and condemnations of several groups of interwar intellectuals. Director and actress Marietta Sadova was convicted in the 'Noica-Pillat' trial in March 1960. This paper aims to unravel the complex interaction between culture and politics through a qualitative analysis of Marietta Sadova's case study. The focus will be on the Securitate's surveillance, coercion methods, and narrative construction on one hand and the artist's surviving fascist identity, compromises made to survive, and the validity of cultural niches of existence on the other. The theoretical and methodological apparatus is built on new historiographical approaches to communist repression, including the ability of the secret police to construct and politically instrumentalize guilt narratives. The results suggest that the interaction between the interwar intellectuals and the communist authorities was neither unidirectional nor unitary but multi-layered and mutually depended on negotiations and concessions, as well as on the secret police agents' newly acquired methods of creating and repressing 'hostile' social networks.

**Keywords:** *communism, cultural politics, fascism, Marietta Sadova, repression, theatre*

**Rezumat:** După o scurtă perioadă de liberalizare în 1956, politicile culturale din România comunistă au intrat într-o perioadă de radicalizare între 1958 și începutul anilor 1960, care au dus la campanii de intimidare, arestări, procese și condamnări politice ale diferitelor grupuri de intelectuali socializați în perioada interbelică. Marietta Sadova, director și actor de teatru, a fost condamnată în procesul lotului „Noica-Pillat” în martie 1960. Articolul urmărește interacțiunea

complexă dintre cultură și politică în România anilor 1950 prin intermediul unei analize calitative asupra studiului de caz al Mariettei Sadova. Analiza se concentrează, pe de-o parte, pe tehnicile de supraveghere ale Securității, metodele coercitive aplicate și construcția narativă a vinovăției, iar pe de altă parte se operează o deconstrucție a identității fasciste reziduale, a compromisurilor realizate și a validității conceptului de nișe culturale ale existenței. Aparatul teoretic și metodologic se fundamentează pe baza unor abordări istoriografice moderne ale represiunii comuniste, accentuând capacitatea poliției secrete de a construi și instrumentaliza narațiuni ale vinovăției. Rezultatele studiului relevă faptul că interacțiunea dintre intelectualii interbelici și autoritățile comuniste nu a fost nici unitară, nici unidirecțională, ci poate fi definită mai degrabă ca multistratificată și dependentă reciproc de negocieri și concesiuni, precum și de noile metode ale agenților Securității de a inventa și ulterior reprimă rețele sociale „ostile”.

**Cuvinte-cheie: comunism, politici culturale, fascism, Marietta Sadova, represiune, teatru**

### Introduction

The Romanian communist regime was broadly divided into the Stalinist rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1947-1965) and the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989). The Gheorghiu-Dej regime was engaged in violent repression against entire social categories such as 'chiaburi' (*kulaks*), political opponents, intellectuals, resistance groups, and opinion leaders, resulting in tens of thousands of citizens killed, tortured, imprisoned, forcibly deported, or abusively deprived of their property for invented political crimes<sup>1</sup>. After political prisons and forced labour camps were closed in 1964, the regime changed its repressive strategies to subtler coercion methods in order to co-opt and control dissidents and intellectuals by employing symbolic, ideological, and material means and by trying to convince them to make concessions or develop politically neutral survival strategies<sup>2</sup>. Even if these two coercive methods seem different, they were complementary regarding the political aim they pursued, as the present study aims to unravel. Marietta Sadova holds an essential position in the cultural history of interwar and communist Romania, whose professional career frequently interfered with politics due to her profession as a director

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<sup>1</sup> Lavinia Stan, 'Women as anti-communist dissidents' in Florentina Andreescu, Michael Shapiro (ed.), *Genre and the (Post)Communist Woman*, Routledge, 2014, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84.

and actress. In communism, the theatre was a habitual practice for propaganda purposes and functioned based on a strictly supervised repertoire<sup>3</sup>. As a result, her sinuous path opens a new perspective on the relation between theatre performance and the secret police, as well as on well-researched concepts of 'resistance,' 'compromise' and 'victimhood'.

The present research tries to offer an answer to the question of cultural repression and political collaboration during the communist regime in Romania, starting from the premise that, between 1947-1989, even if the *cultural* and *political* fields were distinct, they were intertwined by mutual ideological intrusions and various social networks' conflicting interests. The intellectuals, especially the former fascists, democrats, social-democrats or apolitical, had different strategies to overcome their compromising political past and preserve their cultural status at the intersection of culture and politics while being targeted by the surveillance web of the Securitate.

The focus will be on an in-depth qualitative analysis of a case study of Marietta Sadova using her surveillance file from the CNSAS (National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives) archives. We will try to deconstruct the narrative of her conviction from 1960 and relieve her biography from ideological clichés and constraints. The novelty of the method is reflected in the analysis combining two perspectives on victimhood: the Securitate's bureaucratic and ideological view perspective through the CNSAS files, reports, and agents' annotations, and the victim's perspective from the notes written by informant cellmates during her arrest and interrogation. The synthesis of the two sources determined the final verdict delivered by the Securitate officers to the justice court. As for the historiographical debate around 'repression,' the analysis proposes a new perspective on its rationale, focusing on the newly acquired methods of the Securitate cadres from the USSR secret agents of constructing and later repressing social networks of 'hostile elements' rather than pursue separate individuals. It resulted from the training taken in the mid-1950s in the USSR by the Romanian secret police cadres. The approach comes as an addition to the classical historiographical perspective that considers the Romanian repression from the late 50s the mere result of the Hungarian revolution in 1956, neglecting the method-related transformations within the work of the Securitate officers.

The analysis of these complementary facets of the communist repression against an interwar theatre director and actress determines the structure of the study. Firstly, her attempt to find a 'cultural niche of

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<sup>3</sup> Monica Gheț, *Moments in the Destiny of Romanian Culture in Communism – Theater and Film*, in *Philobiblon, Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, vol. 8-9, 2003, p. 312.

existence'<sup>4</sup> through theatre to carry out her cultural activity without much intrusion of the communist ideological directives are examined. Secondly, the focus is on Sadova's failure to pursue an apolitical form of cultural activity without interfering with the state's ideological constraints, eventually leading to her imprisonment. She was part of a grander surveillance program of the Securitate, which was responsible for convicting hundreds of intellectuals in political trials based on obscure and retroactive faults. The recurrent element addressed throughout the research is the communist authorities' strategy to instrumentalize past and present political allegiances to construct the 'intellectual enemy' narrative at the intersection of past fascist engagement and alleged present anti-communist attitudes. From a micro-social perspective, the targeted intellectuals knew they had to carefully navigate these conflicting identities to survive the all-seeing gaze of the Securitate's informant networks.

In contrast, from a macro-social perspective, one could not have anticipated the repression methodically constructed around their specific social category. However, the conclusions suggest that even if the intellectuals avoided exposing their grievances towards the communist regime, the condemnation depended only on the will of the Securitate officers, not on the intellectuals' caution when meeting possible compromising social contacts. Given the nature of this equivocal conclusion, one limit of the study is the randomness of repression, and the incomprehensible choice of the Securitate for one targeted individual over another, as oral directives and behind-closed-doors plans are non-quantifiable units of analysis due to the lack of sources at our disposal.

### Theatre and the Iron Guard

Marietta Sadova was born on July 22, 1897 in Sibiu and went to Bucharest to study at the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts and pursue a theatrical career. She was an actress and theatre director under several regimes while coordinating the National Theatre and the 'Constantin

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of 'cultural niches of existence' was developed by Gabriel Andreescu in *Existența prin cultură. Represiune, colaboraționism și rezistență intelectuală sub regimul comunist*, [The Existence through Culture. Repression, collaborationism and intellectual resistance during Communist Regime], Humanitas, Bucharest, 2015. He provides an incipient theoretical and methodological framework, defining a 'cultural niche of existence' as a path of one intellectual's artistic affirmation, being a form of partial independence from the totalitarian power, which gives him meaning of his own life in a suffocating cultural field. In short, in order to create, the intellectual had to exist, and in order to exist, he had to be allowed to exist. Existing without working was a sentence to poverty and marginalization, while working required several compromises. The 'cultural niches of existence' gives us an innovative perspective on how certain intellectuals found a niche where the compromise between personal cultural standards and the interference of communist censorship was accepted as reasonable.

Nottara' Theatre in Bucharest. According to some research, Sadova was part of the second generation of Romanian artists and theoreticians who affirmed themselves between 1945-1947, alongside Ion Olteanu, Val Mugur, Petru Comarnescu, Alice Voinescu, Aurora Nasta, Mihai Popescu, Aura Buzescu, Ion Finişteanu<sup>5</sup>.

Sadova married poet, playwright, and novelist Ion Marin Sadoveanu in 1919, when she was 22. After their marriage, the couple pursued doctoral studies in Paris and returned to Romania in 1921. In the early 30s, Sadoveanu served as general director of Bucharest's theatre and opera and was appointed as undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Arts. The couple divorced in 1928 as Marietta carried on a clandestine love affair with Haig Acterian, a seven-years younger actor from Bulandra-Manolescu-Maximilian-Storin theatre company. Haig Acterian graduated from the Bucharest Conservatory and became the director of the National Theatre in 1940. He was the brother of lawyer Arşavir Acterian and director Jeni Acterian, the author of the famous *Diary of a Hard-to-Please Girl*. Due to her relationship with Haig, Marietta eventually joined the group Criterion Association, which gathered prominent cultural personalities such as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Vulcănescu, Arşavir Acterian, Petru Comarnescu and others. Marietta Sadova and Haig Acterian formed one of the most important and famous 'legionary couples' within the circle of nationalist intellectuals, and central figures in Bucharest's cultural elites<sup>6</sup>.

Marietta Sadova was both a talented actress and director and a controversial person regarding her political allegiances. She became a convinced activist for the Iron Guard in the late 1930s and enlisted in 1934 due to her anti-Semitic and radical Orthodox views. In the early 1940s, her actions revealed a combative, nationalist, and zealous religious person who used the National Theatre as a propaganda tool in recruiting young students for the looming victory of the Legion. According to Bejan, Sadova viewed herself as a 'bridge between her elite cultural community of theatre and film and the Legionary Movement,' directing her activity toward attracting people for the legionary cause<sup>7</sup>. Reports also noted that Sadova actively participated in the Legionary Rebellion in January 1941<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Monica Gheţ, *op.cit.*, p. 312. The list was inspired by actress Sorana Coroamă Stanca, a close friend of Marietta Sadova

<sup>6</sup> Anca Diana Axinia, *Women and Politics in the Romanian Legionary Movement*, PhD thesis, European University Institute, Florence, January 13 2022, p. 130

<sup>7</sup> Cristina A. Bejan, *Intellectuals and Fascism in Interwar Romania. The Criterion Association*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 234

<sup>8</sup> Archives of the Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (from now on ACNSAS), Informative Fund, File 209489, vol. 1, f. 114

The ongoing struggle for the ideals of the Iron Guard even after its defeat in 1941 has combined with Sadova's need for cultural survival under the communist regime. Haig Acterian was arrested and condemned to 12 years in prison, and due to his wife's efforts, he was sent by young King Michael to fight against Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front. Haig disappeared on the front in 1943, most likely being killed during the battles in the Kuban. However, Sadova never gave up on trying to reach her husband and continued to hold regular meetings with former Legionaries. She organized to aid and raise money for the arrested Legionaries and their family members while also drawing up a 'black list' of actors who did not sympathize with the Iron Guard, including the director of the 'Constantin Nottara' Theatre, Chiril Economu<sup>9</sup>. All these pro-Guardian initiatives strengthened the hatred of Sadova's colleagues against her, which later paved the way for various accusations directed toward her shady past in informant notes. The Securitate began collecting information concerning her political past allegiance and her alleged anti-communist remarks to instrumentalize Sadova's repression.

Like many other intellectuals, Marietta Sadova's survival depended on doubling her attitude toward the regime: she pursued her ideals in private while publicly manifesting approval for the communist regime. Her communist conversion was part of the survival tactic which allowed her to follow a theatre career without alarming the authorities about her fascist past. However, the Securitate followed her professional

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<sup>9</sup> During the 1950s, Chiril Economou was a vicious opponent of Marietta Sadova in the world of theatre, writing informant notes to the Securitate in order to discredit her. In a note from 1959, Economou described Sadova as 'third-hand actress' and a 'fleece brought to power by the legionaries' (ACNSAS, Informative Fund, File 209489, vol. I, f. 89). He claimed that since she was the coordinator of the National Theater, 'she had the ambition to succeed, defaming and challenging any talent that was beginning to assert himself or that was in full assertion. Marietta's portrait was clearly unfavourably constructed, being described as a talented but very cunning director, her career being linked to her ability to manipulate theatre directors and political elites to reach leadership positions. There were other details the Securitate was considering, such as actress Corina Constantinescu's religious wedding (Marietta Sadova's friend, former legionnaire) in the theatre hall, to whom Marietta presumably offered a 200,000 lei donation, while 'the monthly salary of the undersigned was 5,000 lei per month at that time. The note aimed to slander Sadova's legitimacy to hold leadership positions: 'Sadova remained a legionnaire through ideas and feelings' (ACNSAS, Informative Fund, File 209489, ff. 89-92). Even if the Securitate dismissed Economou's statements as 'unfounded' during the investigations, his notes were included in the 1960 trial sentence as it follows: 'The defendant [Marietta Sadova] also revealed her chauvinist-legionary feelings in the Nottara Theater, slandering the regime's achievements as reflected from the statements of witnesses Chiril Economou, Ludovic Antal and Stroescu Nela' (Mihai Giugariu (coord.), *Prigoana. Documente ale procesului C. Noica, C. Pillat, S. Lăzărescu și alții* [Persecution: Documents of the trial of C. Noica, C., Pillat, S. Lăzărescu and others], Ed. Vremea, Bucharest, 2010, p. 478.

and private life, suspecting that her allegiance to the regime was a curtain for hiding her unbroken legionary identity. On the other hand, Sadova quickly became a renowned actress and director under the socialist order. She has been decorated with the Order of Labour class II by Decree no. 59/1951 and distinguished as Hermit Master of Art by Decree no. 424/1953. In 1954, she was honoured with the State Prize by Decree no. 459/1954. Even if an unpublished decree would later withdrew these distinctions from 1960, when the actress faced imprisonment, they reflect the complex and often ambiguous transformations old intellectuals underwent in the new socialist regime.

### **Constructing the political file**

As Marietta Sadova was part of the 'Noica-Pillat trial' from 1960, her surveillance file was constructed on numerous insults and accusations contained in informant notes while surrounded by hostile colleagues at the theatre who sought to discredit her to fulfil personal ambitions. The insults and attempts to discredit her ranged from professional envy, accusations of lesbianism, favouring the legionnaires, or even suffering from mental disorders. Her file was mainly built on other actors' and artists' notes, which aimed to remove her as director of the 'Constantin Nottara' Theatre or to acquire several professional advantages: leading roles in plays, more money, or better-paid positions.

Marietta Sadova's fascist past emerged when numerous notes highlighted her political orientation from the interwar period, especially her active participation in the Legionary Rebellion from January 1941. The film begins with a Siguranță report from March 20, 1941, where Marietta Sadova was portrayed as a 'legionary fanatic' alongside her husband, Haig Acterian, and other artists<sup>10</sup>. The report's main concern was finding 17 rifles hidden in a lodge following a Siguranță search from March 16, 1941. The non-legionary artists were dissatisfied with the authorities for not taking action against the actors who wore the green uniform and took part in the rebellion. They accused the legionary artists of maintaining a climate of terror at the National Theatre.

Ultimately, the accusations in the report were aimed at Sadova's political stance: she insulted general Ion Antonescu, maintained a hostile atmosphere against the regime, encouraged legionary students to continue the political struggle, waited for the fall of the government, and believed in the revival of the Iron Guard. The report concluded that Marietta Sadova was 'extremely dangerous for supporting the legionnaires' morale in their

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<sup>10</sup> ACNSAS, Informative Fund, File 209489, vol. I, f. 114

action against the current regime<sup>11</sup>. The conspiracy scenarios about the existence of a secret 'Legionary Staff' continued five years away from the previous note. In an informative note from May 27, 1946, Sadova was related to a series of legionary sympathizers from the National Theatre, including Corina Constantinescu (actress), Mihai Constantinescu (violinist), and Ilinca Constantinescu (student). The report seeks to 'expose' an incipient Iron Guardian network gravitating around Marietta Sadova. Beyond the strongly ideologized language, the note reflects a state of tension within the artists of the National Theatre from Bucharest, which led to an internal struggle for power during the 1950s.

### **The Romanian Theatre Company at the 1956 International Dramatic Festival**

In 1956, the National Theatre of Bucharest participated in Paris's third International Dramatic Festival. The importance of this event was emphasized in different studies, which showed how politics, national contexts, and individual experiences interweaved as a result of political interactions beyond the Iron Curtain<sup>12</sup>. Even if the event has been scholarly recounted from a national and international perspective, our analysis focuses on Marietta Sadova's interaction with her former Criterionist friends as part of the communist leader's strategy to lure exiled intellectuals back to Romania.

In 1956, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev called for peaceful coexistence and de-Stalinization, resulting in increased circulation of ideas and interactions between Eastern and Western cultural institutions despite their ideological division. The favourable international context after the death of Stalin in 1953 facilitated the emergence of cultural openness to the West. The International Theatre Institute founded the International Dramatic Festival in France in 1954, later becoming the Theatre of Nations. In 1955, Romania was invited to participate at the Third International Dramatic Festival and accepted the French Ministry of Culture's invitation

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<sup>11</sup> ACNSAS, Informative Fund, File 209489, vol. I, f. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Viviana Iacob, *Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy: Romania and the International Theatre Institute, 1956-1969*, East Central Europe, 45 (2018), p. 185. The issue has been analysed in several articles and studies: Cristian Vasile, 'Communist Romania's Cultural Cold War, 1947-1960', *Revista Arhivelor*, no. 2, pp. 134-150; Vladimir Tismăneanu, Cristian Vasile, 'Turneul Teatrului Național la Paris din 1956: Secția de Relații Externe, exilul și raporturile culturale româno-franceze', *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană*, vol. 8, 2009, pp. 193-206; Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [Communist during Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej regime] Cultural Policies Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2011; Stelian Tănase, *Anatomia mistificării 1944-1989. Procesul Noica-Pilat* [Anatomy of Mystification. Noica-Pilat Trial], Ed. Humanitas, București, 1997.



in February 1956<sup>13</sup>. The National Theatre Company staged two plays at the Sarah Bertrand Theatre: *The Last Hour* by Jewish playwright Mihail Sebastian, directed by Momy Ghelerter, and *The Lost Letter* by Ion Luca Caragiale, directed by Sică Alexandrescu<sup>14</sup>.

The Romanian delegation comprised 75 individuals accompanied by state official Paul Cornea and director of the National Theatre Vasile Moldoveanu. The delegation included Maria Filotti, director Marietta Sadova, actor Radu Beligan, and critic Margareta Bărbuță<sup>15</sup>. The group was accompanied by the ideologue supervisor of the Propaganda and Culture Direction, Pavel Câmpeanu, under the direct subordination of Ghizela Vass, coordinator of the Foreign Relation Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee. There was no interdiction on whom Romanian artists should or should not contact in Paris, as they were encouraged to freely network as part of the official strategy for penetrating and instrumentalizing the Romanian exile in favour of the communist regime from Bucharest<sup>16</sup>. Marietta Sadova was the perfect fit for a networking strategy in Paris due to her past friendship with philosopher Emil Cioran, historian of religion Mircea Eliade, and playwright Eugene Ionesco; while being praised, rewarded, and recognized in Romania as a loyal socialist realist director.

Marietta Sadova was under close surveillance from July 8, 1954, when the Securitate opened a 'verification file' on her name. The authorities kept an eye on her activity while using her theatrical talent in the service of the regime when needed. This opportunity emerged in 1956, when, as Sadova stated in her testimony during the 1959 arrest, before leaving for Paris, she was called by Minister of Culture Constanța Crăciun, who urged her to 'talk to everyone in Paris, to receive all those who want to see her, not to give the impression that she is timid, reserved or that certain conduct was imposed on her from Bucharest'<sup>17</sup>. The Romanian delegation followed the official instructions and, as a result, interviews, press conferences, and correspondence titled the evolution of the Romanian company as a success. For the first time after the establishment of the communist regime in Romania, exiled intellectuals who were present in the audience were not classified as 'fascists', 'traitors', or 'fugitives', epithets previously used for portraying them in communist propaganda newspapers. The authorities reversed their

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<sup>13</sup> Stelian Tănase, *Anatomia mistificării 1944-1989. Procesul Noica-Pillat*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1997, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> Viviana Iacob, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189.

<sup>17</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 13.

reaction to emphasize the appreciation of Romanians migrants for the company's performance. The success was quickly instrumentalized by the propaganda newspaper *Scînteia* on July 4, 1956: 'When leaving the theatre, Romanian actors were expected by a large audience, which included many Romanians of all ages and all beliefs - some of them living in Paris, others coming from London, Brussels or further<sup>18</sup>.

While in Paris for three weeks, Marietta Sadova met Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran. The directives received from Constanța Crăciun were to invite them to Romania and assure them of the good intentions of the communist regime. Mircea Eliade was sceptical of the regime's spontaneous benevolence towards intellectuals, considering the brutal repression they endured several years ago. He stated that, no matter how well the communist regime from Bucharest wants to 'sell' its image, he knows that the situation in Romanian People's Republic is 'terrible'. Eliade continued to believe that the communist regime would eventually fall soon. He complained about the poor quality of publications in Romania, accused writers of collaboration with the regime, and denounced the intervention of the party in literature and scientific activity, which weakened cultural creation. At their next meeting, Eliade offered Sadova several copies of his latest works, including *The Forbidden Forest* (1955), *Images et symbols* (1952), and *Le Mythe de l'Eternel Retour* (1949), and asked her to distribute them to his friends in Bucharest<sup>19</sup>.

A few days later, Marietta Sadova met with her younger Criterionist friend Emil Cioran. Like Eliade, Cioran was not convinced by the communist condescension and stated that the Soviet Union 'tends to subjugate the whole of Europe'<sup>20</sup>. Upon leaving, Emil Cioran offered her ten copies of his newly published book *La tentation d'exister* (1956), which he asked to be distributed to Constantin Noica, Petre Țuțea, and other familiar friends. The meeting with Eugene Ionesco did not occur, given that he had left Paris at that time. One should consider that Marietta Sadova provided these conversations during her arrest and investigation in 1959. The information encountered in the Securitate archives should be questioned as the minutes of interrogations were manipulated by the Securitate agents and officers according to the political end they pursued - in Sadova's case, the conviction in a show trial. However, multiple sources - such as memoirs, letters, and acquaintances' testimonies - even if they do not recall meeting Sadova in 1956 for unknown reasons, still

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<sup>18</sup> *Scînteia* newspaper from July 4, 1956.

<sup>19</sup> Mihai Giugariu (coord.), *Prigoana...*, p. 139.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 140

confirm the hostile attitude of Eliade, Cioran, or Ionesco towards the communist regime and their lack of desire to return to the country.

When the theatre company returned to Romania, Marietta Sadova left a copy of Cioran's book at Minister's Constanța Crăciun antechamber as a subtle gesture of her mission's success. Several meetings followed between Sadova and Crăciun to clarify the official and unofficial aspects of the Parisian tour. This action corresponded to a mutual agreement or a gesture of 'delicacy'<sup>21</sup>, as Sadova called it. In 1956, Marietta Sadova was neither denounced nor blamed for bringing Eliade and Cioran books back to the country. Her actions went unnoticed and were overlooked by the Securitate agents due to their insignificant consequences at that time. However, the books began circulating among various groups of targeted or investigated intellectuals. The Securitate turned its gaze to Sadova as the primary provider of forbidden literature from the West.

Romania's participation in the third edition of the International Dramatic Festival in Paris was considered a stunning success in terms of cultural diplomacy. Communist authorities carefully planned the details of the tour. Critic Paul Cornea claimed that the idea of an international tour belonged to the Theatre Department of the Ministry of Culture. The Propaganda Section gave a favourable verdict, which was attached to the party's Central Committee<sup>22</sup>. The purpose of the communist authorities was to impress the Western audience and seduce the exiled Romanian intellectuals who eventually attended the performance. The 'charming operation' of the Romanian theatre company was an instance of East-West rapprochement and an ideological probing through cultural diplomacy. However, as Iacob suggests, the memoirs published by the delegation members recount the Paris tour much more as a story of artistic success rather than the first East-West encounter, concluding that the 1956 Parisian tour did not reach all the expected political results<sup>23</sup>. In 1957 and 1958, Romania did not participate in the Theatre Nations due to the ideological radicalization of cultural politics between 1958 and the early 1960s. The artists were subjected to intimidation campaigns, arrests, trials, and condemnations<sup>24</sup>. The Securitate placed Sadova under close surveillance and began collecting details on her from different informants. Sadova's harmless gesture of bringing her interwar friends' books in Romania offered the Securitate the basis of her conviction four years later. The regime's failed attempt to pursue cultural liberalization

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<sup>21</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2011, p. 215.

<sup>23</sup> Viviana Iacob, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

and its return to ideological intransigence reflect the ever-changing relationship between the artistic community and the political imperatives of the communist elites.

### **Under surveillance, 1958-1959**

The ideological radicalization pursued by the communist authorities began in 1958. The Securitate cadres were sent for further training in the USSR to acquire new methods of identifying and constructing the 'enemy of the people' through bureaucratic techniques. After receiving the training, the Securitate agents began following different patterns when surveilling suspected individuals, emphasizing social networks more and less ideological hermeneutics<sup>25</sup>. Marietta Sadova's file was mainly built on three narrative layers: the 'legionary' narrative, which branched out into the 'hostile relations' narrative, and the 'hostile books' narrative. However, the interest of the Securitate agents was to establish a network of people who read and discussed the forbidden books of Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran rather than carefully making the ideological hermeneutics of their content. Ideology was an instrument in the service of surveillance, intimidating and repressing undesirable social groups.

In 1958, Marietta Sadova was under observation of the 3rd Direction of the Securitate. She was surrounded by agents and informants who provided notes on her work, everyday conversations, and private life. Most informant notes are reminiscent of her Iron Guard support from the interwar period; thus, using the 'legionary' narrative would have been a good opportunity for young aspirants to discredit Sadova's professional status and chase higher positions in theatre. On March 22, 1958, agent 'George' wrote that Sadova 'still performs legionary demagoguery today, only choosing nationalist plays (*Viforul*, *Apus de Soare*) and favoring the former legionary actors (Toma Dumitriu, Alexandru Demetriad)' <sup>26</sup>. A note from agent 'Gălăţeanu', dated on October 10, 1958, stated that Marietta Sadova had visited former legionnaire Mihai Polihroniade's mother to bring her 'news from emigrant writer Mircea Eliade' <sup>27</sup>. In November 1958, agent 'Bucovineanu' re-opened the topic of the Legionary Rebellion from January 1941, writing: 'Mrs. Marietta Sadova and Haig Acterian, carrying pistols, were the most ardent in their speeches and incitements to rebellion'<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> For a case study on the Securitate repressive methods after 1956 see Anisescu Cristina, Silviu B. Moldovan (ed.), *Pseudomemoriile unui general de Securitate* [Pseudo-Memoirs of an Securitate General] Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 134.

<sup>27</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 131.

<sup>28</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 132.

Regarding her 'hostile social relations, the Securitate agents became increasingly interested in both Sadova's request for the release of former legionary Petre Țuțea and her relations at the theatre. Petre Țuțea was sent to prison in 1957 under the pretext of organizing a fascist subversive party. Sadova drew up a request, signed by numerous cultural personalities of that time, to facilitate Țuțea's release, which was later addressed to the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly<sup>29</sup>. Regarding her relations at the theatre, the CNSAS files indicate her controversial personality through documents that offer multiple and often contrary takes on her professional interactions. She was both appreciated and hated simultaneously, which confirms that her colleagues' attitudes depended on the distribution of roles during certain plays. When Sadova, according to her theatrical vision as a director, offered an important role to an actor to the detriment of another, the latter would eventually end up discrediting her in notes sent to the Securitate agents. In 1958, Sadova staged 'Viforul' by B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea at the Cluj National Theatre, which sparked a controversy surrounding the distribution of roles in favour of her older friends, while the younger actors felt rejected and denounced her. She decided to change the perspective of the main character, Ștefăniță Vodă, and no longer portray him as a scoundrel but as a victim of boyar Luca Arbore. The artistic readjustment implied a different cast distribution which caused a scandal<sup>30</sup>. As a result, *Viforul* was removed from the theatre program and censored due to its 'unorthodox' ideological approach. On May 19, 1959, informant 'Carpathians' (actor Marin Aurelian), who was part of the disadvantaged group, provided a detailed, informative note on the situation:

'The fact that Marietta Sadova is a notorious legionnaire is well-known in the art world across the country. Once in Cluj, Marietta Sadova was overwhelmed by the hostile group, which sought to create a myth around her. She was constantly accompanied and invited by V. Dumitriu, Sandu Rădulescu, Ion Tilvan. The distribution of these plays was inspired and imposed on Marietta Sadova by a group of hostile elements against her artistic opinion. Marietta Sadova, although she was

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<sup>29</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 129. According to agent 'Stefan Dragomirescu', the petition was signed by Victor Eftimiu, Geo Bogza, Marietta Sadova, Ștefănescu-Goangă, Aurel Duteanu and others. Ștefănescu-Goangă even asked Zaharia Stancu to sign the memorandum, but the latter refused.

<sup>30</sup> Vera Molea, *Marietta Sadova sau arta de a trăi prin teatru* [Marietta Sadova or the Art of Living through Theatre] Bucharest Metropolitan Library, 2013, p. 159.

convinced in certain situations that in specific roles, the most suitable elements of the group were not recommended, she still accepted the motto - to help those of ours'<sup>31</sup>.

In reality, Sadova's decision to cast actor Constantin Anatol in the leading role of Ștefăniță Vodă aroused the revolt of actor Marin Aurelian, who 'was very indignant that Mrs. Sadova gave a Jew to play the role of Ștefăniță'<sup>32</sup>. This detail is worth noting considering Sadova's past anti-Semitic bursts, which indicates that she overcame the 'legionary' clichés in favour of individual artistic talent regardless of ethnicity or religion. Moreover, the note is of great importance for understanding the struggle for power and benefits within cultural institutions in communist Romania. The new generation of younger artists was eager to rise in the hierarchy of power and receive distributions in essential roles, so they used the Securitate institution to pursue their professional interests while discrediting other artists using past political allegiances longer valid in 1958.

### **Constructing the enemy of the people**

The event that triggered the Securitate's suspicion of Sadova was the arrest of philosopher Constantin Noica on December 11, 1958. After several interrogations, Noica mentioned Marietta Sadova as the person who brought the forbidden books to Romania, a detail that allowed the Securitate to construct a broader social network with suspected individuals. Multiplying the subjects based on a standard narrative facilitated the inclusion of several intellectuals with different career paths and unrelated destinies in fewer group trials, thus making the extensive repression more efficient.

During the December 13, 1958, Constantin Noica admitted that he received Cioran's book *La tentation d'exister* and Eliade's *The forbidden forest* from Marietta Sadova, who brought them directly from France. In order to clarify the situation, Noica was interrogated again on this matter on December 15, 1958, stating that 'in 1956, through Maria Sadova, an artist who was in Paris, on the occasion of a tour I illegally received a book from Cioran called *La tentation d'exister*'<sup>33</sup>. After Noica received the book, he passed it on for reading to his friends from Câmpulung (Alexandru Paleologu, Iacob Noica) and from Bucharest (Mihail Neculce, Mihail Șora, Mihai Rădulescu, Paul Dumitriu, Nicu Steinhardt, Șerban Cioculescu, Beatrice Strelisker). On the same day, the Securitate opened a surveillance

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<sup>31</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 199.

<sup>32</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 18.

<sup>33</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 110

file on Marietta Sadova's name to further investigate three directions concerning her activity: the legionary membership and participation in the January 1941 rebellion; Sadova's friendship with 'hostile elements' at the Constantin Nottara theatre and the Parisian theatre tour from 1956, when she 'brought some books with fascist legionary ideological content' and established connection with former legionaries<sup>34</sup>. The semantic change of terms related to exiled intellectuals from neutral attributes in 1956 to 'legionary', 'reactionary', and 'hostile' enemies in 1959 reflects the Soviet-inspired grid of analysis acquired by Securitate agents towards cultural activities that have always existed in society but were now interpreted under a different ideological approach.

The agents began intercepting correspondence, listening to the phone, placing more informants around Sadova, and searching for extended lists of contacts. After collecting information for three months, between December 1958 and March 1959, a note (*nota de stadiu*) concluded that Sadova was a fierce enemy of our popular democratic regime, which seeks to fight against it in every way. She is surrounded only by elements with a dubious past and present hostile activity against our democratic order, which she helps morally and materially through her possibilities as a National Theatre director<sup>35</sup>. The information received required cross-checking from different sources, which determined the Securitate to install *tehnică operativă* (microphones and phone tapes) at Sadova's apartment in April 1959<sup>36</sup>. The actress realized agents were following her footsteps when one of the maids was summoned to the Securitate for interrogation concerning Sadova's activity. As a result, she decided to destroy some 'compromising' materials to avoid any further problems<sup>37</sup>, starting with those of Petre Țuțea and continuing with the books of Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade. Not only were the writings in her possession problematic, but also the ones she gave to others. At the moment of Sadova's arrest, no books with Cioran or Eliade's signature were found at her home. However, the copies circulated in Constantin Noica's groups at Câmpulung and Bucharest were confiscated by investigators, and the tracks eventually returned to Marietta Sadova.

### The arrest

Before the arrest, the Securitate began to cross-examine all the information received from informants and dismissed unfounded allegations. The agents tried to confirm Sadova's past fascist activity through different

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<sup>34</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 203

<sup>35</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 206

<sup>36</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 101.

<sup>37</sup> Mihai Giugariu, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

sources but had no alternative testimonies nor additional archives to confirm the events. As a result, a report of Major Simon Jack from July 6, 1959, concludes that 'the informative notes and the anonymous notifications obtained by the former *Siguranță*, do not confirm that Marieta Sadova was recruited in the legionary organization and that she carried out the activity in the legionary nest. There is also no evidence that he played a role in the rebellion and fired a pistol'<sup>38</sup>. The second allegation that Sadova has promoted hostile elements in the theatre was dismissed because informants - Chiril Economou and Ludovic Antal - had several professional conflicts with Sadova in the past. Their allegations were rejected and considered mere speculation<sup>39</sup>.

However, Major Simon Jack found a potential compromising track in her activity: Constantin Noica and the forbidden books. Insisting on the connection between Constantin Noica and Marietta Sadova facilitated her inclusion in the narrative of the future trial of the arrested philosopher. The most conclusive evidence for sending Sadova to criminal court was Noica's statement during the December 1958 interrogation, which indicated Sadova was the one who brought the books of Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade to Romania. The 'forbidden books' narrative was the most effective in instrumentalizing her arrest and conviction.

On September 22, 1959, the 8th Direction conveyed to the 3rd Direction that Sadova's arrest was agreed based on 'bringing books written by Romanian fugitives from abroad and disseminating them among the legionaries'<sup>40</sup>. As a result, Marietta Sadova was arrested on October 15, 1959, under the pretext of disseminating anti-communist propaganda. Reading books had no real impact on the regime's stability, but the agents intended to link Sadova to other targeted individuals, whose destinies would eventually converge in a common trial. The evidence against her was her intention to introduce 'foreign ideas' in the country through literary cenacles [*cenacluri*], in which intellectuals discussed the contents of the novels<sup>41</sup>. Although this was only an ideological pretext for the repressive strategy of the state, the analysis of the CNSAS files emphasizes the will of the Securitate to annihilate interwar social networks.

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<sup>38</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 1, f. 106

<sup>39</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 1, f. 108

<sup>40</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 1, f. 71

<sup>41</sup> Bejan, *op.cit.*, p. 269



### **Investigation and trial**

Marietta Sadova's investigation can be analysed on multiple interactions between her and the Securitate officers: offensive and defensive strategies, conflicting narratives, concession on both sides, and finally constructing the main accusations – the fascist past, western propaganda, and hostile social relations.

Her interaction with the Securitate investigators was not ideal, but there is no evidence of physical violence or unbearable psychological pressure. This is both due to the professional position that Sadova had in the cultural-artistic life of the Romanian People's Republic and to her 'second-degree guilt' in the framework of the Noica-Pillat trial while also being one of the oldest convicts of the group. Sadova was 62 years old in 1959. During the arrest, she shared the cell with Natalia Bădulescu, a cell informant who wrote detailed reports about their private discussions between December 1959 and February 1960. Bădulescu's stance towards Sadova was neutral, as she tried accurately reproducing all the details from their conversations. These types of sources give us the victim's perspective from the inside. However, caution is required due to this information's manipulative potential. One should consider that Marietta may have known Natalia was an informant for the Securitate and eventually prompted her to write ideas supporting the Soviet Union, while Bădulescu was arguing in favour of Sadova's innocence by appealing to her artistic work in the service of the communist regime from Romania.

The investigation was constructed as a moralizing rebuke rather than a terrorizing pressure. Sadova complained that the investigator 'always makes her insincere, telling her to put aside theatrical gestures and demagoguery and reveal her legionary activity'<sup>42</sup>. Sadova soon became disappointed that she was not investigated by a communicative and understandable agent<sup>43</sup>. In January 1960, she was also investigated on charges of lesbianism, which 'upsets and infuriates her because she is accused of things that are downright offensive and untrue'<sup>44</sup>. A note from February 23, 1960, mentions that Sadova 'came from the investigation crying and emotionally affected' after a tense conversation with an investigator, possibly Simon Jack. He told her that she had made mistakes under the influence of 'various malicious people, and that she discredited some party members by generalizing their attitude as belonging to the whole system, without realizing that these are only isolated cases. The

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<sup>42</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 11.

<sup>43</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 64.

<sup>44</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 68

party line is different<sup>45</sup>. The pedagogical and moralizing type of the investigation may indicate Sadova's possible subsequent rehabilitation after spending several years in prison.

The investigation was built up to fit the narrative of the Noica-Pillat group that was being formed at that moment and was later comprised of 25 intellectuals arrested between December 1958 and February 1960. The ties between Marietta Sadova and Constantin Noica were not as close as the investigation tried to frame them. They only met once in the summer of 1957, during one of Noica's visits to Bucharest, when she lent him Eliade's novel, *The Forbidden Forest*. There were no further meetings during literary circles or other joint activities, which shows that Sadova was a stranger to the group in which she was to be artificially included. The books were thus instrumentalized to connect disparate individuals and unknown intermediaries to insinuate the existence of a broader dissident cultural group.

Sadova's sympathy for the Iron Guard was well known since the interwar period. However, nearly 20 years later, the Securitate had difficulty proving her active implication in the Legionary Rebellion. In this case, the investigators decided to equate her past fascist sympathy with an alleged present 'hostile activity within a 'reactionary' social network of intellectuals. The accusation does not reflect nor try to understand the complex personality of the widow director, who dedicated her time to helping loyal friends from theatre and taking care of other ex-legionaries' widows as she was. As a counter-offensive strategy to the Securitate's accusation, Sadova has constructed a legitimizing narrative to diminish her fascist commitment and possibly lower the sentence. As part of a self-referential narrative, Sadova admitted she sympathized with the Iron Guard but claimed to have detached herself at the time of the assassination of Nicolae Iorga and Virgil Madgearu, and 'now she has all the sympathy for the communist regime'<sup>46</sup>. She attributed the adherence to the Legion to Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's charming personality. She manifested her despise for Horia Sima as a man with 'an adventurous, cabotage nature, who pursued a personal ambition'<sup>47</sup>. Carefully constructing the innocent image of her fascist past, Sadova proceeds to link the legionary' acts of charity to her present loyalty for friends 'by virtue of Christianity and in memory of her husband Haig'. After Haig went missing on the eastern front, Sadova resigned herself and took refuge in the theatre, 'which

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<sup>45</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 64

<sup>46</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 10.

<sup>47</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 29

became the strongest stimulant, like a narcotic.' However, her story avoided referencing the Legionary Rebellion, the conflicts at the National Theatre, imprisonment, or anti-Semitism.

As stated before, the main accusation that emerged while investigating Sadova's activity was bringing the books of Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran to Romania. The forbidden books' track had a compromising rationale for Marietta Sadova due to her interwar social network instrumentalized by the Securitate officers. Sadova was part of the Criterion group from the interwar period, where she met Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Mihai Polihroniade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Haig Acterian, Constantin Noica, intellectuals who later supported the Iron Guard. Together, they often organized 'legionary meetings' to discuss fascist political and ideological issues and 'established to raise legionary aid'<sup>48</sup>. After the establishment of the communist regime, Sadova remained faithful to her friendships and eventually met Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran in 1956 during the National Theatre's participation at the International Dramatic Festival in Paris. Then, the investigators established who read the ten copies of Emil Cioran's *La tentation d'exister*: Petre Țuțea, Noica Constantin, Acterian Arșavir, Penculescu George, Terianu Nicolae, Rares Maria, Cioculescu Radu and Balau Nicolae. However, the investigation does not refer to other readers such as Bucur Țincu, Petre Pandrea, Emil Botta, Nicolae Baltag, Coca Casasovici<sup>49</sup>, who somehow remained outside the trial. The books circulated from one person to another without Sadova's knowledge, including inside philosopher Constantin Noica's entourage at Câmpulung. As an 'official' conclusion, the investigators inserted the bottom-page phrase: 'This is the counter-revolutionary activity that I carried out'<sup>50</sup>.

One could not fail to notice that the interrogatories' minutes were written by the Securitate investigator and only signed by the victim, who was coerced to agree with the statements even if they contained lies and distortions. References to the 'legionary meetings' aimed to criminalize the literary circles [*cenacluri*] Sadova and others occasionally attended during the 1950s. The communist authorities prohibited these meetings due to their privacy, which was beyond the control of the secret police, and their capacity to conserve and promote an alternative cultural discourse. Surprisingly enough, the minutes only mention once, and maybe by mistake, the informal 'mission' Sadova received from officials Constanța

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<sup>48</sup> Giugariu, *op. cit.*, p. 137

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 140.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

Crăciun and Pavel Câmpeanu. Defending her actions as part of the Minister of Culture's plan to attract foreign intellectuals back to Romania was no longer valid; thus, the justification for meeting Eliade and Cioran became irrelevant.

Moreover, for the personal record, Sadova considered the accusation of distributing 'hostile' books in Romania unfounded. She recalls only reading Cioran's book once and bursting into indignation on 'how this anarchist makes fun of the Romanian people in such a way'<sup>51</sup>. The theatre director, whose world-view was determined by nationalist ideas, violently reacted to Cioran's anti-Romanian remarks in his philosophy book. Another note stated that Sadova characterized Cioran as a fanatic and an anarchist who wants to be original in this pessimistic context'<sup>52</sup>. She even supported the famous state-coordinated response of Radu Popescu, who officially denounced Cioran's ideas in *the Gazeta Literară* newspaper. Popescu received Cioran's book from Sadova<sup>53</sup>. Contrary to the Securitate's perspective, Sadova was able to maintain her friendship with Cioran while viciously rejecting his philosophical thought.

As a result, Sadova's main accusation was constructed from various details concerning her cultural activity from the past. Most of her actions were innocent. Her past fascist commitment was no longer actual, but the Securitate decided to instrumentalize an insignificant action of her past - the 'forbidden books' narrative - to link suspicious intellectuals and form an artificial 'fascist group'. The narrative of the interwar past has been anachronistically equated with the 1956 international events as a starting point to justify the continuation of fascist allegiances, thus creating a convergent accusation for 25 'reactionary' intellectuals.

## Conclusion

Arrested on October 15, 1959, accused of fascist activity for distributing 'western propaganda' among intellectuals in Romania, director Marietta Sadova was sentenced to eight years in prison and five years of civic degradation for 'crime of conspiracy against the social order based on article 209 from the Criminal Code. During the 'Noica-Pillat' trial, that started on February 24, 1960, Sadova recalled '*she said everything she had in mind, that she was very sorry for everything she did, she regrets that after so many beautiful achievements created with all the joy and enthusiasm, she has to end her [career] life so badly*'<sup>54</sup>. The conviction, she argued, was a great

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<sup>51</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 9.

<sup>52</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 64.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*.

'misfortune' because she ends her career in such an unpleasant way after dedicating her 'whole life' to the theatre. Under the communist regime, she worked for 15 years in the theatre world, claiming that 'she raised the theatre in Cluj and the Nottara theatre to a remarkable level, staged ten plays and made many films'<sup>55</sup>. Marietta Sadova was pardoned in 1964 and reintegrated into cultural life, continuing her career as an actress and theatre director. She later became a university professor at the Institute of Theatre and Cinematography in Bucharest. She had notable roles in *The Profession of Mrs. Warren* by George Bernard Shaw and *The Undead* by Henrik Ibsen while also directing Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* at the Bulandra Theatre in 1969 *Răzvan și Vidra* by Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu. After several years, Sadova described herself as a survivalist, 'a Transylvanian woman who does not let herself be easily defeated'<sup>56</sup>, highlighting that she staged over 40 shows from 1964 to 1972. The Securitate continued to supervise the convicted intellectuals even after their release from prison. In an informative note from 1972, Sadova had a private discussion with some close friends about her conviction in 1960, recalling:

'The only accusation they charged me with was that I brought a book by Emil Cioran from Paris. Moreover, I hadn't even read it... When I found out what slander, what insults this man could bring to the Romanian people, I, who always loved my country and my nation, threw away his scribbles... How could anyone have imagined I would share the ideas of this wretched man? That I would also popularize them? But I had friends who knew how to slander me'<sup>57</sup>.

Marietta Sadova could not have known that her conviction had no real connection to Cioran's ideas from the book, being only a pretext to facilitate the repression of a group around a common narrative. Sadova's coping mechanism with all the unfortunate events of her life – Haig's disappearance, her brother's death, and the political imprisonment – was taking refuge in theatre as a 'cultural niche of existence. The theatre career niche helped her relieve her trauma and also provided an escape from an oppressive and intrusive political regime. Later in her life, she argued that theatre was the only useful thing in an illusory reality, offering the possibility of an inner escape from the limitations of being: 'The theatre and

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<sup>55</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 2, f. 9.

<sup>56</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 209489, vol. 4, f. 90.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

the ideal are like the flight of an eagle, while life and reality are like the flight of a bat - one lifts you, the other fumbles'<sup>58</sup>.

Theatre, as part of the broader framework of the cultural field alongside literature, philosophy, poetry, arts, history, and others, became a 'cultural refuge' for intellectuals who tried to lower the communist regime's ideological intrusion in their profession while fulfilling their cultural ideal despite the authorities' suspicion towards their controversial past.

In conclusion, the case study of Marietta Sadova's career path and her ambiguous relationship with her compromising political past emphasized the shortcomings of a unitary explanation model for understanding the interactions between power and cultural groups in the socialist cultural field. During the communist regime in Romania, many intellectuals, due to their cultural prestige and symbolic status, have had the opportunity to negotiate principles, ideas, publications, and professional choices, with and under the close supervision of the secret police. Based on this evidence, the 'cultural resistance' cannot be understood as a monolithic concept throughout communism; resistance went through a metamorphosis from cultural solidarity in the 1940s and 1950s to a gradual adaptation to the official ideological requirements of the national orientation of the regime after 1964. As a result, resistance and political collaboration are rather cumulative and fluid principles whose variables depend on internal political developments, personal experiences, professional motivations, individual or group psychological typologies, and the pattern of socialization accepted and promoted by the communist regime in order to acquire the maximum control of the society.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 92.