

## THE LEGIONARY INSURGENCY OF JANUARY 1941 IN BUCHAREST – NEW ARCHIVE DISCLOSURES

*Alexandru Iordache\**

10.52846/AUCSI.2023.1.05

### **Abstract**

In the literature of the interwar period and World War II, the severe divide between diverse political conservative trends, including authoritarian conservatism and right wing extremism, had been obvious for some time. In the historiography on the Legionary Rebellion in Romania, as it is frequently termed, of 21-23 January 1941, this perspective was disregarded, despite its considerably explanatory potential. This work takes a novel approach to this topic, analyzing with historical-archival arguments the great clash between two eminently incompatible organizations: one of the elites with authoritarian traditional leanings, and the other revolutionary, intolerant of the old hierarchies and inspired by European fascism, promoting national purification through violence and the annihilation of others. This research will reconsider some of the key notions and assumptions underpinning the disputes and emphasize a sequence of critical decision-making activities based on unstudied Romanian Secret Service data<sup>1</sup>. Also, the work involves a critical analysis of the information regarding the legionary insurgency through the lens of interwar intelligence and their presentation to the readers, whether they are specialists or a history enthusiasts, both from a historical, analytical, and especially applied and exemplary perspective.

**Key words:** *Special Intelligence Service, legionary rebellion, Ion Antonescu, informative and subversive confrontations, Horia Sima.*

In the current article, I intend to introduce a new approach to the study of the legionary rebellion, beyond the classic presentations of its chronological evolution or minimizing as well as justifying the characteristic actions in favour of one of the parts involved.

Thus, the SSI<sup>2</sup> - Legionary Movement relationship (in the general context of the legionary rebellion) was analyzed under several registers or perspectives.

In the framework of the theoretical and methodological register, I mean to ensure a documented presentation of the events associated with the legionary rebellion in Bucharest and in the country by carefully grouping, on a new basis, the intelligence and legionary memoirs, the conclusions resulting from the analysis of the main works of specialty from the country and abroad.

In order to achieve this approach I analyzed, on the one hand, the testimonies and personal notes of some of the direct participants in the legionary rebellion, and on the other hand, the statements of the witnesses who took part into the events. The

---

\* Postdoctoral researcher, PhD., „Valahia” University of Târgoviște, Doctoral School, History specialization, No. 34-36A, Lt. Stancu Ion Street, Târgoviște, 130105, Dâmbovița County, E-mail: alexsiordache1986@gmail.com.

<sup>1</sup> Particularly the archival elements (657 files) referring to the legionary movement, which can be found in The Archives of SRI (Romanian Intelligence Service).

<sup>2</sup> Secret Intelligence Service (later - Special Intelligence Service).

analytically interpreted statements came from the intelligence staff involved in the informative-operational management of the rebellion and from the people interrogated post-factum by the state authorities.

For the same purpose, in the first part of the paper, the fundamental research questions aimed at establishing the correct correlation between the attributes and prerogatives legally assigned to intelligence structures and the informative-operative needs which may occur as a result of the risks and threats to internal state security caused by the extreme right wing groups.

Within the action and practical register presented in the second part of the research, I intend to provide pertinent answers to the questions regarding the extent to which the Romanian intelligence and public order services performed in terms of anticipatory knowledge of the members and actions of the Legionary Movement, respectively if the intelligence presented to the decision-makers in Bucharest could have substantiated the adoption, in due time, of effective measures for defending internal order and democracy against the rise and assertion of autochthonous totalitarianism.

Did Romania and the secret services have the organizational capacity to annihilate the subversive or paramilitary actions carried out by the legionnaires, especially those of extreme hardness, energetic and with a great power of seduction among young people, who could have been easily drawn into the cycle of violence? To what extent was the collaboration within the information community effective? To what extent did the political-military decision-makers, beneficiaries of the informative and analytical materials, live up to their duties and have the ability to understand the data received, to take measures accordingly, in favour of national interests? – these are other questions to which I will look for a well-documented answer.

On the other hand, from the perspective of defining this register as accurately as possible, my aim is to carry out an objective study of the participation of the intelligence structures in the creation of an unfavourable current of public opinion or support of a complex negative propaganda of the Legionary Movement, the foundation on which the extremist organization was to definitively lose his ability to access the political scene again. This objective was assumed at the institutional level by the heads of the intelligence services and had both official forms of work (i.e. participation in the inter-institutional research commission of those suspected of having taken part in the legionary rebellion, questioning of the officials, police agents and officers who witnessed the events during the legionary rebellion), as well as asymmetric and confidential forms of work (for example, negative propaganda against those who revolted and those in exile, supplying the prosecution with photographic material from the period of the legionary rebellion, keeping the legionary nuclei under special observation). Having established such objectives, the research methods were chosen to give me the opportunity to carry out substantial analyzes regarding the researched issue. At this point in the evolution of the research, the emphasis was placed on the study of files from the SRI Archives - recently declassified documents I had primary access to. It is worth noting that, although they are professionally archived in the SRI Archives on certain issues of interest, the original sources kept in this repository were not easy to study.

This shortcoming is mainly caused by the poor way in which some of them were constituted, the first 3,000 files from the SRI Archives (files that have not been micro-filmed so far) being initially described and completed under the direct coordination of the communist officials, by conscripts untrained in archiving activities. Given the fact that the Romanian Intelligence Service is only the custodian of these archival documents, the institution cannot intervene to restructure the files set up by the Security and remove procedural shortcomings.

Thus, there were often inconsistencies between the names applied to the files and their contents, or documents developed in different years, from totally different institutions, which were unjustifiably grouped within the same file (some secular, others ecclesiastical, some belonging to law enforcement institutions, and others taken from mass media) or presenting different issues.

In order to overcome these archival difficulties, I generally tried to use documents which preserve truthful information, which can withstand possible subsequent verifications in relation to other archival sources. At the same time, although they can be only found in a single original source, other information, based on their impact and the value of the depository, was not ignored and had to be corroborated with other sources and presented as hypotheses worth remembering.

In the elaboration of the article, another research method that I took into account was discourse analysis. Thus, I carefully read and examined the language used by the intelligence officers of the time, the aim being to understand as correctly as possible the way in which they perceived the historical political and military reality, the „horizontal” interactions with the exponents of the leadership or other environments which they intersected with, as well as the extent to which the language accurately transposed their communicative intentions.

We also carried out an analysis from a semantic perspective of the discourse, the resulting data being useful for drawing the most pragmatic conclusions.

Last but not least, in approaching and rendering as correctly as possible (i.e. understanding the specific aspects of the informational research of the Legionnaire Movement), I also proceeded to discussions with officers with experience in the informative community and prominent members of the national archival community, among whom I can mention reserve colonel Neviaș Tunăreanu, historian and former deputy head of the SRI Central Archive, reserve general Florin Pîntilie, former deputy head of the SRI Secretariate and head of the SRI Central Archive, and Cristian Anița, director of the National Archives of Romania.

### **Introductory aspects regarding the reorganization of the secret service in the years before the legionary insurgency**

In this chapter, I intend to introduce the reader to the way in which the Romanian secret services thought and adapted forms of institutional organization aimed at making more efficient the informative-operative activity directed against the interwar right-wing extremism. Thus, I tried to present part of the legislative, self-protection measures of the institution, specific for counterinformative purposes, which ensured a correct adaptation of the intelligence community to the internal

realities and the key moments of the confrontations in the period before the legionary insurgency, especially after the proclamation of Romania as a national-legionary state.

In the economy of the work, this chapter describes the theoretical and methodological part of the activity of the Romanian intelligence services in the preamble of the violent manifestations between the legionnaires and General Ion Antonescu. Considering the increasing informational interest of foreign intelligence agencies towards Romania, as well as the social convulsions caused by the economic recession of the years 1929-1933, governmental political circles, especially the people with a decision-making role at the military and intelligence level, established the need to strengthen the counterintelligence sector.

As a result, by means of the reorganization in 1934, the Counterintelligence Section of the Secret Service acquired a better improved organizational structure, similar to the models used by the correspondent sectors in Western intelligence services such as the Intelligence Service in England, the Deuxième Bureau in France or those of neighbouring states (The Archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock P, file no. 17.474, volume I: 109). The Counterintelligence Section was entrusted with new duties and endowed with more qualified and numerous personnel. Moreover, for the first time in the evolution of the Romanian intelligence services, training courses were developed and taught for the professional and practical training of cadres, both in the country and abroad.

As such, from that moment on, the Counterintelligence Section began to be seen as the matrix and main pillar of the Secret Service's activity. As confirmation of this assessment, I can specify the fact that most cases of espionage or treason revealed until 1940 but also during the war, bore the imprint of the activity carried out by counterintelligence structures.

Following the same reorganization, Group III - „Social Actions” was redefined and developed as an intelligence structure with the mission of following „social, domestic and international issues” (The archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock P, file no. 48.34, volumes 409: 132-141). On the organizational level, this group consisted of the record department with three special agents and the „agency” composed of three teams, also divided into sub-teams.

One of the three teams, „Team I”, had in its composition two sub-teams that had as information search media, operative work directions and vectors from among the far-right and right-wing groups. Thus, we are discussing the Sub-team „Extreme right”, which dealt with the pursuit of members or sympathizers of twelve extreme right political parties and formations, such as: „All for the country”, „Fire swastika”, „Block of the 1922 generation”, „Christian Labor Party” or „Legionary Student Corps” and the „Right” Sub-team - followed eleven right-wing parties and organizations, among which the most important were „Christian National Party”, „Romanian Front”, „National Guard” or „Vlad Tepeș League”.

In other words, I can state that the Secret Service received, due to the aforementioned reorganization, legal attributes and organizational prerogatives in the field of prevention, knowledge and counteraction of actions that may disturb the peace, internal order or national security of Romania caused by the interests, actions and approaches of right-wing and extreme right-wing groups.

Since the interwar intelligence leadership valued the legionnaires as the the highest potential source of risk and threat, operative attention was primarily directed to this segment. Skillfully understanding the vulnerability of civil society and the state in front of them, Mihail Moruzov acted from the very beginning in order to recruit a human source at the level of the legionary top management, through which to obtain „intelligence” from within this environment of operative interest.

Thus, based on compromising material (having evidence that he had been infiltrated by the Abwehr in the legionary movement and supported to reach the position of Captain), Mihail Moruzov recruited Horia Sima in 1928. For further informative penetration, Mihail Moruzov paid Sima 200.000 lei monthly, and, owing to the blackmail material, he kept him under control.

As historian Radu Ioanid mentions, the relationship between the two grew over time, in which context, at the first gatherings preceding the Second World War, all the legionnaire leaders such as Horia Sima, Radu Mironovici, Vasile Noveanu or Augustin Bidianu were mobilized on place at the Secret Service and kept available for political negotiations (Ioanid, 2006: 181-182). Moreover, at the time of the clandestine border crossing attempt in 1940, Horia Sima was released, probably due to Moruzov's intervention.

After the legionnaires came to power (on September 14, 1940, Horia Sima was appointed vice-president of the Council of Ministers), it is also likely that Horia Sima ordered the silencing of Mihail Moruzov by arresting him, mainly for counterinformative reasons, to avoid revealing the relationship he had with the intelligence structures. Moreover, it seems that the assassination of Moruzov in cell no. 1 on the night of November 26-27, 1940 coincided with Horia Sima's intentions to definitively break the informative connection with the leader of the secret service, especially as a result of the operative tasks with which he had been directed at the level of legionary decision-making environments.

On the one hand, in the same period, probably motivated by the same reasons of individual and organizational self-protection, Horia Sima and the legionary commands put into practice measures to identify people infiltrated by the intelligence structures or „traitors” from the Legionary Movement .

With this motivation, on 2 September 1940, according to the provisions applied at the national level, Nicu Popescu, the head of the legionary police in Lugoj, requested the names of the police informants on behalf of the legionary command in Bucharest. The answer of the General Directorate of Lugoj Police was a negative one: „it cannot be given. The names of the legionnaire informers from 1938 until today cannot be communicated”.

On the other hand, the attitude of the leadership of the General Directorate of the Police is noteworthy, as they skilfully sent an evasive answer: „we had two informants who provided us with general information regarding the legionary movement. Their information was otherwise not sufficiently justified, which is why they have not been active since June 1940” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 1198: 3-7). The same typical response was also adopted by the police structures in Sibiu or Blaj, which reported that they had no informants inside the legionary movement, the information on this component being

of minimal importance. Also, inventive and hard to dismantle answers were formulated by Târgu Jiu Police („we had an informant who died on August 30, 1940”) or Bucharest Police („we had only one informant, Ivasaxanco Gheorghe, who crossed the border into Bessarabia”) (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 1198: 9-14).

To the disadvantage of the informative community, other general directorates (Tulcea, Bacău) accepted without any rejection the request of the new legionary leadership (the information service for subversive movements was to be organized only in accordance with their provisions), nominating the security agents who dealt with the legionary movement and their informants (such as Stavri Akemelinte from Târgu Ocna and the priest Ștefan Dorneanu in the case of Bacău Police) (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 1198: 8).

Moreover, N. Marinescu, the head of Slatina Police, considered it appropriate to add to this list the conspiratorial names of the informants - Andrei Ionete, Romanian language teacher at Radu Greceanu Boys' High School in Slatina, called „Panduru”, who was trained to provide data on the state of spirit from the school environment regarding the legionary movement, and Emil Dănescu, unemployed, called „Fouché” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 1198: 19).

Even a legionary project to reorganize the Secret Service dates from the period of the national-legionary government, by replacing 25% of the old staff - especially heads of sections and offices - with legionary counsellors, the stated purpose being to „steal the secrets and connections of the Service” (Pintilie, 2003: 298).

Unlike Mihail Moruzov, whose informative connection with the legionary leaders was most of the time useful for the SSI, I consider that Eugen Cristescu, his successor as head of the traditional Romanian secret service, did not agree to any collaboration, as he had no qualms in publicly exposing his revulsion towards the legionary totalitarianism. His ten-year-professional experience in coordinating the struggles of the police forces with the radical elements in the Legion unequivocally confirmed his fears in relation to their intentions of virulent parasitism of democracy.

To these were added the dangerous connections with the Gestapo, in fact the source and means by which the legionnaires could easily turn into criminal armed units.

Under these circumstances, despite the death threats received in writing from the legionnaires (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu nominated him, in „*Cuvântul*”, as one of the main contributors to the „tortures” and „blood spilled by the legionnaires”), Eugen Cristescu constantly acted for the removal of legionary elements.

And it was precisely this aversion to the legionnaires that led Ion Antonescu to appoint<sup>3</sup> him as head of the secret service on November 15, 1940, in a tensed moment, after the antagonistic groups in the Legion (Sima and Codreanu) had fought with the weapons provided in Guttenberg canteen in Bucharest. It should also be noted that one of the fundamental conditions (Aioanei, C., Troncotă, C., 1993: 140) that Eugen Cristescu put forward to Ion Antonescu before accepting the position of

---

<sup>3</sup> The appointment was made by Decree no. 157.357 of November 12 1940, signed by General Ion Antonescu and promulgated three days later by the king, by Decree no. 3765.

general director, was to prevent the representatives of the Legionary Movement from being hired in the secret service.<sup>4</sup>

It was the initial test for Eugen Cristescu, the exam through which he could prove that the SSI had the reaction capacity and informative infiltration capabilities that could serve the state management to deal the connection with the Legion in an effective way, an aspect that Ion Antonescu had begun to realize with more and more difficulty.

Thus, benefiting from the essential support of Niculae D. Stănescu, the head of the Political Group in the SSI, who had recruited an informant among the people who were close to Codreanu brothers, Eugen Cristescu was able to present General Antonescu, on the same evening, a detailed report on the development of the incident, overcoming the managerial „baptism” in the new position.

A few days later, on November 19, 1940, by Decree Law no. 3,813, possibly due to the above-mentioned activities, Eugen Cristescu received the approval to reorganize the Secret Service - the occasion for the intelligence institution to change its name to the Special Information Service - by adapting the models from foreign secret services, including the German one, to the Romanian essential features (The archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock P, file no. 48163, volume II: 30). By means of this reorganization, the Second Counterintelligence Section maintained its old organizational structure and most of its previous attributions, including those of informative-operational monitoring of far-right and right wing groups. The changes occurred only among the staff, with new hires, appointments and, of course, a series of purges. The moment coincided with a considerable increase in the abuses committed by the legionnaires, the social and political life being practically dominated by anarchic violence. Illegal arrests, unauthorized descents, mistreatment of ordinary citizens and assassinations had become routine, flagrantly violating the political agreement supported by General Antonescu.

Appreciating that under the mentioned circumstances a violent confrontation between the legionnaires and the state institutions loyal to General Antonescu was imminent, Eugen Cristescu took, at the same moment, the decision, which would prove to be inspired, to order the set up of a covert network in the top echelons of the Legion.

Through them and the liaison agents, the operational coordination in which even some of Eugen Cristescu's relatives had been involved and assigned tasks, such as sub-commissioner Grigore Petrovici, the leader of the secret service, was creating a tactical advantage that would prove essential in the effort made by his organization and general Antonescu in order to suppress the confrontations with the legionnaires in the following year.

In parallel, right from the moment of taking over the leadership of the SSI, Eugen Cristescu coordinated, through a close collaboration within the intelligence community with the Social Police Service of the Capital Police Prefecture and the General Directorate of the Police, an extensive informative monitoring campaign of

---

<sup>4</sup> The decision proved to be beneficial, as the legionnaires could not subordinate their SSI by infiltrating cadres or sympathizers in leadership positions, as they had done with the Security and the General Inspectorate of the Police.

the ministers, commanders, instructors and ordinary legionnaires who were valued as being willing to get involved in activities which could constitute a danger for the state authority of the type of a coup d'état (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 15-16). Their records were constantly updated and referred to the positions held within the state apparatus and in the legionary decision-making gear, respectively they contained details related to the addresses (some recorded, for counter-informative reasons, with aliases) of the places where they could be found and picked up in case of emergency.<sup>5</sup>

The correct intuition of the violent potential of those in the records and attention of the SSI becomes clear even through a simple comparison of the list of those monitored operatively with those wanted for arrest for involvement in the legionary rebellion. Concretely, a number of 14 legionnaires previously monitored for information can be found in the lists (partially supported by photographs made available by the General Directorate of the Police to facilitate the identification of threat vectors) that the law enforcement and intelligence structures were constantly updating, depending on the evolution of the arrest process, leaving the territory of Romania or their death/disappearance (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 10-20). Among them there were Horia Sima, Dumitru Grozea, action coordinator of the legionary rebellion in Bucharest, or Stelian Stănicel, former general secretary of the Bucharest Municipality Police and one of the „brains” of the takeover of the Capital Police Prefecture.

The truth is that, from the moment of his appointment, Eugen Cristescu intuited premises for the short-term organization of a putsch by Horia Sima, an aspect that led him to reorganize and conceive the SSI as a general information service for the head of state, in our case of Ion Antonescu. Practically, it can be stated that most of the fundamental decisions adopted by the head of the Romanian state in the period 1940-August 1944 were based on the information provided by the service led by Eugen Cristescu.

In a report drawn up by specialized cadres from the Ministry of War, on September 24, 1944, the following aspects related to the general duties, personnel, funds and technical material of the SSI were mentioned: „The Special Intelligence Service, in the form in which it functioned until August 23, 1944, was a public service, invested with the general information that interested the state leadership. To this end, its general duties consisted of procuring, verifying and completing external and internal information, according to the needs signalled by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Great General Staff and other state authorities” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock P, file no. 40.010, volume 136: 5).

The rich informative material collected by SSI both from its own sources and through the exchange of similar information with other states or with other Romanian civil and military institutions, was processed by the „Office of Studies and Documentation” which operated under the direct coordination of Eugen Cristescu. Information bulletins were drawn up and went directly to the Presidency of the

---

<sup>5</sup> 62 people were subjected to the informative-operative attention of the SSI, of which 13 legionary ministers, 14 commanders, 12 instructors and 23 ordinary legionnaires.



Council of Ministers and, as the case might be, to other ministries, depending on the issues of interest.

A newsletter was presented, as a rule, every day at 12:30 and consisted of two chapters. One was about domestic events, and the second covered news on international issues. Within 20-30 pages, sometimes even 50, data was transmitted regarding the economic situation of the country, the state of mind among the workers and the activity of the political parties, especially the extremist, communist and legionnaire ones. Next to each piece of information, the credibility of the source was mentioned with the following notations: „reliable source”, „verified” or „unverified information”, „official source”, „conclusions provided by experts”, etc. (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock P, file no. 40.010, volume 136: 6-7).

If we also add the fact that many of these bulletins contain Ion Antonescu's handwriting (orders, observations, mentions regarding the need to detail the issue), we can consolidate the above-mentioned appreciation of the military.

In the same direction, the more sensitive information was presented to General Antonescu directly by Eugen Cristescu during the daily audiences he had in his cabinet. Even more interesting was the fact that, on the days when Ion Antonescu was absent from Bucharest, Eugen Cristescu avoided using the envelopes sealed by special mail and went, in case of emergency, to the place where he knew he could contact the head of state directly (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 3176: 211-230).

### **SSI activity during the legionary insurgency**

In this chapter, I set out to reveal the context and the overall problems that the SSI had to face and that it tried to manage effectively, especially from the position of authority in the field of defense and promotion of the national security of our country, between January 21-23, 1941.

At the same time, in the second chapter I intended to unravel the riddles regarding the effectiveness of the measures taken, i.e. whether the resource used for the control and informative penetration of various groups or legionary structures was well-placed and could guide the executive towards the assumption and decision of certain measures expected to promote national interests.

Also, in this chapter, I set out to elucidate the true nature and extent of the actions related to the days of January 1941, their doctrinal and organizational justice, respectively their correct inclusion in the category of pogroms, atrocities or horrors committed in the history of humanity.

On the other hand, chapter II also intends to answer the question regarding the extent to which the SSI leadership was actively involved in suppressing the legionary insurgency.

In the context of what was presented in the previous chapter, in December 1940, General Ion Antonescu took the first measures aimed at removing the legionnaires out of the internal political scene - on December 2, 1940, he ordered the abolition of the Legionary Police, and three weeks later, the legionnaire foreign minister, Mihail Sturdza, was dismissed.

Despite the dissolution order, the Legionnaire Police did not definitively cease its activity, continuing to carry out searches, unauthorized descents or unjustified confiscation of goods. In addition, as a response to the general's measures, the legionnaires accelerated their own arming, established clandestine warehouses of ammunition and weapons, and increased the training of paramilitary structures (Trașcă, Stan, 2002: 52-55).

General Antonescu's reply did not take long to appear, after the meeting on January 14, 1941 with Adolf Hitler, who ordered additional measures aimed at solving the thorny problem of legionary radicalism.

In the above-mentioned meeting, the Romanian general declared his disponibility for a full collaboration with Nazi Germany (emphasizing in this way the additional benefits for the success of the future Barbarossa operation), under the conditions of an undeniable support in relation to the legionary conjunctural partner, who was revolutionary and unpredictable (Sandu, 2019: 394). As a result, in the same context, Adolf Hitler reiterated his direct support for the repression of the legionnaire partner, noting that internally the only desired attitude was constructive and not a repetitive revolutionary one. In order to achieve this goal, the Führer also considered a physical elimination of the elements that did not fit, a method which was not at all unfamiliar to him. Moreover, for the full alignment of Romania to his strategic objectives, Adolf Hitler confessed to the Romanian general that the relationship they had established was superior to any link with the Legionary Movement, the breaking of the latter „being no sacrifice for Germany” (Sandu, 2019 : 395).

As a reaction, the legionary general secretary, Nicolae Pătrașcu, began to mobilize and arm the legionary nests, the general hope being that a possible violent intervention would attract early career officers and the capital's population to their side.

Enthusiasm grew in intensity after the German Legation assured them that German soldiers would not get involved in Romanian internal affairs. At the same time, in order to test the reaction capacity of the masses to the calls for legionary mobilization, on January 19, 1941, in Bucharest and in the province, there were organized meetings of the sympathizers of the movement, in which the orators appointed by Horia Sima intoned „Holy Legionary Youth” and lectured on the topic of „The Struggle of Germany and Italy to establish a new European order” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 100-108).

In the same circumstances, Ion Antonescu alerted the military structures, asking them to be prepared to initiate the elimination of the radical part of the Legion. The pretext was identified very quickly, due to the assassination of the German major Döring, logistics manager of the German troops stationed in Romania, in the middle of a group of German officers who were returning from a common meal to the Ambassador Hotel in Bucharest, by Dimitrie Sarantopoulos, a Greek who later proved to be a British spy. Being a favorable opportunity to obtain the monopoly of power, Ion Antonescu took advantage and pronounced the dismissal of the legionary general Constantin Petrovicescu from the Ministry of the Interior on the grounds of professional incapacity („he had not taken the measures required by the circumstances of the murder”, „he had not ordered security at the headquarters of the German Military Mission”), and then summoned the prefects to the capital and ordered their

replacement with legionnaires (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 100-108).

In response, Horia Sima quickly summoned the leadership of the Legionary Movement and obtained their agreement for a large-scale „solidarity” demonstration and for making a written appeal to Ion Antonescu, requesting the revocation of the dismissal order from the Ministry of the Interior.

In the same direction, on January 20, 1941, about 10,000 legionnaires publicly demonstrated for the elimination of „satanic” elements and „Masonic and Judaized persons” from the leadership of the state and the formation of an exclusively legionary government (Trașcă, Stan, 2002: doc. 25-26). According to what was established through the Security Service agency of the Bucharest Police Prefecture, the protesters had been recruited from among legionnaire students and regimented workers in the Legionary Labour Corps, being organized into marching units (at the disposal of Horia Sima) by Viorel Trifa, the president of the National Union of the Romanian Christian Students, „the commander of the Romanian students”, and Dumitru Grozea, the commander of the Legionary Labour Corps (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 109).

Understanding the possible organizational consequences that might arise if the demonstration caused disorder, Horia Sima asked the participants not to attack the general in a declarative way and to direct their efforts on the stigmatization of Rîoșanu, as an accomplice and protector of the Greek assassin. Thus, during the march along the main streets of Bucharest, the participants initially sang legionary hymns and chanted „down with the vassals, down with Rîoșanu”. Later, the group of demonstrators coordinated by Dumitru Grozea started chanting „WE WANT A LEGIONARY GOVERNMENT AND HORIA SIMA AS OUR LEADER” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 109), cancelling on this basis any potential intention to maintain the legionary claims at a ponderate level.

Meanwhile, on the same occasion, a manifesto signed by the two legionary leaders was distributed, demanding „the punishment of all Masonic servants who try to hand the country over to the Jews” (<https://www.icr.ro/paris/varsovia-commemoration-of-80-years-of-the-legionary-rebellion-and-pogrom-in-Bucharest>).

Among them was, from the so-called position of protector and defender of Freemasonry and the Jews, Eugen Cristescu, the head of the Secret Intelligence Service. In relation to these, the reaction of the Romanian general was not delayed, being an intransigent and provocative one. Thus, in order to lure the legionnaires into the nets of the decisive trap, Ion Antonescu proceeded in the morning of January 21, 1941 to dismiss and purge all public order forces loyal to the movement<sup>6</sup> and ordered the army and the police force to ensure the control of the most important public buildings and institutions. In order to make sure that no acts of resistance would happen on their part, General Antonescu, through the Ministry of Coordination, had requested the prefects, a few days before their replacement, to come to Bucharest for

---

<sup>6</sup> Alexandru Ghica and Radu Mironovici were dismissed from their positions within the General Directorate of Security and Police, and all the legionary prefects and quaestors were replaced.

„important economic consultations”. At the same time, a similar order was sent to the police quaestors by Alexandru Rioșanu, summoning them, on the same day, to the headquarters of the Regional Police Inspectorates, for „informative meetings” ([http://www.miscarea-legionara.net/doc\\_carte\\_era\\_libertatii2.html](http://www.miscarea-legionara.net/doc_carte_era_libertatii2.html)).

In the first phase, the measures presented, accompanied by the indication given to the new appointed prefects to ensure resistance - even armed - in the eventuality of an attempt to expel them, were not motivated by previous intentions of repression<sup>7</sup>, but rather by asymmetrical ones<sup>8</sup>, of definitive compromise among the population and the German political and military authorities.

According to the calculations of the Romanian general, on this basis, the legionnaires were to react to prevent the transfer of power and to abandon, in the desire to strike a decisive blow, any reason for individual and organizational self-preservation. After an action scenario set up in advance, Horia Sima ordered the teams of legionnaires, that very morning, to regain control over the prefectures and police stations and to occupy the telephone and post exchanges and some economic units (Trașcă, Stan, 2002: doc. 32).

It is not out of place to appreciate that the plans of the legionnaire leader were long conceived and constantly updated, if we were to take into account only the fact that the legionnaires kept in interception, during all three days of the rebellion, the conversations of the secret telephone no. 50 of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, or that an action coordination system had previously been established and had its headquarters in Roma Street, through the coordination of Dumitru Grozea (The archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 9).

In the Capital, for example, since 9 o'clock in the morning the chaos had become total, the legionary insurgents, dressed in short leather clothes (a symbolic connection with the clothing of Nazi officers cannot be denied) and armed (from automatic weapons to pickaxes, crowbars, axes and firecrackers) were taking under assault and occupation the Capital Police Prefecture, the Ilfov County Prefecture, the Telephone Palace and the Radio Society. Especially in the case of the Capital Police Prefecture, the desire for armed resistance was at its maximum level, the insurgents being determined to fight harshly the possible measures that were to be ordered against them.

Thus, with the intention of maintaining terror against those who were not part of their camp, the legionnaires entered the offices of the Bucharest Prefecture under the coordination of the legionary commissar Bădulescu, disarmed of the revolvers provided and isolated under guard the old officials of all ranks in the Hall of Festivities and they positioned themselves in defensive posture while cheering their

---

<sup>7</sup> As Ion Antonescu had mobilized the army against the legionnaires and had ordered the military not to act unless they were provoked, the armed conflict between the two sides actually materialized on January 22, 1941.

<sup>8</sup> Asymmetric intelligence measures have a different specificity than the classical one (i.e. gathering intelligence or counter-intelligence), aiming at the combinative connection of different information techniques (the operative game, counter-propaganda, the intentional transmission of fabricated or false data, the recruitment of an adversary intelligence agent, manipulation and others), in order to achieve immediate and unofficial operational goals.

leaders and reproaching the Romanian legal and police authorities. In order to strengthen this capacity, the Legionary Labour Corps, requested by the police chief Romulus Opriș by phone, sent teams with a staff of about 600 people who, as soon as they entered the prefecture, posted themselves at all the entrances and exits, in the offices, corridors and around the windows, with machine guns and grenades (SRI, stock D, file no. 650: 110). Defensive measures were also put into practice, the rebels breaking a wall that corresponded to the Lafayette Store, with the aim of being able to sneak in unnoticed, in case that they could no longer resist the summons of the army.

Those who were mobilized represented a combination of radicalized students, workers, tax collectors or tram drivers of the Bucharest Transport Service (some of them even brought by public transport service buses) who, under the excitement of the moment, did not hesitate to open fire at the first appearance of the army.

Legionnaire sacrifice teams violently tore the bars of the Prefecture and rushed with improvised weapons, pickaxes and hammers, on the tanks that came to „calm them”, being aimed at dismantling the domes and eliminating the soldiers inside. Seeing that they did not succeed, the insurgents had no qualms about detaching the tracks from the tanks, aiming their sights with the revolvers provided, respectively setting fire to one of the military machines by using fuel from the institution's radiators, even when the military personnel had not managed to evacuate (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 1).

These were facts that did not correspond to their „dignity as Romanians”, as it was remarked by a lieutenant-colonel from the Military Justice who was sent to meet them, especially as it was about people who had to ensure public order, such as the legionary quaestors Romulus Opriș (alongside Theodor Djonat, one of the leaders of the legionary defense), Ilie Stângă, Petre Nicolau and Stelian Stănicel. Moreover, as a sign of deprofessionalization, former police officers had associated with suspicious people, such as Dragomir, the head of the Prefecture Garage, a certain Ion, a former waiter who became an assistant commissioner in the institution, or Eremia Socariciu, the former general secretary of the Capital Prefecture, a person with power of action decision, who proved to be among the most radical, vocal and ferocious attackers (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 2).

Paradoxically, they had gathered in a rebel group that proposed the mass killing of old policemen, an aspect that could have happened on a generalized level if Radu Mironovici, the prefect of the Capital Police, had not opposed it.

In parallel with what happened at the Capital Police Prefecture, groups of legionnaires gathered on Calea Victoriei, singing again legionary hymns and chanting „WE WANT A PURE LEGIONARY GOVERNMENT, WE WANT HORIA SIMA TO BE OUR LEADER, DOWN WITH RIOȘANU, UP WITH PETROVICESCU”. At the same time, in order to propagate a state of unrest among the citizens, megaphones were installed and false news was constantly broadcast, in the sense that the civil and military authorities were not able to restore public order, urging the soldiers to disobey the orders of their superiors and fraternize with the rebel elements (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 110).

Anarchy dominated Bucharest completely, so until the end of January 22, 1941, organized teams of the Legionary Labour Corps occupied the police stations by force and disarmed the bureaucratic staff and public guards who were not registered in the movement. Their intentions were to compromise the functioning of the state (an aspect we can deduce from the analysis of a series of tables and documents identified, after the suppression of the revolt, in the drawers of Țigănuș, the former head of the Servant Offices), take control of the royal staff and render the king unable to intervene (obtaining a royal draw, as in the game of chess) and sabotage railway traffic in and from Bucharest through Ateliere Grivița (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 3-8).

In relation to what had happened in Bucharest, Eugen Cristescu asked the partners in the intelligence community not to take any military action before obtaining the intelligence provided by the SSI, an action directive they unanimously agreed with. Against this background, by Cristescu's order, the entire human and informative apparatus of the SSI was infiltrated in the risky neighbourhoods of Bucharest, with the aim of identifying the plans, command points and regrouping locations of the rebel teams.

At the same time, Eugen Cristescu recommended General Antonescu to adopt the tactic of waiting, advising him to request negotiations with the legionary senators. This form of work was the ideal pretext which offered the possibility of arrival in the Capital to large armed units which intervened in the following days to suppress the legionary insurgency.

Also, in the context of the discussions and negotiations with the legionary senators, the SSI was able to identify on the map of Bucharest the main points of resistance of the insurgents, by intercepting the communications which they and the legionary leaders had with Ion Antonescu.

Moreover, General Ion Antonescu's final act of decision to directly involve the army in a confrontation with the Legionnaire Movement was based on the fact that he had real-time intelligence from the secret service, regarding the intensity, the way and the position which public opinion in Romania and the armed forces related with towards the evolution of hostilities. They were aspects of superior relevance, so a superficial treatment of them could have vitiated the expected result of suppressing the rebellion<sup>9</sup>.

Last but not least, under the consultation of the intelligence structures, the police and military forces proceeded to ensure the physical protection of most public buildings in order to prevent attacks against them. Also, after the end of the rebellion, mixed teams were organized on sectors for the disclosure of weapon stores and goods stolen from devastated stores. The missions were executed according to a predetermined plan with the SSI, resulting in the identification of numerous weapon stores, ammunition and other goods taken during the devastation.

Referring again to the evolution of the events in Bucharest, it must be stated that the seriousness of the newly created situation was immediately understood by

---

<sup>9</sup> This was possible under the conditions in which, during the legionary rebellion, none of the headquarters of the secret service could and were occupied by the legionnaires.

some of the moderate legionnaires, who analyzed different forms of action to limit the negative consequences on the Legion caused by the insurgency. In establishing the appropriateness of each working hypothesis, the moderate legionnaires benefited from the support of some police cadres who sympathized with the Legionnaire Movement and had counterinformative training. After the discussions between the two mentioned parties, it was agreed on to request an intervention from the German officials on the basis of which the insurgents would be evacuated and disarmed as quickly as possible, before the intervention of the army against them (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 112-113).

Thus, to prevent unnecessary bloodshed, on the same day, starting at 5:30 p.m., at the Ambassador Hotel in Bucharest, a delegation of moderate legionnaires (Colonel Ștefan Zăvoianu, Commissioner Marcel Popescu, head of Bureau 3 of the Bucharest Prefecture, which generally dealt with the movement of foreigners, Octavian Manta, former chief of police and Professor Ghilla as an interpreter) came into contact with General Erik-Oskar Hansen, commander of the German Military Mission in Romania, asking for his direct support in order to temper and end the hostilities.

The conclusion of these discussions was summarized in an address sent by General Hansen to Radu Mironovici, through which the Germans did not assume any direct intervention, but showed their availability to mediate in order to stop the hostile actions between the two parties<sup>10</sup>. Also, Erik-Oskar Hansen proposed to ensure a form of protection for those who were to continue their docility towards the Axis. On this basis, the legionary commander, who had personally kept away from the events, and several other legionary leaders – including Corneliu Georgescu, Constantin Papanace, Ilie Gârneață or Vasile Iașinschi – benefited from protection at the headquarters of the Sicherheitsdienst, led in Bucharest by von Bolschwing.

The approach initiated by the moderate legionnaires did not have the expected success because the insurgents, in the National Theater Square, greeted with gunfire the two German officers (one of them carrying a white flag) escorted by a motorcycle who had been delegated to intervene in the direction they requested (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 1-5).

The series of failures continued. That same evening, Ștefan Zăvoianu, this time accompanied by the reserve general Mehedinți, failed to change the situation of the rebels through a much-desired intervention from the part of Neubecher, the economic representative of the Reich in Bucharest, or from Baron Manfred Von Killinger, the new ambassador of Nazi Germany in our country, as they could not be found at the headquarters of the German Legation (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 6-7).

Towards the end of 21 January 1941, Horia Sima committed the decisive action error by requesting Ion Antonescu's withdrawal from politics, without having at least the informal acceptance of the German officials who supported the legionary

---

<sup>10</sup> The mediation proposal was communicated to Ion Antonescu, the Romanian general agreeing to grant amnesty to the legionnaires who would lay down their arms by 5 a.m. on January 23, 1941.

cause. In this context, General Antonescu asked for Adolf Hitler's agreement to end the hostilities with the legionnaires. The Führer's response, communicated by Wilfred Fabricius, was that of a consensus regarding the energetic intervention of the army for the same purpose.

This was only an informal and consultative agreement, if we take into account only a few attitudes or operational decisions in the next intervention of the army on 23 January 1941. For example, access on the streets was prohibited, Romanian soldiers preventing communication even between the commanders of German regiments. At the same time, as the German colonel Hoffer complained, some of the Romanian soldiers had adopted a distant and repulsive attitude towards their German counterparts, meeting the German officer and the motorcyclist unit that accompanied him with „shamelessness” and „doors slammed in their faces”. Also, as reported by the German sub-lieutenant Naschristenoffizier, on duty at the Telephone House in Alba Iulia, the official conversations of the German officers were monitored and popular songs were banned in the streets (during the legionary rebellion, lieutenant-colonel Căpâlna requested the revision of the orchestral programme in Dacia Restaurant in Bucharest, where the German song Erika was sung, appreciated as legionnaire and which „sets the spirits”). (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 202: 38-40).

Realizing the danger of dissolution and being summoned by Hitler to give up resistance, Horia Sima signed on the same day, at about 5 p.m., an act of laying down arms exactly in the form in which it had been dictated by Neubecher. The content of this act was immediately brought to the attention of the legionnaires in the Capital (in the morning of 23 January 1941, at 06:30) by Vasile Biriș și Alexandru Sturdza, through a speaker installed on a Philips car and in a special issue of *Cuvântul*, but approximately 300-400 of the rebels (grouped in the courtyard of Slătari Church) did not believe its veracity, not trusting the Romanian soldiers who had arrived in tanks to meet them.

The further course of events is already known in historiography, the confrontation between the army and the rebels (on Calea Victoriei, among the legionary students who wanted to take control of the Telephone Palace, on 32-34 Roma Street, at the Capital Police Prefecture or the Headquarters of Public Guardians) resulting in abominable acts that led to the official elimination of the Legionary Movement. The results of the violences were, according to the subsequent findings of the Minister of the Interior, 261 dead people, of which 120 Jews and 21 officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers (fallen in the actions to destroy the nests of the resistance legionaries) and 245 wounded citizens<sup>11</sup>(Veiga, 1995: 298-301). Paradoxically, among those killed during the legionary rebellion was the director of the Palestinian Emigration Office, Moise Orekovschy (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 7519: 84). Moise Orekovschy was bestially murdered along with 14 Jews, on January 23, 1941, at the Communal Slaughterhouse on Splaiul Dâmboviței.

---

<sup>11</sup> In an informative report carried out by the Security Service of Bucharest Police Prefecture (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 112), other figures regarding the victims of the legionary rebellion are recorded: 240 dead and 580 injured.



The Jewish minority was the most affected one, being the favourite victim of the rebel legionnaires who took advantage of the violent actions to attack it on a large scale. In fact, during the rebellion, official statements repeatedly recorded the savage mutilation of some Israeli corpses in the Jewish neighbourhood of Dudești-Văcărești and in Jilava forest (completely disfigured corpses, having their eyes or teeth removed or tongues, ears, noses and genitals cut off ), and the iconographic testimonies illustrate the extent of the degradation of places of worship and property (25 temples and synagogues throughout the country, 616 shops, 547 homes affected), but also the looting of corpses a day or two after the pogrom of January 21-22 (Sandu, 2019: 396).



Figure 1: (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no 1243, volume 4: 142)

After the consummation and suppression of the rebellion, Otto von Bolschwing, with the approval of Berlin, continued to temporarily protect some of the legionary leaders, without proceeding to hand them over to the Romanian authorities. It seems that the optics of the German military corresponded to a hidden plan of Adolf Hitler, the Führer aiming to hold Ion Antonescu in constant check by threatening a reenactment of the mentioned events. Such eventuality was maintained even later, with Nazi Germany offering asylum, on its own territory, to most of the legionary leaders, led by Horia Sima.

Moreover, between March 5 and 12, 1941, 48 legionnaire leaders were helped to get to Transylvania, disguised as SS officers, and from there they were sent to Berlin.

### **The involvement of intelligence structures in the reassurance of public order in the period following the legionary insurgency**

In order to be able to establish exactly the impact on the Christofascist type groups of the involvement of the intelligence services in suppressing the legionary

insurgency, it is impetuously necessary to proceed to a critical analysis on the organizational and action developments subsequent to this event.

If in the first chapters of the work we investigated the internal security environment from the point of view of theoretical aspects and action manifestations, in this chapter we intend to examine and later define a typology of the actions put into practice by the intelligence community both for the purpose of preventing the resumption of hostilities by the legionnaires, as well as for calming the public opinion regarding this danger.

Such an inclusion is justifiable, as the value of an intelligence service was directly proportional to the effects, results and value of its actions. The more the intelligence service had the capacity to influence, to penetrate into realms of interest for national security or to generate changes in the security environment according to the superior objects of the state, the more significant its organizational quality proved to be.

Starting from these reasonings, we specify the fact that in the context in which the threat of the resumption of hostilities with the members of the radical core of the Legion was taking more and more shape, at the level of the intelligence community the decision was made to create, under the coordination of Ion Antonescu, a complex negative propaganda on the Legionary Movement. Through this form of work, the intelligence structures intended to manipulate public opinion in the direction of a generalized repulsion towards the legionnaires, a foundation on which the extremist organization would definitively lose its ability to step onto the political stage again.

Thus, in the first phase, in order to induce the public opinion that the direction which Ion Antonescu took into consideration was the right one, the decision was adopted to „denigrate” the legionnaires in mass media (especially by means of daily newspapers such as *Universul*), in parallel with polishing the image of the Head of State as a „conciliatory saviour”.

For example, at the initiative of Ion Antonescu, *Universul* published on February 28, 1941 the article entitled „*THE LEADER OF THE STATE is personally interested in the treatment of the detained rebels*”, in which the general was presented by the author<sup>12</sup> as a peacemaker, a direct observer of the way in which all the detained people were treated, apparently aiming to ensure a „*humane treatment*” for them. Moreover, in the same article, it was mentioned the marshal's concern for expediting the investigation of the detainees, so that the innocent could be quickly released. (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 25).

Later, „*for the judgment of public opinion*”, the Social Police and Information Service within the Capital Police Prefecture (probably by the same order of the marshal), disseminated the manifesto called „*WHO ORGANIZED THE REBELLION, some edifying documents*”. The manifesto, presented as the sum of three official documents, aimed to justify the punitive measures on the „*major guilt of the rebel leaders*”, General Constantin Petrovicescu, the former Minister of the Interior, and

---

<sup>12</sup> So far the thorough analysis of the archival documents has not allowed us to establish the identity of the syngraph.

Alexandru Ghika, the former Director General of the Police and Security – who were responsible for arming the legionnaires that acted to „*overturn the legal state order by force*”. (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 40).

At the same time with the measures presented, a state of defamation was permanently maintained towards the legionnaires involved, among the institutions which joined Ion Antonescu's effort in this regard being the Prosecutor's Office of the Military Tribunal. In fact, the deep involvement of the military prosecutors exceeded their legal mandate, in which they proceeded to send threats to the Capital Police Prefecture for the late handing over of some prisoners accused of involvement in the rebellion.

In parallel with the presented measures, the intelligence structures, with the support of the Prosecutor's Office of the Military Court, proceeded to launch in the mass media some statements intended to accuse the legionnaires.

At the same time, action was also taken to speed up the process of punishing the insurgents, the military prosecutors close to the intelligence community proceeded to sending threats to the Capital Police Prefecture for the late handing over of some prisoners accused of involvement in the rebellion. Among them were, in the first days after the rebellion, Ioan Steja from Mihăescu Garage service and Ioan Gropilă, turner, employee of the Malaxa factory (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 40).

Thus, the Directorate of the Security Police within the Ministry of the Interior, at the order of Major General Leoveanu, sent an urgent telegram on February 4, 1941 to the Capital Police Prefecture requesting to put at the disposal of the Technical Service the following types of photographs ordered by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (by order no. 730/1941):

- *Photographs in four copies with scenes from the rebellion in the Capital and the province/ acts of terror committed by the rebels on January 22-25, 1941:*

- a. Rebel groups: prisoners or before release;
- b. Public institutions and houses devastated by gunfire during the rebellion;
- c. Deposits and quantities of weapons found with the rebels;
- d. Warehouses or agglomerations of goods stolen by rebels;
- e. Barricades;
- f. Corpses of soldiers and citizens killed by rebels;
- g. Soldiers or citizens wounded, tortured or ill-treated by the rebels;
- h. Armament or ammunition found in storage, etc.

- *Photographs after the documents from which to see how the legionary rebellion was prepared and led, photos after the legionary brochures found with the legionaries (covers or interesting pages).*

Obviously, the data was intended to support the incriminating process directed against the legionaries. (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 30).



Figures 2-4: The Archives of SRI, stock D, file no. 1243, volume IV, leaves 30-60.

For preventive purposes, after the consummation of the legionary insurgency, at the level of the intelligence community it was considered necessary to direct important informational and technical resources to the identification of the clandestine radio channels used by the legionnaires for the eventual preparation of a resumption of hostilities with the Antonesian authorities. Such assignments were valid both in Bucharest and in the province.

As a practical result, on July 30, 1942, Assistant Commissioner Dorin Antohi from Alba Iulia Regional Police Inspectorate reported to the Directorate of the Corps of Detectives from the General Directorate of the Police that he had intercepted, on Bucharest airwaves, a clandestine radio station through which they were communicated the following:

*„Communications begin, attention..*

*The password is Mărășești, be careful here.. the departure date is changed, the third day after date x..*

*The march on Bucharest is approaching, hurry; Bucharest must be taken over the next day. Water and electricity plants. Firemen know their job..arranged in this way..look for them among the people dressed as postmen.*

*The vile traitor Eugen Cristescu must be shot and also the executioner General Diaconescu, like a dog.*

*Maniu and his band of traitors. Kill Maniu, let's get rid of the peasants once and for all, done with liberalism. Everything is ready. Manhood and courage.”*

*In addition to this report, Alba Iulia Regional Police Inspectorate presented another communication intercepted by the head of Sighișoara Police:*

*„Here is the radio station of the new commission.*

*Firefighters know how to do their duty.*

*Arrange in such a way as G. Munteanu.*

*6 terrorists went from Sibiu region to assassinate the Leader. 5 of them live in Bucharest.*

*Maniu and his gang of traitors are making propaganda for the Soviets. Kill Maniu to get rid of the peasants once and for all.*

*The vile traitor Eugen Cristescu must be shot like a dog, as well as Diaconescu, the executioner general. How long do these lepers live and flatter the Ruler to bring assassins near him.*

*Finish with liberalism, shoot Gh. Brătianu, either them or Romania.*

*Everything is ready.*

*Determination, courage and manhood.”* (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 17-18).

The transmitted communication unequivocally reveals the dominant spirit of revenge among the legionnaires, namely the explosion of a visceral hatred towards the traditional political parties and especially towards the communist phenomenon.

On the other hand, considering that the possibility of a new confrontation with the radical legionnaires cannot be further minimized only by preventive methods, the decision was adopted at the intelligence leadership level to put into practice some offensive combinative actions, which would lead to the identification, pursuit and arrest of insurgents and radicalized elements who continued to operate within the Legionary Movement.

This task was assumed, after the rebellion, by the Special Group within the SSI. Thus, in 1942, as a result of the activity of the Special Group, 44 individuals were arrested, some of whom were previously sentenced to various punishments, others escaped from prisons or who were submitted to the judicial bodies (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 7558: 172-173).

The large number of legionnaires affected by the sanctioning measures applied by the representatives of the Special Group, respectively the wide range of incriminated activities led to a gradual decrease in their illegal activities.

Last but not least, from the perspective of the need to support the process of indictment and legal conviction of the participants in the legionary rebellion, the intelligence structures took the decision to get directly involved in the questioning of officials, agents and police officers who witnessed these events. In the context of collaboration within the intelligence community, at the special request of the prefect of the Capital Police, these informative research actions were carried out continuously until February 12, 1941.

Following them, testimonies were obtained that supported the incriminating process against the rebellious legionnaires, being confirmed aspects related to the intention of some of the legionnaire leaders to give a violent character to the confrontations with the armed forces, their involvement in hostile and unprovoked acts against the authorities, respectively with regarding the annulment, on this basis, of any steps taken by the moderate legionnaires for the cessation of hostilities.

Among those questioned in Bucharest were the following:

- agent Gheorghe I. Tălăngescu, who confirmed and detailed the aspects related to the involvement of the legionnaire commissioner Theodor Djonat in the unprovoked burning of a tank and revealed his and other legionnaires' intentions (Romulus Opreș, Ernest Crăciun, Alexandru Pană, Grigore Malcasian) to react in violent way towards the military (by ordering armed defense positions and requesting fire support from the Legionary Labor Corps);

- assistant commissioner Iosif Reinhard and agent Nicolae C. Ionescu - specified the fact that they were prevented by the legionary agent Traian Szekeris from leaving the Capital Police Prefecture and not participating in the legionary revolt, having been told that Romulus Opriș ordered all members to take part into this act of outrage. As they did not change their point of view, they were disarmed and sequestered in the offices of the institution;

- assistant commissioner Constantin Rada, who was present during the legionary rebellion at the Police Station 16, alongside Commissioner Daniel Cruțescu, detailed a series of aspects related to the violent, defiant and humiliating attitude of the 10-15 legionnaires armed with revolvers and clubs who assaulted the police station. The latter, after threatening them with death, disarmed and stripped them of their uniforms (which the occupants appropriated and dressed) and threw them into a room under the guard of two gypsies armed with pitchforks and swords. Throughout the period of seizure and detention, the two policemen were tortured by one of the gypsies who waved a sword under their noses, ironically mentioning that he was „preparing for a fencing match” (The archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), stock D, file no. 650: 36-41)

#### **Personal conclusions:**

I consider that the interwar intelligence structures performed in ensuring the flow of intelligence necessary to support the decision-making act of its main beneficiaries, the leaders of the Romanian state, in the key moments of the confrontations with the legionnaires.

The flow of transmission regarding the legionary actions or agitative intentions was one with speed of reaction, timely and centered on concrete action intervention measures, an aspect possible on the basis of well-placed and prepared human and informational resources.

The leaders of SSI and other structures within the intelligence community were extremely skilled, combative and connected to the realities of the time, a context which favoured the organizational development of intelligence structures, respectively their role in the state apparatus.

Although there were also some sideslips in the activity, aspects which in some cases increased the adversity between the members of the Legionary Movement and the intelligence institutions, they did not affect the quality, legitimacy, and derived efficiency of the delivered information products.

**Acknowledgement:** This work is supported by project POCU153770, entitled „Accessibility of advanced research for sustainable economic development - ACADEMIKA”, co-financed by the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Operational Program 2014-2020

## References

1. Arhiva SRI (The archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service): fond D (fund D) – dosare (files) 202, 650, 1198, 1243, volume 4, 7519 and 7558.
2. Arhiva SRI (The archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service): fond P (fund P) – dosare (files) 17427 (volume II) 40010 (volume 136), 48163 (volume II), and 48340 (volume 409).
3. Aioanei, C., Troncotă, C. (1993). *Structura organizatorică a Serviciului Secret (special) de informații și activitatea sa (1919-1951)*. Buletin de Informare profesională *Patrie și Onoare*. No. 4. București: Serviciul Român de Informații.
4. Cioflâncă, A. (2021, January 21). *Varșovia. Comemorarea a 80 de ani de la Rebeliunea Legionară și Pogromul de București*, from <https://www.icr.ro/paris/varsovia-comemorarea-a-80-de-ani-de-la-rebeliunea-legionara-si-pogromul-de-la-bucuresti>.
5. Havetz, Z. (1991). *An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard*. *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 26, No. 3/4.
6. Ioanid, R. (2006). *Lotul Antonescu în ancheta SMERȘ, Moscova, 1944-1946. Documente din arhiva FSB*. București: Polirom.
7. Pintilie, F. (2003). *Serviciului Special de Informații din România 1939-1945* (volumul 1). București: Editura Academiei Naționale de Informații.
8. Sandu, T. (2019). *Istoria Gărzii de fier. Un fascism românesc*. Chișinău: Cartier.
9. Scurtu, I. (1996). *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România: origini, manifestări, evoluție, 1919-1927* (volumul 1). București: Institutul Național pentru Studiu Totalitarismului.
10. Sima, H. (2012). *Era libertății. Statul național liberal*, volumul II, from [http://www.miscarea-legionara.net/doc\\_carte\\_era\\_libertatii2.html](http://www.miscarea-legionara.net/doc_carte_era_libertatii2.html).
11. Țiu, I. (2010). *The Legionary Movement after Corneliu Codreanu. From the Dictatorship of King Carol II to the Communist Regime (February 1938-August 1944)*. East European Monographs. New York: Colombia University Press.
12. Trașcă, O., Stan, A. M. (2002). *Rebeliunea legionară în documente străine (germane, franceze, maghiare)*. București: Albatros.
13. Troncotă, C. (2008). *România și frontul secret* (Romania and the secret front). București: Elion.
14. Veiga, F. (1995) *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1914-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului*. București: Editura Humanitas.

