

## THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN ROMANIA. THE FIGHT FOR THE CONTROL OVER THE SPECIAL INFORMATION SERVICE (MARCH – JULY 1945)

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**Abstract:** *Control over the institutions of force was essential for the Romanian Communist Party's strategy to seize complete state power. In such a context, the Special Information Service's politicized activity stood out immediately after the establishment of the Petru Groza government, on March 6, 1945.*

*Emil Bodnăraș was the key figure appointed for this mission by the party leadership. This study explores the most important period, March – July 1945, using documents from secret archives, some of which have recently been made available to researchers.*

**Keywords:** *Emil Bodnăraș, Special Information Service, Communist takeover, Cold War, Soviet occupation, Popular democracy.*

**Rezumat:** *Preluarea puterii în România de către comuniști. Lupta pentru controlul asupra Serviciului Special de Informații (martie – iulie 1945). Pentru strategia Partidului Comunist Român de preluare a puterii totale în Stat, controlul asupra instituțiilor de forță a fost un element esențial. În acest context, operațiunea de politicizare a Serviciului Special de Informații, imediat după instaurarea guvernului condus de Petru Groza, la 6 martie 1945, trebuie subliniată.*

*Figura centrală desemnată de către conducerea partidului cu această misiune a fost Emil Bodnăraș. Studiul nostru își propune să analizeze perioada cea mai importantă, respectiv cea din martie și până în iulie 1945, bazându-se pe documente din arhivele secrete, unele dintre acestea fiind puse de curând în circuitul cercetării.*

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of the Second World War, Stalin devised a plan that aimed to integrate the states of Eastern Europe into a Soviet-style structure. In this sense, he used a tactic that is common everywhere, obviously with certain regional variations. One of the classic stages of the rise of indigenous communists in such countries is first a genuine coalition, which they later manage to dominate from behind the scenes and bring to light, allowing one to speak then of a purely extreme left government.

A central role in this plan of the Kremlin was played by taking control of the secret services from the phase when the communists entered the government controlled the Shadow Power, still resorting to the tactic of using 'companions'. These were political people with a bourgeois background who had either been close to the extreme left or were trying to protect themselves by collaborating with the communists.<sup>1</sup>

The Romanian Communist Party played a marginal role until August 23, 1944, after functioning illegally for two decades (1924 – 1944). The situation changed completely during the Red Army's *de facto* occupation of the country, and they took advantage of every opportunity to carry out a policy of gradually gaining a dominant position within state institutions.<sup>2</sup> This is how the government led by Petru Groza, was established on March 6, 1945, under the banner of the National Democratic Front.<sup>3</sup> Along with political issues, such as re-establishing the Romanian administration in northwestern Transylvania or the agrarian reform, one of the important objectives of the new power was taking control of the Special Information

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<sup>1</sup> In Romania such figures included the prime minister imposed on March 6, 1945, Petru Groza, and the vice-president of the Council, Gheorghe Tătărescu, to name just the well-known people. See Gheorghe Onișoru, *Revolta „tovarășului de drum”. Memoriul lui Gheorghe Tătărescu din 22 mai 1947* [Revolt of the 'way comrade'. The Memorandum of Gheorghe Tătărescu from May 22, 1947], in "Arhivele totalitarismului", 2022, no. 1-2, p. 93-116.

<sup>2</sup> See: Stefano Bottoni, *Reassessing the Communist Takeover in Romania: Violence, Institutional Continuity, and Ethnic Conflict Management*, in "East European Politics and Societies", Vol. 24, 2010, No. 1, pp. 59-89.

<sup>3</sup> For more details see Gheorghe Onișoru, „*Stalin și poporul rus...*” *Democrație și dictatură în România contemporană. Premizele instaurării comunismului* [‘Stalin and the Russian people...’ Democracy and dictatorship in contemporary Romania. The premises of the establishment of communism], Bucharest, Corint Publishing House, 2021, pp. 239-299.

Service and transforming it into an effective tool for fighting the opposition.

**EMIL BODNĂRAȘ:  
A CONTROVERSIAL AND STILL ENIGMATIC CHARACTER**

The person assigned for this purpose was Emil Bodnăraș. Officer, a former defector to the Soviet Union<sup>4</sup> caught on his return to the country in July 1934,<sup>5</sup> was tried and sentenced to ten years in prison; he met famous communist leaders in the penitentiary, led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Released on November 8, 1942, after serving eight years of detention,<sup>6</sup> Bodnăraș left with precise instructions from him, which he followed.

When Emil Bodnăraș obtained his release, he made contact with the party leadership, using the code name Felix.<sup>7</sup> He also benefited from the freedom of action granted to indigenous communists after the self-dissolution of the Komintern on 15 May 1943.<sup>8</sup>

Applying his experience as an officer, particularly the one acquired during his two years in the Soviet Union, he quickly established himself as an expert on military matters. The fact is also proven by a report from November 28, 1943, entitled *The War Apparatus of the Romanian Communist Party*.<sup>9</sup>

Bodnăraș proposed that in addition to the Central Committee, a Special Central Commission, made up of three members, should lead a Special Operative

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<sup>4</sup> Born on February 10, 1904, at Iaslovăț, in Bucovina, he graduated from the Artillery as valedictorian in 1930. On the night of February 16/17, 1932, the young lieutenant crossed the Dniester through the Hotin area, coming into contact with the Soviet secret services and returning to the country two years later, after an investigation at the O.G.P.U. (Unified State Political Directorate), followed by an internship at one of the espionage schools under the auspices of the Komintern. See Central National Historical Archives, fund *Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Special Information Service*, file 2/1926, f. 49; Florian Banu, *Emil Bodnăraș, patriot român sau agent sovietic?* [Emil Bodnăraș, Romanian patriot or Soviet agent?], in "Enigmele istoriei", I, 2020, no. 1, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund *Collection of party files of party members from illegal years who died*, File B 171, f. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 7v.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, Fund *C.C. of the R.C.P. Chancellery Section*, File 86/1943, f. 7-13.

<sup>8</sup> See Gheorghe Onișoru, *May 15, 1943: Dissolution of the Komintern and its effects on the Communist Party of Romania*, "Annals of the University of Craiova", History, Vol. XIX, 2014, no. 2, pp. 75-84.

<sup>9</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund *C.C. of the R.C.P. Administrative Political Section*, file 2/1943, f. 2-11.

Group. It consisted of five divisions,<sup>10</sup> each composed of sections, and there was also an organization at a regional level. Based on this plan, they would activate the formations of patriotic struggle groups starting August 23, 1944, first against the German troops, then moving on to operations of a political nature directed against the bourgeois parties.

However, the most important operation directed by Emil Bodnăraș remains the one of April 4, 1944, when he and Iosif Rangheț took Ștefan Foriș, the Communist Party secretary, off the street, detained him in a conspiratorial house and imposed a triumvirate, along with Constantin Pârvulescu.<sup>11</sup> On April 16, Bodnăraș informed Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Teohari Georgescu, imprisoned in the Târgu Jiu camp, about the success of the operation.<sup>12</sup>

Emil Bodnăraș seconded Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu during the preparation of the coup on August 23, 1944, and was introduced to Palace circles under the name engineer Ceaușu<sup>13</sup> at the conspiratorial meeting on the night of June 13/14.<sup>14</sup> He was not content to be Pătrășcanu's shadow but actively participated in the preparations to overthrow Marshal Antonescu. In this respect, he presented on July 24 a Plan of political-organizational, civil and military measures to be taken when the armed insurrection began.<sup>15</sup> This Plan proved to be a very helpful tool for the success of the operation.

Another spectacular moment for Emil Bodnăraș was the taking over, on the night of August 23/24, after 2 o'clock, of former marshal Ion Antonescu from the Royal Palace and placing him under the guard of patriotic troops in a conspiratorial house in the Vatra Luminoasă district. From there, he would be picked up by

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<sup>10</sup> Division I Intelligence, II Liaison, III Operations, IV Policy and V Services.

<sup>11</sup> During Foriș's detention (under the conspiratorial name Ilie), he received a letter notifying him that he had to hand over all the documents he had, the Central Committee being dissolved. See Central National Historical Archives, fund *C.C. of R.C.P. Chancellery Section*, file 49/1944, f. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, file 52/1944, f. 8-10.

<sup>13</sup> For more details, Gheorghe Onișoru, „*Stalin și poporul rus...*” [‘Stalin and the Russian people...’], pp. 136-186.

<sup>14</sup> On October 31, 1952, Bodnăraș evoked the preliminaries on August 23, 1944, in a discussion with Constantin Pârvulescu, emphasizing with obvious satisfaction “Nobody knew me, not even Maniu, nobody. I met them all then for the first time. I noticed that they were very surprised that Patrășcanu came with me. I was then introduced as engineer Ceaușu. Patrășcanu was unhappy with the fact that the decision was made to double him...”. See Central National Historical Archives, Fund *C.C. of the R.C.P. Chancellery Section*, file 97/1952, f. 42-54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, Fund *C.C. of the R.C.P. Administrative Political Section*, file 70/1944, f. 1-4.

the Soviet General Colonel Ivan Z. Susaikov on August 31 at 5 p.m. and taken to the command post of the Soviet 33rd Army, to be sent to Moscow on September 2.<sup>16</sup>

The report drawn up by the commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, Marshal Rodion I. Malinovski on the subject reveals the bold attitude of Emil Bodnăraș, who tried - as far as possible - to prevent the takeover of Ion Antonescu by the Soviets. "On August 31, 1944, General Colonel Susaikov approached Colonel Teodorescu, the head of the Bucharest garrison, and demanded the surrender of Antonescu. Teodorescu replied that he did not know where he was. Susaikov insisted, pointing out that the situation would otherwise escalate. Teodorescu informed the government. Comrade Bodnăraș, a member of the C.C. of the R.C.P., and General Dembrowski came.<sup>17</sup>

The representatives of the Soviet command were led to the house where Antonescu was held. Susaikov claimed that the guard was not properly organized, despite the ten Romanian communists armed with revolvers, and as a result, the Soviets took over the detainees. Emil Bodnăraș objected that it was better for the prisoners to stay there, adding a Soviet guard. Susaikov refused. Then Emil Bodnăraș requested that the transport be carried out with a Romanian escort. The transport of the arrested was carried out under the guard of an escort made up of Soviet soldiers and three Romanian communists. On August 31, at 5 p.m., the prisoners were taken to the command post of the 33rd Red Army, where they spent the night under Soviet guard, and on the morning of September 1, they were brought to the Front command post. On September 2, they were sent to Moscow."<sup>18</sup>

Emil Bodnăraș opted for a reserved political approach between August 23, 1944, and March 6, 1945, preferring to deal mainly with the patriotic battle formations. Thus, although at the time of Antonescu's fall, he was part of the triumvirate that led the party, he remained in the shadow of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu or even Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu.

### **SPECIAL INFORMATION SERVICE UNTIL MARCH 6, 1945**

The Special Information Service operated in Romania from 1924 to 1951, when it was incorporated into the General Direction of State Security by decree no. 264 of April 2.<sup>19</sup> During the interwar period, under the leadership of Mihail

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, Fund I.S.I.S.P. Moments from the history of the Romanian people, Fund XIII, File 9-89, f. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Dombrowki had been appointed Prefect of the Capital Police after August 23, 1944.

<sup>18</sup> Central National Historical Archives, *loc. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Alin Spănu, Cristian Troncotă, *Serviciul Special de Informații* [The Special Information

Moruzov, director between April 12, 1924, and September 13, 1940, the Service was primarily at the service of King Charles II, carrying out intense activity both internally and externally.

After the Sovereign abdicated and General Ion Antonescu assumed state power, Mihail Moruzov was arrested on September 8, 1940, and his duties were taken over by Colonel Ioan Nicolaid, a Major Staff Army officer.<sup>20</sup> Imprisoned in Jilava, the former director of the S.I.S. would be among the victims of the Jilava prison massacre on the night of November 26/72, 1940.<sup>21</sup>

After a short two-month interim, on November 11, General Antonescu issued the decree appointing Eugen Cristescu - at that time director of the State Administration, Personnel and Mobilization within the Ministry of the Interior - as the head of the Service.<sup>22</sup> He took office on November 15 and served as one of the Head of State's devoted men until August 23. On November 19, a decree-law no. 3813 was published outlining the organization and operation of the S.I.S., composed of Management, Secretariat, Section I Information (Eastern, Western and Southern Fronts) and Section II Counterintelligence.<sup>23</sup>

Between August 23, 1944, and March 6, 1945, the Service experienced a period of deep turmoil, as evidenced by the departure of three directors in less than six months.<sup>24</sup> On August 27, 1944, when Eugen Cristescu had disappeared during the coup d'état, Colonel Victor Siminel took over, attempting to implement internal restructuring during the transition from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to the Ministry of War.<sup>25</sup>

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Service], in Octavian Roske (Coord.), *România 1945 - 1989. Enciclopedia regimului comunist. Represiunea* [Romania 1945 - 1989. The Encyclopedia of the Communist Regime. The Repression], Vol. IV, S - Ș, Bucharest, I.N.S.T., 2021, p. 243.

<sup>20</sup> Ottmar Trașcă, *Relațiile politice și militare româno-germane, septembrie 1940 - august 1944* [Romanian - German Political and Military Relations, September 1940 - August 1944], Cluj, Argonaut, 2013, p. 391.

<sup>21</sup> See the prosecutors' report, Central National Historical Archives, Fund *Ministry of the Interior. Varia*, File 27/1940, f. 1-10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, Fund *Ministry of National Propaganda. Internal press*, File 480, f. 87a.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of the Interior, *Organizarea și funcționarea organelor Ministerului de Interne de la înființare până în prezent* [The organization and functioning of the bodies of the Ministry of the Interior from its establishment until now], Bucharest, 1978, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Directors: Victor Siminel (August 25, 1944 and September 20, 1944), Ioan Lissievici (September 25 - December 25, 1944) and Gheorghe Săvoiu (December 25, 1944 - March 6, 1945).

<sup>25</sup> By circular order no. 1,156 of September 9, 1944, signed by Victor Siminel, the Special Intelligence Service is reorganized into four Sections, namely External Intelligence,

However, Siminel's mandate was extremely short, because on September 19 Colonel Ioan Lissievici replaced him.<sup>26</sup> Five days later, on September 24, Eugen Cristescu was arrested and handed over to the Military Command of the Capital<sup>27</sup> and the media did not overlook the topic<sup>28</sup>. In this context, on September 27, Traian Borcescu, head of the Counter-intelligence Service of S.I.S., sent a Report to the Minister of War denying claims that the Service had served as a Gestapo outpost during the war. "S.I.S. was an intelligence service of the Romanian state, having no instrumentation equipment on the ground and whose activity was limited to the procurement of military and civil information, according to the orders and instructions received from the Head of State, personally only by the director of the Service."

Moreover, Borcescu claimed that through the work he did, important politicians escaped arrest or even deportation to Germany, and all the counter-informative material collected was prepared only for Marshal Antonescu and Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Antonescu.<sup>29</sup>

In this uncertain context, Colonel Iona Lissievici, the new head of the S.I.S., sent a report on November 27, 1944, to the tutelary forum – the Ministry of War, specifically to the undersecretary of State, General Ilie Crețulescu. The document captures the state of confusion among the institution's employees and analyses the factors that determined it.

This Report<sup>30</sup> was inspired by General Nicolae Vlădescu's visit to the headquarters of the Special Information Service concerning organisational

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Counterintelligence, Technical and Administrative. See Florian Banu, Liviu Țăranu (Coords.), *Securitatea, 1948 – 1989. Monografie*, [The Securitate, 1948 – 1989. Monography], Vol. I, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun, 2016, p. 47-48.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> On October 12, 1944, the Soviets took Eugen Cristescu and sent him to Moscow for investigations. He returned to the country to be tried as part of Marshal Antonescu group, and was initially sentenced to death, then the punishment was commuted to hard labour for life ("Monitorul Oficial", part I, no. 128, June 5, 1946, p. 5715). See Cristian Troncoță, *Omul de taină al Mareșalului* [The Marshal's Confident], Bucharest, 2005, p. 115 and appendix 2.

<sup>28</sup> For example, on September 28, 1944, National Peasant Party journal, "Dreptatea" (The Justice), published a virulent attack on Eugen Cristescu and the S.I.S., *At the Pillar of Infamy*. The attack is, however, somewhat surprising if we consider the fact that during the war, Eugen Cristescu mediated the connections between Iuliu Maniu and Ion Antonescu.

<sup>29</sup> Archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Fund *Penal*, File 40.011, vol. 56, f. 27-29.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, Fund "Y", File 25.374/Bucharest, Vol. 3, f. 101-107.

measures on November 25, 1944. Lissievici specified that he had already done so by cutting the number of Sections from 12 to five, plus the Secretariat. The number of employees also decreased from 89 officers, 814 civil servants, 22 non-commissioned officers and 175 troops, to 37 officers, 630 civil servants (including drivers, mechanics, washermen, workers, etc.) and 13 non-commissioned officers.<sup>31</sup>

One of the big problems of S.I.S. was the restoration of the information network, which practically disintegrated following the passage of the front line across the national territory, thus in regions such as Moldova and Dobrogea there was no longer any connection. Another important problem was that “the majority of the officials are frightened by the measures depriving them of freedom, taken by the Soviet bodies against some of their comrades.”<sup>32</sup>

On December 24, 1944, Colonel Gheorghe Săvoiu replaced Lissievici<sup>33</sup> and was in command until March 12, 1945, during a time of intense political turmoil that led to the forced resignation of Prime Minister Nicolae Rădescu.

### **MARCH 1945: COMMUNIST TAKEOVER ON S.I.S. BEGINS**

On March 14, a week after the installation of the Groza government, Nicolae D. Stănescu,<sup>34</sup> who led the political group within the II Counterintelligence Section, was appointed as the new director of the Special Information Service. However, the big change came the next day, when the representative of the Communist Party, Emil Bodnăraș, took over the position of secretary general at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.<sup>35</sup>

At the proposal of Bodnăraș, on March 24, the government decided that the Special Information Service should move from the Ministry of War to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, under the direct coordination of the General Secretary.<sup>36</sup> An operation to purge the Service and bring in new cadres loyal to the Communist Party immediately began. At the same time, former director Ioan Lissievici, Colonel Traian Borcescu and other senior officers were

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>33</sup> Florian Banu, Liviu Țăranu, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Born on August 17, 1911, at Bucharest. *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> He replaced Constantin I. Botez, “Monitorul Oficial”, part I, no. 62, March 16, 1945, p. 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund *Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Transcripts*, File 3/1945, p. 390.



arrested on March 26 and initially sent for about two weeks to Moscow, where they were interrogated by the Soviet services. When they returned to the country, they were imprisoned at Malmaison and released on December 23, 1945.<sup>37</sup>

On April 27, 1945, ministerial decision no. 79 establishing the structure, functioning, and powers of the Special Information Service was issued as well as the initiative of Emil Bodnăraș.<sup>38</sup> The most important element was the limitation of the powers available to the director of the institution, practically totally subordinated to the 'coordinating factor', respectively the general secretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.<sup>39</sup>

The decision specified that the Service was staffed with civilian and military personnel (Art. 3), and its organization would be entirely secret (Art. 5). The General Director, responsible for the "informational and administrative direction of the Service", theoretically had important duties, according to Article 6: "Fixes the attributions for all subdivisions of the Service, as well as for the entire Service staff; Appoints, promotes, distributes and conducts every move of civilian Service personnel, for all ranks; Manages all funds associated with the Service and approves costs of any size".<sup>40</sup>

The 'theoretically' important duties of the Director General include the provisions of the following article of the analysed normative act, which states that "In exercising all the powers provided for in this decision, the General Director of the Special Information Service is directly responsible to the General Secretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers."<sup>41</sup>

Also essential are the provisions of article 29, justifying the purges from the Service ordered and patronized by Emil Bodnăraș: "The purification and

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<sup>37</sup> The information appears in the statement given by Traian Borcescu, under arrest, on May 15, 1962. See Archive of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives, *Fund Penal*, File 10.933, Vol 13, f. 399.

<sup>38</sup> Ladislau-Antoniou Csendes, *NKVD/ KGB Approaches and Party Control in Romanian Secret Services and Army between 1948 - 1964*, in Alexandra Grůňová (Ed.), *NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and Eastern Europe 1945 - 1989. Anthology of the international conference, Bratislava 14. - 16. 11. 2007*, Bratislava, Nation's Memory Institute, 2008, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> First article of the decision signed by Petru Groza was explicit: "The Special Intelligence Service is a State Institution and functions under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, under the control of the Secretary General, charged with this attribution by the Decision of the President of the Council of Ministers." See Archive of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives, *Fund S.I.E.*, File 253, f. 2-13.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

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

retraining of Special Information Service staff of all categories will be done until the term specified by Law for the purification of public administrations No. 217, published in the Official Gazette No. 74 of March 30, 1945".<sup>42</sup>

### A RELEVANT DOCUMENT

A variety of archive documents and analyses of historians who tracked the establishment of communist rule in Romania demonstrate how things were in reality. An important source recently made available to researchers is a typewritten unsigned report containing pen corrections, which at the very least can be attributed to Emil Bodnăraș himself. The document *Report on the activity of the Special Section (Special Information Service) from March 6, 1945, to date* is relevant for the leadership of the Communist Party and is dated July 3, 1945, providing a very interesting perspective on the class struggle from the viewpoint of an espionage service.<sup>43</sup>

The first part of the report concerns the S.I.S. Organization, and the introductory sentence leaving no room for interpretation: "Immediately after the installation of the Petru Groza government, it was decided to reassign the Special Information Service, which from the most odious instrument of Antonescu's dictatorship had to become a powerful weapon in the fight that the government started against the forces of reaction, and especially an instrument in the service of the party and our common interests."

In other words, Emil Bodnăraș openly admitted that the mission he received was done using a state institution and gradually turning it into a Communist Party instrument. The official document states why the Special Information Service was transferred from the Ministry of War to the General Secretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

Another interesting finding relates, in light of the Report's completion date of July 3, to the actions of the group of advisers around King Michael I, which Bodnăraș described as 'a reactionary-militarist clique'. The Palace was aware of the danger of placing the Special Intelligence Service under the command of a

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*. It is interesting that, according to article 33, the Decision of April 27, signed by Prime Minister Petru Groza and General Secretary Emil Bodnăraș, came into force on April 18.

<sup>43</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund *Collection 50. Documents elaborated by the repressive organs about the activity of the Romanian Communist Party and revolutionary mass organizations*, File 10.615, f. 1-29.

communist leader. Consequently, there was an attempt to delay the enactment of the decree on the so-called reorganization of the institution, which was not sanctioned by the King until April 14.

A less widely circulated piece of information in the specialized literature is that the Report talks about the action of a Special Section, which would be included in the S.I.S. only after April 17, although the directives of the Communist Party had foreseen this even before March 6.<sup>44</sup> Under these conditions, Special Service staff operated between March 6 and April 30 only as observers of the Special Information Service, "without being invested with any official capacity."<sup>45</sup> Only at the end of April, the 'specialists' were able to benefit from the reorganization of the institution and were appointed directors in the newly created Coordination Directorate, "which masks in this phrase the express powers of the Special Section."<sup>46</sup>

Thus, 22 people were first assigned to the Special Information Service, all of whom either were members of the Communist Party or 'politically close'. Of these, seven entered the Coordination Directorate, and the rest were redistributed to other sections with the mission "to control the personnel and activity of the S.I.S.". It should be noted that the Service had at the end of April 769 employees, 650 civil and 119 military personnel.

The first purge targeted people deemed compromised due to their activity during the time of Marshal Antonescu's government. The result was a batch of 230 civilians and 18 military personnel who were removed, which is about a third of the employees. It should be emphasized that among the 18 officers, 16 were superiors.

In parallel, a new organizational chart of the Special Information Service was adopted, which was to be led by a career General Director, who was responsible for technical and administrative duties. Four sections completed the organization scheme: Staff, Secretariat, Administrative<sup>47</sup>; Foreign Information<sup>48</sup>;

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>45</sup> The Report emphasizes that "They limited themselves to controlling the activity of the S.I.S. through the General Director and prepared the documentary material regarding the value of the Service, the organizational situation, as they tried to control the activity of the senior staff of the S.I.S. through personal contacts, thus preparing a first bundle of elements from the Service with which to make a first reclassification." *Ibidem.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>47</sup> "with the mission to take care of the civil and military situation of the staff, as well as purely administrative matters: cash register, credit bureau, vehicles." *Ibidem.*

<sup>48</sup> "with the mission of collecting information from outside the borders, systematized in

Counterintelligence<sup>49</sup>; Counterinformation.<sup>50</sup>

The Special Section, listed as the Directorate of Studies and Coordination in the organizational chart, played a distinctive function, as shown by its supervision attributions over personnel operations as well as the institution as a whole and by the fact that most of its members were conspirators. One issue that stood out was the addition of a new task, that of “politicizing the entire S.I.S. apparatus.”

Undoubtedly, such a task was difficult, but it reveals that the Communist Party was determined to apply both short-term and long-term policies, which is why people training became a fundamental element. Until then, professionals who understood Bodnăraș's message were successfully used, one of whom was the Special Section's appointed director, Lucian Stupineanu.

As a result, by the end of the first stage of transformation after passing under the total control of Bodnăraș, the Special Information Service had embarked on a road of deep and even irreversible mutations. However, there was still much to do, so the General Secretary of the Government set three new goals for the second phase of his ‘reform’: strengthening the number and quality of Special Section collaborators; a second massive purge of S. I. S. officials; a closer collaboration between the different S.I.S. sections and the Special Section.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, on June 1, 1945, the second wave of purges took place at the Special Information Service, and 130 civil and 59 military officials were removed, most of them senior officers. This meant that more than half of the existing staff on March 6, 1945, had already left the institution. Among the new arrivals, a good part went to the Special Section, which reached a hundred members.

A communist cell directed by a former illegalist, Ion Didenco,<sup>52</sup> was also

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three sectors: North, West and South. This section will become more important upon once diplomatic relations with the other countries resume.” *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> “with the mission of supervising the activity of foreign Legations and Intelligence Services, at the same time to follow the general intelligence activity of espionage systematized in the various countries. The Counter-Espionage Directorate also has its own investigation and surveillance agency.” *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> “with the mission of ensuring internal counter-informative action, in the following the sectors: political, social, nationalities, economic and military, as well as having its own investigation and surveillance agency.” *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> He had escaped from the Târgu Jiu camp together with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on the night of August 9/10, 1944. Didenco was a pseudonym; his name was Ion Anton Vidrașcu, born in 1906 in Odesa, party member since 1936. See Central National Historical Archives, Fund *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Collection*, File 671, p. 10 and File 674, vol. I-II.

created at the beginning of June 1945, in keeping with the politicization of the institution and as a new feature for an espionage service. In the same sense, a Trade Union was established on June 13.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the political work, Emil Bodnăraş did not neglect the informative work either, as the agency's maintenance and consolidation was an important priority. Hubert was the conspiratorial name of one of the best political informers, found in many files containing information notes coming from the Special Information Service during 1945 – 1947.<sup>54</sup> The Report identifies him as Cohn Burăh, 44 years old, a member of the Communist Party who had been recruited since September 1944 to be used in connection with the National Peasant Party due to his friendship with one of the Maniu's men, Gică Macărescu. From the latter, he obtained a lot of information regarding Iuliu Maniu and other leaders of the party. Thanks to his good results, Hubert<sup>55</sup> became a resident, having in turn a network of informants who helped him obtain information from the American and British missions in Bucharest.

Because of the policy carried out by Bodnăraş, on the drafting date - July 3, 1945, of the analysed Report, the S.I.S. had 297 civilian employees, and the 99 employees of the Special Section, even though between May 1 and July 1, 437 employees had been purged.<sup>56</sup>

As for the future of the Service, Emil Bodnăraş believed that the good path he had started on could not lead to the expected results if the General Director Nicolae Stănescu, considered too close to the old regime, was not replaced. The deadline given in the Report for this step was two weeks, but the General Secretary's wish was fulfilled sooner. On July 12, Stănescu<sup>57</sup> submitted his

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, Fund Collection 50. Documents elaborated by the repressive bodies about the activity of the Romanian Communist Party and revolutionary mass organizations, File 10.615, ff. 1-29.

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

<sup>55</sup> The Hubert source did indeed produce many high-quality briefing notes, such as those of 24 and 28 August 1945, drawn up at the height of the crisis leading to the 'royal strike'. See Archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Fund Documentary, File 4033, f. 150-151.

<sup>56</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund Collection 50. Documents elaborated by the repressive bodies about the activity of the Romanian Communist Party and revolutionary mass organizations, File 10.615, ff. 1-29.

<sup>57</sup> In March 1950, Stănescu was detained for a few days, then he was released and returned to the informative work, only to be arrested again on October 20, 1950, for six years; *Ibidem*, Fund I.S.I.S.P. Memories and memoirs regarding the revolutionary and democratic labour movement in Romania (fund XVII), File 10, Vol. I, ff. 4-18.

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resignation and Lucian Stupineanu took his position.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The takeover of the Special Intelligence Service by the communists immediately after the installation of the Groza government was not a result of the struggle for power between various political forces. It was a well-thought-out plan that, when implemented, was supposed to bring additional leverage to the extreme left as it built the totalitarian regime it was going to patronize. In this context, Emil Bodnăraș played an essential role because he managed to not only purge the Service and bring in obedient staff, verified communists, but also to start achieving important results in the line of informative work. Even if from the summer of 1945 there was a race between the S.I.S. and the Directorate of the Security Police under the control of the Minister of the Interior, Teohari Georgescu,<sup>59</sup> the conclusion is that the secret services fully contributed to the establishment of communism in Romania. The actions of Emil Bodnăraș from March to July 1945 have proved particularly significant from this point of view.

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<sup>58</sup> He maintained his position until January 1947, when he was replaced by Serghei Nicolau. See Archive of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives, Fund *Penal*, File 10.931, Vol. 12, f. 54.

<sup>59</sup> Relevant in this sense is the report drawn up by the leadership of the S.I.S., on July 12, 1946, analysing the relations with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and insisting on the hostile attitude of the general secretary Avram Bunaciu and general Alexandru Nicolschi, head of the Corps of Detectives. See S.R.I., *Cartea Albă a Securității* [The White Book of Securitate], Vol. I, *August 23, 1944 - August 30, 1948*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 311-315.

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