

THE LEFTIST EXTREMISM REFLECTED IN THE DOCUMENTS OF CRAIOVA CITY POLICE OFFICE (1919-1940)

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Abstract: Starting from the analysis we have made on the basis of the archives documents of the collection available at the Police Office of Craiova city, our paper creates a radiography of the leftist extremism manifested in Romania in the interwar period. Therefore, the orders, the circulars, the instructions, the strictly secret and confidential informing notes issued by the Police Office of Craiova and by the police organizations under its jurisdictional authority, throw even more light on the activity carried out by the Comintern and by its branch in Romania, the Romanian Communist Party, regarding not only the liquidation of Romania's democratic regime and the setting up of the proletariat's dictatorship, but also regarding the Soviet revisionism, which was claiming, throughout that period, the urgent separation of Bessarabia, and not only, from the Romanian state.

Keywords: the III Internationale, extremism, communism, irredentism, revisionism.

The documents making up the collection available at Craiova Police Office¹, in the custody of Dolj county Service of the National Archives, can be structured and divided into three distinct periods in point of their topics. The first period is represented by the archives documents belonging to 1831-1842 epoch, over 300 in number, which are written in Cyrillic paleography and contain both information about the infringements of law in Craiova – to a greater extent – and quite interesting data about the population's condition of health, the town sanitation, the police equipment, the police buildings, in a word, valuable information for all those concerned with the process of modernizing the city Craiova and, implicitly, the police institutions, in the period of Organic Regulations Law.

The second period, referring to the interval 1919-1940, consists in documents issued by the police institutions and other institutions having the competence of

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¹ Dolj County Department of the National Archives, Documents collection of Craiova Police Office, no. 1061, the collection comprises 1553 archives documents, the limit years being 1832-1951 (further cited as SJAN Dolj).

maintaining the Romanian state's internal order and security – Military Police – Force, Army, Justice and so on, documents relating to the fight of these institutions for combating the extremism, both the leftist and the rightist one, to the fight for keeping the democratic liberties, to pursuing and arresting those who broke the law or those whose activity came into conflict with the Romanian state's interests. The degrees of danger that the workers' and the communists' activities represented for the democratic state order determined a frenzy of the police institutions. That was expressed in numerous circulars, orders, instructions, strictly secret or confidential informing notes relating to the imperative measures on the occasion of organizing 1 May, to the national days celebration to the measures taken for combating the iron-guardist and the communist movements, to the more and more vigilant scrutinizing of the press of Russian and Magyar origin, going so far as the total elimination of this press, to keeping a watchful eye on the religious associations and sects, for example the inochentists, the reapers, the students of the Bible, namely the millennium adepts, etc. The documents of this period contain extremely valuable information about the irredentist, revisionist actions of our neighbors – Hungarians, Russians, Bulgarians who – by means of some international groups – were working for the urgent separation of Bessarabia, Transylvania, Bukovina and Dobrogea from the structure of the Romanian state. These documents also included rather interesting information with regard to the demographic evolution of Craiova city during the interwar period, to the level of industrialization of Craiova and Oltenia, respectively, to the number and the state of mind of the Romanian subjects and foreign citizens, to combating the profiteering, to effacing the prostitution, the traffic in drugs or in pornographic literature, to the location and equipment of police stations, etc.

The third category is represented by documents belonging to the period of the Second World War and further, up to January 1949 when Miliția² was set up, an institution which was going to last until 1990. So, during the first years of war, the police institution issued documents in which the prevailing information was referring to the correspondence carried out between this institution and the police and military police of Bessarabia and Bukovina, of Chișinău and Cernăuți, respectively, documents concerning persons who had fled Bessarabia and Bukovina, including lists of names of the persons, who had taken refuge, the place where they had come from and where they were quartered, concerning the population's state of the mind, the pursuing and investigating of the spies, concerning all kinds of requisitions as supplies for the army. During the second part of the war, after Romania's joining the Allied Powers, the documents make numerous references to the transgressions committed by the German army in retreat from Romania, and even more to those committed by the Soviet army, to the

² Dinică Ciobotea, Ileana Cioarec, Emilian Cojocaru, Gabriel Croitoru, Constantin Nicolescu (coord.), *Din istoria instituției poliției în județul Dolj*, vol. III, 1919-1949, Craiova, MJM Publishing House, 2016, p. 62.

population's state of mind as regards Romania's decision about the continuation of the war, a.s.o.

After the First World War, in Romania, like in other European states, there developed the extremism, both the leftist and rightist one, which fostered either internationalism or nationalism. In our country, the left-wing extremism was brought by the Communist Party of Romania which not only championed the abolition of the democratic regime and the setting up of proletariat's dictatorship, but also unconditionally rallied to the revengeful, irredentist policy carried on by Hungary, Soviet Russia and Bulgaria against the stipulations of the Peace Congress of Versailles, pursuing during the entire interwar period the tearing of Bessarabia, Transylvania, Bukovina and Dobrogea from the Romania's territory³. Therefore, at the end of the first world conflagration, the Communist Internationale II being a failure, the representatives of socialism all over the world were called up to work out a solution leading to the making up of a new organization. On V. I. Lenin's initiative, the IIIrd Communist Internationale was set up in Moscow, in 1919. Next year, in autumn, a delegation of the Romanian socialists went to Moscow to debate the affiliation to the IIIrd Communist Internationale. Taking into consideration the contradictory discussions regarding Comintern's outlook on the Romanian state's character and regarding the obligation of strictly obeying the directives from Moscow, after the delegation's return the General Council of the Socialist Party and Trade-Unions was called, during 30 January – 3 February 1921. It approved, with majority of votes, the leftist group's motion aimed at summoning the general Congress of the party for 8-14 May 1921 and placing the party on communist foundations⁴. Taking place during 8-12 May 1921, the Congress decided the unconditional affiliation to the Communist Internationale III, accepting all the 21 imposed conditions. In fact that was the birth certificate of the Romanian Communist Party. The unconditional affiliation made Romania's government start arresting, 51 out of the 77 voters for the unconditional affiliation being arrested. The trial, known as Dealul Spirii trial, 23 January-4 June 1922, causing intense political agitation, convinced king Ferdinand to grant amnesty for 213 out of 271 arrested person. During the second Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, which took place in Ploiești on 3-4 October 1922, the participants elected the Central Committee and the general secretary, namely Gheorghe Cristescu, also adopting the party statute which stipulated at art. 1 that RCP was a section of the IIIrd Communist Internationale and that it had no other aims but those of the IIIrd Internationale to which it belonged. The article 2 specified that the decisions of the IIIrd Internationale were compulsory for all the members and all the committees, commissions and groups of the Communist Party. It was for the first time in the history of the country that a political party played the part of a section of an

³ Ioan Scurtu (coord.), *Istoria Românilor. Volumul VIII. România întregită (1919-1940)*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2003.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 234-235, 239.

international organization, whose decisions it pledged itself to respect. For Romania the situation had an aggravating character because the Soviet Union did not recognize the Romanian state's integrity, namely the legitimacy of Bessarabia's union with Romania. More than the provisions stipulated in the party statute, in December 1923 the Balkan Communist Federation – a body consisting in all the parties of this European zone affiliated to the IIIrd Communist Internationale –, adopted a resolution which decided that the Communist Party in Romania should fight for the separation of Bessarabia, Transylvania and Dobrogea from the Romanian state⁵. Therefore, as a result of the negotiation between the representatives of Romania and the Soviet Union carried on in Viena (28 March-2 April 1924), the Communist Party of Romania placed itself on the side of the Soviet delegation which did not recognize the legitimacy of the State's Council decision on 27 March 1918, demanding that a plebiscite should be held in Bessarabia⁶. Under these conditions, the government led by Ion C. Brătianu took measures in order to block the communists' activity: on 5 April 1924, in conformity with the order of the Army Corps II, searches were carried out in the offices of the Communist Party, at some militants' residences, in the editorial offices of the communist newspapers. More than that, during the next days the communist press got suspended and the RCP buildings were sealed; on 23 July 1924, according to the Army Corps II orders, it was decided that RCP and the other organizations under its influence should be dissolved. The rebellion in Tatar Bunar organized by the IIIrd Communist Internationale in September 1924, hurried the decision of the Romanian government to outlaw the Communist Party. Through Mârzescu law of December 1924, RCP's activity was banned, its process of dissolution being virtually ended.

In 1925 the Workers and Peasant's Block (WPB) was set up, a legal organization, under the guidance of the Communist Party. The Workers and Peasant's Block tried a collaboration with the Peasant's Party on a plank that was democratic, but anti-liberal, the National Liberal Party being considered reactionary. On the occasion, of the communal election of February 1926, an electoral cartel was created, consisting in the Workers and Peasant's Block, the Socialist Party, the United Trade Unions, the Peasants' Party, the National Party and the People's Party, when almost 200 communists, socialists and social-democrats were elected in the towns' and the communes' councils. Comitern harshly criticized the position of the communists in Romania on the alliance made with the bourgeois parties for the communal election in February 1926, and the ex general secretary of the party Gheorghe Cristescu was excluded from the Communist Party⁷. In June 1928, Comitern convened the IVth Congress of the RCP in Harcov, Ukraine, on which occasion resolutions were imposed concerning

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

the self/determination of Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania and Dobrogea going up to their separation from the Romanian state⁸. During the next period, the Communist Party in Romania was involved in the social movements of the years of economic crisis, especially in the strikers' movements of January-February 1933, inflaming the situation even more by the political significance they meant to give to the events. During the next year up to the beginning of the Second World War, if the Communist Party in Romania showed a change in view regarding Transylvania, militating against the horthyst revisionism, in the question of Bessarabia the party continued to support the traditional, cominternist point of view which was aiming at the separation from Romania⁹.

In my opinion, this outline of the activity of the Communist Party in Romania and of the party's position versus the policy promoted by the IIIrd Communist Internationale was necessary to be presented for a better understanding of the leftist extremism, shown and brought into relief by the documents of Craiova Municipium Police Office, especially after the Romanian Communist Party's dissolution. These documents massively increase the already existing volume of knowledge concerning the illegal, clandestine actions of extreme leftist organizations in Romania until 1940, when the Soviet Russia's revengeful activity carried out against the Versailles Congress during this period led to the occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina on 26 June¹⁰.

The documents selected in order to assert our point of view on the manifestation of the left-wing extremism in Romania, during the interwar period, have been diachronically analyzed according to their set of problems.

Therefore, immediately after outlawing the Romanian Communist Party, the action of watching, monitoring and combatting its clandestine activity was intensified by Ion C. Brătianu government, through the authorized state institutions, the police institutions playing a crucial part.

According to the Great General Staff order no. 1869/1925, the Security General Inspectorate informs Craiova Police Office that the soviets, through the instructions given to the organizations in Romania pursue the organizing of the minorities in Transylvania, Bessarabia and Dobrogea with the aim of triggering, also by means of some elements from the Old Kingdom, the action of overthrowing the current government, Ion I. C. Brătianu government and replacing it with a leftist government. After attaining this goal, a rebellion was to be provoked also by means of armed bands organized in Bulgaria and Moldavian Republic, from where they were to penetrate into Dobrogea and Bessarabia. After achieving this aim, war

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 241-242, 256-257.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 296, 305, 312, 361-362.

¹⁰ SJAN Dolj, Documents collection of Craiova Police Office, the dossiers 1/1924, 4/1924, 15/1924, 1/1925, 2/1925, 5/1925, 6/1925, 1/1926, 2/1926, 1/1931, 2/1931, 8/1931, 1/1932, 5/1932, 7/1932, 9/1932, 10/1932, 11/1932, 12/1932, 14/1932, 1/1933, 2/1933, 3/1933, 4/1933, 7/1933, 8/1933, 10bis/1933, 13/1933, 16/1933, 3/1934, 5/1934, 19/1934, 24/1934, 1/1935, 2/1935, 11/1935, 27/1935, 17/1936, 20/1937, 5/1939, 31/1939, 1/1941, 11/1943.

was to follow. So, maximum of vigilance was required from the police detachments belonging to Craiova General Inspectorate¹¹. Also in this sense, under the pressure of the international authorities closely watching Romania's attitude towards the national minorities especially towards the Jews, but also as a result of the minorities' irredentist actions, the Romanian state, namely Romania's government kept an eye on minorities' activities also by means of security police institutions. A note of security police showed that lists were periodically requested containing detailed information about the minorities' organizations and their branches within the Romanian state¹².

In 1925, according to the order no. 4153/2 November 1925 issued by the Great General Staff, Division II, Counter-Intelligence Section, the Security Police was advising Craiova Police general Inspectorate that the Executive Committee of the IIIrd Communist Internationale decided that new instructions should be sent to the communist parties in Europe, asking them to intensify propaganda within the army. In fact, they demanded an increased propaganda among peasantry who was to be conscripted. The instructions meant for the Communist Party in Romania were to be sent through the Balkan Committee in Vienna, beside which, as it is known, there was also a military office. The instructions were to reach communist parties in the Balkan Peninsula and Romania at the end of November 1925¹³. Other two notes which, in fact, complete the first, notes given by the Security Police of Craiova and Giurgiu, respectively, show that the head of this action, for Bulgaria and Romania, is a certain David Lovenbuch, 35 year old¹⁴ and that during October 1925, the IIIrd Communist Internationale had already sent 5,000 Bolsevik propagandists who had graduated from the special school of communist agitation functioning in Moscow. Both notes end with the suggestion of an increased vigilance and with an emphasis on the danger represented by the Soviet agents. The actual measures taken by the Romanian authorities as regards combatting the communist propaganda among the military are disclosed by a strictly secret note issued by the Security General Inspectorate in Craiova the police detachments under its jurisdictional authority, a note which indicates that periodical tables had been sent with the names of the young people of the contingents 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933 who are enrolled in various clubs of a communist nature people, who appreciate or entertain communist outlooks¹⁵.

The activity of permanent observing the activity of the IIIrd Internationale and of RCP, respectively, by the police institutions, meant, among other things, the selection of foreign press coming to Romania, especially the press of Russian and Hungarian origin. Therefore, after indicating the newspapers of Russian and

¹¹ *Ibidem*, file no. 15/1924, f. 131 f-v.

¹² *Ibidem*, file no. 2/1925, f. 118.

¹³ *Ibidem*, file no. 1/1925, ff. 251-252.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, file no. 2/1925, f. 167.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, file no. 1/1926, ff. 17-29; 4/1933, f. 5 and next.

Hungarian origin authorized to get into the country, it is specified that all the Russian newspapers which might endanger Bessarabia's interests are banned¹⁶. Furthermore, from the declarations of the spies and agents that had been caught, the following data were reported: the centre of the whole activity of communist propaganda for the countries in the Balkans is Vienna, a centre that maintains links with the agents in Romania and there are exchanges of magazines from one centre to another, for instance "Elvira" newspapers, issued in Târgu-Mureş, together with "The Romanian Life" and "Liberation" were sent to Vienna by a certain person called Elek Goebbles. Another piece of information indicated that after the failure of revolution in Bulgaria the soviets had decided that the whole activity should be transferred to Romania. To this end Constantinople city was chosen as centre of this action, a centre led by 5 persons¹⁷.

We also find interesting information about the religious associations and sects which were carrying on their activity in the area controlled by Craiova Police Regional Inspectorate. Thus, in conformity with the decision of the Ministry of Public Education and Cults, no. 24336 of 29 May 1928, Craiova Police General Inspectorate communicates to Craiova Police Office the names of the religious sects and associations which, through their doctrine, endanger the proper morals and the public order, among them being also the sect of Inochentist which, according to the information of the Security Police, is a "true nest of communism"¹⁸. Clear data are requested about the phase of organization and propaganda of this sect, originated in Bessarabia.

As it is known, the communist propaganda action was especially focussed on the days of celebrating national and international holidays, when one intended to organize ample manifestations and to enhance the propaganda. Thus, in accordance with the order issued by Craiova Police Regional Inspectorate and given to Craiova Police Office, we learn that the communist leaders had decided that the day of 24 January 1932 should be declared a "red day", occasion on which large manifestations against the union were to be organized¹⁹. Another order of Craiova Police General Inspectorate discloses that the IIIrd Communist Internationale demanded that, in order to organize 1 May, the revolutionary peasants' Krostintern organization, with its headquarters in Moscow, should organize and produce ample peasants' demonstrations in all the states, against the present world economic crisis. In Romania, as a result of the directives received by the RCP, it was decided that the alliance of the peasants with the workers should be carried out with the aim of overthrowing the capitalism²⁰.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, ff. 23, 24, 25, f-v.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, file no. 2/1926, f. 289.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, file no. 2/1931, f. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, file no. 12/1932, ff. 9-11.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, ff. 12, 47 f-v.

Other two strictly secret orders issued by Police General Direction to the police detachments in the territory show that the year 1932 was chosen by the Communist Party secretariate as an extremely important stage for intensifying the communist propaganda and organize large public demonstrations: so, immediately after the holidays, they will start the propaganda week Lenin-Luxemburg-Liebknicht, a period in which people will hold meetings, will spread manifestos, will raise red flags, will draw the patterns of the communist slogans on the walls, etc.; if the conscription of contingent 1932 is effected in February, the Union of the Communist Youth will spread anti militarist manifestos which should show the soldiers' predicament; before the voting on the law of farming debts conversion, the leaders of the Workers and Peasant's Block would issue a pamphlet showing that the conversion law does not solve the agrarian issue at all, in fact a boycott on this law was prepared by the representatives of the Workers and Peasant's Block²¹, a political structure which was, actually, nothing but an interface of the RCP.

Among the workers' mutual assistance organizations created by Comintern there are also Red Aid, Youth'Road, Workers'Sports which, in fact, had in view the material and moral supporting of the workers imprisoned because of their communist membership. A note of Craiova Police Office reveal the fact that Kishinev Police Inspectorate had sent the instructions – translated from Russian – of the Central Committee of Red Aid in Romania to the regional and local committees of this organization. In brief, these instructions contained; *an introductory part* which specified the Romanian bourgeoisie's intention to destroy the communist organizations, the intention that an illegal party should be formed and also the consolidation of the Union of communist Youth through the complete bolshevization of this organization; *the rules of conspiracy*, which displayed the method of action; as well as *the norms of behavior* for the arrested communist²². At the same time, the document specifies the requirement that stamps of these organizations should be disseminated among workers²³.

The RCP's involvement in the social movements of the years 1933-1934 consisted both in the attempt of lending a political connotation to the events, and in the bid for converting the strikers' movements of January-February 1933 into a starting point for a revolutionary way out from the crisis. Therefore, several orders and circulars of the police institutions indicate that the General Council of the Revolutionary Trade Unions of Romania decided on raising the funds necessary for developing the workers' movement. For February 1934 the Central Committee of the Communist Party was preparing the launching of the general strike, so February 1934 was to be declared "red February". In addition, the Red Aid General Committee signed a manifesto through which it claimed the railway strikers' release and their treatment in prison as political prisoners, whereas the Central

²¹ *Ibidem*, f. 28, 47 f-v.

²² *Ibidem*, file no. 6/1933, ff. 40-43.

²³ *Ibidem*, f. 45.

Committee of MOPB, a clandestine communist organization, gave orders to its organizations in the country to raise funds necessary for the appeal to the court of law on 7 February 1934 for the railway workers sentenced in the trail of the rebellion at Grivița CFR workshops²⁴.

After the installation of Nazism and Hitler in Germany, in the Romanian Communist Party's policy there appeared a radical change as concerns the policy of self-determination going up to Transylvania's and Bukovina's separation from the Romanian state. As regards the policy on Bessarabia, the RCP remained loyal to the traditional line taken by the IIIrd Internationale from Moscow ever since the affiliation. This entire policy is apparent in the orders, circulars and informing notes issued by the police institutions in Craiova, which were steadily observing the Comintern's policy regarding Romania²⁵.

Beside a permanent surveillance of the activity of Comintern and the RCP, respectively, by the bodies authorized to maintain the social order and peace as well as state security, expressed in the clear registering of the RCP members or sympathizers, it is also to be noted the Romanian governments' policy to combat the bolshevism by publishing papers that should demonstrate the incompatibility of Marxist-Leninist doctrine with social organization. So, extremely interesting is the lieutenant colonel Ariefeanu Virgil's paper, *Aux frontières du bolschevisme*, published in Paris, welcomed by the European press, a paper which systematically demonstrates the incompatibility of communism with human nature, a paper which, after having been translated into Romanian, was distributed to all the centres in the country in order to make it very well known²⁶.

Extremely interesting for discovering the policy of the USSR towards Bessarabia and also the population's state of mind is the information found in this archive material concerning both the persons from Bessarabia and Bukovina who had carried on an activity against the Romanian state and also those who had been deported or quartered in various areas of Oltenia and concerning their state of mind²⁷.

As a conclusion of our outline, we can state, without doubt, that the documents displayed by the police institution, corroborated with those of other institutions meant to supervise the preservation of Romanian democratic liberties, reveal new information and considerably enlarge the already existing cognitive resources concerning the leftist extremist manifestations from Romania and towards Romania during the interwar period.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, file no. 4/1933, ff. 21-23; file no. 3/1934, ff. 15, 61.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, file no. 27/1935; file no. 17/1936; file no. 31/1939.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, file no. 4/1933, f. 109.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, file no. 10/1932, f. 108; file no. 1/1941, ff. 231-238.

