

# Elements of Father Andrei Scrima's Ecumenical Activity as Reflected in File No. 0005468 from the "Securitate" Archives

IULIU-MARIUS MORARIU\*

*The Romanian Archimandrite Andrei Scrima was an important worldwide theological personality. His activity as a kind of ambassador of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to the Second Vatican Council, together with his publications, conferences and activity as a professor, transformed him into a voice that was almost always trusted. His attitudes and speeches that criticized the Romanian Communist regime made him also to be seen as an enemy by Bucharest's government. In this context, the Securitate was interested in his ecumenical activity and in his ideas regarding the ecumenism and the potential role of the Romanian Orthodox Church there, trying also to see if his theological ideas were related to the political world and contained criticisms of the dictatorial regime or its relationship with the Church. In this paper, we will describe how his ecumenical activity is described in the Securitate Archives. Due to the fact that file no. 00005468 contains the most important information regarding this topic, the main references cited in the paper are extracted from this source.*

**Keywords:** Securitate, ecumenism, Second Vatican Council, interview, communism, Ecumenical Patriarch

## Introduction

Ecumenism was and still is an essential aspect of Christian dialogue. Theological topics, together with the ethical challenges, the elements of political theology, or the aspects of common heritage (understood as the common history or the theological background), have constituted important subjects, debated before and after the foundation of the World Council of Churches.

The political environment soon grasped the relevance of this movement and its actions. In the Eastern European countries, the communist regimes even tried to use the ecumenical dialogue platform in order to simulate transparency and democracy. This is one of the reasons why today, in those countries, there is a certain reticence (especially among the Eastern-Orthodox people who are in the majority there), for Ecumenism.

---

\* Iuliu-Marius Morariu (hieromonk Maxim), Faculty of Orthodox Theology, "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Str. Episcop Nicolae Ivan 400117, Romania, maxim@radiorenasterea.ro.

In 1961, all the Churches from the Communist bloc joined this movement, after refusing to do so since 1948.<sup>1</sup> Then, the authorities from those states gave approval to some of the well-known clergymen to take part in the ecumenical events or even to study in places like the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.<sup>2</sup> Some of the institutions were infiltrated by the Securitate. Others had been frightened by that agency and came there to present a text previously approved by the agency. There were also some people who escaped from this area and were exiled or they could not be pressured by the regime. Among them, of course, were people with genuine vocations, committed to ecumenism<sup>3</sup>.

Father Andrei Scrima was one of the most prominent Romanian figures of the Romanian exile that worked in the ecumenical area. Delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to the Second Vatican Council, where he was very appreciated,<sup>4</sup> author of studies and articles where he presented the Orthodox spirituality in a very friendly and professional way<sup>5</sup> and professor, he was an important voice, often called to take part in different

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information about this aspect, see also: John Briggs, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 2 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> There were many young Romanians who later became influential in the theological world, who studied there or provided lectures. For more information regarding this topic, see also: Anu Tălvivaara, ed., *50 Years 1952-2002 of Ecumenical Formation at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey part of the World Council of Churches attached to the University of Geneva* (Geneva: Orthodruk Press, 2003), 38–39; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, “Studenti ortodocși români la Institutul Ecumenic din Bossey între anii 1963-2002,” in *Tinerii istorici și cercetările lor*, vol. 5, eds. Nicolae Dumbrăvescu and Gheorghe Dumbrăvescu (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut Publishing House, 2018), 183–92.

<sup>3</sup> About the complicated relationships between Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Movement and how the Romanian Orthodox Church reacted in different moments of the communist period, see also: Kaisamari Hintikka, “The Pride and Prejudice of Romanian Orthodox Ecumenism,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, eds. Jonathan Sutton and Wil van der Bercken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 455–63; Hintikka, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, 1961-1977* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2000) and Lucian Leustean, *The Ecumenical Movement & the Making of the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Puyo, *Une vie pour la vérité, Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1975), 147.

<sup>5</sup> See: André Scrima, “L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” *Istina* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1958): 295–398; idem, “L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” *Istina* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 493–516; idem, “L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” *Istina* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1958): 443–74; C. J. Dumon, “Pour un dialogue sur la piété hesychaste,” *Istina* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1958): 293–94. The Securitate was also informed about Scrima’s activity there and the fact that he was part of the editorial board of this journal. One of the Securitate notes from 6 July 1963 can be considered an example. See: Archives of the Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (later will be quoted: ACNSAS), *Fond SIE*, file no. 2601, 107–8.

ecumenical meetings. The Romanian Securitate was interested by him not only thanks to his relevance as a theologian, but also due to the fact that he acted in this area, where the Bucharest regime desired to create a very positive image. Like Virgil Gheorghiu and other people who were living in exile, Fr. Scrima could not be controlled and therefore, he had no problem in emphasizing in a realistic way not only the Romanian ecumenical realities, but also the political situation in this country.

Conscious of this fact and of the relevance of his activity in the ecumenical movement, we will try to see how it was reflected in the Securitate Archives. We will therefore investigate the three Securitate dossiers that contain information about his work<sup>6</sup> and when needed we will correlate them with other sources. Our investigation will identify the main topics that interested the repressive Romanian machine and its attitudes and actions regarding these topics. At the same time, the investigation will emphasize the Securitate mechanisms regarding ecumenism and highlight the main aspects that interested them and how these aspects were politically useful. The research will try to determine if the Securitate really understood Scrima's ecumenical vision and tried to denigrate it or to use it as a weapon, or just to have a general idea of his work and activity in the ecumenical area and a superficial evaluation of it.

### **The “ecumenical vision” of Father Andrei Scrima reflected in the “Securitate” Archives**

#### *The “Securitate’s” interest in Fr. Scrima’s activity before 1960*

Even before his departure from Romania, Fr. Andrei Scrima was monitored by the Securitate. For example, the documents include a detailed note from 16 March 1953, signed by source “Vântu”,<sup>7</sup> where his entire biography is presented. Not only aspects regarding his studies, his family, his activity as the Librarian of the Romanian Patriarchate, but also information regarding his friends and the political ideas that he shared,<sup>8</sup> can be found there. Many others are examined from the following years.

---

<sup>6</sup> Namely: ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no0005468, vol. 1; ACNSAS, Idem, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2; ACNSAS, *Fond SIE*, file no. 2601.

<sup>7</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 1, 110.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in a note from 11 March 1954, it was specified, by the “39<sup>th</sup> source”, that Andrei Scrima was taking part in a meeting in Antim Monastery where Vasile Voiculescu and Sandu Tudor would also attend. The source also specified the fact that the purpose will be “a mystical seance.” *Ibidem*, 192. In fact, the author was speaking about Scrima's participation to the “Burning Bush” movement's meetings. Fr. Scrima would later publish a book about this movement, translated in different languages. For more information regarding his vision

Shortly before his departure, the aforementioned agency became even more interested in him than before. Cornel I. Achimov, informed by source “Nicolau”, seemed to be very interested about his life and activity. Therefore, on 20 March 1956, the source informed the officer that:

Andrei Scrima (not yet a monastic brother since he has not yet received his tonsure) has made a request to the Theological Institute to take the qualifying exams very quickly and without too much preparation, in order to obtain the degree in theology as soon as possible. It is known that he has a degree in philosophy and was an assistant at the old Faculty of Philosophy, but so far, he has not obtained his degree in theology. He obtained approval from the Patriarch to take, without frequency and internship exemption, all theology and license exams. So far, Scrima has not hurried, but now he is hurrying. Fârtătescu (chief of cadres), said that “soon Scrima will go to India, sent by the Patriarch for studies”. Fârtătescu added: “Last year, an Indian dignitary came to visit the patriarchal palace and through him Scrima arranged to receive an official invitation to move to India as soon as possible. Now Scrima has received that invitation and the patriarch is preparing his departure. Before leaving, Scrima also wants to finish with theology exams.”<sup>9</sup>

The officials who visited the Patriarch or helped Scrima with the departure, like Mohammad Habb din Aligar, were also monitored.<sup>10</sup> The entire progress of the situation was under the attention of the authorities,<sup>11</sup> but without any decision being taken. Shortly after his departure, people like the person responsible for the passport, a man named Iliescu<sup>12</sup> were questioned, due to the fact that Father Scrima would not go directly to India, but would stop in Switzerland, France, Mount Athos and Rome and would talk with different people or journals about himself or about the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church under communism. It was then that the Securitate became more and more interested about his ecumenical activities, for the reasons mentioned above.

---

on this topic, see also: Scrima, *L'accompagnamento Spirituale. Il movimento del Roveto ardente e la rinascita esicasta in Romania* (Bose: Editions Qiqajon, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 1, 160.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, 169.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, for example, “Corneliu” source will write on a short note on 12 November 1956 in which she mentioned that: “Andrei Scrima is very upset because of the events, especially those in Egypt, as he has not yet received the Swiss visa, for his departure to India, as he will be leaving on the Prague-Zurich-Cairo-India route by plane.” *Ibidem*, 171.

<sup>12</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2, 77–79.

Unfortunately, in the three dossiers maintained on him by the Securitate, there is no information regarding his stop in Geneva and the lectures provided to the Ecumenical Institute from Bossey. It was not until 1967, almost one decade later, when somebody sent there would write about one of his visits in Geneva, where he met Patriarch Justinian.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the interest of the Securitate in his activity in the ecumenical movement would begin to intensify during 1957. It was then when specialists in theology would be asked to prepare a list of his published works.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, several theologians were asked to translate some of his articles and to speak about the ecumenical relevance of some journals which published his articles. Also, his correspondence with the places where he travelled would be intercepted. Therefore, a note from 20 October 1957, written by source "Costică", summarized the main activities of Fr. Scrima before arriving in India, where he had been sent. He briefly presented the landmarks of his activities there, showing that although the details of his travel were not totally known by the Securitate, they still had information about each step that he took:

Scrima Andrei arrived almost a year ago in India, after contacting the bishop of Malta and staying in Switzerland, Italy and then in Paris.

He asked to be sent to him four volumes from *Philatelia*<sup>15</sup> translated by the priest Stăniloae Dumitru. Priest Stăniloae Dumitru brought from Sibiu these collections of philokalties, where he has them stored. The Patriarch would have wanted Stăniloae Dumitru to make twenty copies available to him, but Stăniloae Dumitru informed him that he had no more, which is not true.

Scrima Andrei arrived abroad, has given interviews similar to the one from the French magazine "La réforme" and other English, German, etc. magazines.<sup>16</sup>

The ecumenical aspects of his activity are, as it can be easily seen, emphasized there. He met the Orthodox bishop of Malta, visited countries with other confessional majorities like Romania and asked for a collection of Orthodox

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 52–53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 146–48.

<sup>15</sup> Here, the author of the note makes a spelling error, like so many in the notes, due to the lack of education of most of the agents or their lack of theological development. In fact, he was referring to the "Philokalia" collection. From 1945 to 1948, Fr. Stăniloae translated its first four volumes in Sibiu. See: *Filocalia*, vol. 1–4, trans. Dumitru Stăniloae (Sibiu: Tipografia Arhiepiscopiei, 1945–1948).

<sup>16</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. I, 105.

spirituality translated partially into Romanian by one of the most important theological voices of the time. Due to the fact that these books were in our language, they were intended for some readers who knew this language, namely to some Romanian theologians or writers in exile. Together with the books, he also provided interviews. Bucharest authorities were interested to know content of the books and to find out how he spoke about the Orthodox Church and especially about the ruling regime. Of course, they almost never forgot to mention the fact that Patriarch Justinian supported him<sup>17</sup> or to emphasize the fact that he was using the Patriarch's words or texts in his speeches. An example which should be considered is the note of "Costică," that tries to summarize Scrima's article and points out that:

The article written by Andrei Scrima and published by Olivier Clement in French is entitled "The Romanian Orthodox Church or the miracle of the incessant prayer." It is a kind of interview, sprinkled with quotes from the words of Patriarch Justinian, and the content is, in short, the following:

- The Romanian Orthodox Church has kept, under communism, a relatively privileged and middle situation of superiority to those available to the Russian church in the Soviet Union;
- within the Romanian Patriarchate, the network of ecclesiastical schools has remained almost intact (10 seminaries and 2 higher theological institutes) and now depends only on the church, which pays special attention to it;
- The Romanian Orthodox Church currently has 5 publishing houses and regularly publishes 3 patriarchal magazines and 5 metropolitan magazines, all able to compete with the best theological publications in the West;
- The Church has recently (?) received the right to teach high school religious education in the state schools and lives somewhat under a regime approved by the state, which helps in material relations;
- This privileged situation is explained by the exceptional personality of Patriarch Justinian, an old friend of Gheorghe Gheorghiu

---

<sup>17</sup> "What is sure is that the Patriarch Justinian supported him with money (sometimes missent) during his travels, and at his departure made available, according to some of his diaries, a series of theological and material manuscripts, documentaries (this is the result, among other things, of the report published by Andrei Scrima, under the signature of Olivier Clement, in the protest weekly «Reforms», published in Paris, no. 644 of July 20, 1957, a report appended with the praises and comments of Bart[olomeu] Anania, in an edition of the journal «Orthodoxy», edited by the Romanian Patriarchate". ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 1, 54.

Dej, whom he hid from the police (?) during the repression of a strike;

– Patriarch Justinian, perfectly loyal to the state, has from the beginning put the activity of the Church above any policy;

– “In the thinking that guides the cultural and economic life of the present Romanian state, none of the ideas that constitute the overall vision of any religion and even more of the Christian religion of Orthodox confession, can be found,” and yet, each remaining in his position and maintaining the hope of a peaceful triumph, “an atmosphere of peace and respect characterizes the relationship between the state and the church” (quoted from a speech by Patriarch Justinian).<sup>18</sup>

A deep analysis of this text reveals in fact that it is rather an essay where the author offers an overview of the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church under a communist dictatorship. In the same time, it is a distant and rather objective essay, because the author is conscious of the fact that what he says is meant to protect the mentioned persons and not to transform them into targets of the regime. Also, the position adopted by the majoritarian church is expressed in a very diplomatic way. Fr. Andrei insists on the fact that the Patriarch has the support of the most important theologians of the moment, namely Fr. Cosma, Teodor M. Popescu or Fr. Stăniloae, popular and pious clergymen, but also shows that the Church does not intend to dominate, just to persuade through the “spirit’s weapons.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, this analysis brings him to something important for ecumenism as well as for the Romanian Orthodox Church. Scrima himself inserts a phrase that was surely, among other aspects, meant to protect the Romanian Orthodox Church from a future persecution and says that: “the direct contact between the Romanian and Occidental Christianity would deeply serve ecumenism.”<sup>20</sup> His conclusion is rather an exhortation and it was a message sent to both the ecumenical movement and the Romanian Securitate.

### *The “Securitate’s” interest in Fr. Scrima’s activity after 1960*

Before the 1960’s, when the Romanian Orthodox Church began to get involved in the ecumenical dialogue<sup>21</sup>, there was an interest in Fr. Scrima’s activity as it might be a tool used to discredit the Romanian regime. Later,

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, 55.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 55–57.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> See: Hintikka, “The Pride and Prejudice,” 457.

after the 1960's, when he became an active part in the ecumenical dialogue and some of the regime's delegates in the Ecumenical Movement often met him in different conferences and initiated dialogue regarding some of his affirmations, there was a deeper interest in his ideas. The author himself focused more before the Second Vatican Council on describing the Romanian realities in the international theological journals and presenting the ways how the communist regime persecuted some of the notorious autochthon voices on the development of an ecumenical theology. Such an example can be considered his interview from *Unitas* from 1961, translated and analyzed by Securitate. The short note of N. Budişteanu from 14 November 1961 briefly summarizes the context of the work and says that the translated article can be found in an appendix.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Budişteanu did not know exactly the meaning of this journal, but also most probably, due to the desire of the authorities to compare different approaches to the topic, Fr. Scrima's dossier contained other translations<sup>23</sup> of the same content, plus an evaluation of the journal and its role, made, at the request of the authorities, by source "Costea". Most probably, the "source" was somebody from the neighbourhood of Patriarch Justinian, because he knew that the clergyman received some copies of the journal and the source was also a theologian, due to the fact that he evaluated the journal with precision, emphasizing its relevance for the Catholic religion. He showed there that:

"Unitas" magazine is published by Catholic circles under the aegis of the "Notre-Dame de l'Assomption" (sic) Archconfraternity and appears in French, Italian and English.

Recently, the patriarch received a large package with different church publications from abroad, coming through the Department of Cults, with the "S" visa. Among these magazines was a collection of French editions of the magazine "Unitas" in 1960 and a copy in Italian in January-March 1961.<sup>24</sup>

The summary written by source "Costea" also contained a summary, signed this time by a captain of the Securitate. Here, it was shown that, although

---

<sup>22</sup> "In March 1961, the Catholic magazine «Unitas» published an article referring to the conference held by the former monk ANDREI SCRIMA—a lecturer, former librarian of the Romanian Patriarchate—regarding the situation of the Romanian Orthodox church. The conference was held by SCRIMA ANDREI in November 1960 in Rome, and included some Catholic monks of the Jesuit order.

Through the article summarizing the conference held by SCRIMA ANDREI, Patriarch JUSTINIAN is praised and presented as a supporter of Catholics.

The translated article is attached." ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 1, 63.

<sup>23</sup> See: *Ibidem*, 248–51, where can be found another translation of the same article.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.



the cults department subscribed to this journal, its personnel did not receive the requested copies containing Scrima's article.<sup>25</sup> This shows on one side the interest in the content of Fr. Scrima's interview and on the other, the bad communication that sometimes existed between the state institutions.

As we have already mentioned, the references to these interviews will be recurrently used in different documents like the one from 26 May 1965, when the Securitate decided to also put him under surveillance in India and France.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to say how this decision was influenced by the fact that he took part as an ambassador of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the Second Vatican Council, in a context where the Romanian Orthodox Church was not allowed to be present and criticized the event<sup>27</sup>. Authorities also monitored the persons who came in contact with him and were involved in ecumenical activities and sent people to take part in ecumenical activities and get in touch with him. For example, on 8 July 1965, source "Petroniu" source wrote a note describing a meeting in France with the Romanian monk. Among the topics considered there was also his activity in the ecumenical movement, where Fr. Scrima was already known for his ideas.<sup>28</sup> The spy asked him about his speeches from various meetings among Christians. Among the arguments discussed was something that deeply wounded Scrima, who was born in a region of Romania with a Hungarian majority, namely the ethnic composition of Transylvania. In this context, after the dialogue, it should be noted that:

Scrima explained to the source that he had twice tried to repair the bad impression he had left at the congresses in Enugu, Nigeria and Rodhos in Greece. Metropolitan Moisescu, concluded that the population of Transylvania was mostly Hungarian.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> "The Department of Cults subscribes to this magazine and although it was suggested to you, Dogaru D-tru, by an employee, that a few copies of the translations of articles in the magazine be given to the MAI, the copies are not provided. In the future we will obtain not only the copies of this publication from our own sources but also the translations of it, which we will present to the professional management." *Ibidem*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Hintikka, "The Pride and Prejudice," 457–58. For more information regarding Fr. Scrima's activity there, see also: M. Velati, *Separati ma fratelli. Gli osservatori non cattolici al Vaticano II (1962-1965)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014); Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban and Daniela Dumbravă eds., *André Scrima. Expérience spirituelle et langage théologique. Actes du colloque de Rome, 29-30 octobre 2008*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Radu Bercea, "Essai sur l'herméneutique 'en acte' d'André Scrima," *New Europe College Yearbook* 6 (1998-1999) : 32.

<sup>29</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2, 3.

The same document mentions the fact that Moisescu invited him, in a private meeting, to come back to Romania but Scrima affirmed that there were more possibilities to accomplish his tasks abroad.<sup>30</sup>

1964 was another year when the Romanian regime took an interest in his activity. A visit to Jordan determined the rebirth of this curiosity on the part of the Romanian authorities. On 5 February 1964, the surveillance office in Tel-Aviv sent a telegram reporting the fact that, as a representative of the ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, the aforementioned monk visited that country and was interested in the situation of Romanian monks residing there. At the end of the brief text there is also mentioned that with the encouragement of the Greek Patriarch, Scrima works for the unification of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.<sup>31</sup> Most probably, his visit to Jordan took place thanks to a conference or a preliminary visit that resulted in the later meeting between the heads of the two sister Christian Churches, namely the Pope and the Patriarch.

One year later, Fr. Scrima paid another visit to Jordan and also met an architect, namely Baramki Gheorghe, later also questioned by the Securitate<sup>32</sup> about the occasion of a trip in Romania. The Securitate office in Tel Aviv then, namely on 22 January 1965, sent a telegram to Bucharest, presenting both the Romanian theologian's situation and the details of his visit:

The Romanian fugitive monk SCRIMA ANDREI works as a representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople near the Vatican. He resides in Rome in the Greek Orthodox parish of this city.

As representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople SCRIMA ANDREI has the task of conducting negotiations for the union of the Orthodox and the Catholic churches.

In January 1964, SCRIMA ANDREI visited Jordan, where through the architect BARAMKI GHEORGHE he was interested in the activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as the situation of the priests ANANIA, FELIX, SOFIAN, BENEDICT and others, who had been arrested after his escape from the country.

As BARAMKI GHEORGHE was going to visit Romania in July 1964, they established that SCRIMA would come to Jordan again

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> "We have information that in 1962, the fugitive monk ANDREI SCRIMA (currently the trusted man of Patriarch ATENAGORAS from Constantinople) paid a visit to Jordan to inquire about the life of the Romanian monks in this country and if they have Romanian connections. Under the supervision of the Patriarch ATENAGORAS, the monk ANDREI SCRIMA conducts negotiations with different persons in order to unify the Orthodox and Catholic churches." *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 42–44.

before leaving BARANKI to give him some information and then to find out the result of the visit.

Not being able to travel, SCRIMA ANDREI asked BARAMKI for details of the visit in a letter sent in October 1964.<sup>33</sup>

Here, although the ideas expressed in an ecumenical meeting are not brought to our attention, it was still his activity in the ecumenical area that attracted Securitate's attention. In fact, the theological content of his speeches was not the cause of all this interest, but rather his prestige, which could be used, in the eyes of Bucharest rulers, in actions that would discredit them. Almost all the sources that investigated him underlined this aspect. The same source "Petroniu", previously mentioned, wrote another note about him on 19 October 1967. Here, he not only mentioned the fact that he was invited to hold conferences in prestigious places like the UNESCO organization and the Second Vatican Council where he had an important role<sup>34</sup> and showed that he had a great influence on Patriarch Justinian<sup>35</sup> and thanks to Scrima the Romanian Church leader even changed his opinion regarding controversial persons like Fr. Virgil Gheorghiu from Paris,<sup>36</sup> "Petroniu" defined him as being "the most interesting character of all the Romanian emigration abroad."<sup>37</sup>

A few years later, on 27 May 1970, an informative note signed by C. O. again brought under scrutiny Scrima's activity in the ecumenical field. Two conversations that the informer had with two Catholic priests from the Church "Saint Isaiah" in Jerusalem were presented in detail. Although the debated topic was a political one, it contained many accents of ecumenical

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> "He actively participated in the debates and the Vatican's work of recent years, regarding the reforms of the Roman-Catholic church. He also had the most important role in the dialogue between the two churches; Orthodox and Catholic would be the hidden initiators of this action and the main factor of those carried out so far in this field with the great prelates of the Catholic Church (cardinals, archbishops and bishops)." *Ibidem*, 52. For more information about the Council and his role there, see also: Jean Puyo and Yves Congar, *Une vie pour la vérité. Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar* (Le Centurion, 1975); Vincenzo Carbone, *Il Diario Conciliare di Monsignor Pericle Felici* (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> "Good relations and reliable man of Patriarch of Romania. Correspondence and oral messages. It seems that due to P. F. Patriarch he changed his views of GHEORGHIU, cold relations, antagonistic with him". ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Virgil Gheorghiu was ordained in 1963 by the Bishop Teofil Ionescu who, at the time, was not in canonical relations with the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate. Later, thanks to Fr. Scrima's intervention, the Romanian writer came under Bishop Ionescu's jurisdiction. For more information about his life, activity and work, see also: Thierry Gillyboeuf, *Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu – scriitorul calomniat* (Bucharest: Sophia, 2019), but also Virgil Gheorghiu, *Ispita libertății – memorii II* (Bucharest: All Educational Press, 2002); idem, *Memorii – martorul orei 25* (Bucharest: All Educational Press, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. 2, 52.

theology and therefore we consider the document relevant for our topic. Due to the fact that the document *in situ* was an important source that revealed information regarding the surveillance of Fr. Scrima and also about the way the surveillance organs have perceived his activity, we offer below an extract of its content:

The source reports the data obtained from the talks with the Catholic priest HUSAR BRUNO, the superior of the “Saint Isaiah” Church in Jerusalem and with the priest DUBOIS MARCEL from the same church.

People reported that during the month of May 1970, a meeting of several ecclesiastical personalities took place in Beirut.

Their meeting was held at the request of the Arab authorities in order for the church personalities to show their views regarding the occupation of the Arab territories by the Israeli authorities.

During the meeting, the participants condemned the Israeli expansion into the Arab territories and demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all these territories. They also condemned Israel’s “what would be done” restrictions on churches and the Christian mission in the “Holy Land.”

The meeting was also attended by ANDREI SCRIMA, a Romanian priest who lives in an Orthodox monastery in Lebanon. He further stated that he agrees with the work of Arab terrorist organizations and that they must fight against Israel until the liberation of the occupied Arab territories following the 1967 war.

ANDREI SCRIMA spoke with great spirit and passion against Israel, saying that he would even be able to join these Arab organizations, which he supports morally and materially, if he could.

The aforementioned people said they were surprised by ANDREI SCRIMA’s attitude towards Israel.

The source also reports that in 1967 ANDREI SCRIMA was in Israel. On this occasion he contacted several Israeli personalities and at that time he publicly defiled the Israeli occupation and sympathized with the Arab countries and population suffering from the 1967 war and at that time, Israeli personalities were dissatisfied with the statements made by ANDREI SCRIMA.

In the situation created, ANDREI SCRIMA refuses to go to Israel. He stated, however, that he will go, however, when Patriarch Justinian will be in Jerusalem for the consecration of the Romanian church.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 5–6. His travel to Jerusalem mentioned here will be also presented in a detailed way in a later note, where the author will mention that Scrima had meetings with theolog-

His attitude towards the Palestinians and the Arab situation influenced neither the Jewish authorities to act against him, nor the Occidental societies to expel him from the universities where he was a teacher. His arguments were most probably well-sustained and his attitude was perceived as a personal honest perspective, which was not meant to upset anyone. Most probably, the Securitate informer was exaggerating in his presentation, a behaviour that often happened in other situations. Therefore, in 1971 was also mentioned, in a note from the same source, the fact that he was teaching in Lebanon, in Seleuhar University, and also the fact that he was in close relationships with important theological and political personalities like the Pope or de Gaulle and he was invited in Paris recurrently to attend conferences.<sup>39</sup>

In the Securitate documents, together with the detailed biographical notes that were requested in a repetitive manner, there was some synthesis of Scrima's life and activity after he left Romania. Here, his main activities were reviewed, with facts intended to inform the Securitate about the important role he played and also about the need to monitor him. Such an example can be also considered a characterization profile by the "Radu" source, on 25 May 1972. Here, "Radu" presents the information that Father Scrima arrived in Constantinople, talked to the Ecumenical Patriarch and from there was sent to the Vatican, where he pursued a wealth of activities and then to Lebanon where he served as a professor.<sup>40</sup> The information is relevant not only because it reveals what Securitate knew and what their methods of gathering information were, but also the Securitate's interest in the ecumenical movement and realities.

It was not only a theoretical and informative purpose that engaged so many people in investigating Scrima's activity. The authorities also thought seriously at times in the history of surveillance of Fr. Scrima about the pos-

---

ical personalities like the Bishop Aristobulus, professor Tournay, Marcel Dubois and many others. See: *Ibidem*, 34–36.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 18–19. It was mentioned there that: "He stays at a monastery which he founded in Lebanon for about three months a year, and publishes spiritual literature for it in Arabic. He is appreciated by the Patriarch ATENAGORAS and by the high Catholic circles in Rome, even by the popes."

<sup>40</sup> "By 1962 he moved to Istanbul and attracted the support of the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, who, after a period sent him as his representative to the Vatican. From Scrima's accounts, as well as some Catholic prelates, representatives of the Vatican here, it appears that he made a major contribution to improving relations between the Vatican and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, along the lines of eliminating the schism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In the Vatican, he created some relations that sustained him and thanks to which he became a professor in Lebanon. A. Scrima realizes [this] is a wonderful philosophical activity in favour of the Vatican and against the Mosaic religion." ACNSAS, *Fond SIE*, file no. 2601, 88.

sibility of murdering him. A testimony to this conclusion can be considered the note of source “Cristian” from 30 November 1962, written after the Romanian priest gave a sermon in Constantinople. The note included the following:

We are informed from Istanbul that on 25. 11. 1962, a certain Andrei Scrima, archimandrite, who fled out from the country (*Romania*), during a religious service held at the Balik-Pazer Church in Istanbul, made a series of slanderous statements toward our country.

The residence should notify them if Scrima is known in the Central and if necessary, remove him for being undesirable to the metropolitan authorities.<sup>41</sup>

For unknown reasons his annihilation was not accomplished, but the authorities were, as we have tried to show, very attentive to what he said. Moreover, the communists also kept an eye on Romanians who could be influenced by him or could be in contact with the Romanian theologian. Among them, in first place was surely his family. Together with its members, there were also people who corresponded with him (first among them, Patriarch Justinian), that were monitored too. Also, at a certain moment of the history, Securitate was also interested in the ones who agreed with him and his activity. For instance, on 8 January 1966, Petre Vasilescu was imprisoned and forced to answer a few questions due to the fact that he listened to Andrei Scrima's broadcast from “Radio Europa Liberă”, in which he spoke about the release of the anathemas between Catholics and Orthodox people.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

As can be seen from our presentation, Fr. Scrima's activity within the ecumenical movement constituted a topic that frequently interested the communist authorities. The people with whom he met, the interviews that he gave, the articles published by him, his conferences and his relationships were among the topics presented in different notes in the Securitate Archives. Written sometimes by theologians, and in other situations by people who had no theological background, the information sometimes referred both to the theological content of his publications while trying to evaluate his work, and to the political content, and in other situations to speak only about the political content. Certainly, as we have tried to emphasize, not the serious theological concerns that caused the Romanian authorities to monitor him and

---

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 132.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, 121.

learn what he said, but rather the desire of Bucharest rulers to create a good image using the Ecumenical Movement, the World Council of Churches and the dialogue with the Catholic Church as tools in the accomplishment of this purpose. Due to the fact that, through his honesty and knowledge, the Romanian Archimandrite changed the image of the Bucharest regime's activities which they had almost succeeded in selling to the West, he became an enemy and his activities were intensely analysed. The communist regime doubled, by different methods, its efforts to neutralize the effects of Scrima's work and, as we saw, also by requests that he be murdered.

As a general conclusion, the fact must be emphasized that neither the theologians who were sent to him, nor the "Securitate" officers had a deep understanding of his ecumenical vision or of his theology, a fact that explains why nothing could be found in the Securitate files about an analysis or about surveillance organs' interest in his ecumenical vision in a proper way, but rather an interest in his person, work, ideas and meetings, which remains superficial. The captains and majors were interested instead in whom he met and what the influence of his dialogue partners was, the topics debated and the ideas developed and their potential political relevance. Still, the fact that they were interested in how he presented the Romanian Orthodox Church and its activity under the Communist regime and how it faced some of the challenges, also caused the security agents to get in touch with his ecumenical vision, to investigate his publications and even to punish some of the people who were interested in his work and had a similar way of thinking with the Romanian theologian in French exile, who came back to his native country after 1989.

Most probably, future investigations will be able to correlate the information found in the government's records with some of his actions and will be able to show how the Securitate pressures caused him to develop a certain attitude. Perhaps they will determine if he was aware of the way in which some of his assumptions and ideas were perceived in Romania and their impact in the country that he left before becoming a relevant voice of the Orthodox theology within the Ecumenical movement.