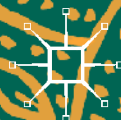


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**ROMANIAN  
COUNTERINSURGENCY  
AND ITS GLOBAL  
CONTEXT, 1944-1962**

**Andrei Miroiu**



Romanian Counterinsurgency and its Global  
Context, 1944–1962



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Romanian  
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## Introduction

**Abstract** The introduction provides the rationale for the book and sets it in the context of the contemporary, post-9/11 debates concerning counterinsurgency. It briefly engages with the two main approaches to the analysis and interpretation of early Cold War anti-guerrilla campaigns and makes the case for both the comparative approach in the study of counterinsurgency and the relevance of non-Western, small state military operations against armed rebels. The theoretical stance embraced is laid out, and the main arguments are presented.

**Keywords** Asymmetric warfare • Cold War • Communist bloc • Counterinsurgency

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the problems and eventual failures of American-led military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan spurred the need for a reappraisal and deeper study of counterinsurgency. One of the main directions followed was historical, with the gaze of military practitioners and scholars focusing especially on the “classical period” of counterinsurgency, the period stretching from the end of the Second World War to the end of the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the studies concentrated on two important cases: the British campaign in Malaya, which was seen as a “textbook victory,” and the French war in Algeria, seen as the archetypal defeat. While many were mostly interested in recuperating

the perceived wisdom of the time through a re-read of the literature of the period, especially the work of “luminaries” such as Robert Thompson or David Galula, those of a more thorough inclination revisited the counterinsurgencies of the period in depth, making use of new archival documents, testimonies and memoirs.

The results of the two approaches could not have been more different. The first advocated that much of what they took to be lessons of the past, especially those concerning the winning of the “hearts and minds” of the civilian population, are relevant and useful as guides for contemporary conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the proponents of this camp, some of them military officers or academics associated with governmental departments or military research structures, found their ideas embraced by military and political leaders and translated into policies in the Middle East and Central Asia.<sup>3</sup> The second camp took a longer time to produce their results, but they were damning; “classical counterinsurgencies” fought by Western powers had been brutal, murderous conflicts fought in disregard of internal and international law.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this period little attention was paid to the counterinsurgency campaigns waged by non-Western powers. Some assumed the cultural differences between the capitalist West and the communist East meant that any work on such campaigns would have no comparative value at all.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, little was published, particularly in English, on such topics. Even the campaigns fought on the European continent by the Soviet Union and its communist allies received scant attention, despite the proximity to the physical and cultural Western space.<sup>6</sup>

This book is an attempt to rectify this neglect and has two main aims. The first is to present and analyze one such campaign, fought by the Soviet-imposed and -supported government of Romania against a scattered insurgency waged by anti-communist, nationalist groups between 1944 and the early 1960s. The second goal is to integrate this counterinsurgency in its global context, through a comparison not only with the actions of the USSR in its western borderlands but also with the campaigns fought by Western powers in their colonies, especially the British in Malaya and the French in Algeria.

Still seldom mentioned in the English-speaking world, the Romanian anti-communist armed resistance and the governmental responses to it are now, due to local circumstances and efforts, better known than other contemporary rebellions. The opening and thorough research of the archives of the repressive institutions of the country led to the publication of a vast

number of volumes of documents, archival funds, secret periodicals and memoirs directly concerned with the events. A solid secondary literature emerged in the last 20 years; based on a careful study of primary and secondary sources, one can attempt a presentation and analysis of Romanian counterinsurgency. Yet to stop here would produce a partial image, perhaps useful for historical purposes but one that would have little relevance in the general framework of war studies, more specifically of strategic studies. A comparative look yields more interesting and relevant results if we are to understand insurgency and counterinsurgency as unitary, coherent phenomena and thus relevant objects of study for social sciences. Moreover, directly comparing communist and Western counterinsurgency has not been attempted so far and would thus contribute both to dispelling the idea that there were significant cultural differences between the camps and to a more comprehensive understanding of what it meant to wage irregular warfare in the immediate post-1945 period.

This study is based on the assumption that counterinsurgencies are fundamentally military affairs. Therefore, the analysis attempted here is predicated upon the idea that there are three essential elements of governmental response to armed rebellions: population control, intelligence and military operations. The main premise behind choosing these dimensions was that contemporary governments faced with insurgencies have three main tasks. The first task is to prevent the transformation of the conflict into a civil war by allowing the insurgents to attract vast sectors of the civilian population to their side; the best avenue for doing so is through population control. The second task is to find the enemy and uncover its cells, structures and *modus operandi*, which is the task of intelligence agencies. The third task is to eliminate the armed rebels—an objective that is considered in the framework of military operations.

Both in the case of Romania and other, better known campaigns, the findings of this study point to the hollowness of the prevalent narrative concerning “hearts and minds” approaches aimed at the local populations and instead highlight the centrality of massive deportations and physical and psychological intimidation and control of targeted populations. The study of intelligence engages with the relative merits of centralised and decentralised organisation for counterinsurgency campaigns, evaluates the use of interrogation and torture and assesses the role of infiltration and counter-gangs. Military approaches, such as patrols, cordoning, garrisoning, raids, and special forces operations, are analyzed in relation to achieving success in the campaigns.

Perhaps the most important argument raised here is that population control was the strategic-level answer to early post-war counterinsurgencies, whereas intelligence and military operations were mostly relevant on a tactical level. This led to the proposal of a counter-metaphor to the oft-used “hearts and minds” portrayal of successful counterinsurgency. This work argues that one should more accurately see success in these campaigns as a combination of “bullets, brains and barb wire,” where brains stands for the intelligence operations providing the information that brought the enemies in the way of the bullets used in military operations, or behind the barb wire, which is a better symbolic depiction of what population control policies actually were.

This book is divided in six chapters. The second comprises the comparative, global context in which the Romanian campaign was fought, with particular attention to Western colonial campaigns fought in Malaya and Algeria, but also using examples from similar ventures in Greece, Madagascar, Indochina, Kenya, Cyprus, Tunisia and Morocco. It is focused specifically on Western imperial campaigns, as Soviet experience is discussed in an integrated manner with the Romanian one in Chap. 3. While the reader interested only in the Romanian campaign could entirely skip this chapter, I do believe that a more comprehensive understanding is gained by reading it.

The third chapter discusses the historical context of the anti-communist armed resistance in Romania in the first decade and a half of the Cold War. It presents the historical conditions of the establishment of a pro-Moscow government in Romania at the end of the Second World War, the causes of the insurgency and its social base and a typology of armed rebel groups. The fourth chapter contains a discussion of the organisation of communist intelligence and police counter-insurrectionary efforts and the role of Soviet advisors in the conflict. It details specific intelligence operations, such as informant networks, interrogation, betrayal, debriefing, infiltration, surveillance and counter-gangs. The fifth chapter engages with the use of specific military operations, such as patrols, checkpoints, ambushes, sweeps and targeted strikes, and continues with detailed examples of their use in the destruction of specific armed groups. It also focuses on the forms of population control used by the government to prevent the rebellion from spreading and eventually cut the insurgents from any popular support. It discusses complete territorial control and censorship but is dedicated in depth to the crushing of peasant riots and the use of massive internal deportation of restive populations or groups deemed suspect by the government.

## NOTES

1. For the term encompassing the period from 1948 to 1973, see James D. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare" in David Jordan, James D. Kiras, David J. Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck and C. Dale Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 260.
2. See, for instance, Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare. The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005; Nigel Alwyn-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations" in *Military Review*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (2005); John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago. From Mao to bin Laden*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009; David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; David H. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story" in *Defence Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1–2 (2010). For the consensus see Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy. Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 436–437.
3. The main document that codified the policies inspired by this school of thought is US Army, *Counterinsurgency FM 3-24*, December 2006. For critical analysis of its effects see, among many, John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jaregui, Sean T. Mitchell, Jeremy Walton (eds.), *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010; Michael Hastings. *The Operators: the Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan*, New York: Blue Rider Press, 2012; Fred M. Kaplan, *The Insurgents. David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013; Gian Gentile, *Wrong Turn. America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*, New York: The New Press, 2013.
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5. Rod Paschall, “Soviet Counterinsurgency: Past, Present and Future” in Richard H. Shultz (ed.), *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency. U.S. – Soviet Policy in the Third World*, Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989.
6. Notable exceptions to this neglect are Yuri Zhukov, “Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-insurgency: The Soviet Campaign Against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army” in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007), 439–466; Dorin Dobrinu, “Historicizing a Disputed Theme: Anti-communist Armed Resistance in Romania” in Vladimir Tismăneanu (ed.), *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009; Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

## Western Imperial Counterinsurgency, 1945–1962

**Abstract** This chapter is a sweeping depiction of the global context in which Romanian counterinsurgency was fought. The focus is firmly on Western imperial counterinsurgency, particularly French and British. Through a discussion of campaigns fought in Madagascar, Indochina, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Greece, Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus, the arguments concerning the role of population control, military and intelligence operations are developed and a comparative picture of post-war colonial counterinsurgency appears.

**Keywords** British decolonisation • Cold War • Counterinsurgency • French decolonisation • Intelligence operations • Military operations • Population control

In the fall of 1945, with Germany and Japan defeated and occupied, few in the imperial capitals of Lisbon, Amsterdam, London and Paris were convinced that the end of colonial domination was over.<sup>1</sup> Despite all the talk about national determination in the Atlantic Charter and on the hallways of the newly born United Nations, the governments of the colonial empires were active at the time in reasserting their dominance of territories occupied by their defeated opponents.<sup>2</sup> The British returned virtually unopposed to Southeast Asia and helped the Dutch send their forces to the East Indies. The French returned with their bureaucracy and tens of

thousands of colonial troops to Indochina. It would seem prospects for independence lay in the distant future, at best a generation or two away. From some territories, particularly in Africa, the European elites had no intention of leaving at all and no expectation to be forced to do so.<sup>3</sup>

Yet this was not to be. Within a decade and a half, with the exception of Portuguese colonies and a few far-flung islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, scarcely any significant territory remained in the hands of Western empires. While the Soviet Union was busy consolidating its imperial dominance from Berlin to Ulan Bator and the USA was building its own “empire by invitation”, the European empires all but disappeared.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, stiff opposition in the colonies, sometimes taking the form of armed combat, as well as unenthusiastic support for empire at home put the Western governments in front of two options: to “fight or flight”.<sup>5</sup> As time would prove, both were chosen and both led to the loss of the colonies.

Indeed, neither 1945 nor 1946 were without violent opposition to the Western rule or the return of Western rule to its colonial outposts. Before the war was fully over, the French had to put down a massive anti-colonial riot in the Sétif region of Algeria, with thousands of civilians killed in the process. In 1947, the reassertion of authority in Madagascar was even more brutal, the historical record speaking of tens of thousands of victims.<sup>6</sup> By 1946, the Dutch were actively engaged in combat operations in the East Indies and had to throw in the towel within three years.

The same year saw the beginning of the War in Indochina, the first in a series of Vietnamese wars lasting until 1979. Guided by the cunning politician and fiery ideologue Ho Chi Min and led on the field of battle by the greatest non-Western general of the twentieth century, Vo Nguyen Giap, the Vietnamese communists goaded the French colonial authorities into a guerrilla campaign.<sup>7</sup> Following almost to the letter Mao Zedong’s prescriptions for revolutionary war, and by doing this unintentionally persuading the French military that Maoism underpins all anti-colonial movements, the Vietnamese were able to escalate to all-out civil war.<sup>8</sup> Defeating the troops of Paris in pitched battles, they forced France’s ignominious surrender at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and, subsequently, their withdrawal from the newborn states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.<sup>9</sup>

While London’s African colonies were generally quiet at the end of the Second World War, the same cannot be said of territories in Asia or in those of Britain’s close allies. The end of the British mandate in Palestine saw a vicious insurgency led by Zionist elements punctuated by terror-



ist attacks and summary executions, lasting until the proclamation of the state of Israel in the summer of 1948.<sup>10</sup> Greece, an ally of the United Kingdom, saw itself engulfed in a bitter civil war between the nationalist royal government and the Communist Party of Greece, initially supported by Tito's Yugoslavia. Lasting between 1946 and 1949, it involved the direct commitment of British troops in the first phase and military advisers and equipment in the second phase. Unlike the Vietnamese, the Greek communists moved too fast from guerrilla warfare to conventional confrontation and were defeated in pitched battles by governmental troops. This, as well as the cutting of supply lines by Yugoslavia, led to the defeat of the anti-imperialist fighters.<sup>11</sup>

It was in Southeast Asia, though, that London would end up fighting its longest and most famous colonial campaign after the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> After Indian independence in 1947, Malaya became the most important economic asset of the troubled empire. As a major exporter of rubber and tin, the region was bringing a lot of hard currency, particularly US dollars, to British planters, mining tycoons and banks and filling Treasury coffers.<sup>13</sup> Initially peaceful, Malaya erupted in violence in the summer of 1948. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its military wing, the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), unleashed a campaign aimed at driving the colonists out and establishing a Marxist-Leninist regime. With some 8000 armed fighters, many with guerrilla experience in anti-Japanese campaigns, the MRLA seemed like a powerful adversary and were sometimes able to mount spectacular attacks against British civilians or governmental authorities.<sup>14</sup>

However, London was better placed in Malaya than Paris ever was in Indochina. Firstly, the peninsula was ethnically divided between the majority Malays and the Chinese and Indian minorities.<sup>15</sup> As the MCP was overwhelmingly drawn from the poor Chinese, it was easy for the authorities to mobilise against them not only most of the Malays but also the Chinese upper and middle-classes, whose commercial and business interests overlapped closely those of the British.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the United Kingdom was able to bring in resources from many territories, including experienced policemen from Palestine, battle-hardened Gurkhas from Nepal, former headhunting jungle warriors, such as the Iban tribesmen from Sarawak, imperial infantry battalions from Africa and Commonwealth forces from Australia, in addition to troops sent directly from the British Isles. These resources, combined with the ability to control the skies and the seas, meant that there was little chance for victory for the MCP.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless,

the campaign against them lasted for 12 years, and it was won only after a massive campaign against the poor civilian Chinese population of Malaya.

The mid-1950s saw the eruption of other major anti-colonial campaigns. In Kenya, radicalised groups from the Kikuyu population rose to armed struggle, vexed by decades of ill treatment and expropriation at the hands of a tiny, self-indulgent and government-encouraged minority of white planters.<sup>18</sup> Their struggle was mostly carried out in the jungle and on the jungle fringes and came to be known as the Mau-Mau Revolt. Featuring intricate magic rituals and, in some cases, brutal acts of retribution against British civilians, the anti-colonial movement suffered from lack of weapons and a proper organisation.<sup>19</sup> Even still, it gave London and its local forces two years of serious armed trouble, which again was only finished through a massive and violent campaign against Kikuyu civilians. Historians only revealed the full extent of its horror in the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, much like in Malaya, London was able to organise eventual independence for Kenya in terms agreeable to present and future British interests in the country.

Another important rebellion that began in the middle of the decade took place in a territory apparently ill suited to guerrilla warfare, the island of Cyprus. The Greek population of Cyprus was animated by a desire to see the British authorities leave and to achieve union with Greece. More extreme elements in its midst coupled this desire with others, aimed at the destruction of local communists and the expulsion of the island's Turkish minority. These ideas received political support from the Orthodox Archbishop of Cyprus, the shrewd Makarios and became the ideology of *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) EOKA, a conservative guerrilla movement led by Colonel Georgios Grivas.<sup>20</sup> Between 1956 and 1960, EOKA led a violent campaign against British officials, police and military personnel, as well as minority Turks and Greek communists. While less brutal than in its colonial outposts of Kenya and Malaya, London's reaction featured execution of civilians, surveillance, actions against local communities and military operations aimed at the guerrillas. While Grivas's guerrillas did not win in the field, they played an important part in achieving independence for Cyprus in 1960.<sup>21</sup>

A third massive anti-colonial rebellion that marked the second part of the 1950s and the early 1960s took place in French North Africa. Morocco and Tunisia rose first to challenge Paris's right to rule over them.<sup>22</sup> Energised by loyalty towards a charismatic monarch in the case of

the former and by a skilful politician in the case of the latter, local populations mounted both peaceful demonstrations and armed attacks against resident French military forces. After two years of significant conflict, both countries achieved complete independence in 1956.<sup>23</sup> The most violent conflict of the region, though, was to take place in Algeria. Conquered in the 1830s–1840s and considered a part of mainland France, the country had a large white minority, spread both in its major cities and in the rural areas. In political and economic control of the territory, the local whites made few concessions to the Muslim majority in the aftermath of the Second World War, preferring to keep them in a state of economic and social inferiority.<sup>24</sup> While some Muslim Algerians sought to rectify this through legal political activism, others saw radical change and eventual independence possible only through the means of armed struggle.<sup>25</sup>

Unleashed on 1 November 1954, the campaign waged by the *Front de Libération Nationale* National Liberation Front (FLN) saw massive terrorist attacks against cities over the years, vicious murders of French civilians in the countryside, wholesale slaughter of Muslim Algerians who did not entirely agree with the FLN's agenda, ambushes of French police and military forces and, eventually, when the rebels grew in numbers, attempts to engage the regular army in pitched battles.<sup>26</sup> The situation steadily deteriorated, to the point that segments of the local white population and radical elements of the French Army were mounting open and armed opposition to Paris's policies, which they considered too soft.<sup>27</sup> The colonial government fought back and was able to turn the tables in the end, defeating the opposition of the whites, purging its own army, eliminating FLN's network of arms procurers in Europe, sealing off the borders with Tunisia and Morocco, destroying FLN's urban armed wing and hunting down its rural elements in the remotest corners of the country.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the government could do nothing against urban peaceful protest, which re-emerged in full force after 1960. This, coupled with internal war-weariness and revelations of massive abuses and tortures during the war, forced Paris to the negotiating table and resulted in independence for the country in 1962.<sup>29</sup>

While governmental reactions to each particular rebellion varied with the region, the adversary and the local interests, when Western capitals decided to stay on and fight to preserve a colony or mould its future in a profitable way, their counterinsurgency campaigns had three main components. First, in nearly all of them, civilian population had to be controlled to a degree that would prevent the guerrillas from radicalising it or raising

it to a general anti-colonial insurrection and would stop the armed rebels' free movement. The second element was the province of intelligence services and involved finding and identifying the rebels and their support network. The third essential action was the elimination of the partisans through a variety of means, most of them falling in the category of military operations. The analysis of how these options were pursued by Western governments between 1945 and 1962 serves as a useful general context and comparison tool for understanding parallel campaigns fought in the Eastern Bloc, such as the one in Romania.

In most of post-1945 campaigns, population control policies were successful, with the possible exception of Algeria, where the authorities lost control in the late stage of the conflict, not so much over the Muslim majority but rather over the European inhabitants of the country.<sup>30</sup> Even in this case, the government was victorious in the sense in which it prevented the transformation of an armed rebellion into a conventional and symmetric civil war, which had been the goal of the FLN for a time.<sup>31</sup> In Malaya, the early preventive arrest campaigns and large-unit manoeuvres had stopped the MCP from reaching out to most of the country's population, but in the long run the strategy of population control was, likewise, responsible for preventing the escalation of the conflict.<sup>32</sup>

The most striking aspect of the strategies of population control that needs to be kept in mind is the government's policy of dislodging vast numbers of civilians from their areas into settlements under government control, thus enforcing large-scale internal deportation programs. In Malaya, the British colonists resettled virtually half of the target population (the ethnic Chinese) or up to 15 % of all inhabitants of the country.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the 10,000 who were deported to China, a million people were moved from their homes, be they squatter settlements or older villages, which were often destroyed by the armed forces.<sup>34</sup> In addition to them, many Malayan Aborigines, the most ancient population of the peninsula, were deported from their native jungles to unfamiliar, insalubrious settlements where they perished in droves.<sup>35</sup> In Algeria the French government forcibly resettled up to 2.5 million Muslim Algerians, making up to 40 % of the country's population; among them were 400,000 nomads whose way of life was completely destroyed.<sup>36</sup>

Deportations were always harsh and brutal affairs. To describe them in terms of "hearts and minds" policies, as it has been done until recently at least in the case of Malaya, is to grossly misrepresent reality. Houses and ways of life were destroyed, sometimes forever. Livelihoods were threat-

ened and nearly anyone deported suffered, in addition to psychological trauma, serious economic losses that were seldom compensated at their market value, if ever. In Malaya the “New Villages” were, at least in the early years of their existence, forced labour camps in all but name.<sup>37</sup> In Algeria, even when the settlements were not surrounded by barb wire and patrolled by the army, they were devised in such a manner as to crush intimacy and destroy the traditional social pattern of Muslim families and community.<sup>38</sup> In Kenya, entire Kikuyu communities were moved to concentration camps under the strict surveillance and guard of governmental forces and those of the local white planters. Beatings, other forms of torture and murder were commonplace in these, to an extent unparalleled in other post-war colonial internal deportation programs.<sup>39</sup>

In all of these cases, at least for a number of years, health and hygiene conditions were appalling and one could not help thinking that the governments were responsible for enormous suffering and an untold number of deaths among its own peaceful citizens. This situation, in addition to food control, which was a most prominent tactic in Malaya but was present in the other cases as well, served to physically and psychologically break the population’s will to resist, if it even existed in the first place. By the time improvements to the lot of the deported were made, through better sanitation, health services, electrification, schools, roads and land repartitions, it is likely that the civilian population had learned the hard way what determined governments can do when they feel threatened.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to this direct, physical control over populations perceived to be inclined to help the guerrillas, the governments also mounted intense legal and psychological warfare campaigns against the population at large. Special emergency legislation was issued in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Algeria, with Paris and London virtually ceasing to act as democratic powers. Basic rights, like freedom of movement, free speech, *habeas corpus* and the right to a fair and speedy trial, were “legally” disposed with. Hundreds of people were sentenced to death and executed in Malaya and Kenya and thousands suffered the same fate in Algeria for breaking the emergency laws.<sup>41</sup>

Psychological warfare was most elaborate in Malaya and Algeria, where special military-run institutions ran vast programs of indoctrination, black propaganda, and poster, radio and film campaigns to rally the population to the cause of the government. Persuasion, bribe, threats and brainwashing were used against both enemies and the population at large. Millions of leaflets were dumped over the jungles of Malaya, accompanied by voice

aircraft persuading the rebels to surrender. In the towns and villages, like in Algeria, posters and films were the main propaganda channels for the government.<sup>42</sup>

It has to be noted here that the material as well as the personnel and institutional efforts involved in the population control policies were enormous, at least in Malaya, Kenya and Algeria. The special Chinese departments and the Chinese Home Guards in the British colony and the *Sections Administratives Spécialisées* in Algeria employed tens of thousands of people and spent vast sums of money to achieve their goals.<sup>43</sup> Whenever it mounted a massive internal deportation operation, a colonial government was able to mobilise tens of thousands of troops, thousands of trucks and dozens of trains. Indeed, a government needs to be rich and resolute, not only ruthless, in order to mount a successful population control campaign during an insurgency.

Intelligence organisation for counterinsurgency was quite different in the post-war colonial counterinsurgencies. The British in Malaya, after a short period of experimentation at the beginning, preferred to concentrate authority for the collection, analysis and distribution of intelligence in the hands of the civilian Special Branch, helped by army intelligence officers attached to it. This was also the case in the other colonial campaigns fought by London after the Second World War. The French had what seemed to be a disjointed intelligence effort, with army intelligence, ministry of the interior information services as well as both the internal and external civilian metropolitan intelligence services involved in Algerian problems.<sup>44</sup>

The reasons for this, especially in the light of the military success that governments enjoyed, seem to have been the nature of the opponent and the geographical characteristics of the conflict. The British fought in Malaya against one of the most coherent and politically organised opponents, without internal frictions and obeying the orders of a central command.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the area of operations was very uniform—mountainous jungle—and it made perfect sense to concentrate intelligence efforts under one service. Putting everything under the civilian Special Branch also helped in showing that the Malayan conflict was not a serious war. In Kenya or Cyprus, the guerrillas were also confined to operating within national borders. In the Algerian case, the FLN was not as united, with the external command (based in friendly Arab nations) often at odds with the internal one (based in Algeria proper), which was also divided, sometimes along ethnic lines between Arabs and Berbers.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, unlike the MCP or other guerrillas opposing the British Empire, the FLN operated

not only in Algeria but also in other countries and on other continents. The French had to find their enemies in the middle of deserts, in mountain hideouts, in fertile valleys, on the streets of big cities in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia but also in France, Germany and the USA. It would have been too difficult to run the campaign under only one intelligence service.<sup>47</sup>

One advantage that imperial governments enjoyed from the start was the fact that the rebels did not mount a preemptive decapitation strike against intelligence agents working in contested areas. In other cases, such as Aden in the 1960s but most prominently Dublin during the “Bloody Sunday” of 21 November 1920, local guerrillas dealt heavy blows to the intelligence services by assassinating undercover agents. In the early post-war insurgencies this was not the case, most likely because of the inability of the partisans to identify such targets in advance.<sup>48</sup>

Advanced technology was not really significant in the fight against a relatively unsophisticated but elusive adversary. Except for the use of precision aerial photography to identify enemy movements and camps in Malaya and Algeria and the use of listening devices in urban settings in most cases, technology had to make space for traditional, human intelligence collection.<sup>49</sup> Informers and informer networks were the bedrock on which the intelligence campaigns were based in classical counterinsurgency. Their recruitment and formation required a steady, painful and long effort by specialised intelligence officers, who in Algeria and Malaya had to battle with their own inability to communicate in the native languages. These predicaments explain to a degree why it was so difficult to recruit and run good informers and to form efficient and lucrative informer networks. The nature of the adversary and its operations accounts for the other problems of gathering intelligence. More often than not, the informers had to be recruited in the local communities or among the deported with the hope that they would provide intelligence on the support network of the guerrillas.<sup>50</sup> This support network had organisational coherence in Greece, Malaya, Cyprus and Algeria and was the main target of intelligence efforts in all the three cases. It’s targeting, if successful, allowed intelligence officers to identify most of the members of the network and the identities of the guerrillas, their habits, patterns of operations and, if especially lucky, locations. The process was lengthy and arduous and in many cases could be marred by intelligence officers or informers blowing their own covers in the process.<sup>51</sup>

A far more difficult task was the infiltration of agents and informers inside the guerrilla groups per se. The British had some success among the couriers of the MCP running correspondence between the guerrilla

camps in the jungle and the support network in the resettlement camps but were seldom able to insert agents in the fighting formations. The French had a similar experience in Algeria, penetrating support networks in rural and urban areas but seldom achieving intelligence from the armed rebel formations. They were, however, more capable in penetrating the FLN cells operating outside Algeria, most notably in metropolitan France. Through cooperation with other intelligence agencies, like those of federal Germany, weapons smugglers were identified and eliminated.<sup>52</sup>

In gathering human intelligence, the interrogation of civilians, suspected enemy helpers and surrendered and captured enemy personnel played a prominent role. Language and cultural differences impeded French and British efforts, as the authorities had few officers who could speak Greek, Arabic or Chinese and had to rely instead on interpreters and, further along the line, on educating metropolitan officers or recruiting native speakers. Also, especially when conducting a massive interrogation in a cordoned locality, the officers had to make special efforts not to blow the cover of their informers and had to do far more interrogatories for the sake of appearances. However, in most cases the most problematic aspect, at least from the vantage point of the present, is the brutal and sometimes inhumane methods used during interrogation. It has been established for a long time that French officers routinely tortured suspected terrorists during the Battle of Algiers, and it has become apparent in the last decade and a half that this was normal practice in the rural areas throughout the conflict. Thousands were killed in the process. Despite the fact that for decades the British portrayed their interrogation practices in post-war colonial warfare as clean and humane, proof began to emerge recently that torture, including the removal of fingernails, was a part of the process in Malaya, mirroring far more gruesome practices during the parallel campaign fought in Kenya against the Mau Mau.<sup>53</sup>

When military operations are discussed, it is interesting to note that, despite the fact that geography, culture, ethnicity and organisation were vastly different between the insurgents, the options of the authorities were similar. Nor did it matter that the government could deploy hundreds of thousands of troops, like the French in Algeria, or mostly operate at platoon or company strength, like in other campaigns. In all cases, the task of eliminating the rebels led the armed forces to consider and mount similar operations.

First, an analysis of Western post-war imperial counterinsurgency makes the case that large-scale, conventional operations against armed



rebels were not useless approaches ordered by incompetent or reactionary officers unwilling to adapt to a new style of warfare, as some of the counterinsurgency literature has suggested. In the initial stages, raids with large military units, convoys, large patrols and strong checkpoints prevented the rebels from establishing liberated zones in order to contact and radicalise the population. Later on, the massive presence of governmental forces, albeit an arduous and expensive process, served to show the flag and insure the local population of the military superiority of the authorities over the rebels.<sup>54</sup> While seemingly inefficient in terms of enemies captured or killed, constant patrolling, checkpoints, cordons and sweeps maintained constant pressure on the guerrillas, who kept feeling that they are being hunted down by a determined adversary. The British in Malaya, once they established the Police Jungle Force and brought Aboriginal scouts in combination with Sarawak Rangers and other special forces into the fold, showed how large units can be very efficient against elusive rebels. Similarly, the French *Commandos de chasse* were instrumental in defeating the last large formations of the FLN in 1959–1960.<sup>55</sup>

Some specific large-unit approaches were particularly useful or sought after. In addition to the previously mentioned special forces operations, the French used large formations up to battalion and regiment size in their strategy of *quadrillage*, which ensured territorial control and posed serious problems to any FLN large formations trying to move through the country. Forces as large as infantry divisions guarded the electrified barriers on the frontiers with Morocco and Tunisia, sealing off the rebels in the country from those abroad.<sup>56</sup> This lesson was learned by the British, who applied it on a smaller scale in the campaign they fought in Western Oman (Dhofar) in the late 1960s and early 1970s: well-defended, strong and constantly patrolled barriers can isolate insurgents from the civilian population in certain cases.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the most efficient in terms of enemies apprehended or killed in all the cases were ambushes and informed strikes, or targeted operations. When governmental officers became aware of locations, hideouts, routes and times for the passage of guerrillas, they were able to deploy troops to the indicated locations, even on short notice, and in numerous cases, they were successful. Even when an operation was botched and allowed some or all the guerrillas to escape, it put serious pressure on them, sometimes leading to their break-up. In cases when enemies were killed or captured, intelligence recovered could lead to other victories.<sup>58</sup>

It is hard to assess the role of counter-gangs in post-war imperial counterinsurgency. Much touted by some experts for their success in Kenya, the case of the Q squads in Malaya is hard to judge, and their efficiency cannot be measured until the full archives of the conflict will be available for study. In Algeria, large-scale counter-gangs were used in a number of cases by the French to the point that they resembled more ethnic militias allied with the government than special, stealthy anti-guerrilla units meant to look and operate like their opponents. While efficient in their initial phase, they were plagued by betrayals and usually collapsed quickly or passed altogether to the side of the FLN. It bears keeping in mind that the *Commandos de chasse* resembled many of the characteristics of counter-gangs that were used in other conflicts.<sup>59</sup>

The analysis of military operations also highlights the particular role of specialisation of the forces and the utility of specially trained formations for the defeat of armed insurgency. In Greece, commandos took precedence in fighting the insurgents, through night raids, deep raids and penetration to attack the rear of enemy troops and also as a strategic reserve transported by aircraft.<sup>60</sup> In Indochina, the French military created special anti-guerrilla forces in the form of the Mixed Airborne Commando Groups made up of French officers, NCOs and native Vietnamese paratroopers who operated deep inside rebel-held territory gathering intelligence and engaging enemy units in combat.<sup>61</sup> The British drew a lot of success from their ability to use imperial troops in Malaya. In addition to the local Malay troops and the Sarawak Rangers, London was able to extract resources from the Commonwealth (especially Australia), but, more importantly in terms of jungle warfare, from Fiji and Kenya.<sup>62</sup> The French raised massive numbers of Algerian soldiers for their units, varying in roles from cooks and construction workers to especially efficient members of the *Commandos de chasse*. They also had no particular need to create special counterinsurgency units, as the colonial infantry regiments and the parachute regiments had already acquainted themselves with asymmetric warfare in Indochina. However, they did display an appetite for innovation in raising horse cavalry regiments for operations in particularly inhospitable terrain.<sup>63</sup> The tendency to use specialised forces in combating insurgents in colonial and post-colonial spaces became even stronger in the 1960s. For instance, they were the backbone of British operations against Indonesian forces in Borneo during the *Konfrontasi*, 1963–1966.<sup>64</sup>

Western counterinsurgencies in the first few decades after the end of the Second World War were messy, brutal affairs. They featured high levels of

violence, and the sources of that violence were not only guerrillas seeking to overthrow governments and the authorities fighting against them but also the explicit policies of imperial capitals for keeping order through vast programs of population control. More often than not, this was accomplished not through “hearts and minds” policies but through internal and external deportation, internment, propaganda, brainwashing, summary sentencing and executions, beatings, torture and rapes. While intelligence and military operations were fundamental in tackling armed rebels and certainly need to be understood in order to get a good grasp of the tactical and operational levels of classical counterinsurgency, it is the population control measures that were the true strategic level of the campaigns.

The Romanian counterinsurgency campaign, which is the focus of the next chapters, was not fought in a vacuum. It is important to place it not only in the context of other Eastern Bloc campaigns, especially the Soviet operations in Ukraine and the Baltic states, but also in a specific worldwide military context. Thus, one can understand that cultural differences are overblown in the discussion of post-war asymmetric warfare. Common elements stemming from the nature of the conflict and the usual government reactions when faced with armed rebellion were often more important than ideological, economic and social dissimilarities.

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## A Small Rebellion

**Abstract** This chapter presents the historical local context of Romanian counterinsurgency. It surveys its place in the plethora of campaigns fought in the Soviet space during and after the end of the Second World War. It presents the political, social and economic conditions in which a Moscow-backed government took over the defeated country and proceeded to its transformation according to the Stalinist model of development, and it assesses the strength and chances of organised political and military groups opposing this.

**Keywords** Cold War • Opposition groups • Romania • Second World War • Soviet counterinsurgency

The Moscow-backed Romanian communists took power in early March 1945, and by that time, armed groups and subversive movements were already contesting their bid for controlling the destinies of this European nation. The Romanian Communist Party (*Partidul Comunist Român*, PCR) would go on to fight these armed groups and others formed in the following years for more than a decade and a half, until the last isolated armed rebels were captured in 1961 and 1962.<sup>1</sup> While these groups never formed a unitary movement and were quite small and unable to pose vital threats to the regime, they did constitute an insurgency in the sense of a politically motivated, armed struggle against a central government.

Indeed, when compared with other campaigns fought at the same time, the Romanian insurgency can be even more relevant for contemporary concerns. It was a scattered, diffused and leaderless movement united nevertheless by an ideology (nationalism) and by the belief that armed struggle would contribute to the downfall of an illegitimate regime supported by a foreign power. In this it resembles what Mark Sageman called the “leaderless jihad” to describe post-9/11 evolutions in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary as well as older literature on Counterinsurgency COIN usually refuses to engage with non-Western practice and theory of counter-guerrilla warfare. The reasons most often invoked for this refusal stem from a belief that cultural differences between the West and the East were so strong as to lead to completely dissimilar approaches that could never be replicated.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Russian and Soviet COIN, authors writing at the end of the Cold War were arguing that the country and its outlook is not Western and does not abide to Western norms and customs of warfare. Although there was a long tradition of Marxist regimes fighting counter-insurgencies—the communist countries had been counterinsurgents for practically their entire existence—this cultural difference makes their experience in the same time unique and little relevant for the West.<sup>4</sup>

But even if this theory holds true and there are indeed deep cultural and political differences, especially concerning the political unaccountability of the communist regimes, their experience remains extremely relevant from the perspective of strategic studies. In the end, they were governments trying to defeat armed rebels. Despite their great powers concerning society at large, they faced similar problems as their peers in the West when conducting actual operations and intelligence gathering.

The Soviet regime, which had fought its first COINs against Nestor Makhno in the closing years of the Civil War and later against a Basmachi uprising in Central Asia, faced stiff resistance in its attempts to recuperate and control the territories snatched from it by the Germans in 1941–1942.<sup>5</sup> The initial response, even while the Nazi troops were still on Soviet territory, was extremely brutal. Regular Red Army troops and the Interior Ministry (NKVD) troops ravaged Chechen and Northern Caucasian villages back of the front is a military term, ruthlessly suppressing any attempt by local armed rebels to get in touch with the advancing Germans in 1942.<sup>6</sup> Thousands were killed outright, without trial or any legal formality. Population control techniques were implemented in the thick of war—as they had been attempted in 1940 in the territories occupied by Moscow in 1939–1940 in the Baltic States, Poland and Bessarabia—and

the authorities pursued vast deportations of hundreds of thousands of citizens belonging to suspect ethnicities from their homelands to Siberia.<sup>7</sup>

For many regions in the Soviet Western Borderlands and in the countries “liberated” by the Red Army, the violence did not stop in May 1945. Anti-communist armed resistance movements continued their struggle into the 1950s, many rebels hoping they were fighting in the early stages of another world war pitting the oppressive Soviets against the benevolent, liberal and democratic West led by the USA.<sup>8</sup> In the most sweeping research attempted so far on the subject, Alexander Statiev argued that, after 1944, anti-Soviet groups already fighting in the local wooded areas by the time of the reoccupation made up the core of the resistance. The guerrillas were mainly peasants, though the leaders still came from urban middle and lower middle class. Some underground networks were centralized, others had only an embryonic organization; those centralized (OUN-B—Ukrainian Nationalists, the Polish *Armija Krajowa*) had a coherent strategy, infrastructure and control of their forces.<sup>9</sup> Generally, the nationalist guerrillas were heroic: when surrounded in their bunkers they did not surrender; they either charged the attackers until mowed down by machine guns or committed suicide with grenades. Many relatives of the guerrillas preferred to commit suicide than reveal the location of the fighters.<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, the Soviet regime did not have many supporters in the western borderlands at the beginning. Eventually, though, peasants increasingly sided with the state in order to break the vicious circle of violence and chaos. However, the support of the poor peasants for the government was weaker than expected, in no small measure, due to the blunders and brutalities of the COIN policies.<sup>11</sup> Among the methods used against guerrillas foremost was deportation, affecting the largest number of people among all counterinsurgency measures. Forced migrations targeted not only the active opposition but also all potential opponents, like family members of known guerrillas, class enemies, and the former elite. Sometimes entire ethnic groups were targeted.<sup>12</sup>

Among the fiercest opponents of the nationalist partisans were those that Statiev calls, in reference to Mexican militias, the *Red Rurales*. In order to suppress resistance in the western borderlands, the Soviet state also armed thousands of local peasants who fought the insurgents side by side with the regular forces. The peasant anti-insurgent fighters, knowing the sentiments and activities of every person in their village, frustrated the aim of some insurgents to live between actions as ordinary farmers, thus

forcing the enemies of the Soviets to surrender or be full-time insurgents, a difficult position after 1944. In non-forested regions, full-time insurgency was impossible.<sup>13</sup>

The particular tactics and policies devised to deal with the partisans included establishing local platoon or section-sized garrisons (as many as 623 in Ukraine in 1945). Mainly, they were organizing ambushes and were supported by patrols of larger units (company-sized) with light weapons, in radio contact with motorized NKVD companies ready to intervene wherever guerrillas had been spotted.<sup>14</sup> Another procedure was sealing a particular village for a week and using dogs to methodically search every house. Intelligence gathering was considered of paramount importance. Regional party leaders, for instance in Ukraine, where N.S. Khrushchev was very active in combating partisans, were responsible for the establishment of an enormous agent network numbering tens of thousands of informers who became the most important source of intelligence about the insurgency.<sup>15</sup>

Intelligence activities helped covert operations; those activities included testing loyalties, making guerrillas and supporters turn on each other, using insurgents to suspect others were agents in order to kill them. Commando units made of former insurgents operated against guerrillas, often with spectacular success. The interrogation of captured guerrillas was particularly brutal; it often involved beatings and burning of their bodies with cigarettes and on stoves.<sup>16</sup> Other means used to break the will of the insurgents and their supporters were intimidation through show trials, bringing and exposing bodies of the dead guerrillas in the villages and public executions, especially hangings. Interspersed between these were amnesties for some of the partisans who wanted to surrender.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the Polish, Baltic and Ukrainian anti-communist and anti-Soviet insurgencies, which overlapped the Second World War and continued in the decade that followed this conflagration, the Romanian anti-communist armed struggle was virtually unknown to the Western public during the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, prominent analysts discussing the communist takeover of the country and its Stalinist-inspired social and economic transformation rarely mentioned any kind of political or military opposition to the new regime.<sup>19</sup> If they did, they tended to assume that this resistance was crushed in 1946–1947, and that the few armed guerrillas operating in the mountains met a similar fate in the following years.<sup>20</sup> In this they were following, somehow unwillingly, the view propagated by Bucharest, which throughout that period allowed

the publication of literary works and the screening of movies describing the fate of their opponents in similar terms.<sup>21</sup>

However, after the fall of Eastern European communist regimes in 1989, a deluge of memoirs and testimonies coming from survivors of these movements, their relatives and other former political prisoners in communist prisons soon changed this view.<sup>22</sup> These works brought into public light the existence, intensity and length of the insurgency, although some fell into the trap of many memoirs by exaggerating its uniqueness or significance.<sup>23</sup> A more rigorous study of the Romanian anti-communist armed resistance began in the middle of the 1990s when researchers, initially without much institutional backing started working in the archives of the Romanian secret police, *Departamentul Securității Statului* (Securitate). The results of this research have been impressive, with dozens of volumes of documents published and a solid secondary literature emerging in the field. Over the last decade and a half, a number of research institutes, national inquiry commissions and a scientific board working under the auspices of the Romanian Presidency contributed to this effort.<sup>24</sup> Although massive syntheses are few or still await publication, and the literature published in other languages (such as English and French) is scarce, the amount of published primary sources makes the Romanian case, quite surprisingly, far better documented than the other case studies of early Cold War COIN.<sup>25</sup>

### THE CONTEXT OF THE RESISTANCE

Anti-communist armed resistance began in a Romania devastated by a war in which it was essentially defeated and occupied by its foe, the Soviet Union. The pro-Axis government of Ion Antonescu (1940–1944), which initially governed in an alliance with the local iteration of the European fascist phenomenon, the Legionary Movement, took the country to war against Moscow in June 1941. This was done in order to recuperate the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in June 1940, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. On the Eastern Front, the Romanian contribution was significantly higher in terms of troops and losses than all of the other German allies, with two Romanian armies destroyed in the Battle of Stalingrad alongside Marshal Friedrich Paulus's 6th German Army. Economically, Romanian oil production from the oil fields of Ploiești fuelled the German war machine, becoming one of the main targets of British and American air raids after 1942.<sup>26</sup>



Keeping in touch with the “barbarisation of warfare” on the Eastern Front, the Romanian troops had a significant share in the extermination of Jewish population and in the mass killing of Soviet citizens in occupied areas, most notably Transdnistria and Odessa.<sup>27</sup> This behaviour, which in turn elicited a special condemnation and harsh treatment of the country from the victorious Soviets, had its roots both in a historical mistrust and fear of Russia and in a strong state-backed anti-Soviet and anti-communist propaganda. Indeed, the Romanian action on the Eastern Front was portrayed as the “Holy War against Bolshevism”, seen as a struggle for the life and soul of the nation in the face of an implacable enemy bent on their destruction.<sup>28</sup>

These relatively widespread feelings and convictions were unlikely to subdue in the aftermath of the conflict, with hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops on Romanian soil and the remnants of the national army fighting this time against German and Hungarian troops around Budapest and in the Tatra Mountains.<sup>29</sup> Bessarabia and North Bukovina were to remain detached from Romania. All political leaders who had led the country in the war were arrested, put through SMERSH interrogation in Moscow then turned over to the Romanian authorities for trial as war criminals. A number of them, including Ion Antonescu, were given death sentences and executed in June 1946.<sup>30</sup> The terms of the armistice convention signed with the Allied Powers on 12 September 1944 seemed, for many Romanians, extremely harsh—a war-torn country being forced to pay a large war indemnity to its main victor, with a large part of this war debt being collected in precious industrial machinery and products with high export-value, such as oil and timber.<sup>31</sup>

To crown all that, the political groups and parties who had led the country through the interwar period were, with good reason, perceived by Moscow and its local proxies as staunchly anti-Soviet and opposed to any transformation of the country according to a Marxist-Leninist model. Therefore the PCR had to move fast against these opponents, boosted by the support of Soviet troops in the country and the two pro-communist Romanian army divisions recruited and trained by political commissars in the prisoner camps inside USSR and brought in late 1944 in the country. With part of the government’s ministerial positions in the hands of the internal wing of the PCR ever since the coup that ousted Antonescu on 23 August 1944, this task was becoming increasingly feasible. This was made even more so by the PCR’s takeover throughout the following autumn and winter of the intelligence and police structures of the state.<sup>32</sup>

After half a year of struggle with the centre and right-wing political parties represented in the cabinet and after a major push from Soviet adjunct Foreign Minister Andrey Vyshinsky, the PCR assumed virtually full power on 6 March 1945, in a new administration led by Dr Petru Groza. This new government, while including as token formations agrarian and social-democrat groups, was a communist government in all but name, with the party assuming the posts that would allow it to implement an agenda to the liking of Josef Stalin faster and more aggressively.<sup>33</sup>

By the summer of 1948, the Romanian communists had completely destroyed their political opponents and created a framework for a radical reshaping of the social and economic structures of the country. The PCR and its affiliates conducted a land reform that dealt a heavy blow to large landowners in early 1945, won through fraud and intimidation the parliamentary elections in the fall of 1946, dissolved and arrested the leadership of their liberal and agrarian foes in the summer of 1947, forced the king to abdicate and proclaimed a people's republic on 30 December 1947, and decreed a vast confiscation and nationalization of property and industrial enterprises in June 1948.<sup>34</sup> This brutal reshaping of a country was bound to lead to a significant degree of opposition.

One has here to engage with the dual problem of the magnitude of collaboration with and resistance to communist rule in early post-war Romania. Collaboration, or at least abeyance to governmental policy, seems to have characterized the majority of the population. While one can indeed explain this through the war-weariness of the citizens, through fear of reprisals or an effective intimidation of the masses by the government, economic and social explanations need also to be considered. Indeed, interwar Romania had a deeply divided economy and society. Wealthy elites with business interests in heavy industry, oil production, finance and large agricultural estates controlled the economic and political destinies of the nation. The growing but still relatively small industrial working class was battling the small wages and the prolonged effects of the Great Depression.<sup>35</sup> Over 70 % of the population was still rural and occupied in agriculture, with a vast majority of them tending small subsistence farms. In the countryside, morbidity, child mortality and illiteracy were significantly higher than those in other European nations and approaching the levels seen in the African and Asian colonies of Western powers.<sup>36</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that underprivileged Romanians, who were by no means few, were willing to give a chance to a regime that ruled in the

name of their class and promised the rectification in their favour of all the ills of the country.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of the opposition to the communists, passive resistance is hard to quantify. For decades, exiled Romanians and foreign scholars argued that the majority of the people were opposed to the Moscow-backed government and its reforms. In the last two decades, many local analysts and scholars voiced similar opinions, but hard data simply cannot be collected in order to provide a definite answer to this question, and the evidence remains anecdotic or grounded in scattered materials on public opinion in the documents of the Securitate (the Romanian secret police from 1948 until 1989).<sup>38</sup>

What can be ascertained with a greater certainty is that dozens, if not hundreds, of armed or subversive groups comprising a few thousand individuals were formed in the years after 1944 and engaged in active resistance, propaganda and defiance of the regime. Other thousands were part of the support networks these guerrillas relied on for food, lodging and information. Many more individuals, without formally belonging to these groups, engaged in demonstrations or vocal disagreement with the policies of the PCR/PMR, risking their careers and liberty. When the waves of reform reached the countryside and Soviet-style collectivization began in earnest in 1949, thousands of peasants mounted violent, sometimes armed riots against the local communist authorities. An even larger number of citizens, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, were deemed to be suspect by the government and were deported, given compulsory residences or time spent in prison or work camps.<sup>39</sup> Although only some of these groups can be analysed from the perspective of counterinsurgency studies, it is important to highlight the significant opposition to the communist transformation of the country in order to better understand how a virtually hopeless struggle lasted for so long against such strong odds.

### A TYPOLOGY OF REBEL GROUPS

In the growing literature of armed anti-communist resistance in Romania, a relative consensus has been formed concerning the outlook and ultimate fate of the guerrillas. According to most authors, they were small groups of up to 20 armed individuals, generally living in remote rural areas, preferably with mountainous terrain. They relied, to a great measure, on the networks of family and friends in local villages, providing them with shelter, food, information, physical and moral comfort.<sup>40</sup> They were

composed mostly of local anti-communist peasants, led by charismatic figures recruited from former notabilities, notaries, teachers and army officers. A good number of them were city-folk who took to the mountains to add their efforts to the armed resistance, including students, lawyers and traders.<sup>41</sup> A table, detailing the name, leaders, composition, type, period and area of operations of most groups mentioned in this analysis can be found at the end of the book, with the entries in the order in which the groups were first mentioned.

Many had not been politically affiliated before or during the war, while others had been liberals, members of the National Peasants Party, social democrats, and some were even former communists.<sup>42</sup> A good number of them, though not the majority, were legionaries (members of the Romanian fascist movement, the Iron Guard or the Legionary Movement); they did, however, tend to be the leaders of many of the most dangerous guerrilla groups, therefore enabling the government to portray the armed rebels as fascist enemies.<sup>43</sup> Armed with light weapons, mostly pistols, rifles, grenades and occasionally automatic weapons, the guerrillas may have had a modicum of military training due to many of them serving in the army during the Second World War. Most of their attacks were attempts at sabotage, strikes against local communists and local party buildings or confrontations with the armed forces of the regime.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, their fate was sealed by a combination of intelligence work from the authorities, involving the creation of an informative network in their areas, the use of torture and intimidation, infiltrators and counter-gangs with surgical operations when the groups' locations were discovered. Disillusionment and discouragement coupled with betrayal also accounted for the capture of rebels, some going down fighting, some taking their own lives while many others ending before a firing squad or spending long years in labour camps and prisons.<sup>45</sup>

To a large degree, this image is accurate and one has to partially agree with Dorin Dobrinu's assessment: "Romanian anti-communist armed resistance was mostly a fight for survival rather than a fight for a vision. The phenomenon was more akin to pre-modern social banditry than with modern guerrilla movements".<sup>46</sup> However, this view, relegating in a sense the Romanian guerrillas to the ranks of Eric Hobsbawm's "primitive rebels", needs to be amended, not only because the insurgents were strongly ideological in their anti-communist positions but also because the reality of their struggle and the government's reaction to it was considerably more complex.<sup>47</sup>

Armed resistance to the communist rule was to spring from many directions and quarters, but despite the common sentiment, most of the groups were spontaneous and there never was a coordinated action. Elements of the Romanian general officers corps, under the command of General Aurel Aldea had tried in 1945–1946 to form a National Resistance Movement to oversee the disparate rebel groups and to organize an armed insurrection.<sup>48</sup> The action was short lived due to vigilant action of the communist-controlled intelligence services, and those connected with the National Resistance Movement were arrested in the summer of 1946. However, some isolated officers in units across the country came into contact with rebels and supported them with weapons and ammunition.<sup>49</sup> This, as well as the size and organization of some rebel groups in a sense justified the disorientation of the intelligence agencies, which were still looking for a possible unified command of the partisans as late as 1949.<sup>50</sup>

The group around General Aldea had been in contact with intelligence agents of the British and American missions to Bucharest, which opens up the subject of the foreign involvement in anti-communist armed resistance in Romania.

Quite unsurprisingly, the first foreign power who fought the new regime in Bucharest had been Nazi Germany in the final months of the Second World War. Immediately after 23 August 1944, Berlin released from the internment camps the thousands of members of the legionary movement who were kept in Germany since their failed attempt to wrest power from Ion Antonescu in January 1941.<sup>51</sup> Forming a fascist government in exile based in Vienna and placed under the leadership of legionary leader Horia Sima, the Nazis initiated a program of training crack teams of legionary paratroopers. Groups of 6–8 men received guerrilla, sabotage and radio-communication training at a special warfare school in Austria and were inserted by special air missions in mountainous regions of the country in the winter of 1944–1945.<sup>52</sup> Imprecise air-drops, adverse weather conditions, poor training and bad morale compromised most of these missions more than any action taken by government forces against them. The missions ended in nearly complete failure, with surviving legionaries surrendering or being quickly captured. Very few were able to hide themselves and join local guerrillas, and virtually no sabotage actions were attempted.<sup>53</sup>

For a much longer period, into the 1950s, Western intelligence tried to contact and help subversive and armed groups working against the authorities in Bucharest.<sup>54</sup> The British Intelligence Service used former policemen to gather information and contact rebel groups in Moldova.<sup>55</sup> The

American OSS mission to Bucharest, led by the Frank Wisner who would eventually rise to lead the CIA's National Clandestine Service, moved as soon as it arrived in early September 1944 to secure contacts among the political and military leaders who would pose a challenge to the Stalinist takeover of the country.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the most successful of their actions was to effectively penetrate the Special Information Service (*Serviciul Special de Informații*, SSI), the country's main foreign intelligence service. Inside the SSI, officers who had coordinated information collection on the Eastern Front and were implacable enemies of the Soviet Union created a special covert unit. This unit, seemingly protected at the highest level by General Nicolae Rădescu, prime minister between November 1944 and March 1945, passed information to the American OSS and was bent on helping any anti-communist insurrection in the eventuality of open conflict between the Western allies and Moscow.<sup>57</sup> However, the communist penetration of the service, coordinated by Emil Bodnăraș, a GRU agent, led to the discovery and capture of this group.<sup>58</sup> American officers had also tried to directly contact some of the rebels. A document from an agent infiltrated in a guerrilla group from Bukovina details the visit of an American lieutenant Hamilton to Vatra Dornei, his contacts and promises of help to the guerrillas, such as radio transmitters. The rebels would provide him with military plans regarding resistance.<sup>59</sup> The outcome of such contacts was, however, not positive, as this group was soon annihilated.

Once the Cold War had truly begun, the CIA organized paratrooper teams made up of Romanian exiles from Western Europe. Gordon Mason, chief of the CIA base in Bucharest from 1949 to 1951, endorsed the strategy. The agents were to cooperate with and convince the partisans to sabotage factories and railroads. In case of war, they were supposed to prompt the partisans to skirmish with the Soviet troops. The agents were recruited in refugee camps, trained in signals in Italy and given parachute lessons and practice in Germany.

In an action that highlights the failure of these missions, one such group was launched on 19 October 1951, in the Negoiu Mountains. The members were captured within a month and executed in 1952.<sup>60</sup> The story of other groups was similar. In 1951 near Brașov, a team of two was dropped and soon captured. On 2 October 1952 near Târgu Cărbunești in Oltenia, a two-member group was inserted and almost a year passed before they were captured. Another three agents were sent in June 1953 in the Apuseni Mountains; they were captured almost immediately, and an

attempt was made to use them as double agents. Another group of three agents was dropped in the Oradea-Satu Mare region; one was killed in a gunfight with the Securitate, while two others were captured and later executed.<sup>61</sup> Probably to deter such missions, the Romanian armed forces made public the introduction of night fighter jets at this time.<sup>62</sup> The program thus ended in failure, spelling an end to direct Western action against communism in Romania. While in some cases, such as in Albania or Soviet Armenia, the infiltration of British-trained spies and guerrillas was hampered by the information coming from double agents such as Kim Philby, there is no evidence of this in the Romanian case. The documents available so far do not hint to operational intelligence coming from the Soviets.

Moving towards a description of the actual partisan groups, one has to emphasize again their disconnect from each other, their small size and limited fighting capacity, as well as their tendencies to live in close proximity to the region of origin of many members of their group. Few were urban-based, and those who were aimed mostly to leave the country through the force of arms rather than challenge the authorities permanently. A 1972 Securitate analysis mentions that, in 1949, some rebels tried to leave the country by hijacking planes. One of the actions failed, another succeeded in December, with four air pirates boarding an internal flight, shooting the armed agent on board and forcing the crew to redirect the aircraft to Belgrade in Yugoslavia. In 1950 and 1954, two large groups, one of 17 and one of 20 also tried to hijack airplanes. The first group was arrested before boarding. The second group managed to board the plane and kill the guard but was unable to force open the door to the cockpit; the pilot managed an emergency landing, leading to the capture of all the hijackers.<sup>63</sup>

Most of the rural groups were based in mountainous, heavily forested and difficult terrain. Some of guerrillas led extremely isolated lives, either completely alone or with few others in mountain huts, subsisting on small game and a few provisions that could be procured from the villages. These supplies were so important that, in some cases, the authorities tried to cut the food supply of the guerrillas by evacuating all isolated households from the mountains and trying to force their opponents to seek closer contact with the villages.<sup>64</sup> Others were kept in hiding in the isolated homes of friendly villagers; they were in comparatively better conditions but under constant threat of discovery.<sup>65</sup> It is no surprise that regions such as Bukovina, the Apuseni and the Făgăraș mountains, the area of Maramureș or the forests of the Banat were the main hotbeds of armed

resistance against Romanian communism. It is, in a sense, more interesting to note that areas with less inviting terrain for guerrilla actions—such as the hilly Dobrogea and central Transylvania, the plains to the north of Bucharest or those of Oltenia—were also home to some of the rebels. However, a number of these groups would fall in the category of subversive factions, with many choosing to foment rebellion by distributing manifestos instead of pursuing military action.<sup>66</sup>

The subversive groups, as the Securitate documents called them, were often made of former militants from the National Liberal and National Peasant parties and their youth organizations, sometimes in alliance with legionaries and willing to plan for insurrection, conduct propaganda and disrupt elections by attacking communist representatives.<sup>67</sup> Other groups, never mounting any significant action against the authorities, cannot be counted among the rebels, despite their opposition to the regime.<sup>68</sup> Among them were, for instance, the 20 high school students in the town of Făgăraș who were alleged to be members of the legionary organization *Frățuile de cruce* (Brotherhoods of the cross). They were all students at the Radu Negru High School, the place where the leader of the Legionary Movement Horia Sima (1906–1993) finished his secondary studies.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, a number of them were armed and willing to attack communist authority figures or defend themselves against those bent on capturing them. In some cases, these attacks were brazen, violent and extremely spectacular. For instance, a group operating in the Southwest of the country (the region of Mehedinți) attacked the local party authorities in July 1949 during a local ball, shooting and killing a party member who had previously given speeches against the opponents of the regime. To cover their retreat, they threw grenades at the partygoers, wounding six people. Two months before, the same guerrillas shot a local president of *Frontul Plugarilor* (an agrarian party affiliated to the communists).<sup>70</sup> On the night of 4 August, these partisans tried to set fire to the ammunition depot of the local Border Guards Regiment but were stopped by vigilant sentries.<sup>71</sup> Just three weeks later, on the night of 25 August, the guerrillas kidnapped two party members in the village of Titerlești and took them to the mountains. They were both beaten, one of them to death. The rebels also ambushed three Militia officers who came to the rescue of the party members; two were captured, interrogated and released.<sup>72</sup> Other guerrillas, operating in the nearby Banat, gained fame through the much-publicized murder of Lazăr Cernescu (“Lazăr de la Rusca” in subsequent communist propaganda and literary works). Cernescu, a local



party activist, had served as an informer for the Securitate and was captured by the partisans near Domaşnea on 8 November 1948. Dragged into the woods, he was executed, his body being discovered only months afterwards.<sup>73</sup>

In the opposite corner of the country, Bukovina, partisans trained in the special guerrilla schools established by the Germans in the summer months of 1944, mounted brazen attacks and raids for a number of years against Romanian communist troops and authorities and over the border, inside the Soviet Union itself. For instance, during their fight against the Red Army, the group led by Vladimir Macoveiciuc allegedly killed 61 Soviet soldiers.<sup>74</sup> Another strong group led by Silvestru Harsmei consisted of up to 12 guerrilla refugees from Soviet-occupied Bukovina. They operated in 1949 in the same forested, mountainous terrain between Romania and Soviet Bukovina as Macoveiciuc, attacking border guards's posts and taking their weapons.<sup>75</sup> The area was really hard to control both by the Romanian and Soviet governments. This is emphasized, for instance, by a 1949 two-week long raid in Romania by a group of Ukrainian rebels of the UPA.<sup>76</sup>

However, the picture would not be complete if one would not recognize that some of these groups were of a particularly nefarious nature. In the months after 23 August 1944, former army officer Gavrilă Olteanu led a paramilitary militia calling themselves the "Iuliu Maniu Guards", after the name of a prominent Transylvanian political leader, a former prime-minister of the country. This group was guilty of the systematic murder of Hungarian civilians in the aftermath of the retreat of German and Hungarian forces from central Transylvania.<sup>77</sup> Baptized "Avram Iancu's Haiduks" in 1945, they wanted to continue their fight against the internal foes, among whom they numbered the communists and, quite unsurprisingly given the connections of many of their members with the legionary movement, the Romanian Jews.<sup>78</sup>

Some of the groups who claimed to be politically motivated guerrillas were little more than highway robbers. A Bukovinian group used to rob intercity buses in 1949. The political aspect of this group was highlighted by the confiscation of party membership cards from the travelers they robbed. The previously mentioned guerrillas led by Silverstru Harsmei also robbed stores in Romania and the Soviet Union.<sup>79</sup> In western Romania, the group led by Teodor Şuşman, undoubtedly a politically motivated rebel, also robbed local forestry industry offices, state businesses and agricultural cooperatives. These partisans were not shy in kidnapping their personal enemies from their homes and murdering them in the woods.<sup>80</sup>

In the same region, the Apuseni Mountains, the guerrillas led by former Army Major Nicolae Dabija robbed the Tax Office in Teiuş on 22 December 1948, shooting the manager in the head. This was prompted by the need to get money to pay for food and weapons, as the local peasants were not enthusiastic about supporting the group for free.<sup>81</sup> This half-way course between banditry and political action was also a characteristic in some of the rebel groups from Maramureş, who mounted small actions between March and June 1949, threatening members of the communist-affiliated political parties, stealing weapons and clothes in non-violent armed robberies.<sup>82</sup>

The anti-communist armed resistance in post-war Romania was thus a complex phenomenon, led by various groups of different strengths, composition, ability and willingness to wage armed struggle. The following two chapters of this book examine the governmental responses to the challenges posed by the guerrillas, starting with an analysis of intelligence operations and continuing with military operations and population control through deportations.

## NOTES

1. PCR was renamed the Romanian Workers Party (*Partidul Muncitoresc Român*, PMR) in 1948 after the absorption of the social democrats.
2. Marc Sageman, "Leaderless Jihad: Radicalization in the West", on [www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net), last consulted 24 June 2013.
3. For a relatively nuanced view on the matter, see Yuri Zhukov, "Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-insurgency: The Soviet Campaign against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army" in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007), 439–466.
4. Rod Paschall, "Soviet Counterinsurgency: Past, Present and Future" in Richard H. Shultz (ed.), *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency. U.S. – Soviet Policy in the Third World*, Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989.
5. Michael Malet, *Nestor Maklino in the Russian Civil War*, London: Macmillan, 1985; Marie Broxup, "The Basmachi" in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1983), 57–81.
6. Alexander Statiev, "The Nature of Anti-Soviet Armed Resistance, 1942–44. The North Caucasus, the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic, and Crimea" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2005), 285–318.
7. Alexander Statiev, "Motivations and Goals of Soviet Deportations in the Western Borderlands" in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 28, No. 6 (2005), 977–1003.

8. Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between. Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 205.
9. Enrique Martinez Codo, *Guerrillas tras la Cortina de Hierro*, Buenos Aires: Instituto Informativo-Editorial Ucraino, 1966, especially Chap. V.
10. Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 107–108.
11. *Ibidem*, 134, 161.
12. Enrique Martinez Codo, *Guerrillas tras la Cortina de Hierro*, 84.
13. Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency*, 209–229.
14. For this type of operation, see in Bessarabia B. Movilă, “Rezistența anticomunistă din Basarabia și cauzele ei (1944–1950)” in *Școala memoriei 2006*, Fundația Academia Civică, 146.
15. On the actions of Khrushchev against UPA, see the pro-guerrilla book of Yurii Tys-Krokhmaluk, *UPA Warfare in Ukraine; Strategical, Tactical, and Organizational Problems of Ukrainian Resistance in World War II*, New York: Society of Veterans of Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1972, 300–311.
16. Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between*, 209.
17. Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency*, Chap. 9.
18. The insurgencies in the Soviet Union had sometimes been described to the Western public by the guerrillas themselves; see the memoirs of Juozas Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom: Lithuanian Partisans Versus the USSR, 1944–1947*, Toronto: Lithuanian Canadian Committee for Human Rights, 1975.
19. See, for instance, Reuben H. Markham, *Rumania Under the Soviet Yoke*, Boston: Meadow Publishing Company, 1949; Alexandre Cretzianu (ed.), *Captive Rumania*, New York: Praeger, 1956.
20. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania 1944–1962*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, 124.
21. An example is the 1972 film *Capcana (The Trap)*, depicting a real incident from 1949 when guerrillas briefly occupied the village of Muntele Băișorii. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR1RU5\\_KBQY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR1RU5_KBQY) last consulted 9 November 2015.
22. For an interesting perspective on them, see Monica Ciobanu, "Reconstructing the History of Early Communism and Armed Resistance in Romania" in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 66, No. 9 (2014), 1452–1481.
23. Florian Banu, “Câteva considerații privind istoriografia Securității” in *Caietele CNSAS*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2008), 191.
24. Among them one must mention Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Institutul Național pentru Studii Totalitarismului, Academia Civică, Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România.

25. The most complete work on the subject, belonging to the former director of the National Archives Dorin Dobrinu, still awaits publication, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România (1944 – începutul anilor ‘60)*, PhD thesis, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, 2006. The author would like to express his gratitude to Dr Dobrinu for sharing his research. A comprehensive and synthetic work of his in English is Dorin Dobrinu, “Historicizing a Disputed Theme: Anti-communist Armed Resistance in Romania” in Vladimir Tismăneanu (ed.), *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009.
26. For a synthetic work, see Mark Axworthy, Cornel Scafeș, Cristian Crăciunoiu, *Third Axis, Fourth Ally. Romanian Armed Forces in the European War, 1941–1945*, London: Arms and Armour, 1995.
27. Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941–1945. German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985; *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, Iași: Polirom, 2005.
28. Grant T. Harward, “Peasant Armies at Odds: Romanian-Soviet Interaction During the Second World War” in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 24, No.2 (2011), 274–298.
29. After the 23 August 1944 coup that ousted Marshal Antonescu, Romania changed sides, and its remaining armed forces fought Nazi Germany and Fascist Hungary until the end of the war. Up to 12 Romanian divisions were subordinated to the Soviet 3rd and 4th Ukrainian Fronts and fought in Transylvania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
30. Radu Ioanid, FSB (eds.), *Lotul Antonescu în ancheta SMERȘ, Moscova, 1944–1946*, Iași: Polirom, 2006. SMERSH was the special counterintelligence and interrogation unit of the Soviet Ministry of the Interior.
31. Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
32. Despite its age, a standard work on the Communist takeover remains Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania 1944–1962*. See next note for an explanation of internal and external wings of the PCR.
33. The “internal” group of the PCR, led by party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and comprising among others Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Gheorghe Apostol, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chivu Stoica and Nicolae Ceaușescu had won its spurs in the strikes and anti-war manifestations of the 1930s and spent the majority of the war years in jail. The “external” group, whose prominent members were Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu and Vasile Luca, had spent the war in Moscow and were perceived, at least initially, to be the more aggressive and less pragmatic of the two factions. The groups would fight for control of the party for many years, until the internal group gained Stalin’s favour and won in 1952. For this, see the standard work on the internal dynamics of the

- PCR Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
34. Stephen Fischer-Galati, *Twentieth Century Romania*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
  35. Of particular significance in this regard are the works of the communist intellectual and party leader Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Problemele de bază ale României*, Bucharest: Editura de stat, 1946; *Un veac de framîntari sociale, 1821–1907*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1969 and *Sub trei dictaturi*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1970.
  36. Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010)*, Iași: Polirom, 2010.
  37. Stephen Fischer-Galati, *The Socialist Republic of Rumania*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, 32.
  38. For a critique of the theory of vast resistance to the regime, see Florian Banu, “Câteva considerații privind istoriografia Securității”, 192–193.
  39. For a work of synthesis, advocating for a large-scale opposition to the regime, see Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, *Final Report*, Bucharest, 2006.
  40. Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, *Final Report*, 332.
  41. Monica Ciobanu, “Reconstructing the History of Early Communism and Armed Resistance in Romania”, 1464.
  42. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania 1944–1962*, 132.
  43. According to a 1951 Securitate document, of 804 captured partisans 88 were former members of the National Peasant Party, 79 of the Ploughmen Front (surprisingly, the head of this formation was prime-minister Dr. Petru Groza), 15 former members of the National Liberal Party and—most surprisingly—42 former members of the Romanian Communist Party, see Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc, 1948–1965*, Iași: Polirom, 2001, 178.
  44. Report of the General Directorate of the Securitate, October 21st 1948 in Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”. *Grupurile de rezistență și Securitatea (1948–1968)*, Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2003 (quoted as BBE), Doc. 2, 46–49.
  45. Florian Banu, “Metode utilizate de Securitate pentru lichidarea grupurilor de rezistență din munți (1948–1958)”, in Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, *Mișcarea armată de rezistență anticomunistă din România, 1944–1962*, Bucharest: Kullusys, 2003, 301–316; Andrei Miroiu, “Wiping out <The Bandits>: Romanian Counterinsurgency Strategies in the Early Communist Period” in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (2010).

46. Dorin Dobrinu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 831. For the low threat also see Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 181.
47. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, New York: Praeger, 1963.
48. Declaration of Gheorghe Kintescu, June 1946 in Radu Ciuceanu, Octavian Roske, Cristian Troncotă (eds.), *Începuturile mișcării de rezistență în România*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 1998–2001 (quoted as IMRR), Vol. II, Doc. 11, 40–41.
49. Georges Diener *L'Autre Communisme en Roumanie. Résistance populaire et maquis 1945–1965*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001, 82.
50. Report of the General Directorate of the Securitate, May 7th 1949 in BBE, Doc. 7, 73.
51. In late January 1941, the Iron Guard tried to oust Ion Antonescu from power and install a purely fascist regime. Their coup failed, especially after the Germans supported Antonescu, who was considered to be a more serious and capable ally. The leadership of the Iron Guard and thousands of members were taken to Germany, though, and kept in internment camps as an alternative to any power shift in Romania.
52. Perry Biddiscombe, "Prodding the Russian Bear: Pro-German Resistance in Romania, 1944–5" in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 23, (1993), 193–232.
53. Filon Verca, *Parașutați în România vândută*, Timișoara: Marineasa, 2000.
54. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes. The History of the CIA*, New York: Doubleday, 2007, especially Chap. 1.
55. Siguranță note, 25 July 1945 in IMRR, Vol. II, Doc. 89, 272.
56. M. Fătu, "Conspirația antistatală a P.N.Ț. din anul 1947" in Consiliul Securității Statului, *Studii și documente*, Vol. I, 1969, 27–28.
57. The belief in an imminent conflict between the West and the Soviet Union was crucial for many of the rebel groups. This led in some cases to particularly delusional views, such as the fact that, in 1948, local resistance groups believed that Western forces would land in Dobrogea to fight the Soviets and their task would be to hamper the retreat of the communist forces; see Marian Cojoc (ed.), *Rezistența armată din Dobrogea 1945–1960*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2004 (quoted as RAD), 20.
58. Mihai Șerban, *De la Serviciul Special de Informații la Securitatea Poporului 1944–1948*, Bucharest: Ed. Militară, 2009, 122–137.
59. Note of infiltrated agent Roman, 8 May 1946 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 113, 194–196.
60. Dennis Deletant *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 177.

61. Cristian Troncotă *Istoria Securității regimului comunist din România*, Vol. I 1948–1964, Bucharest, 2003, 196–197.
62. Mircea Carp, Basil Ratziu “The Armed Forces” in Alexandre Cretzianu (ed.) *Captive Rumania*, 367.
63. *Securitatea*, No. 1 (1972), 92–93.
64. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 1 November 1949 in Nicolae Chipurici, Tudor Rățoi (eds.), *Rezistența anticomunistă din sud-vestul României. Opreziune și rezistență. Documente*, Vol. I, Craiova: MJM, 2004 (quoted as RASV), Doc. 229, 272.
65. See for a comparison between the two ways of hiding *Jurnale din rezistența anticomunistă. Vasile Motrescu, Mircea Dobre 1952–1953*, Bucharest: Nemira, 2006.
66. See, for instance, the actions of the Capotă-Dejeu group, Introduction by Cornel Jurj and Denisa Bodeanu in Denisa Bodeanu, Cosmin Budeancă (eds.), *Rezistența anticomunistă din România. Grupul “Capotă-Dejeu” (1947–1957)*, Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2006 (quoted as RACD), 11–12.
67. M. Fătu, “Conspirația antistatală a P.N.Ț. din anul 1947”, 9, 13, 21–22.
68. Florian Banu, “Mișcarea de rezistență armată anticomunistă din România – între negare și hiperbolizare” in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, Iulia Pop (eds.), *Rezistența anticomunistă – cercetare științifică și valorificare muzeală*, Vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2006.
69. Order of General Pintilie, 18 April 1951 in Adrian Brișcă, Radu Ciuceanu (eds.), *Rezistența armată din Munții Făgăraș. Grupul Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu 1949–1955*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2007 (quoted as RAMF), Doc. 37, 125.
70. Note of Mehedinți Militia, 2 August 1949 in RASV, Doc. 156, 191–193.
71. Note of Mehedinți Militia, 5 August 1949 in RASV, Doc. 157, 193.
72. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 25 August 1949 in RASV, Docs. 173–174, 204–208.
73. Dorin Dobrinu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 535.
74. Securitate document, March 9th 1949 in Adrian Brișcă, Radu Ciuceanu (eds.) *Rezistența armată din Bucovina*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 1998, (quoted as RAB), Vol. I, Doc. 41, 235.
75. Dorin Dobrinu, “Grupuri minore din rezistența anticomunistă bucovineană (1948–1961)” in *Codrii Cosminului*, No. 12, (2006), 181.
76. Yurii Tys-Krokhmaluk, *UPA warfare in Ukraine*, 390.
77. Letter of Gavrilă Olteanu to Iuliu Maniu, 11 August 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 13, 54–57.
78. Letter to Prime Minister Groza, 15 August 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 17, 60.
79. Dorin Dobrinu, “Grupuri minore”, 180, 182.
80. Cornel Jurj and Cosmin Budeancă introduction to Denisa Bodeanu, Cosmin Budeancă (eds.), *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România. Grupul*

- “Teodor Șuşman” (1948–1958), Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2004 (quoted as RATS), 27–28, 32–33.
81. Liviu Pleșa, “Implicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată. Cazul maiorului Nicolae Dabija (1948–1949)” in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, Iulia Pop (editori), *Rezistența anticomunistă. Cercetare științifică și valorificarea muzeală*, Vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Argonaut, 2006, 105–124; also Adrian Brișcă, Puica Buhoci *Rezistența armată din Munții Apuseni. Gruparea maiorului Nicolae Dabija, 1948–1949*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2007 (quoted as RAMA), Doc. 1, 51.
  82. Camelia Ivan Duică introduction to Camelia Ivan Duică (ed.), *Rezistența anticomunistă din Maramureș. Gruparea Popșa 1948–1949*, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005 (quoted as RAP), 20–21.



## Intelligence and Intelligence Operations

**Abstract** This chapter is concerned with intelligence and intelligence operations against the Romanian anti-communist partisans. It engages with the organization of intelligence and law enforcement agencies involved in anti-partisan operations, and it includes a section on Soviet involvement in the matter. The core of this chapter is a discussion and analysis of: the use of informers; creation of informant networks; interrogations; the use of torture; infiltration; the role of technology; and the effectiveness of these methods.

**Keywords** Infiltration • Informant networks • Intelligence agencies • Intelligence operations • Intelligence organization • Interrogation • Torture

The following chapter details intelligence and intelligence operations in the campaign against anti-communist partisans in Romania. This and the following chapter on military operations and population control rely almost entirely on primary source documents, thus being firmly anchored in a historical methodology. The raw data provides a more in-depth approach, allowing a closer understanding of the realities of anti-partisan warfare. At the same time, the reader might feel that the events and groups discussed in the following pages are random.<sup>1</sup> However, this is mostly due to the small scale, scattered nature of the Romanian rebel groups, which led to a fragmented response from the authorities.

Romanian counterinsurgency was, much like its Soviet correspondent, the province of the intelligence services of the communist regime. There is virtually no trace of involvement of regular Romanian army units in dealing with the partisans, except for the very limited role, in 1945–1946, played by the army intelligence branch. There can be many explanations for this fact, ranging from the uncertainty that the political leaders had concerning the loyalty of the army, which was continuously purged of “bourgeois” elements for a decade after 1944 to the fact that army units were simply too large to be used effectively against the partisans.

However, a more powerful argument is that the intelligence services were much better equipped to deal with the problem. Moreover, after their takeover by communist agents, the party could be assured of their loyalty. A few main agencies were involved in the fight against the anti-communist rebels immediately after 1944. The most prominent of these was, in the early years, *Siguranța Statului* (State Security), the main internal intelligence agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Romania for many decades. Its role was mainly intelligence gathering and had to resort to police and the gendarmes when it wanted to move against a particular target. The intelligence service of the Prime Minister, *Serviciul Special de Informații* (SSI) operated as a dual foreign and internal espionage agency, boasting 1083 employees, 44 information centres in Romania and 26 foreign residences in 1944.<sup>2</sup> It was instrumental in the first years of communist rule in dismantling subversive groups, especially those gathering political or military leaders.<sup>3</sup> The regular police, renamed in 1949 in Soviet fashion *Miliția* (Militia), was always a militarized force in Romania and had intelligence-gathering abilities and missions at a local level. It was always used as support to more seasoned troops or in a main strike role when there was no time to summon reinforcements. The local gendarmes played a similar role, and their tradition of working in villages enabled them to be among the best informed concerning the moves of the partisans.<sup>4</sup> They also had a tactical strike role, which is highlighted by the fact that in October 1945, 36 “intervention platoons” were formed by the Gendarmerie to tackle the problem of armed rebel groups. Also working against subversive groups was the Detective Corps under Alexandru Nicolschi, a Soviet agent; operating within it was a strike force designated as Mobile Brigade.<sup>5</sup>

Except for the Militia, the other agencies were all merged into *Dirrecția Generală a Securității Poporului* (General Directorate of People’s Security, Securitate), an organ of the Ministry of Internal Affairs created on 30

August 1948; some merged immediately, some significantly later, like the SSI, which was not wholly absorbed until 1951. From then until the capture of the last armed rebels in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the Securitate played the main role, aided in its tactical missions by the Militia. The most important elements in this fight were always the local and regional offices of the Securitate, with the central command being rarely involved in the actual campaigns against the partisans. The central leadership did indeed provide general guidance, approved some of the larger initiatives and sent officers to inquire where inefficiencies and wrongdoings were signalled, but overall the level of responsibility and action was almost always local or regional.<sup>6</sup>

The level of threat was not considered to be high enough to necessitate an overall command, and in 1952 a special structure, the “Gangs” Service was created within Securitate’s 3rd Division, under Lt. Col. Pavel Aranici.<sup>7</sup> Even after this coordination service was created, the action remained mostly local. There were good reasons for this, some related to the weakness of the rebels, but the main reason was because of the strength of the counterinsurgents. In terms of the information network, the Securitate had 42,187 informers as early as 1948.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of strength, Securitate was heavily armed and manned in comparison with the partisans, being able to use entire companies and even combined forces of multiple battalions in large-scale operations. It may not have boasted the 165,000 troops, its own artillery and aviation attributed to it by exiled observers, but it was overwhelmingly strong in relation to its armed opponents.<sup>9</sup> In addition to that, it was always able to coordinate its actions between regional units hunting the same guerrillas and elicit the help of the Militia in the process. In the Mehedinți area, for instance, where the strong partisans led by former army Colonel Ion Uță were operating, such cooperation was instrumental in finally defeating them.<sup>10</sup>

A legitimate question that arises in the case of a country occupied at the end of the Second World War by the USSR, which maintained a force of at least two Red Army divisions on its territory until 1958, was what role did the Soviet Union play in Romanian counterinsurgency? As discussed earlier, simultaneously with the Romanian campaign, Moscow was fighting a much larger counterinsurgency in its western borderlands, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Polish territories. Indeed, the cooperation against the rebels sometimes preceded the establishment of formal relations between Romania and the USSR. This was the case in Bukovina,

where elements of anti-Soviet partisans emerged even before 23 August 1944. As early as 12 September 1944, Romanian authorities were cooperating with the *Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (**People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs**) NKVD against guerrillas, surrendering them to the Soviet army.<sup>11</sup> One would, therefore, legitimately expect Soviet involvement in Romanian COIN in the following years; interestingly, this was not necessarily the case.

Indirect involvement, through the control of the party and the Securitate leadership, was evident. The members of the “external group” of the PCR/PMR are widely considered to have been Soviet agents. Emil Bodnăraș, in charge of Romanian intelligence since late 1944, was an agent of *Glavnoe Razvedivatel'noe Upravlenie* (GRU, Soviet Military Intelligence) since the 1930s. Gheorghe Pintilie, the head of the Securitate from 1948 to 1963, was an NKVD agent.<sup>12</sup> To illustrate the degree of control and infiltration of Soviet agents, one need look no further than Gheorghe Pintilie's wife, Ana Toma, herself an NKVD agent. Ana Toma was first the wife of Sorin Toma, editor in chief of the party's official daily magazine *Scântea*, and afterwards the romantic interest of Constantin Pârvălescu, number three in the party in 1944.<sup>13</sup> In addition to that, the intelligence services were staffed with many officers with dual citizenship and allegiance, Romanian and Soviet.<sup>14</sup>

But in addition to this indirect influence, the Soviet Union had, through its advisors placed inside the Romanian intelligence agencies, a direct measure of influence on anti-partisan activity. The chief Soviet intelligence official in Romania between 1944 and 1947 was Dmitri Georgievici Fedicikin, a main representative of the Foreign Intelligence Division (INU) of the NKGB. After the founding of the Securitate, he was succeeded by Alexandr Saharovski (1949–1953), who in 1956 became chief of the First Main Directorate of the KGB.<sup>15</sup> One source asserts that Saharovski was sent together with another agent, Patrakeev, following a letter from the Romanian authorities specifically requesting help in the struggle against the armed groups.<sup>16</sup>

Until the historians are fully able to access the archives of the Soviet intelligence services, it will be hard to provide a definitive assessment of the impact of the advisors on the conduct of anti-partisan operations in Romania. Some analysts have noted that their traces are few, even in the Romanian primary sources, due to the fact that they destroyed the documents before leaving.<sup>17</sup> Memoirs of high-ranking Securitate officers are fairly silent on the topic, mainly acknowledging the “good advice” received from the Soviet agents.<sup>18</sup>

Primary sources, though, speak of a local involvement of advisors detached with regional units. In the summer of 1945, a document from Transylvania describes the contact and collaboration between the head of Năsăud Gendarmerie and an NKVD captain and delegate for the region in apprehending suspected rebels. The Soviet Captain was ordering the arrest of persons and seemed to have more information than his Romanian counterpart.<sup>19</sup> Later on in the year, the Soviets were showing interest in the organization led by Gavrilă Olteanu (the Haiduks) and were keen to interfere.<sup>20</sup> In some cases, local authorities valued the cooperation of their Soviet colleagues. For instance, the local intelligence officials from Botoșani asked Bucharest to convince Soviet partners to keep Major Tarasov, a Soviet officer, in the area for his knowledge and abilities in the problem of the Haiduks.<sup>21</sup> However, as previously mentioned, the documents at our disposal do not provide a full picture in this regard, and the role of the Soviet advisors in relation to Romanian counterinsurgency cannot be fully understood at the moment.

Written rebel communications over long distances were made impossible early on through a vastly developed system of censorship of correspondence. In the mid-1950s, the “F” Division of the Securitate was entirely dedicated to the purpose of controlling correspondence. In April 1956, for instance, this Division had 277 employees.<sup>22</sup> This is one of the few instances when advanced technological means were used against the rebel groups. In an earlier stage of anti-rebel operations, listening and photography equipment had been installed in the house of General Aldea as he was trying to organize the previously mentioned National Resistance Movement.<sup>23</sup> But these means were quite sophisticated and after the elimination of urban resistance were no longer employed directly, for lack of targets.

Therefore, as the Romanian partisans were mostly small, scattered groups dwelling in forested areas and being nearly completely dependent upon the local communities for food and often shelter, the main approach of the authorities was to create powerful local information networks. These networks were the backbone of a strategy that called for the uncovering of the whole structure of the local rebel organization. Through the use of informers, local Militia and Securitate officers were supposed to uncover the identities of the guerrillas and their helpers, penetrate these groups and create the conditions for mounting swift and decisive blows to arrest and destroy the entire rebel group.<sup>24</sup> These information networks varied greatly in numbers and the complexity of their operations.

Against subversive groups operating in urban settings, such as those of anti-communist university students, one intelligence officer could control an entire operation with just two informers per faculty.<sup>25</sup> In rural settings, where partisans were particularly strong and dangerous, dozens of informers were needed.<sup>26</sup>

By 1949, the central Securitate command was dissuading local commanders from using large numbers of troops for dealing with insurgents. Instead, they were ordered to seriously double-check all intelligence, create an information network among the relatives of the maquis, get the support of poor peasants for their actions, recruit shepherds, forest workers and local guards as informers and cooperate with the Militia (without revealing sensitive information to it).<sup>27</sup> When this proceeded smoothly, the task of the authorities was easy, such as in the 1949 action in Maramureş when, tipped off by an informer, a Securitate officer and two Militia soldiers arrested an armed rebel in Sălişte in the house of his host without any resistance.<sup>28</sup>

The payoff was great in the case of some of the teams sent by the CIA, for instance, in the arrest of a group of three foreign-trained paratroopers in the region of Beiuş in the Apuseni Mountains in late April 1953. The group, made up of locals who had left for the West a few years before, was captured not through the massive combing of the mountains and forests that followed the report of landings but through informative action. A Securitate informer who was a friend of the family of one of the paratroopers identified by intelligence as a possible returned insurgent was able, through multiple conversations with the parents of the rebel, to make them reveal his return. The Securitate arrested the three paratroopers and spread the rumor that they were never able to capture them, in order to “turn” them and relay through them false information to the CIA.<sup>29</sup>

In time, the composition of the informant networks became larger and larger. Against the guerrillas led by Silvestru Harsmei, the authorities created networks of informers among the categories suspected to be helpers of the group, especially relatives, former convicts, lovers, potential lovers and persons employed in jobs involving work in the forests. Patrols and checkpoints were also initiated; undercover Militia officers were infiltrated as workers in the stores that might sell goods to the partisans.<sup>30</sup> By the end of anti-partisan operations in the early 1960s, the Securitate had, according to its own estimations, 500,000 informers.<sup>31</sup> While obviously most of them had nothing to do with anti-guerrilla operations, the number gives a dimension of the seriousness put into extracting intelligence from the population.

This approach did not always come naturally. Like in many counter-insurgencies, the emphasis on building an informant network came after the frustration caused by conventional military approaches. In addition to the regular patrols and sweeps, in some cases the Securitate officers had to literally dig for information. In a testimony from 1973, Major General Pavel Costandache recalled how, for the capture of the “Arsenescu gang”, three undercover Securitate officers dug a tunnel during the night to approach a safehouse without being detected and gather information on the group.<sup>32</sup> These actions had extremely limited success and called for different approaches. For instance, in Bukovina the frustration with the capture of just one rebel in months of searches led the authorities to call for a strategy with less emphasis on ambushes and wide operations, which seldom worked, but with more attention to information and the recruitment of informers.<sup>33</sup>

Torture played a significant part in extracting intelligence. The relatives and friends of the known rebels were especially exposed to extremely cruel treatments at the hands of the interrogators, both to instill fear in the guerrillas and compel them to surrender and to extract information as soon as possible. A significant, though yet unknown number of those subjected to these treatments perished at the hands of the interrogators. Sometimes torture did yield immediate and spectacular results, such as in the case of the partisans led by Gligor Cantemir in the county of Arad, where torture was applied systematically to those suspected of being his contacts. Information thus extracted led not only to the arrest of Cantemir, a prominent legionary who had been part of the teams parachuted by Germans after August 1944, but also to the capture of other 70 legionaries affiliated with him and suspected of entertaining rebellious actions.<sup>34</sup>

This procedure was, of course, completely illegal, as admitted by internal investigations during the late 1960s, when the political winds had changed and the ranks of the secret service were purged.<sup>35</sup> While some might object to the use of term “illegal” when discussing the deeds of intelligence agencies of dictatorships, historical examples seem to point out that when these regimes last a long time, legal concerns come back to the fore, if only for internal power plays. One could also emphasize the fact that in present-day Romania, surviving members of Securitate were and are prosecuted for their crimes against political prisoners and partisans, using the law existing at the time of their actions.<sup>36</sup>

Poor professional training of the Securitate officers often led to the alienation of informers, their exposure as agents or simply to the collection

of useless intelligence.<sup>37</sup> This led to an extremely slow pace of finding anything about the rebels and explains why some groups lasted for so long.<sup>38</sup>

An interesting example of the organization and functioning of information networks is the case of anti-partisan operations in southwest Romania between 1948 and 1951. Despite the fact that most of the inhabitants were not sympathetic to the authorities and refused to volunteer information, there were local informers who had identified armed groups of up to five guerrillas patrolling the mountains, dealing with local shepherds and trying to obtain information and recruits.<sup>39</sup> Among the best informers were women and children, who provided regular and accurate details of their spotting of and meeting with partisans. They also revealed that guerrillas were receiving food from local peasants and transporting them to their mountain hideouts using horses.<sup>40</sup> These reports were combined by the intelligence officers with the results of their surveillance of a large group of relatives of the known partisans. Another category of locals under close supervision was widows and women of “loose morals” supposed to be frequented by the partisans.<sup>41</sup>

Betrayal played a great part in the elimination of some rebel groups. As information came directly from an inner source, it was much easier for the governmental forces to locate the guerrillas. For instance, two members of the Gavrilă group from the Făgăraș Mountains who managed to escape pursuit at the beginning of December 1950 were hiding in a village in the Timișoara Region (Pădureni). Betrayed by one of the locals whom they approached, the partisans were attacked in their hideout by a six-man squad of the local Militia who shot them both dead, but not before they managed to kill the team leader. Those who harbored them were arrested.<sup>42</sup> The betrayal of the hosts led to the downfall of many in the Apuseni-based rebel group of Major Dabija, surprised in their hideouts and killed in gun-battles with the Securitate.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps the riskiest approach that the Romanian communist forces took when dealing with the partisans was infiltration, the placing of an agent working for the government within a particular guerrilla group. It is interesting to note that, despite the certainty of risk, the payoffs were estimated to be so great that the tactic was consistently used in a wide variety of regions and against both rural and urban armed or subversive groups. Ideally, a covert agent who might or might not have been an intelligence officer was tasked to approach individuals within the support network of a partisan group, declaring their willingness to help the guerrillas or be one of them. Once inside the network or after being accepted in the armed



group, the agent would identify its members, discover their hideouts and their strengths and make all efforts to attract the guerrilla into traps and ambushes organized by local governmental forces. When agents were allowed enough time, they could provide a wealth of information, such as those operating in the armed groups from Dobrogea, who were giving extremely detailed reports on the composition and actions of the rebels.<sup>44</sup> The following examples highlight the variety of infiltration actions and detail success and failure.

Infiltration was employed as soon as anti-governmental groups and structures were identified after 1945. The “Haiduks” of Gavrilă Olteanu were infiltrated early on by agent “A. Roman”, who was in reality SSI Captain Nicolae Dumitrescu, using his position as liaison between the group and General Aurel Aldea, who was a leader of the National Resistance Movement, the agent sent numerous and detailed reports on the organization for almost a year.<sup>45</sup> Agent “Iancu”, working for the Siguranță, was infiltrated in the Bucharest chapter of the “Haiduks”, reporting on their meetings and contacts.<sup>46</sup> When both the Haiduks and the National Resistance Movement were destroyed through mass arrests in late May 1946, agent Roman was also imprisoned with his contacts and acted as an undercover agent in jail.<sup>47</sup>

In the same period, intelligence officers were infiltrated among the anti-communist officers of the Sinaia-based Mountain Battalion and were reporting that, in collusion with officers of the British Military Mission, the pro-rebel officers of this unit were stockpiling weapons and preparing the organization of guerrilla groups to trap Soviet units to the West of the Carpathians in case war broke out. Although the plot had been discovered by leaked information in November 1945, the agent that destroyed the group was infiltrated only in May 1946. As a reserve officer in this unit, he already had the trust of the officers. The agent uncovered the structure of the organization and its links to other units and the Royal Guard Battalion in Bucharest.<sup>48</sup>

The elimination of the group led by the brothers Paragină from the Vrancea Mountains in the night of 18 October 1949, was accomplished through the infiltration of a Securitate informer and a Securitate undercover sergeant major. It took months to get the two into the gang, as initially they had to be portrayed in the local community as runaways and political opponents of the communists. They were verified by the insurgents through moving them repeatedly from trusted person to trusted person, through interrogatories, and even mock executions. After

weeks of trials they were accepted in the group and taken to the mountain camps, where the group mustered 18 fighters, mostly former intellectuals and petty bourgeois. The insurgents would collect taxes from the villages nearby, mount attacks on isolated police and party officials and conduct anti-communist propaganda. After gaining the confidence of the leaders of the group, the undercover Securitate agents were able to relay information as to the group's location. The guerrillas were surrounded and captured without resistance.<sup>49</sup>

The destruction of Traian Cristea's group in 1956 was also achieved through infiltration. Operating against local officials in the Răcari region, just a few kilometers to the northwest of Bucharest, the group was made of seven members and was housed by former elements of the rural bourgeoisie. The Bucharest Securitate used a turned agent, a student arrested for anti-communist activities. He became the lover of Traian Cristea's sister and through her, after weeks of having his loyalty tested by the guerrillas, he became acquainted with the rebel who "recruited" him to write political manifestos. The entire rebel group was arrested without resistance.<sup>50</sup> In 1957, "Action 29" was mounted against a legionary group from Dobrogea. The gang was infiltrated by a former classmate of one of the members, a Securitate agent, who helped in the discovery of not only all the members of the group but also sympathizers from Galați, Brașov and București. All the rebels were arrested in 1959.<sup>51</sup>

In the Apuseni, infiltration was much sought after in the case of the group led by Major Dabija. The chosen infiltrator paraded himself as an escaped convict and, after being accepted in the group, tried to place notices on the group activities in secret hideouts in trees.<sup>52</sup> However, the agent—retired army Lt. Col. Iancu Bocan found it impossible to send back information.<sup>53</sup> Colonel Bocan was a happy case despite his failure. For those whom the partisans discovered to be working against them, the fate was cruel. When the Bukovinian partisans of Vladimir Macoveiciuc learned that two police agents had been placed among them in December 1945, they killed both of them with axes and then hacked them to pieces.<sup>54</sup> These discoveries happened either through accident, poor work of the covert agents or, in one particularly important case for intelligence work, when one of the agents was simply unreliable. During the summer of 1951, the Securitate attempted to infiltrate four informers in the Northern Făgăraș group led by Ion Gavrilă, among them captured Bukovinian partisan Vasile Motrescu. Once inside the group, he revealed that the other three were traitors; the partisans executed the three on 14

September 1951.<sup>55</sup> Motrescu's action was not unique. In December 1950, the Securitate arrested a member of the Șușman group from the county of Cluj and tried to turn him into an infiltrated agent; however, when returned to the gang, he revealed his capture to his comrades.<sup>56</sup>

Despite these failures, enough victories could be reported to vindicate those officers who thought infiltration was worthwhile. Years after the previously mentioned incident concerning the Șușman group, in the summer of 1954, three of his partisans were discovered through the use, as informer, of the sister of two of them. One was killed; another was sentenced to death and executed. The third member, a woman, was given a life sentence.<sup>57</sup> In the case of the Popșa group from Maramureș, the authorities penetrated both the support and propaganda network and the group itself. A legionary group from Sighet calling itself the "Young Nest", whose members were planning on joining the local guerrillas, had been infiltrated with an informer in November 1948, as soon as the Securitate found out about its existence. This allowed the authorities to place an agent within the partisans themselves in April 1949, and in just a few days, the information received led to two gunfights, one involving a whole Securitate platoon on 1 May and the second on 2 May, when the group was surrounded and effectively destroyed.<sup>58</sup>

In another case, a Securitate non-commissioned officer was infiltrated in 1950–1951 in the partisan group led by Andrei Ghivnici. He managed to single-handedly liquidate all of the rebels.<sup>59</sup> Securitate Major Grigore Mândruț infiltrated the subversive group from the Cluj County led by Iosif Capotă; he had an important role in their capture.<sup>60</sup>

A more complete story of a destruction through infiltration can be told in relation to the "White Guard", an organization led by Leonida Bodiș and operating in Bistrița-Năsăud. They referred to themselves as members of the National Christian League, and for some reason, the Securitate was calling them "White Guard", which was an invented term for a supposed counter-gang operating in the area.

Leonida Bodiș, an army lieutenant, had been captured at Stalingrad and returned as a battalion commander in the Russian-organized "Tudor Vladimirescu" Division. Captured by the Germans in January 1945, he was contacted by legionary elements for a possible mission but he refused. He returned to the country in June 1946, and was tried for desertion. Not under arrest during his trial, he went underground when he heard he had been convicted to 25 years of hard labour. The organization formed around him was supposed to act only upon the eruption of a war between

the West and the Soviet Union. Cooperation between the Securitate and the army intelligence service in trying to infiltrate the group with former military officers did not amount to much. In September 1948, an information network coordinated both by Securitate and army intelligence was built up in the villages where the organization was known to be operating. Some of the army officers blew their own cover in the process by calling their sources to official meetings in the local town halls. Acting on a carefully elaborated plan, 30 Securitate strike teams totalling 156 men went into action on the night of 13 February 1949 in four villages, arresting 22 suspected members of the organization. However the mission was a failure, as 29 of those known to possess weapons escaped to the mountains. Bodiú was eventually captured after a government agent infiltrated the group. A former good friend of Bodiú, this agent lured him in a trap on 21 March 1949. In July, under the pretext of trying to escape while revealing the location of some weapons, Bodiú and two other members of the rebel group were shot and killed by the Securitate. Another 63 people were tried and convicted to prison terms for being members of or helping the rebel group.<sup>61</sup>

The Romanian counterinsurgents also attempted the use of counter-gangs in the fight against the anti-communist rebels. This approach, which mirrors contemporary developments in the Soviet Union but also in Malaya, Indochina, Kenya and Algeria, features the formation of crack teams of intelligence officers operating in disguise as locals or trying to pass themselves off as rebels, in order to approach the real guerrillas, gain their confidence and eventually attack and destroy them.

Early in the struggle, a counter-gang was used to destroy the previously mentioned Sinaia group of army officers plotting insurrection in the spring of 1946. After the infiltrated agent had provided ample information concerning the composition, intentions and capabilities of the rebels, the authorities planned that a crack team of Siguranța officers in disguise as tourists would operate from a mountain cabin known to be frequented by the rebels, and another would make the arrests in Sinaia. Top priority was given to the discovery of weapons caches.<sup>62</sup> During the very successful operation, 12 active and reserve officers were arrested, and two other runaway rebel officers who had been members of the National Resistance Movement were arrested. Two major supply depots were discovered, with tens of thousands of rounds, dozens of artillery shells, a hundred grenades, 14 guns and two machine guns.<sup>63</sup>

In other instances, success was more problematic or was completely absent. In the fall of 1949, the Mehedinți local command authorized the formation of a counter-gang composed of 12 Militia officers who patrolled the area of partisan activity disguised as forest rangers. On 24 September, they fell on three guerrillas, who managed to escape after a shootout.<sup>64</sup> Similarly problematic was the activity of counter-gangs in the region of Făgăraș. The Securitate “group Manda” who managed to infiltrate the partisans led by Ion Gavrilă in 1952 was not even meant to act against them but against a similar partisan group on the south slopes of the Făgăraș Mountains.<sup>65</sup> Later in 1952, a counter-gang with officers disguised as tourists were sent on their tracks, without much success, despite the fact that the guerrillas used to attack tourist cabins in the mountains.<sup>66</sup>

However, failure did not dissuade the authorities from trying again, and there were instances when the approach was massively successful, especially in the later stages of the struggle. In the case of the remnants of the Leon Șușman group from the Apuseni, the counter-gang approach worked after both the informative network and the infiltration approach had produced results. To wipe out the group in 1957, the Securitate used 22 informers against them and intercepted the correspondence of the family and close relatives. After successfully inserting an agent in the group, a team of 10 officers was placed in the area under the cover of being members of a geological team; a company of Securitate troops stationed in the area supported the counter-gang. Through the infiltrated agent, the officers found out about a meeting of the group in the house of one of their supporters and surrounded it. In the ensuing gunfight, one partisan was killed and three were wounded and captured; however, the commander of the Securitate team was also shot dead.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

1. For a list detailing the partisan groups mentioned in this section, see table (appendix) at the end of the book.
2. Serviciul Român de Informații, *Cartea albă a Securității*, Vol. I 23 August 1944–30 August 1948, Bucharest, 1997, 18.
3. This passage is based on Cristian Troncotă, *Istoria serviciilor secrete românești. De la Cuza la Ceaușescu*, Bucharest: Ion Cristoiu, 1999.
4. See, for instance, Note of Mărășești Gendarmes, 1 August 1948 in RASV, Doc. 45, 84–86.
5. Florian Banu, “Strămoșii Securității – structuri de poliție politică din România în perioada 23 august 1944–30 august 1948” in Aurel Pentelescu, Gavrilă

- Preda (eds.), *Clipe de viață. Comandorul dr. Ilie Manole la 60 de ani*, Ploiești, Karta-Graphic, 2007, 456–484.
6. For a general discussion on Securitate's beginnings, organization and role in the repression, see Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii. O istorie a Securității (1948–1964)*, Iași: Polirom, 2008.
  7. Luminița Banu, "Utilizarea rețelei informative în reprimarea rezistenței armate anticomuniste" in Gheorghe Onișoru (ed.), *Mișcarea armată de rezistență anticomunistă din România. 1944–1962*, București: Kullusys, 2003, pp. 317–333.
  8. Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 101.
  9. For the higher number, also used by Dennis Deletant, see Alexandre Cretzianu (ed.) *Captive Rumania*. For a correction, see Florian Banu, "Câteva considerații privind istoriografia Securității".
  10. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 1 November 1949 in RASV, Doc. 229, 273.
  11. Report of the Siguranță section in Câmpulung Moldovenesc 18 November 1944 in RAB, Vol. I, Doc. 14, 160.
  12. An analysis of these networks can be found in Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii*.
  13. Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 98.
  14. Nationalist Romanian historiography often writes in xenophobic tones on this topic, trying to portray Securitate's abuses as the work of officers of Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Hungarian descent. See for this the book of Cristian Troncotă, himself a former Securitate officer, *Istoria serviciilor secrete românești. De la Cuza la Ceaușescu*.
  15. Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 97, 98.
  16. *Jurnale din rezistența anticomunistă*, 14.
  17. Serviciul Român de Informații, *Cartea albă a Securității*, 7.
  18. Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, *Pseudomemoriile unui general de Securitate*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007.
  19. Notes of Năsăud Gendarmerie, 31 July and 1 August 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Docs. 10–11, 51–52.
  20. Note of the Ministry of the Interior, 11 October 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 30, 72.
  21. Note of 2 November 1945 in IMRR, Vol. II, Doc. 111, 288.
  22. Liviu Țăranu, "Controlul corespondenței în anii '50" in *Dosarele Istoriei*, nr. 11(99)/2004, 52–54.
  23. Report of SSI, 5 November 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 39, 81.
  24. For the need to recruit informers from the local hostile elements who might harbour knowledge of the rebels, see Address of Teleorman Securitate, 11 June 1951 in CAR, Doc. 80, 283–284.
  25. Siguranță note of 3 December 1946 in Serviciul Român de Informații, *Cartea albă a Securității*, Doc. 259, 335–336.

26. See, for instance, RATS, 38–39.
27. Order of the General Directorate of the Securitate to the Pitești Regional Securitate, 15 September 1949 in BBE, Doc. 10, 85.
28. Report of Maramureș Securitate Service, 3 April 1949 in RAP, 47–48.
29. BIASS No. 3 (1968), 58–60.
30. Dorin Dobrinu, “Grupuri minore”, 183.
31. BIASS No. 2 (1968), 5.
32. *Securitatea*, No. 3 (1973), 7.
33. Report of the Suceava Militia, 11 July 1951 in RAB, Vol. II, Doc. 33, 69.
34. Dorin Dobrinu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 507–508.
35. BIASS No. 2 (1968), 6.
36. For instance, on 24 July 2015, Alexandru Vișinescu, aged 95, was sentenced to 20 years in jail for inhumane treatment of detainees in the political prison of Râmnicu Sărat. Vișinescu was commander of this facility between 1956 and 1963; <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/tortionarul-alexandru-visinescu-a-fost-condamnat-la-20-de-ani-de-inchisoare-ce-despagubiri-trebuie-sa-plateasca-urmasilor-victimelor-sale-14635178> last consulted 11 November 2015.
37. For a lengthy discussion of the poor professional standards of the time, see Cristian Troncotă, *Istoria serviciilor secrete românești*.
38. Luminița Banu, “Utilizarea rețelei informative în reprimarea rezistenței armate anticomuniste”.
39. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 1 November 1949 in RASV, Doc. 229, 274; Note of Cloșani Gendarmes, 20 August 1948 in RASV, Doc. 61, 96–97.
40. Note of Pașani Gendarmes, 14 September 1948 in RASV, Doc. 78, 116–117; Note of Ponoarele Militia, 25 September 1949 in RASV, Doc. 208, 235.
41. Note of “Gangs” Sector I Teregova, 10 December 1951 in RASV, Doc. 297, 346–348. Like in many traditional rural communities, in Romanian villages young widows were a constant source of extra-marital sex for local men.
42. Note of Office 522, 16 January 1951 in RAMF, Doc. 23, 97–98.
43. Liviu Pleșa, “Implicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată”.
44. Report of Constanța Regional Siguranță, 12 July 1948 in RAD, Doc. 8, 56–59.
45. Note of “A. Roman”, 14 October 1945 in IMRR, Vol. I, Doc. 33, 75.
46. Informative note, 12 September 1945 in IMRR, Vol. II, Doc. 95, 279.
47. Document of 1 June 1946 in IMRR, Vol. II, 30.
48. Document of 5 June 1946 and Note of SSI, 17 June 1946 in IMRR, Vol. II, 46, 64–65.
49. BIASS No. 3 (1968), 50–57. However, a pro-legionary blog (<http://garziledcebal.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/grupul-ion-paragina-vrancea.html>, last consulted 18 February 2013) based on an interview with a member of the group (Mihai Timaru) asserts that the capture was after a fierce gunfight with numerous people killed, among them five Securitate troops.

50. BIASS No. 3 (1968), 61–65.
51. Testimony of Col. Victor Burlacu in *Securitatea*, No. 3 (1973), 12–13.
52. Proposal of the Câmpeni Securitate Office to the Turda Regional Office, 21 February 1949 in RAMA, Doc. 4, 55.
53. Statement of Lt. Col. Iancu Bocan, 5 March 1949 in RAMA, Doc. 11, 66.
54. Report of the Regional Police Inspectorate Northern Moldova, 10 January 1946 in RAB, Vol. I, Doc. 20, 175.
55. Report of the Sibiu Militia, 16 September 1951 in RAMF, Doc. 61, 163–164 and fn. 33–36. For the larger history of the Gavrilă group see Dorin Dobrinu, “Rezistența armată anticomunistă din Munții Făgăraș – versantul nordic. Grupul carpatic făgărășan/Grupul Ion Gavrilă (1949/1950–1955/1956)” in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «G. Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca*, tom. XLVI, 2007, pp. 433–502.
56. RATS, 29.
57. *Ibid.*, 46–47.
58. “The history of the Popșa Group and its capture”, report by Maramureș Securitate, 31 May 1949 in RAP, Doc. 24, 68–71.
59. Dorin Dobrinu, “Grupuri minore”, 181.
60. RACD, 25–26.
61. This entire fragment is based on Oana Ionel, “Anihilarea organizației „Garda Albă” de către Securitate (1949)” in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, Iulia Pop (editori), *Rezistența anticomunistă. Cercetare științifică și valorificarea muzeală*, Vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Argonaut, 2006, 142–158.
62. Siguranță’s plan for the arrest of the “Armed Group Sinaia”, 24 June 1946 in IMRR, Vol. II, Doc. 49, 73–75.
63. Document of 28 June 1946 in IMRR, Vol. II, 79–80. Subsequent documents point to the discovery of other large weapons deposits.
64. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 1 November 1949 in RASV, Doc. 229, 270.
65. Informative Report on the Problem of the Gangs in 1951, 15 February 1952 in BBE, Doc. 23, 130–131.
66. Report on the Problem of the Gangs, 16 September 1952 in BBE, Doc. 26, 152–155.
67. See for the entire operation Dorin Dobrinu, “Anticommunist Resistance Groups in Central Transylvania – the Apuseni Mountains (1948–1957)” in *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, Vol. 45, (2006), 245–265.



## Military Operations and Population Control

**Abstract** Military operations and population control were essential for defeating Romanian partisans. The chapter discusses the military instrument of the pro-Moscow regime and classic operations, such as patrolling, checkpoints, cordoning, searches, informed strikes, ambushes, tactical assaults against entrenched positions, sweeps through forests and mountains, while providing an assessment of their relative efficiency. The population control segment engages with censorship, the crushing of peasant revolts and especially with large-scale internal deportations of segments of population deemed by the government to be suspect or unreliable.

**Keywords** Ambushes • Censorship • Deportations • Informed strikes • Military operations • Patrols • Population control

### MILITARY OPERATIONS

As the Romanian counterinsurgents faced very mobile, lightly armed opponents who, above all, avoided openly challenging them, by necessity some of the features experienced in contemporary COIN campaigns elsewhere were absent in this case.<sup>1</sup> The technological advantage that governments usually enjoy in COINs was insignificant after the defeat of

the urban subversive groups. Heavy artillery and aviation were not useful against the small partisan groups, who learned early on to move mostly at night and to make the best of the mountainous, forested areas in which the rebels tended to roam.

In only one case the partisans mounted an attack on a village with the intention to occupy it and use it as a liberated, safe permanent base, and immediately the authorities sent in heavy forces. In this case, a group from the Turda County led by air commodore Diamandi Ionescu occupied the village of Muntele Băișorii in August 1949, taking over the town hall, removing communist portraits and flags and burning documents. The representatives of the local authorities were sequestered in a house. Within hours, trucks of governmental troops with artillery made their way to the village, but the guerrillas managed to escape.<sup>2</sup>

The small size of the opponents and the little danger they posed were the main causes why Romanian COIN was entirely conducted by the police and the intelligence agencies rather than the army. Despite this, as it will be shown in this chapter, there were cases when massive forces, ranging up to thousands of troops and multiple battalions were used in certain anti-partisan operations.

Usually, the teams who made the arrests when a rebel or subversive element had been identified by intelligence and no significant resistance was expected were quite small. Arrests took place at night. Initially made by a team of four; this was increased to six in 1949, and provisions were made for the reconnaissance of the target's house before proceeding to the capture.<sup>3</sup>

When miscalculations were made and small teams were sent, the decision could misfire badly. The Macavei brothers, partisans working with Major Dabija in the Apuseni, proved particularly hard to capture. Resisting arrest for gold trafficking, which was the reason for them joining the guerrillas, they wounded four gendarmes in July 1948. In October the same year, Alexandru Macavei killed two gendarmes who tried to arrest him.<sup>4</sup> When resistance was anticipated or when the numbers of those expected to be captured was significant, far larger formations were sent in. In the early 1950s, the Securitate sent a whole company to make arrests in the villages supporting the partisans led by Teodor Șuşman.<sup>5</sup> In the summer of 1950, when villages to the north of Bucharest erupted in anti-collectivization riots, the government sent in a Securitate battalion and two additional companies for pacification and arrests.<sup>6</sup> For the arrest of Iosif Capotă, the leader of a subversive group who was deemed to be armed

and dangerous, an entire Securitate battalion surrounded the village of Brăișor on the night of 6 December 1957; an intervention team caught the target unawares and prevented him from taking poison.<sup>7</sup>

These targeted actions, following a flux of intelligence, were the culmination of more traditional approaches to dealing with partisans. These comprised, like in many other examples throughout history, patrols, checkpoints, searches and sweeps through the areas with guerrilla activity. When informant action produced little or no results in the case of the Bukovina-based partisans led by Constantin Cenușă in 1950, the regional Militia divided its forces at checkpoints, with 12 teams of three Militia NCOs blocking strategic points on the different routes assumed to be used by the partisans. The anti-partisan squads were armed with rifles and some had hand grenades.<sup>8</sup> As this came to naught, in the fall of the same year the authorities decided on the manning of more ambush points on the mountain routes.<sup>9</sup> When fixed solutions again disappointed, the Militia switched to mobile tactics, with patrols in three villages tasked with scouting the areas and watching the houses of those suspected to support the partisans.<sup>10</sup>

Similar approaches were taken in April 1954 by the Operative Group Făgăraș, a task force specially formed to deal with the Gavrilă group, combining the use of a counter-gang comprised of officers disguised as tourists with patrols and ambush groups, as well as sweeps through the forests.<sup>11</sup> In 1948–1950 patrols were regularly mounted against partisans operating in the Vlădeasa Mountains, with very little success.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes, these tactics were reactive and hasty, such as the action of the Mehedinți Militia after the partisans had kidnapped and killed two local party leaders on 25 August 1949. The Militia organized patrol, cordon and sweep operations involving well over 50 officers, again with no success.<sup>13</sup>

However, the reason why patrols and checkpoints were never abandoned was that there were indeed cases when simple patrols and searches could score massive hits against the partisans, especially if government troops could call on support in case they stumbled upon their opponents.<sup>14</sup> In the summer of 1949, near the Crucea village in Dobrudja, during a routine patrol, the Militia chief of the village's station and one Militia trooper were informed of a villager that was producing illegal alcohol. The search of his house revealed armed rebels, who opened fire on the two Militia officers. After a prolonged chase, including gunfights and horseback racing, the reinforcements came to the scene; they were made of other Militia officers and armed local communists, and the rebels were

pinned down. One of the fugitives was mortally shot, and the other two surrendered.<sup>15</sup> In the spring of the same year, checkpoints scored a big hit in southwestern Romania. After six guerrillas were identified in the village of Izverna on 27 March, local Militia established watching posts. On 31 March, three partisans were seen by watchmen and a gunfight erupted, leaving the guerrillas dead. The government's forces were made up of seven Militia officers, seven forest rangers and three civilians.<sup>16</sup>

Sweeps—involving the combing by a large number of troops of relatively large and difficult areas, mostly forested and with many possible hideouts—were another feature of Romanian COIN. They could take place during daytime, but they were also employed during the night, such as the 4:00 a.m. raid on Christmas night 1950 mounted by mixed Securitate–Militia squads descending on objectives in the Bukovina villages of Putna and Straja and searching the suspected houses for partisans.<sup>17</sup> Sweeps of company-sized Securitate forces were quite common, such as in the case of late August and early September 1952 when a battle group of these dimensions was dispatched against the Gavrilă group shepherd' huts in the region of Făgăraș.<sup>18</sup>

Large-scale operations were also mounted. More often than not, they were the product of the frustration of superior command after the rebels had escaped from engagements or were simply too stealthy or too well hidden. After the attack of Gavrilă's partisans on a cabin on the Negoiu Mountain and a gunfight with a squad of four Securitate officers in early November 1953, a huge sweep through their areas was ordered. The authorities gathered no less than six Securitate battalions, an independent company and 50 specially trained dogs that combed the forests under the general command of the director of the Stalin (Braşov) Regional Securitate, colonel Ambruş.<sup>19</sup> In a similar operation tracking the scattered remains of the Teodor Şuşman group, who had been defeated in a gunfight in July 1952, the Securitate used more than 2500 officers and troops as well as police dogs.<sup>20</sup>

The previously mentioned operation of July 1952 followed a successful ambush, which was another preferred option of the government's forces. A Securitate company who knew that they were going to cross a particular river surprised the Şuşman partisans, numbering seven fighters. In the gunfight and the ensuing pursuit, two rebels were killed and the others scattered, never to form a combat unit again.<sup>21</sup>

Ambushes were employed in Bukovina against the notoriously elusive guerrillas of Constantin Cenuşă. In one particular case in 1950, 15 teams

of up to six Securitate officers were to guard the houses from where the partisans might be helped.<sup>22</sup> In this case they were unsuccessful, but the next year, a Militia squad in one of the ambush points captured partisan Vasile Motrescu.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the reactive sweeps, which seldom produced any results, ambushes mounted after previous contact had been made with the guerrillas could result in victory for the government's forces. In a south-western Romanian village on 13 May 1949, two armed partisans attacked a local Militia officer. The next night the Militia organized an ambush at the house of the brother of one of the guerrillas; the partisan appeared and died after a short gunfight with two Militia officers.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most successful operations were those mounted by the authorities whenever they possessed information regarding the location of armed rebels or their supporters. These "informed strikes" allowed the counterinsurgents to gather forces better suited to apprehending or subduing the guerrillas. Sometimes, the killing of the leader of the group in shootouts with the government's forces was enough to destroy an entire group, like in the case of the group led by Vasile Cămăruță, which operated between 1949 and 1950 in the Baia County in Moldova.<sup>25</sup> In other cases, such as that of the National Resistance Movement and the "Haiduks", which had been thoroughly infiltrated by government agents, coordinated strikes led to the destruction of the organizations through simultaneous arrests on 28 May 1946, which resulted in 30 members captured without resistance.<sup>26</sup> The following paragraphs present different "informed strikes" against the partisans and their outcome.

In 1949, the Securitate recruited an informer connected with some of the young members of the Popșa group operating in the region of Maramureș. He relayed the location of the group in a house of a local miller, and six Securitate and Militia agents were sent against them. The house was surrounded, and the rebels opened fire on the government's troops with automatic weapons and grenades. After a 30-minute gunfight, one rebel was killed, three captured and one managed to escape.<sup>27</sup> In the same year in Dobrogea, the Securitate used information from captured partisans to find out about the hideout of another two members of the group in the village of Bătlăgești. After a gunfight with automatic weapons and grenades, the two were captured.<sup>28</sup> In the Apuseni Mountains, the group led by Ștefan Popa was attacked by 200 Securitate troops from the Sibiu Battalion on 8 March 1949. Three partisans were killed and two captured.<sup>29</sup>

In 1950, there were a series of coordinated, informed strikes against the guerrillas operating in the Făgăraș Mountains. Tipped off by informers, a joint Securitate–Militia team of 29 men attacked the partisan group led by Ion Gavrilă in the village of Râușor during the night of 15 November. A serious gunfight resulted in the death of a Militia sergeant major, a political officer who volunteered for the action; another NCO was seriously wounded, while four partisans were apprehended, one of them slightly wounded.<sup>30</sup> In a follow-up operation in the neighboring village of Părău, two other partisans armed with an automatic rifle, a rifle, a handgun and a grenade were surprised by the governmental troops, who shot and killed one of them and captured the other.<sup>31</sup>

The next month, a particularly gruesome operation took place in the same region, which highlights many features of Securitate’s *modus operandi*. In order to capture one isolated partisan (Toma Pirău), the officers kidnapped his half-brother, who was blackmailed into revealing the location of his kin. On December 18, he revealed the hideout of his brother, who was hiding in the house of an uncle. Again, a joint Securitate–Militia team of 20 men was formed and dispatched to the indicated place, which was completely surrounded. A squad of six men stormed the objective, finding only the uncle, who was compelled to take the team to the barn. The partisan, who was in the barn, opened fire on the communist troops, killing a lieutenant. The entire detachment attacked the barn for an hour and a half, during which another NCO was mortally wounded. After the shooting stopped, unwilling to risk any more lives, the team dispatched the parents of the partisan in the barn, who confirmed that their son was dead.<sup>32</sup>

The Ion Gavrilă group was seriously weakened by “informed strikes” in the summer of 1954. On 6 August, two platoons discovered and surrounded two members of the group who were killed in a gunfight; the troops had previous knowledge of their whereabouts and had been led through by guides. Almost two weeks later, a squad of eight Securitate troops, informed by two local shepherds, discovered and attacked two other partisans. One of them was presumably Ion Gavrilă, who managed to escape after mortally wounding a soldier. In this as well as in other actions, the technical limitations of the weapons of the government troops were obvious, some of them jamming after firing a few shots (and maybe also proving the stress or the lack of training of the soldiers).<sup>33</sup> The next day, 20 August, Gavrilă and four other guerrillas were surprised during a

sweeping operation through the forest. While the leader and three others were able to escape, partisan Ioan Iloiu was wounded and captured.<sup>34</sup>

### THE ELIMINATION OF REBEL GROUPS

Geographical features played a significant part in the conflict, more often than not being an advantage for the guerrillas. However, there were instances when the struggle was made particularly desperate for the partisans by the configuration of the terrain. The mostly legionary groups operating in Dobrogea, for instance, had to face the reality that their region was an operational zone of the Red Army after 1944, Constanța—the region's centre and the most important maritime port of Romania having the largest garrison of Soviet troops in the country. The geographical features—plains and very small, easily accessible mountains—meant that armed resistance was extremely difficult and that clashes with the government's forces were particularly lethal.<sup>35</sup>

In one such instance, a future leader of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service, Nicolae Doicaru, made his name. Doicaru took part in person in the operation that led to the discovery and death of Gogu Puiu on 18 July 1949. An informer tipped off the Securitate concerning a meeting of rebels in the village of Cobadin. A team of officers fell on the village, arrested people suspected to be hosts, and one of them revealed the location of Puiu, the recognized leader of resistance in Dobrogea. After a fierce gunfight in which he wounded an officer, the rebel escaped to another part of the village where he was again surrounded and eventually killed by a grenade explosion.<sup>36</sup>

Sheer mental exhaustion led to the surrender of some guerrillas. Constantin Cenușă, who had avoided numerous attempts to capture him, negotiated his surrender and that of his last remaining partner in letters sent to local Securitate NCOs through a priest who acted as an intermediary.<sup>37</sup> The authorities were keen on finally apprehending them, so two informers, one a forestry worker and the other a forest guard, contacted the partisans and intermediated a meeting between the two partisans and three Militia NCOs who tried to persuade them to surrender. The partisans asked for a few days to collect their things and say goodbye to their wives, and they were granted their wishes, the Militia pulling out the squads that were guarding the mountain roads. On 30 August 1951, the two partisans surrendered to a team of seven Militia and Securitate officers.<sup>38</sup>

Informant action led to the collapse of a subversive group from Câmpulung Moldovenesc. The Group of “Young Partisans”, numbering 13 high school students, was formed in the early 1950s and armed themselves by stealing weapons and ammunition from the local hunting association. Before mounting any attacks they were arrested by the Securitate in the summer of 1954.<sup>39</sup> Treason and the use of informers led to the destruction of an armed group called “King Michael’s Partisans—the Secret Army” operating from 1948 to 1949 as a subversive organization in the Cluj-Gherla-Turda area and, after that, as an armed resistance group in the area Gherla-Dej. Up to 150 people had joined the organization; some were leading a normal existence in their villages, being a support network for the armed guerrillas living in the forests. While the support network was discovered through treason, the armed partisans were apprehended through an informer, a neighbour of the leader of the group. Hunted down and forced to surrender on 8 October 1949, after the Securitate officers threatened to kill his brother, the leader of the rebels and his son were immediately taken to the woods, killed and buried on the spot.<sup>40</sup>

The previously mentioned partisans led by Major Dabija were finally defeated through a mixture of intelligence work, conventional military operations and treason. In early March 1949, Securitate troops captured partisan Traian Ihuț, who testified about the location and strength of the partisans on Muntele Mare. The local Securitate leadership decided to attack the partisans immediately. A joint Securitate–Militia wipe-out operation started in the morning of 4 March. A company of 80 troops from the Cluj Securitate Battalion and led by the commander of regional Securitate, Colonel Mihai Patriciu, charged the peak 1201 where two strongholds of the partisans were situated. A gunfight started at 6:20 a.m. and lasted for close to two hours, followed by hand-to-hand combat and the burning of the strongholds. The Securitate troops had three dead and three wounded, while 11 partisans were killed, including two females who were college students.<sup>41</sup> Major Dabija and two other partisans managed to escape this time.

The Securitate troops that led the assault had been divided into two platoons, the first being guided by Traian Ihuț. The second platoon was disoriented, and during the fight, disobeyed orders and mistakenly fired on the first platoon. In a classic military operation, governmental troops used grenades to burn the strongholds and then fired automatic rifles at them. The location was not completely surrounded, and this is



why the three partisans, including Dabija, were able to escape.<sup>42</sup> Major Dabija was finally captured on 22 March, being betrayed by a local villager in whose barn he was sleeping. The informer brought three other villagers and a Militia officer, and together they caught Dabija in his sleep and brought him to the local Militia office.<sup>43</sup> On 28 October 1949, seven members of the group, including Major Nicolae Dabija were executed in Sibiu. In addition to them, the Securitate killed 13 other members in April 1950, their deaths being recorded as due to pulmonary diseases.<sup>44</sup>

The end of the group led by Teodor Țușman came very slowly and was a mixture of sheer desperation for the rebels and good, albeit painfully slow informative work of the authorities. Teodor Țușman committed suicide while being hunted down by government troops in December 1951. After a long and complex informative action, the last two members of the group, both of them Țușman's sons, were discovered in a barn by Securitate troops on 2 February 1958. Unable to capture them and after an inconclusive two-hour gunfight, the governmental forces burned the barn down, resulting in the deaths of the two. To showcase the frustration of the authorities, at a following trial 17 people were convicted to long prison terms for having aided the group members.<sup>45</sup>

Such trials were common in the case of partisans and their helpers. Massive reprisals were also something quite common. Previously mentioned rebels Iosif Capotă and Alexandru Dejeu, who had never mounted any armed attack, were sentenced to death and executed in Gherla on 2 September 1958. Their helpers got sentences between eight years in jail and forced labour for life.<sup>46</sup> No less than 14 people who had belonged to Toma Arnăuțoiu's group fighting in the Argeș County were executed in 1959.<sup>47</sup> These executions were part of the vast process of destroying the political opposition of the PMR. It is estimated that between 1952 and 1965, therefore excluding the violent years 1945–1951, there were 129 death penalties for political opponents of which just 34 were legionaries. Seventy-five sentences were carried out. In the same period 31,000 people were arrested and convicted for political crimes.<sup>48</sup>

These legal actions had another, darker counterpart. As previously mentioned, the Securitate also carried illegal, summary executions of captured rebels. When the government troops re-occupied the village held for a few hours by the guerrillas led by Diamandi Ionescu, they shot as reprisals six villagers who had helped the rebels.<sup>49</sup> In Mehedinți, on the night of 28 March 1948, two persons arrested for destroying local telephone

networks were taken for a reconstitution, apparently tried to escape and were shot by their escort.<sup>50</sup>

In August 1950, in one of the most egregious cases that eventually raised the suspicions of the central Securitate command, the commander of Turda Regional Securitate, frustrated by the inability of his subordinates to find local partisans, ordered the summary execution of three rich peasants suspected of helping the guerrillas. Lying to his superiors about the murders, which he presented as deaths in gunfights, the commander was questioned and severely reprimanded, not for killing innocents but for misrepresenting the truth.<sup>51</sup>

### POPULATION CONTROL, REVOLTS AND DEPORTATIONS

It is beyond the scope of this book to provide a full discussion of the broad series of measures and institutions devoted to population control in communist Romania. Firstly, like all Stalinist regimes, overt population control was at the heart of the process of socialist transformation. The first two constitutions of the People's Republic of Romania (proclaimed on 30 December 1947) issued in 1948 and 1952 clearly stated that the country is a "dictatorship of the proletariat". This entailed the subordination and control of all those who opposed or could oppose the working class. The PMR penetrated all structures of organized life, being not only territorial, and thus having representatives in all localities, but also occupational, and therefore having a separate chain of command in all state-run economic enterprises. In addition, the means of mass-communication were not only state-owned and operated but also directly put in the service of government propaganda. The police and intelligence services operated under the control of the party, indirectly since their takeover in 1944–1945 and directly after 1947.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, it is quite difficult to distinguish whether some population control measures were specifically targeting the armed rebels or were just part of the larger process of bringing the whole country under the will of the party. For instance, the legionaries were under the special supervision of the Securitate even if they had no intention whatsoever to mount any specific anti-regime actions.<sup>53</sup> This surveillance continued for decades and extended towards the generation of their children, even though the targets did nothing more than tell stories of the past and sing songs about the long years spent in prisons and work camps.<sup>54</sup> In other instances, in areas where armed rebels were operating, local authorities had to reaffirm their

power by destroying posters announcing that war with Western powers was imminent and Anglo-American paratroopers were bound to arrive within days.<sup>55</sup> In 1948, the party issued a list of 47 songs the population was forbidden to sing, but this, like the other cases discussed in this chapter, cannot be wholly interpreted as population control measures specifically targeting partisans.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, this section will focus on the large-scale measures for establishing population control over groups who had rioted against the regime or were considered bound to do so. The first categories targeted for deportation were peasants rioting against the collectivization of their property.<sup>57</sup> While in early 1945 the communist government of Dr. Petru Groza tried to enlist the support of the poor farmers by completely dismantling the last remnants of large agricultural estates and redistributing land to the peasants, within four years the tables had turned. Led by Ana Pauker, the leader of the “external” group of the PMR, in the summer of 1949, the authorities initiated the collectivization of agriculture, following the well-tested Soviet pattern. The initial expectations were that thousands of collective farms, comprising millions of peasants would be formed within the next two years.<sup>58</sup>

The peasants’ response to this policy meant a rude awakening for the authorities. Virtually everywhere collectivization was opposed, and in the areas with partisan activity, such as the counties of Arad and Bihor, organized armed revolts took place.<sup>59</sup> The Securitate identified the “Independent Romania Organization” as a subversive group operating in the region of Bihor. Apparently the riots were organized by this group, with the date of 1 August 1949 set as the beginning of the rebellion. The “Vlad Țepeș II” Oradea-based group was also involved in the organization of the riots. This rebel organization had sympathizers and members infiltrated in the local Securitate and Militia battalions.<sup>60</sup> Even in the assessment of the intelligence service, this denoted poor intelligence work of the Securitate, poor political leadership of the local Party organizations and ignorance of the legitimate demands of poor local peasants. As early as late July, crowds of between 300 and 600 people rioted in the county villages, attacking authorities and sometimes killing them. Local government and party offices were devastated, and documents concerning collectivization were burned.<sup>61</sup>

To destroy resistance, the reaction was prompt and ruthless. Two special commands were organized, in Arad and Oradea. The troops were ordered to arrest between 10 and 15 rich peasant families from each rioting village.

The Oradea command received for this operation three Securitate battalions and one Border Troops battalion. Arad Command had two Securitate and one Border Troops battalion and a Border Troops company. Securitate platoons and Militia officers were to move into rioting villages, while other platoons would provide mobile patrols between the villages. The ensuing operation was brutal. On the night of 3 August, ten people were killed in the rioting villages, mostly executed while “trying to escape”. Their families were rounded up the same night and deported by train the next morning.<sup>62</sup> In the four rioting villages in the county of Arad, 111 people were arrested. Altogether, 33 people were deported. Only, for this particular task, the authorities deployed 315 Militia troops and 65 Securitate agents (a ratio of over ten to one). The deported could take clothes, as much food as they could carry and different small household objects. Thirty-nine officers guarded the train on its long way to Dobrogea, near the town of Medgidia, more than 500 kilometres away.<sup>63</sup> Overall, 12 peasants were executed in Arad and 16 in Oradea. Purging themselves, the authorities had two Securitate officers, a captain and a lieutenant, identified as traitors for leaking information to the subversive groups.<sup>64</sup>

The peasant revolts from Transylvania were far from unique. The next summer, when the collectivization process resumed, six Wallachian villages to the north of Bucharest rose up against the communists. A whole Securitate battalion and two additional companies were necessary to subdue the rebels.<sup>65</sup> During the riots, the government’s troops used deadly force, with one rebel killed and four others shot and wounded.<sup>66</sup>

Following these incidents, it became governmental policy to combine brutal repression with deportations whenever the authorities believed peasants would oppose the creation of collective farms. In April 1950, 44 people from the county of Bistrița were selected for deportation because they opposed the Romanian version of the *kolkhozes*.<sup>67</sup> Resistance in the county of Cluj seemed to be even stronger, as in the same month 145 people from this area were to be deported.<sup>68</sup> In all of these cases the government was able to impose its view. However, the powerful, violent reaction of many peasants against collectivization led to a slowing of the process and eventually its halt. In no small measure, the elimination of the “external” group of the Romanian communists, who all fell from power in 1952, was due to the perception that their policies were harmful towards the larger interests of the party. Indeed, in 1951–1952, during the height of repression of those resisting collectivization, in the whole country there were 34,738 arrests and 439 public trials.<sup>69</sup> After the mid-1950s and coupled

more strongly with industrialization, collectivization was restarted, albeit with less violence and at a much slower pace, eventually ending in 1962.

The lessons learned during this process led the Romanian communists to the belief that preventive action is needed whenever a certain segment of the population might be inclined to revolt or support partisan activity. Mass internal deportation was to play a central part from now on in dealing with dangerous communities.

The most prominent of these took place in the early summer of 1951 when 40,000 people were deported in the course of one day from the western region of Banat to the Bărăgan, a large barren area in the east of the country, close to the Danube. Some of the deportees had been forcibly moved a number of times before. Romanians from Bessarabia were moved to Banat then deported to Bărăgan. Aromanians from Greece were moved to Southern Dobrogea in the 1920s, to the Banat in 1940 and to the Bărăgan in the 1950s.<sup>70</sup> The main reason for this action was the suspicion that the local communities would collude with Tito's regime in the case of conflict between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Soviet camp. About 970 of the ethnic local Serbs had been partisans in Tito's armies during the war and had maintained close relations with their former comrades living in the neighbouring country.<sup>71</sup>

Deportations were carried out according to Decision 200/1951 of the Romanian government that called for the forcible movement of the population living in a 25 km belt close to the Yugoslav border. The deportation plan was finalized by the Securitate on 14 November 1950, and identified 40,320 people as "security risks". They comprised 1330 foreign citizens, 8477 Romanian refugees from Soviet-occupied Bessarabia, 3557 Macedonians, 2344 people who collaborated with the German army in World War II, 257 Germans, 1054 "supporters of Tito", 1218 people with relatives abroad, 367 who had supported anti-communist guerrillas, 731 "enemies of the socialist regime", 19,034 rich peasants and innkeepers, 162 former big landlords and bourgeois and 341 convicted criminals. However, a different research suggests that 9413 of the deportees were ethnic Germans.

Of the people who left the Banat, 629 died in the Bărăgan. Over 10,000 army and Militia troops took part in the deportations, and in addition to the trains, 6211 trucks were also used. This huge mobilization was insufficient, and some families waited under the open sky for two or three days to be deported, and most of them, upon arrival, were just abandoned on an open field.<sup>72</sup>

All deportations were organized by the local party committees and were conducted by officers of the Militia, who arrived at their targets' homes at 1:00 a.m.<sup>73</sup> Inventory commissions immediately seized the goods of the deported, paying for them in cash.<sup>74</sup> Some of the deported found out about the imminence of their dislocation and had their luggage prepared. One person, upon being notified of his impending deportation, committed suicide. During the searches, weapons and ammunition were found at some of the richer peasants' homes, but no arrests for partisan activity were made.<sup>75</sup>

Each train used for deportation was huge, with 60–62 carriages, largely because each carriage was carrying only one family and their goods. They were allowed to take food, furniture, horses, a cow, their own horse-drawn cart and a pig.<sup>76</sup> In total, on 18 June, 66 trains with 2622 carriages transported 3537 families, while another 3276 families were still awaiting embarkation.<sup>77</sup>

Upon arrival on the barren plains of the Bărăgan, the deported were to be employed as farm hands at state-owned farms. In order to emphasize that the move was permanent, the authorities forced them to create new communities and to build new houses. Sofica Cirișanu, a woman of 20 in 1951, recalls how at the destination, the deported found already-drawn parcels for their new dwellings, with a house number nailed to a post.<sup>78</sup> By necessity, these houses were initially just hovels, which quickly became unsuitable for living in the local climate, characterized by very little water in dry season but extreme humidity once autumn rains began.<sup>79</sup>

The Securitate admitted in its internal documents that the action of the local party leadership as the deportees reached the Bărăgan was extremely disorganized and that they were unable to cope with the necessities of those relocated. The deportees had to pay for their food and the construction material for their new homes. Therefore, a big difference was noted between the poor and the rich among them, the latter having the resources to pay for what they needed.<sup>80</sup> Building a house was compulsory; those who refused or were slow in doing so were prevented from getting jobs at local farms, seriously hurting the possibility of feeding their families. In a sign that the action was disorganized, some of the deported were allowed to build their new houses wherever they pleased, as the area was extremely large and sparsely populated. In the new localities, those who arrived from Banat had the opportunity to meet others who were enduring the same fate; some of the engineers responsible for the building of the villages

were also people deported from other cities.<sup>81</sup> Others were families of the partisans, who had been deported from their regions to put psychological pressure on the guerrillas and to remove one of their sources of support.<sup>82</sup>

In order to focus surveillance of the new communities, the authorities created a special department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1954. Called the Dislocation and House Arrest Service, it employed over 30 officers headed by a lieutenant colonel. Their main task was not only to keep an eye on the 40,000 deported persons but also to recruit informers and actively seek information about anti-communist activities. Most agents were recruited through blackmail, and the targets were the usual suspects, mainly priests and former legionaries.<sup>83</sup>

Many perished in the harsh winters of the Bărăgan because of hunger, cold, desperation and low-quality medical care. The villages built by the deportees were left by most of them after an amnesty in 1956 and were demolished by the authorities in 1964 in an effort to erase the memory of a period of repression.<sup>84</sup>

## NOTES

1. The groups mentioned in this section are detailed in table (appendix) at the end of this book.
2. Dorin Dobrințu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 457.
3. In 1951, the number of those arrested as members of subversive groups, rebel gangs and illegal religious groups was 3488; Florian Banu, "Securitatea și arestarea „dușmanilor poporului” (1948–1958) in Stela Cheptea, Gh. Buzatu (eds.), *Convergențe istorice și geopolitice. Omagiu Profesorului Horia Dumitrescu*, Iași, Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2009, pp. 416–426.
4. Liviu Pleșa, "Implicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată", fn. 16.
5. RATS, 34.
6. Operative synthesis of the Ministry of the Interior, 10 July 1950 in CAR, Doc. 38, 205–206.
7. RACD, 28.
8. Action plan of the Rădăuți County Militia for the pursuit and liquidation of partisans, 2 May 1950 in RAB, Vol. I, Doc. 76, 313.
9. Informative report of the Securitate, 21 September 1950 in RAB, Vol. I, Doc. 96, 365.
10. Militia action plan for the destruction of the Cenușă group on Easter 1951, 23 April 1951 in RAB, Vol. II, Doc. 17, 54.
11. Plan of the Operative Group Făgăraș, April 1954 in BBE, Doc. 37, 221.
12. RATS, 24–25.

13. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 28 August 1949 in RASV, 209–212.
14. For the deployment of a special Militia strike team in Bukovina in 1949, permanently stationed at the county headquarters and ready to deploy immediately when the partisans were sighted, see the document Action plan of the Rădăuți County Militia for the liquidation of the partisans, 13 July 1949 in RAB, Vol. I, Doc. 60, 286.
15. Report of the chief of the Crucea Militia station, 21 July 1949 in RAD, Doc. 16, 91–92.
16. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 25 August 1949 in RASV, Docs. 173–174, 204–208.
17. Common Securitate-Militia plan, 20 December 1950 in RAB, Vol. II, Doc. 9, 39.
18. Report on the Problem of the Gangs, September 16th 1952 in BBE, Doc. 26, 152–155.
19. Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 4 November 1953 in BBE, Doc. 33, 204–205.
20. RATS, 45.
21. *Ibid.*, 43.
22. Securitate operations plan, 1 October 1950 in RAB, Vol. II, Doc. 1, 30.
23. Report of the Suceava Regional Directorate of the Securitate, 29 June 1951 in RAB, Vol. II, Doc. 29, 66.
24. Report of the judge of Broșteni, 14 May 1949 in RASV, Doc. 116, 156–158.
25. Dorin Dobrințu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 307–308.
26. SSI note of 31 May 1946 in Serviciul Român de Informații, *Cartea albă a Securității*, Doc. 213, 292–293.
27. Telegram of Oradea Regional Securitate, 1 May 1949 and Report of Oradea Regional Securitate, 3 May 1949 in RAP, Docs. 15 and 16, 52–54.
28. Report of Constanța Regional Securitate, 21 July 1949 in RAD, Doc. 17, 92–93.
29. Note of the General Securitate Directorate in RAMA, Doc. 15, 71.
30. Note of the Stalin Regional Securitate, 15 November 1950 in RAMF, Doc. 3, 39–40.
31. Telegram of the Stalin Regional Securitate, 15 November 1950 in RAMF, Doc. 6, 43.
32. Report of the Făgăraș Securitate, 18 December 1950 in RAMF, Doc. 21, 94. The author of the report, Securitate Captain Teodosiu Ioan does not mention the following, but the editors of the volume claim in a footnote that before the team left they burned the property.
33. Report of Military Unit 0199, August 1954 and Report of Military Unit 0487, August 1954 in BBE, Docs. 39 and 40, 229–232.
34. Report of Military Unit 0106, August 1954 in BBE, Doc. 41, 233–234.



35. RAD, 12–13.
36. Report of the Director of Constanța Regional Securitate, Captain Nicolae Doicaru, 18 July 1949 in RAD, Doc. 15, 90.
37. RAB, Vol. II, Docs. 36–40, 78–83.
38. Report of the Suceava Regional Militia, 27 August 1951 and Report of the Suceava Regional Militia, 30 August 1951 in RAB, Vol. II, Docs. 42 and 44, 84, 86.
39. Dorin Dobrinu, “Grupuri minore”, 186–187.
40. Dorin Dobrinu, “Rezistența armată anticomunistă și rezistența greco-catolică în centrul Transilvaniei. Organizația «Partizanii Regelui Mihai—Armata Secretă» (1948–1950)” in Ovidiu Bozgan (ed.), *Biserică, Politică, Societate*, Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2007.
41. Report of the Cluj Regional Militia, 3 March 1949 and Report of the Cluj Regional Militia, 5 March 1949 in RAMA, Docs. 7 and 8, 61–62. Another document of 5 March 1949 gives a different number for the partisans assessing that the group was formed of 26 individuals, of which 12 were captured and 7 killed.
42. Report of Staff Sergeant Octavian Voicu, 6 March 1949 in RAMA, Doc. 14, 69.
43. Report of the Cluj Regional Securitate, 24 March 1949 in RAMA, Doc. 37, 103.
44. Liviu Pleșa, “Implicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată”.
45. RATS, 36, 49–50.
46. RACD, 30.
47. Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România*, 180.
48. BIAS No. 2 (1968), 5. The number of those arrested quoted in this primary source is probably on the conservative side.
49. Dorin Dobrinu, *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România*, 459.
50. Document of gendarmes from Mehedinți, 28 March 1948 in RASV, Doc. 10, 57–58.
51. Report of Securitate Major Kovacs Mihail, 20 August 1950 and Report of Securitate Major N. Dumitrescu, 22 August 1950 in CAR, Docs. 47–48, 220–228.
52. For a good survey of the period see Stelian Tănase, *Elite și societate: guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948–1965*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998.
53. Consiliul Securității Statului, *Buletin intern pentru aparatul Securității Statului*, (BIASS) No. 1 (1968), 35–40.
54. Liviu Țăranu, “Considerații privind evoluția Mișcării Legionare în timpul democrației populare” in *Sangidava*, No. 2, Târgu-Mureș: Ardealul, 2008, 201–205.
55. Note of local gendarmes from Mehedinți, 6 February 1948 in RASV, Doc. 7, 54–55.
56. Table of forbidden songs, 23 September 1948 in RASV, Doc. 82, 122–123.

57. On the larger topic of collectivization and resistance see Dorin Dobrinu, Constantin Iordachi, *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949–1962*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009.
58. See for this policy and Ana Pauker's role in it Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker. The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
59. Synthesis of the peasant riots in the Bihor-Arad region, 12 August 1949 in Dan Cătănuș, Octavian Roske (eds.), *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România. Represiunea*, Vol. I 1949–1953, Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2004 (quoted as CAR), 107.
60. *Ibid.*, 108.
61. *Ibid.*, 111–113.
62. Plan of Arad Command for quelling local riots, 2 August 1949 in CAR, Doc. 4, 74–76.
63. Docs. 5,6,7 in CAR, 76–87.
64. Synthesis of the peasant riots in the Bihor-Arad region, 12 August 1949 in CAR, 115–118.
65. Operative synthesis of the Ministry of the Interior, 10 July 1950 in CAR, Doc. 38, 205–206.
66. Doc. 39, 12 July 1950 in CAR, 206–207.
67. Table made by Bistrița Securitate, 14 April 1950 in CAR, Doc. 26, 144–161.
68. Document of Cluj Securitate, 17 April 1950 in CAR, Doc. 27, 162–186.
69. The most arrests were in Hunedoara Region, 16,146. See Report of the Ministry of the Interior, 1 December 1961 in CAR, Doc. 130, 413–419.
70. Viorel Marineasa, Valentin Sămânță, Daniel Vighi, *Deportarea în Bărăgan. Destine, documente, reportaje*, Timișoara: Mirton, 1996, 9.
71. Miodrag Milin, “Încă o dată despre geneza Bărăganului” in Silviu Sarafolean (ed.), *Deportații în Bărăgan 1951–1956*, Timișoara: Mirton, 2001, X.
72. *Ibid.*, XIII–XV.
73. Viorel Marineasa, *Deportarea în Bărăgan*, 45.
74. Synthesis of the Sânicolau Mare Regional Organization of the PMR in *ibid.*, 72–74.
75. Report of the Timișoara Committee of the PMR, 2 July 1951 in *ibid.*, 78–80.
76. Testimonies of Ana Babeți and Gina Sterian in Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită—istorie povestită. Deportarea în Bărăgan (1951–1956)*, Timișoara: Amarcord, 1997, 146–147, 192.
77. Special bulletin of the Timișoara Regional Securitate, 20 June 1951 in Viorel Marineasa, *Deportarea în Bărăgan*, 81–84.
78. Her recollections are available at <http://www.alternativaonline.ca/Marturii0702.html> consulted 7 December 2015.

79. Interview with Valeria Munteanu in Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită*, 210–211.
80. Synthesis of the Securitate, 9 August 1951 in Viorel Marineasa, *Deportarea în Bărăgan*, 87–97.
81. Interview with Gligor Talianu in Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită*, 242–245.
82. See for some of these deportations, involving between two and three members of the families of the identified rebels Order of the “Gangs” Sector I Teregova, 7 December 1951 in RASV, Doc. 295, 345–346.
83. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, “Serviciul Dislocări și Domicilii Obligatorii (S.D.D.O.) din cadrul Ministerului Afacerilor Interne (1954–1956)” in *Caietele CNSAS*, Vol. II, No. 1(3) (2009), 87–102.
84. Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită*, 7.

## Conclusion

**Abstract** This section sums up the main arguments and relevance of the book, with an emphasis on the relevance of Romanian counterinsurgency and the comparative method in the study of early Cold War asymmetric conflicts.

**Keywords** Cold War • Comparative method • Romanian counterinsurgency • Western counterinsurgency

In the aftermath of the Second World War, imperial powers battled armed opponents in territories they controlled, be they far-flung outposts of empire or territories much closer to home. It did not matter that they were countries with centuries of colonial history or, like the Soviet Union, had just acquired more territory at the expense of its neighbours. Small powers, such as Romania, which underwent a profound, foreign-induced transformation in its economic and power structure, also fought armed rebellions. Cultures differed enormously between the counterinsurgents. They spoke English, French, Dutch, Polish, Russian or Romanian. They ate and drank different things, sung different songs, prayed differently or not at all. Some were already developed industrial nations with consumer goods in relatively easy reach of their middle classes. Some were emerging industrial powerhouses banking everything on the growth of steel and chemical industries. Others were overwhelmingly rural countries with

fields still ploughed with horses or bullocks, much like in the Middle Ages. The British were living in a long-established liberal democracy, at least for the upper and middle-classes. The French, with more recent brushes with authoritarianism, also had a strong democratic tradition and a declared respect for the universal rights of man. The Eastern countries, though, were brutal dictatorships, not of the proletariat but of small, murderous elites claiming to govern in its name.

The insurgents also differed enormously. They were communists or nationalists or even had fascist elements among their ranks. They could boast large numbers, operating in battalion or company strength or, at most, in platoon-sized forces. They had territories or sections of the local communities under their control, or they were forced to live deep in the forests or the mountains, in hiding and in constant fear for their lives. The rebels operated in thick jungles haunted by mosquitoes, snakes, falling trees and tigers or in savannahs, dry deserts, rocky hills and mountains; they could be found in dark alleys in large metropolises or deep in the secular forests of Europe. They spoke Chinese, Malay, Greek, Vietnamese, Bantu, Arabic or Romanian. They prayed to God, to Allah, to deities of the forests or swore by the books of Marx, Lenin and Mao.

Despite this tremendous diversity, counterinsurgency was approached similarly in all of the cases discussed. A government who chose to stay in power rather than surrender, a colonial government who chose fight rather than flight, walked similar paths in the decades after 1945. First, it had to stop the conflict from becoming a civil war. To do this, it had to physically isolate the armed rebels from the civilian population, sometimes at all costs. To do that, governments identified the segments of the population vulnerable to rebel propaganda, and in many cases, deported them *en masse*, either abroad or in territories far removed from those roamed by the partisans. Governments then had to identify and find their opponents. The state intelligence and police apparatus was tasked to do that, through informant networks, interrogations, infiltration, interception of signals and correspondence. The task of disposing of the maquis fell to military troops, who did what they knew best: patrols, mounted checkpoints, searches, sweeps, ambushes, targeted strikes, and large-scale, combined arms operations.

Romanian counterinsurgency, a small affair by comparison, serves as a typical example, an illustration in a nutshell of what was regular in other, better known or simply much larger campaigns. It also shows that small countries share the concerns and approaches of major powers when

confronted with armed groups contesting their mastery of a territory or some specific polices. Romania, much like the rest of the East and the West, shows that victory in classical counterinsurgency was not about hearts and minds but about bullets, brains and barb wire.

## APPENDIX

Table of key partisan groups in Romania

(This table has been compiled from the collections of documents quoted in this chapter).

<i>Name of the group</i>	<i>Leader</i>	<i>Period of operations</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Type (guerrilla/subversive)</i>	<i>Size of the group</i>
National Resistance Movement	Gen. Aurel Aldea	1945–1946	Bucharest	Coordination structure	Unknown
Ion Uță group	Col. Ion Uță	1947–1949	Banat-Mehedinti (S-W Romania)	Guerrilla	20
Macoveiciuc group	Vladimir Macoveiciuc	1944–1947	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Guerrilla	47
Harsmei group	Silvestru Harsmei	1949–1951	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Guerrilla	12
Avram Iancu's Haiduks	Gavrilă Olteanu	1944–1946	Central Romania	Guerrilla	Unknown
Teodor Șușman group	Teodor Șușman	1947–1958	Apușeni (N-W Romania)	Guerrilla	7–8
Dabija-Macavci group	Maj. Nicolae Dabija	1948–1949	Apușeni (N-W Romania)	Guerrilla	Over 20
Independent Romania Organization	Nistor Bădicianu	1948–1949	Oradea (N-W Romania)	Subversive	4
Vlad Țepeș II	Victor Lupșa	1947–1950	Vrancea and Brașov (Central Romania)	Guerrilla	Unknown
Arsenescu group	Col. Gheorghe Arsenescu	1949–1961	Făgăraș (Central Romania)	Guerrilla	16
Vasile Motrescu	Vasile Motrescu	Early 1950s	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Lone guerrilla	1
Cantemir group	Gligor Cantemir	1947–1952	Arad (W Romania)	Guerrilla	Unknown
Gavrilă group	Ion Gavrilă	1950–1956	Făgăraș (Central Romania)	Guerrilla	Over 20
Sinaia group	?	1945–1946	Sinaia (Central Romania)	Guerrilla, not yet active	14
Paragină group	Ion and Cristea Paragină	1948–1953	Vrancea (Central-eastern Romania)	Guerrilla	Over 20
Cristea group	Traian Cristea	Mid-1950s	Răcari (S Romania)	Subversive-guerrilla	Unknown
Popșa group	Vasile Popșa	1948–1949	Maramureș (N-W Romania)	Guerrilla	9
“Young Nest”	?	1948–1949	Sighet (N-W Romania)	Subversive	Less than 10
Ghivnici group	Andrei Ghivnici	1946–1951	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Guerrilla	5–6
Capotă-Dejeu group	Iosif Capotă, Alexandru Dejeu	Mid-1950s	Cluj (Central-Western Romania)	Subversive	23



<i>Name of the group</i>	<i>Leader</i>	<i>Period of operations</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Type (guerrilla/subversive)</i>	<i>Size of the group</i>
“White Guard” Leon Şuşman group	Leonida Bodiu Leon Şuşman	1948-1949 1948-1957	Bistriţa-Năsăud Turda (Central-Western Romania)	Subversive-guerrilla Guerrilla	Over 20 Less than 10
Diamandi Ionescu group	Air commodore Diamandi Ionescu	1949-1950	Apuseni (N-W Romania)	Guerrilla	20
Dobrogea guerrillas	Gogu Puiu	1947-1949	Dobrogea (S-E Romania)	Guerrilla	Over 20
Cenuşă group	Constantin Cenuşă	1944-1952	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Guerrilla	Less than 10
Cămăruţă group	Vasile Cămăruţă	1949-1950	Bukovina (N-E Romania)	Guerrilla	Unknown
Arnăuţoiu group	Lt. Toma Arnăuţoiu	1949-1958	Făgăraş (Central Romania)	Guerrilla	Less than 20

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