

# **Caietele CNSAS**

**Revistă semestrială editată de  
Consiliul Național  
pentru  
Studierea Arhivelor Securității**

## **Reeducare și propagandă**

**Anul VIII, nr. 2 (16)/2015**

**Editura CNSAS  
București  
2017**

# CUPRINS

## I. Aparatul represiv comunist. Instituții, cadre, obiective

Mihai DEMETRIADE, <i>Istoricul Serviciului de Contrainformații Penitenciare (1949-1967)</i> .....	7
---	---

## II. Sub lupa Securității

Roland CLARK, <i>Re-amintirea lui Codreanu: virtuți fasciste maligne la închisoarea de la Aiud (1964)</i> .....	181
Dragoș URSU, <i>Misticism și reeducare. Avataruri ale confruntării dintre deținuți și regim în cadrul reeducării de la Aiud</i> .....	217
Tereza-Brîndușa PALADE, <i>Mânia Arhanghelului: etno-teologie și propagandă fascistă în scrierile lui Nichifor Crainic</i> .....	241
Valentin VASILE, <i>Aproape o jumătate de veac de sport și propagandă în România (1945-1989)</i> .....	259
Cristina PREUTU, <i>Rolul și efectul scrisorilor adresate puterii în România socialistă</i> .....	319

## III. Documente

Oana IONEL DEMETRIADE, <i>Grupul democrat-progresist din lagărul de la Caracal (1945). Documente ale reeducării ideologice</i> .....	337
--	-----

## II. Sub lupa Securității

**Roland CLARK**

### Re-Membering Codreanu: Maligning Fascist Virtues in Aiud Prison, 1964

**Re-amintirea lui Codreanu: virtuți fasciste maligne la închisoarea de la Aiud  
(1964)**

În 1964, un grup de 106 deținuți de la închisoarea Aiud scriseseră memoriul colectiv *Despre organizația legionară: Misticism, masacre, trădare*. În acest memoriu au repovestit istoria Legiunii Arhanghelului Mihail, mișcarea fascistă din cauza căreia fuseseră închiși, pe motiv că ar fi susținut-o. Aceștia au scris două volume de memorii ca parte a “reeducării” înainte de a fi eliberați în societatea aflată acum sub dominație comunistă sub conducerea Partidului Comunist. Spre deosebire de majoritatea ideologiilor, fascismul nu a avut o doctrină sau un crez pe care deținuții să-l poată retracta pentru a-și demonstra renunțarea la apartenența mișcării. În schimb, aceștia în mod sistematic s-au calomniat între ei și pe alți foști activiști, argumentând faptul că ei niciodată nu au practicat cu adevărat virtuțile care conform crezului legionar defineau fascismul în România. *Despre organizația legionară* vorbește despre devianță sexuală, superstiție, trădare și violență ca fiind caracteristici ale fascismului românesc din perioada 1922 până în 1964 și laudă sistemul brutal al închisorii ca fiind singura cale prin care bolile sociale produse de fascism pot fi remediate.

**Etichete:** reeducare, închisoare, fascism, memorie, masculinitate

**Keywords:** Reeducation, Prison, Fascism, Memory, Masculinity

The Romanian Communist Party celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the collapse of Ion Antonescu’s right-wing government with Decree No. 411/1964, which freed the last of the 15,035 political prisoners who were progressively released from Romanian prisons between 1962 and 1964. Prison authorities classified 6,255 of these prisoners as “legionaries,” meaning that even though they had been officially accused of “plotting against the social order,” they were incarcerated because of their alleged affiliations with the Legion of the

Archangel Michael.<sup>1</sup> A fascist movement established by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927, the Legion had ruled the country from September 1940 to January 1941, and individuals identified with the Legion had been involved in anti-communist activities during the 1940s. Prior to their release in July 1964, a group of 105 prisoners involved in the Collective of Cultural and Educational Clubs produced a richly illustrated two-volume history of the Legion as proof that they had been “reeducated” and were ready to return to society.

The Collective’s book, *On the Legionary Organization: Mysticism, Massacres, Betrayal (Despre organizația legionară: Misticism, masacre, tradare)*, slandered the Legion shamelessly, inverting legionary values in order to discredit it as thoroughly as possible.<sup>2</sup> Unlike communism, liberalism, or Christianity, fascism had no core texts or doctrines that followers could renounce as proof that they were no longer fascists. Instead, activists identified publicly as fascists and promoted a cluster of virtues they claimed were associated with the Legion, including muscular masculinity, self-control, honor, loyalty, nationalism, antisemitism, perseverance in suffering, piety, and asceticism. *On the Legionary Organization* systematically discredited legionary performances of these virtues as hypocritical and inauthentic, showing that they were simulacra with no basis in the “reality” that took place behind the scenes. Far from being noble youth fighting for their nation, the book argued that legionaries were sexual deviants, violent thugs, and deluded puppets being manipulated by bourgeois politicians, the king, and foreign dictators who sought to exploit Romania for their own ends. Mihai Demetriade has detailed the process of reeducation at Aiud in two seminal articles and, after outlining the context in which reeducation took place, my focus here is on the rhetorical strategies employed by the authors of *On the Legionary Organization*.<sup>3</sup> Reading the prisoners’ words

---

<sup>1</sup> Ilarion Țiu, *Discriminarea în perioada comunistă: Viața deținuților politici legionari după eliberarea din închisori*, “Sfera politicii”, Vol. 20, Nr. 2(168), 2012, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Mihalaxe Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară: misticism, masacre, tradare*, 2 vols, Aiud, Colectivul Cluburilor Cultural-Educativ, 1964. The only copy of the book is held in the Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (ACNSAS), fond Documentar, dosar nr. 10160 and 10162.

<sup>3</sup> Mihai Demetriade, *Descompunere și reabilitare elemente cadru privind activitatea Grupului Operativ Aiud*, “Caietele CNSAS”, II, Nr. 2(4), 2009, pp. 257-

and illustrations not only provides insights into the process of “rehabilitation” in communist prisons but, assuming that this book slandered the prisoners’ most deeply cherished values, it also reveals what they believed the essence of the legionary movement to have been.

The Romanian system of gulags was extensive and lethal. Based on statistics assembled by the Securitate (secret police) during the 1960s, Dorin Dobrinu argues that 91,333 people were arrested between 1950 and 31 March 1968, of whom 73,636 were condemned.<sup>4</sup> Arrests usually took place in waves, beginning with the arrest of war criminals in May 1945, and expanding dramatically after the mass arrests of National Peasant activists in May 1947.<sup>5</sup> In May 1948 the Romanian Communist Party, led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, incarcerated thousands of individuals associated with the Legion on vague counterrevolutionary charges.<sup>6</sup> Two years later, Teohari Georgescu openly stated that “anyone who had held positions in the former political parties” should be preemptively arrested as a danger to the state.<sup>7</sup> In summer 1949 the regime began construction of the Danube-Black Sea Canal, and many people were arrested simply because the state needed laborers who would work for free.<sup>8</sup> The Securitate targeted former legionaries again in 1958, in particular individuals who had been arrested following the legionary rebellion of January 1941, and by 1959 legionaries constituted 22 percent of political prisoners held in Romania.<sup>9</sup> Prisoners were organized by age; juveniles

---

332; Mihai Demetriade, *Victor Biriș, cel mai important agent de influență din penitenciarul Aiud (1957-1963)*, “Caietele CNSAS”, V, Nr. 1-2 (9-10), 2012, pp. 11-148. See also, Cristian Troncotă, *Modelul reeducării prin autoanaliza. Aiud și Gherla: 1960-1964*, “Arhivele totalitarismului”, 2, Nr. 1-2, 1994, pp. 60-73.

<sup>4</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, “Studiu introductiv,” in Dorin Dobrinu ed., *Listele morții: Deținuți politici decedați în sistemul carceral din România potrivit documentelor Securității, 1945-1958*, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Romulus Rusan, *Cronologia și geografia represiunii comuniste în România*, Bucharest, Fundația Academia Civică, 2007, p. 15; Dumitru Șandru, *Valuri de arestări din anul 1947*, “Arhivele totalitarismului”, 16, Nr. 3-4(60-61), 2008, pp. 54-70.

<sup>6</sup> Ilarion Țiu, *Istoria mișcării legionare, 1944-1968*, Târgoviște, 2012, pp. 173-177.

<sup>7</sup> Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii: O istorie a Securității (1948-1964)*, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 133.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1999, p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

were sent to Târgșor, women to Miercuria Ciuc, workers to Gherla, and intellectuals to Aiud.<sup>10</sup> Depending on when and with whom they were arrested, legionaries often spent time in prisons at Gherla, Suceava, and Jilava before joining the “intellectuals” in Aiud.<sup>11</sup> As the following table shows, the number of legionaries imprisoned at Aiud increased significantly between 1958 and 1961, and the number of inmates involved in reeducation rose dramatically between 1961 and 1962, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total number of legionaries held at Aiud.

	18 Feb 1958	15 Oct 1959	Mar 1960	Nov 1961	Dec 1961	15 Apr 1962	12 May 1962	Nov 1962
Legionaries	800	1,955	2,786	3,632		3,259	3,135	3,195
In Reeducation					512	980	1,248	2,046

*Table 1. Legionaries at Aiud involved in Reeducation, 1958-1962.*<sup>12</sup>

Prisoners spoke with each other about the Legion well before the reeducation campaigns began, and *On the Legionary Organization* complained that inmates were sustaining their “sick, belligerent mentalities” by sharing “memories of legionary events, outdated green fantasies, [and] sterile quotes from ‘unrecognized geniuses’ who were legionaries, such as [Radu] Gyr, [Nichifor] Crainic, etc.”<sup>13</sup> The physical layout of the prisons shaped how prisoners came to identify with and remember the Legion. Jilava, for example, was so crowded in 1948 that not everyone could lay down or stand up at once. Inmates slept on bunks stacked three high against the walls and they took turns standing up, sleeping on the cool floor or on the impossibly hot top bunk.<sup>14</sup> Surviving

<sup>10</sup> Rusan, *Cronologia*, pp. 48-50; Ioan Ianolide, *Întoarcerea la Hristos: document pentru o lume nouă*, Bucharest, Editura Christiana, 2006, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Dimitrie Bejan, *Oranki: amintiri din captivitate*, Bucharest, Editura Tehnica, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Figures taken from Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 274, 292-294.

<sup>13</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 187.

<sup>14</sup> Mihai Pușcașu, *Mărturii din iadul închisorilor comuniste*, Făgăraș, Editura Agaton, 2010, p. 50. cf. the description in Ion Ioanid, *Închisoarea noastră cea de toate zilele*, vol. 1, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2002, pp. 59-70.

in such conditions required a certain degree of cooperation between prisoners, and legionaries established formal hierarchies within the cells, designating “cell leaders” who were responsible for discipline and ensuring cooperation.<sup>15</sup> Among other things, this level of cooperation differentiated them from other prisoners and fostered a group identity as a distinctive subsection of the prison population.<sup>16</sup> Prison was often the first time that young people who had been arrested as “legionaries” for suspected anticommunist activities had the chance to meet activists who had been part of the moment during the 1930s, and discussions in prison helped shape what prisoners understood the Legion to have been all about.<sup>17</sup> The work camps at the Canal were much more transient than prisons like Jilava. Here prisoners often saw each other for shorter periods and took the opportunity to share stories and pass on news quickly before they were transferred to another worksite.<sup>18</sup> As the prisoners themselves recognized, the problem with these memories was that one had no way of verifying the details. Often rumors passed through several informants before someone wrote them down and at times they sounded so fantastical that other prisoners refused to believe them.<sup>19</sup>

Aiud was a much larger prison and some cells contained over a hundred prisoners at a time. Given the concentration of legionaries at Aiud this is where the most intensive memory-making took place, often through ingenious means of communication.<sup>20</sup> Once again these memories relied heavily on rumors, giving rise to the expression that the

---

<sup>15</sup> Țiu, *op. cit.*, p. 190; Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> Silviu N. Dragomir, “De la serbare, în închisoare,” in Lăcrămaioara Stoenescu, *De pe băncile școlii în închisorile comuniste*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche, 2010, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Ioanid, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 232-233; Valeriu Anania, *Memorii*, Iași, Polirom, 2011, p. 331.

<sup>18</sup> ACNSAS, fond Penal, dosar nr. 160, vol. 2, f. 63-64, vol. 9, ff. 7-38; fond Informativ, dosar nr. 160181, ff. 227-228; fond Informativ, dosar nr. 157074, f. 124. On the Canal’s history more generally, see Ion Cârja, *Canalul morții, 1949-1954*, New York, Acțiunea Românească, 1974; Mircea Stănescu, *Reeducarea în România comunistă, 1949-1955*, vol. 3, Iași, Polirom, 2010, pp. 123-370.

<sup>19</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar nr. 160161, vol. 1, f. 34-37; Nicolae Itul, “Regimul celular este regim de tăcere,” in Dragoș Ursu and Ioana Ursu eds., *Aiudule, Aiudule*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renașterea, 2011, p. 186; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, ff. 92-95; Ioan Muntean, *La pas, prin “reeducările de la Pitești, Gherla și Aiud*, Bucharest, Editura Majadahonda, 1997, p. 179.

inmates who arrived in 1948 “came with the Americans” because they brought rumors that the U.S. would soon invade Romania and overthrow the communist regime. This particular claim caused frequent arguments between the optimistic newcomers and those who had been in prison for several years by this time.<sup>21</sup> Prison officials placed small groups of prisoners – usually three – together for short periods after convincing one of the prisoners to provoke the others into talking about their legionary pasts, future plans, or ideological beliefs. Afterwards the informer would be taken aside and asked to write down what was said, while the others were interrogated separately to confirm the stories.<sup>22</sup> Prisoners knew that such manipulation was being practiced and deliberately lied to the other inmates in order to confuse the Securitate officers who had arranged these conversations.<sup>23</sup> This practice meant that prisoners were never sure which stories were true and which were not, so “memoirs” written in prison by individuals such as Petre Pandrea and Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa are notoriously unreliable because they were based on rumors and misinformation that these men heard in prison, not to mention that they were also exercises in “reeducation” similar to those during which *On the Legionary Organization* was produced.<sup>24</sup> Demanding that prisoners write autobiographies condemning themselves was a common practice, and inmates often wrote such confessions multiple times during their time in prison.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Octavian Gherman, “Și dacă-l ai pe Hristos cu tine,” in Ursu and Ursu eds., *Aiudule, Aiudule*, p. 113; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar nr. 234687, vol. 1, ff. 7-245; Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 282-288; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, pp. 66, 78, 97.

<sup>23</sup> ACNSAS, fond Penal, dosar nr. 160, vol. 15, ff. 308-312, 364-368; Vasile Turtureanu, “Trebuie credință,” in Ursu and Ursu eds., *Aiudule, Aiudule*, pp. 24-25; Neculai Popa, *Coborârea în Iad: amintiri din închisorile României comuniste*, Bucharest, Editura Vreamea, 2009, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> Petre Pandrea, *Garde de Fier*, Bucharest, Editura Vreamea, 2001; Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros*, Bucharest, Editura Lucman, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Petre Baicu, *Povestiri din închisori și lașăre*, Oradea, Biblioteca Revistei Familia, 1995, p. 219.



### Reeducation

Reeducation meant different things at different times. When General Antonescu sent young men who had been arrested as legionaries to fight on the Eastern Front in 1942, he described military service as “rehabilitation.”<sup>26</sup> In April 1945 Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej spoke about the need to “reeducate” legionaries, and a program was introduced at Aiud later that year during which prisoners were forced to work in workshops and to read Marxist literature.<sup>27</sup> The program spread to other prisons, and prisoners at Târgșor spoke about having been “reeducated through work.” Legionaries who did not want to be reeducated were sent to solitary confinement.<sup>28</sup> Mihai Demetriade notes that the prison authorities did not consider work to be a particularly efficient form of reeducation, but the fact that they could dictate the composition of work teams and included prisoners who used the opportunity to spread pro-communist propaganda in the teams made the process more effective over time.<sup>29</sup>

Prison itself was a form of reeducation. In his famous study of “total institutions,” Erving Goffman argues that an inmate, particularly if s/he has been incarcerated for a long time, undergoes “a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified.”<sup>30</sup> Total institutions usurp control over the social roles, relationships, and support systems that inmates relied upon on the “outside,” and appropriate one’s ability to decide how one dresses, cuts one’s hair, or interacts with physical surroundings on the grounds that the inmates are not capable of making such basic decisions themselves. Even the relationship between an individual and his or her actions is disrupted, denying the inmate the ability to be “a person with ‘adult’ self-determination, autonomy, and freedom and action.”<sup>31</sup> Having lost personal autonomy, prisoners often

---

<sup>26</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, “Legionarii și guvernarea Ion Antonescu (1941-1944)” in *Romania: A Crossroads of Europe*, ed. Kurt W. Treptow, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, p. 205.

<sup>27</sup> Țiu, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>28</sup> Dragomir, “De la serbare,” p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 301-305. Cf. Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, pp. 208, 227.

<sup>30</sup> Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, New Brunswick, Aldine Transaction, 2007, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

learn the social rules of the prison so well that they continue to behave as prisoners even after returning home.<sup>32</sup> In Andreas Glaeser's terms, prison shifts one's orientations in such a way that the understandings governing social behavior are altered and new epistemic regimes are instituted.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most dramatic means of reeducating inmates in Romania was through torture, which was common and widespread, both at the hands of the guards and of fellow prisoners. *On the Legionary Organization* downplayed the use of torture by prison officials and claimed that the prisons were characterized by a "respect for human rights, reflected in the living conditions of the prisoners as follows: food, healthcare, hygienic living quarters, [and] freedom of opinion."<sup>34</sup> The reality was very different. A list assembled by Cezar Zugravu, himself a former political prisoner, includes the following methods of torture used in the prison system: "1. Foul swearing; 2. "Free" blows with the palm, fist, or foot on sensitive parts of the body (cheeks, neck, abdomen, testicles, spine); 3. Striking the sole of the foot with a whip or wooden or rubber club while the victim is uncomfortably restrained; 4. Striking the palms of the hands; 5. Hanging the prisoner upside down; 6. Beating with thin sticks or whip (*vâna de bou*) while restrained; 7. Crushing the fingernails with special pliers; 8. Burning the soles of the feet with a welding torch; 9. Beating the testicles with a heavy pencil until the victim falls unconscious; 10. Fastening the hands between two benches and striking the palms; 11. Screams or groans of close relatives or of strangers (on a tape recorder); 12. Beating the head with a club; 13. Beating the kidneys with a club; 14. Beating with a sack of sand; 15. Beating around the mouth with the point or the heel of a boot; 16. Setting a wolf on the victim while tied to a pole or a hook; 17. Hanging (crucifixion) on hooks fixed to the wall; 18. Interrogation with a cat inside the victim's shirt; 19. Beating the calves with a wire; 20. Beating an open wound; 21. Throwing the victim onto railway tracks to simulate a suicide; 22. Pulling out the nails on the hands or feet; 23. Daily beatings of prisoners with long prison sentences (in the cells of Aiud, Gherla, and Râmnicu Sărat); 24. Clubbing prisoners forced

---

<sup>32</sup> Jennifer Turner, *Re-'homing' the Ex-offender: Constructing a 'Prisoner diaspora', "Area"*, Vol. 45, Nr. 4, 2013, pp. 485-492. Cf. Marina Yusupova, *Masculinity, Criminality, and Russian Men, "Sextures"*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 46-61.

<sup>33</sup> Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, The Opposition, and The End of East German Socialism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011, 10, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 178.

to run in circles around the torturer; 25. Interrogation with a lit cigarette applied to the scrotum or abdomen; 26. “Leapfrog” (used in the extermination camp at Valea Neagră-Peninsula): after a day of work, prisoners were forced to squat down and jump with their hands on the shoulders of the prisoner in front of them; 27. Forcing two prisoners to beat each other, on command; 28. Prisoners forced to lay with their face in the mud while being questioned; 29. “Imprisonment” (at the Valea Neagră prison there was a box without a roof, in which prisoners were forced to remain standing, swashed together in pairs, all night long); 30. Interrogation with powerful projectiles aimed at the victim’s eyes; 31. Continuous interrogation for whole days and nights; 32. Interrogation with electric shocks; 33. Interrogation after extremely salty food and no water; 34. Interrogation following solitary confinement in a dark, damp cell full of rats; 35. “The wisdom room”: during interrogation the prisoner was forced to stand on his or her feet for hours or days at a time in solitary confinement with hands locked behind the back in self-tightening handcuffs; 36. Solitary confinement in a tight cell for weeks, months, or years; 37. Tying prisoners considered “recalcitrant” to a bed in an uncomfortable position for long periods (1-6 months); 38. Forbidding prisoners to use a toilet for days at a time; 39. Shaving a dry beard with the torturer spitting in the victim’s face instead of using water and soap; 40. Raping girls and female prisoners; 41. “Crucifixion.”<sup>35</sup>

Torture irreversibly changes how victims view the world. Psychologists Lilla Hárđi and Adrienn Kroó note that the goal of torture is “to undermine values, beliefs, self-concept, and personality development. This objective thus elicits the devastation of one’s identity, the ‘core’ of the personality.”<sup>36</sup> They argue that survivors of torture find it very difficult to trust anyone, and that “experiences of degradation, infantile helplessness, and total dependence become a basis for all subsequent emotional events.”<sup>37</sup> At the same time that torture victims find it difficult to trust, their need to strong relationships with others is significantly

---

<sup>35</sup> Cezar Zugrav, *Metodele de tortură din securitate, din închisori și din lagărele de exterminare*, “Analele Sighet”, Vol. 5, 1997, pp. 478-486; reproduced in Dobrinu, *Listele morții*, p. 31-32.

<sup>36</sup> Lilla Hárđi and Adrienn Kroó, *The Trauma of Torture and the Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors*, “Zeitschrift für Psychologie / Journal of Psychology”, Vol. 219, Nr. 3, 2011, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 134.

heightened. Clinical observation suggests that “exposure to torture and ill-treatment evokes archaic conflicts and anxieties in victims, as well as revitalizes the attachment behavior of seeking safety and consolation.”<sup>38</sup> The fact that victims need strong attachments but find trust difficult has two major implications. The first is that the bonds formed between prisoners at Aiud were sometimes so strong that prisoners preferred to remain incarcerated with their friends instead of seeking freedom when opportunities arose.<sup>39</sup> Second, prisoners became susceptible to peer pressure and were more likely to cooperate with exercises such as reeducation if they believed that it might help their friends or would ingratiate them with people they respected. As Katherine Verdery notes about the experience of living under Romanian socialism in general, “many people became collaborators [with the Securitate] because they had friends and families whom they wanted to protect or whose suspect actions had implicated them – that is, they became collaborators because they were socially embedded.”<sup>40</sup> Some prisoners claimed that they participated in reeducation solely to make life easier for their friends, and the Collective of Cultural and Educational Clubs was a profoundly social experience.<sup>41</sup> Ioan Lupeș, who was arrested as a legionary in 1955, recalled his shock when he heard that Ion Stoian, who had tried to organize a legionary resistance in Suceava prison in March 1949, joined the reeducation experiment there only a month later, together with other prisoners associated with his resistance effort.<sup>42</sup> Peer pressure had a significant impact on prisoners, who often resisted or cooperated as a group because the ability of individuals to make independent decisions had been broken down so completely.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Katri Kanninen, Raija-Leena Punamäki, and Samir Qouta, *Personality and Trauma: Adult Attachment and Posttraumatic Distress Among Former Political Prisoners*, “Peace and Conflict”, Vol. 9, Nr. 2, 2003, p. 102.

<sup>39</sup> Ioanid, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 278, 310-311.

<sup>40</sup> Katherine Verdery, “Postsocialist Cleansing in Eastern Europe: Purity and Danger in Transitional Justice,” in *Socialism Vanquished, Socialism Challenged: Eastern Europe and China, 1989-2009*, Nina Bandelj and Dorothy J. Solinger eds., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Ioanid, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 251.

<sup>42</sup> ACNSAS, fond Penal, dosar nr. 160, vol. 1, ff. 82-85.

<sup>43</sup> Stoian himself claimed that he took part in reeducation out of a desire not to break with other legionaries who also took part in the experiment. Alin Mureșan, *Pitești: Cronica unei sinucideri asistate*, Iași, Polirom, 2010, p. 25.

The inmates who contributed to *On the Legionary Organization* certainly understood the impact incarceration and torture had on them. However convinced they may have been of the righteousness of their cause before being imprisoned, by 1964 they were ready to confess that:

”The toxic final product of a legionary education puts us in the presence of a type of human who has lost the ability to perceive reality. Missing a rational compass, he allows himself to live arbitrarily in the past, to see and act in the world in a reactionary, static manner. His obscurantism makes him incapable of adapting to the ever-changing conditions of life. Through its unique regime, prison transformed the defects of the legionary man, who oscillated between flagellation and self-flagellation, into virtues. More at home in the world of ghosts, between the walls of a cell, this was the deregulated and confused type of being who existed at the moment when reeducation began – that is to say, at the moment of his social recuperation through the restructuring of his soul”<sup>44</sup>.

As this quote suggests, those legionaries who took part in the reeducation project at Aiud appropriated their torturer’s evaluations of them and were willing to admit their “faults” in public, before other prisoners. Hárđi and Kroó write that “the internalization of the torturer’s attitude – whose aim is to prove the victim is not a worthy human being – has severe consequences concerning the survivor’s self-image, self-esteem, and identity.”<sup>45</sup> Returning to pre-trauma ways of being in the world is just not possible; victims have to deal with their experiences and move beyond them, not try to suppress them and pretend they never happened. Psychologists working with torture victims use “reflective pondering” and encourage patients to create new autobiographical narratives to help them “resolve discrepancies between the new trauma-related information and prior assumptive models.”<sup>46</sup> The reeducation process at Aiud also encouraged prisoners to create new narratives about their collective past as a way of facilitating their reentry into society, but the therapeutic context was very different. Psychologists working in liberal democratic contexts see to restore patients’ psychological well-being, which they

---

<sup>44</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 177.

<sup>45</sup> Hárđi and Kroó, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Joseph, David Murphy and Stephen Regel, *An Affective-Cognitive Processing Model of Post-Traumatic Growth*, “Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy”, Vol. 19, 2012, p. 322.

define as “high levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, openness to personal growth, purpose in life and self-acceptance.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast, prison officials at Aiud hoped that writing new autobiographical narratives would help with “emptying the detainee’s conscience of the burden of past mistakes, verifying his sincerity and manly courage, submitting himself to the truth, organized exchanges of knowledge between the detainees, and making contact with the new moral universe.”<sup>48</sup>

The concept of reeducation had particularly horrifying connotations for many inmates because of the “experiment” Securitate officers carried out at Pitești between 1949 and 1953. The experiment began not at Pitești, but in the prison at Suceava, where a young prisoner named Alexandru Bogdanovici, who had been arrested for his involvement in legionary activities at the University of Iași in 1948, began lecturing other prisoners on communist doctrine, reading them communist newspapers, and slandering the Legion.<sup>49</sup> Bogdanovici had been involved in the first reeducation program at Aiud in 1945 before being released and rearrested. As part of their reeducation, Bogdanovici’s collaborators, Neculai Dumeni and Lucian Pascaru, openly confessed their past crimes in minute detail in the hope of receiving mercy for their “sincerity.”<sup>50</sup> Bogdanovici was soon joined by another prisoner, Eugen Țurcanu, and together they established the Organization of Prisoners with Communist Convictions (ODCC). They ingratiated themselves with prison officials and began to submit reports to the Securitate about discussions that took place inside their cells.<sup>51</sup> Rumors circulated that they had been promised an early release or jobs with the Securitate after they finished their sentences.<sup>52</sup>

Țurcanu was transferred to Pitești in April 1949, and attempted to find favor with the authorities there, eventually gaining the support of Colonel Iosif Nemeș, who assigned the Securitate officer Ion Marina to

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 318.

<sup>48</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> Mureșan, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>50</sup> Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> Mureșan, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>52</sup> Ianolide, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Octavian Voinea, *Masacrarea studențimii române în închisorile de la Pitești, Gherla și Aiud*, Bucharest, Editura Majadahonda, 1995, p. 11.

direct Țurcanu's attempts to reeducate his fellow prisoners. In November, with the support of the prison authorities, Țurcanu and his supporters began beating prisoners who were not part of the ODCC.<sup>53</sup> The extent of the violence associated with the ODCC increased dramatically once Țurcanu was given use of Hospital Room No. 4 in December 1949. Țurcanu and his associates fell upon the inmates in this cell and beat them brutally for two days straight, after which time he forced them to attack each other and then to write written confessions giving new information that they had withheld during their interrogations.<sup>54</sup> Octavian Voinea, a legionary who was arrested in 1948 and sent to Pitești together with a group of legionary medical students, writes that "the students were tortured day and night for several weeks without a break until, one by one, they fell. Their brains had been washed, they had become imbeciles and beasts; robots who carried out Țurcanu's orders with unimaginable scrupulousness and loyalty."<sup>55</sup> Țurcanu's approach to reeducation was remarkably consistent. First he would attempt to win the trust of prisoners and learn about their pasts. Then torture began suddenly and brutally, including regular beatings with clubs and whips, forcing inmates to eat and drink their own feces for weeks on end, crucifixion, sodomy while screaming blasphemies, and jumping on victims until they died. When they begged to join the ODCC, Țurcanu made his victims confess their anti-communist thoughts and actions before others, accuse themselves of immorality, and then join him in torturing other prisoners.<sup>56</sup>

Similar experiments in reeducation took place during 1950 and 1951 among political prisoners held at Brașov, Gherla, Târgșor, Târgu Ocna, and at the Canal, almost always using torturers who had been reeducated at Pitești.<sup>57</sup> Mircea Stănescu estimates that 22 people died

---

<sup>53</sup> Mureșan, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-42.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 53-57.

<sup>55</sup> Voinea, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>56</sup> Mureșan, *op. cit.*, p. 53. Eyewitness accounts of these methods can be found in Popa, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-125; Voinea, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-85; Ianolide, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-104; Muntean, *op. cit.*, p. 60-115; and Dumitru Lăcătușu and Alin Mureșan eds., *Casa terorii: documente privind penitenciarul Pitești (1945-1977)*, Iași, Polirom, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Mureșan, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-129; Stănescu, *Reeducarea*, vols. 2 and 3, *passim*. See also the eyewitness accounts in Ianolide, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-112, 125-133; Muntean, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-121; Voinea, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-104; and Popa, *op. cit.*, 129-150.

during these experiments, and “over 1,000 were mutilated physically and psychologically.”<sup>58</sup> The experiments ended after changes within the communist party leadership made it politically expedient to condemn the torturers and to distance the party from any involvement.<sup>59</sup> The authorities put Țurcanu and his collaborators on trial in 1954, forcing their victims to testify that the prisoners were solely responsible for the experiments, thereby absolving the authorities of any responsibility.<sup>60</sup> Several of the authors of *On the Legionary Organization* had been victims of reeducation in the past, and all of them are likely to have heard first-hand accounts of the Pitești experiment.<sup>61</sup> The inmates knew quite well that the authorities had orchestrated the torture of prisoners by other prisoners, but the book argues that this sort of torture had a long history in legionary circles. It suggests that Țurcanu learned his methods from the murder of Mihail Stelescu in 1936 (when Țurcanu was ten years old), and from legionaries torturing other legionaries at the Rostock concentration camp during the Second World War (while Țurcanu was still at school in Romania). Focusing specifically on the crimes perpetrated by legionaries during the National Legionary State, they wrote that “the beatings given out by legionary police, the murders at Jilava, the abominations at the abattoirs, the murder of Negrescu in front of his wife and children, the killing of Inei Bârjoveanu; this entire macabre patrimony leads to the objective conclusion that the legionary mentality is structured around a spirit of violence, murder, and sadism.”<sup>62</sup>

A new reeducation project began at Aiud in 1958 at the initiative of Colonel Gheorghe Crăciun, who had recently taken command of the prison and who assigned 16 prison officers to work on the project.<sup>63</sup> It followed a revolt by the prisoners the previous year, that involved a prolonged hunger strike and shouting to passersby.<sup>64</sup> Crăciun described the project’s goal as being “to shake the faith [of prisoners] in their old beliefs and to strengthen their faith in the durability of our popular

---

<sup>58</sup> Stănescu, *Reeducarea*, vol. 1, p. 269-270.

<sup>59</sup> Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>60</sup> Lăcătușu and Mureșan eds., *op. cit.*; Mircea Stănescu, *The Reeducation Trials in Communist Romania (1952-1960)*, Boulder, CO, East European Monographs, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Muntean, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283; Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>62</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 162.

<sup>63</sup> Demetriade, *Descompunere*, p. 271.

<sup>64</sup> Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 67.



democratic regime.”<sup>65</sup> Colonel Crăciun frequently met and dialogued with prisoners, but consistently lost his temper when faced with legionary intransigence and a refusal to compromise.<sup>66</sup> Gheorghe Laghiu writes that reeducation began after a university professor, Aurel Negucioiu, gave a lecture to the inmates, convincing them that intellectual and cultural life still existed under state socialism, and *On the Legionary Organization* confirmed the impact of literature and scientific publications on the prisoners.<sup>67</sup> Crăciun organized the inmates into four large Cultural and Educational Clubs and several smaller ones, divided according to the prisoners’ levels of education.<sup>68</sup> Here they read communist newspapers and magazines, in particular the party newspaper “Scânteia” (Sparkle) and “Glasul patriei” (Voice of the Fatherland), a cultural magazine edited by formerly ultranationalist intellectuals who had agreed to write communist propaganda after they were released from prison.<sup>69</sup> Inmates described the impact of articles by Radu Gyr and Nichifor Crainic in “Glasul patriei” as “overwhelming,” and as having catalyzed the establishment of new clubs.<sup>70</sup>

Crăciun’s goal was that former legionaries would become completely hostile to the movement by the time they were released under the general amnesty.<sup>71</sup> Inmates who joined a cultural-educational club promised “to participate intensely in influencing popular opinion in favor of respecting the rules and orders we receive from the management; to write monthly articles for the wall journal; to participate in or organize a technical lecture; to train myself for the highest possible qualifications by studying the materials on metalwork in the library ; [and] to vehemently oppose those who do not join the cultural-educational process.”<sup>72</sup> Those who participated in the clubs had to accuse themselves and other legionaries, usually in writing, of a host of shameful deeds. Prisoners

---

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Demetriade, *Descompunere*, p. 263.

<sup>66</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar nr. 160161, vol. 1, f. 42-45; Voinea, *op. cit.*, p. 177; Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

<sup>67</sup> Gheorghe Laghiu, *Aiud am fost martor*, Aarhus, Eksperimental Forlag, 1999, pp. 112-113; Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, pp. 193, 197.

<sup>68</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 230.

<sup>69</sup> Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 305-310; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 121.

<sup>70</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 210.

<sup>71</sup> ACNSAS, fond SIE, dosar nr. 5065, f. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Demetriade, *Descompunere*, p. 264.

wrote such accusations on a “wall-journal,” in which articles were pinned to a wall for everyone to see, as well as drawing pictures and assembling photo-montages that were then displayed in prominent parts of the prison.<sup>73</sup> The prison produced several books as part of this reeducation project, in addition to 11,000 articles and over 70 volumes of written confessions.<sup>74</sup>

Legionaries formed factions within the prison, with groups arguing for outright defiance, religious self-abnegation and prayer, or renouncing activism altogether.<sup>75</sup> Each faction had clearly recognized leaders who could rely on their followers to participate in hunger strikes or engage in other forms of passive resistance if necessary.<sup>76</sup> In 1962 prison authorities reorganized the cells in order to break up these factions and to encourage reeducation by forming new ones.<sup>77</sup> Club members received better food, clothing, cigarettes, exercise, chess games, newspapers, kinder treatment, and the promise of an early release as a reward for participating in the program.<sup>78</sup> Those who refused, on the other hand, were placed in solitary confinement with starvation rations, inadequate clothing for the cold winters, and no medical assistance.<sup>79</sup> Grigore Caraza, who spent weeks at a time in solitary confinement for refusing to participate in reeducation, writes that “if it was not possible to resist at Pitești, at Aiud the so-called cultural-educational activities could be rejected only at the risk of dying in chains, the proof of which is that less than one percent resisted without accepting reeducation.”<sup>80</sup> Prisoners held in solitary confinement for opposing reeducation were occasionally brought out and forced to witness what their colleagues were saying about the Legion before being sent back to solitary if they refused to

---

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 310, 315; Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 218.

<sup>74</sup> Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 321, 329. Cf. statistics on reeducation activities in Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, pp. 191, 193-194, 197.

<sup>75</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, pp. 150-156.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, pp. 159-160, 167.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 205; Voinea, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>78</sup> Grigore Caraza, *Aiud însângerat*, Bucharest, Editura Vremea XXI, 2004, p. 144; Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 291, 294; Ioanid, *op. cit.*, p. 250; Laghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>79</sup> Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 265, 272-273; Ioanid, *op. cit.*, p. 249; Muntean, *op. cit.*, p. 288; Ianolide, *op. cit.*, 215.

<sup>80</sup> Caraza, *Aiud însângerat*, p. 145.

participate.<sup>81</sup> According to the resistance fighter and novelist Ion Cârja, “students who had taken part in the system of reeducation at Pitești and Gherla were used, generally successfully, in later reeducation campaigns at Aiud. ... Those who had lost their minds were used to horrify individuals who resisted reeducation, while others were used, on the basis of their pasts, as active participants in reeducation as club leaders, agitators, informers, etc.”<sup>82</sup>

Colonel Crăciun selected prominent legionaries such as Victor Biriș, Radu Budișteanu or Victor Vojen as targets for reeducation, hoping (successfully) that their example would be followed by others. He organized for them to take carefully orchestrated trips around the country to see the achievements of socialism, and put heavy pressure on them to submit to the program.<sup>83</sup> According to internal prison documents, the purpose of these trips was more about ingratiating the Colonel with the prisoners than about changing their minds about socialism.<sup>84</sup> Victor Biriș eventually broke down under extreme pressure, and when he began his first public confession in mid-1962 it broke the spirits of other prominent legionaries, one of whom tried to commit suicide, and convinced many of the other inmates to participate in reeducation.<sup>85</sup> Several former inmates write that Valeriu Anania, the future Metropolitan of Cluj, Alba, Crișana and Maramureș, was the author of many of the slanders in the book, and actively recruited others – particularly priests – to participate in reeducation. The implication is that other legionaries were simply obliged to sign the cover, indicating their agreement with what Anania had written.<sup>86</sup> Anania denied these accusations in his memoirs, claiming that during reeducation he had distinguished between the teachings of the Legion and those of the Church, renouncing the Legion in order to hold

---

<sup>81</sup> Cârja, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>82</sup> Ion Cârja, *Intorcarea din infern*, Madrid, Editura Dacia, 1969, pp. 207-208; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 91.

<sup>83</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 238; Demetriade, *Descompunere*, pp. 322-326; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, pp. 65-119; Ioanid, *op. cit.*, p. 248; Ianolide, *op. cit.*, 212-214; Nistor Chioreanu, *Morinte vii*, Iași, Institutul European, 1992, pp. 325-326.

<sup>84</sup> Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 138.

<sup>86</sup> Voinea, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194; Caraza, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-146; Chioreanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-342; Muntean, *op. cit.*, 282.

true to Christianity and encouraging his friends among the clergy to do the same.<sup>87</sup> Anania's memoirs conveniently distance him both from the Legion, whose crimes were well recognized by the time his memoirs were published in 2011, and from collaborating with the communist authorities.

Regardless of who penned the actual words, the production of *On the Legionary Movement* was a collective endeavor designed to compromise everyone involved in it. The book lists the names of the prisoners who participated in its production, as well as identifying them by their ranks in the Legion.<sup>88</sup> Many of these people had denied or minimized their legionary activities during their trials, and now, ironically, Colonel Crăciun forced them to (re)identify themselves with the Legion before they could renounce it. The psychological impact of reeducation relied on the notion that the people being reeducated *really were* legionaries. Consequently, these men wrote as representatives of the legionary movement which, through them, was collectively rewriting its own past.

### Signs and Simulacra

Although ostensibly *On the Legionary Movement* claimed to be presenting "what really happened" in contrast to what legionary propaganda claimed the movement was all about, prisoners were well aware that the account was entirely fictional. But this was a potent fiction, and it was no accident that, as Octavian Voinea noted, "it looked like a Gospel produced by devoted medieval monks, bound in leather with silver [engravings]."<sup>89</sup> In his reflections on the construction of reality in a mass-media society, Jean Baudrillard argued that:

All Western faith and good faith became engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could be exchanged for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange - God of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum - not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged

---

<sup>87</sup> Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 333, 336, 339.

<sup>88</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, pp. 3-4.

<sup>89</sup> Voinea, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.<sup>90</sup>

In Romanian communist prisons, God's function as an ultimate reference point was replaced by the arbitrary power of the prison officials. They, and no-one else, had the power to determine whether something was true or false, real or the fantasy of "fanatics."<sup>91</sup> Truth then became purely a function of power and abandoned any pretense of referring to *Dinge an sich*, or things in themselves. Andreas Glaeser has recently reflected on the way that in the German Democratic Republic the socialist bureaucracy usurped control over processes of validation – "the interconnection of events certifying understandings across time," – thereby creating new ways of ordering the world that ultimately proved unintelligible and unsustainable.<sup>92</sup> In the same way, prison officials at Aiud defined what constituted legitimate memories and established interpretive lenses through which the legionary past had to be interpreted.

The standard interpretive framework used in *On the Legionary Organization* was Marxist, and prisoners explained that the Legion resulted from "the final phase of the expansion of capitalism" that resulted in "social, economic, and political chaos, ... permanent instability, ... [and] the cruel suffering of the exploited masses. In addition, a process of acute ideological confusion took place, of spiritual decomposition that manifested itself partly through scientific and artistic decadence and partly through the debauchery of the morals of the dominant classes."<sup>93</sup> In this account, legionaries were consistently the puppets of the king and the bourgeoisie, and their actions were determined in the first instance by the class conditions of the day.<sup>94</sup>

Reeducation at Aiud could only begin once prisoners accepted the approved processes of validation, and their task then became one of rewriting the Legion's history by replacing legionary with communist simulacra. Codreanu had shown how legionaries *should* interpret the

---

<sup>90</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp. 5-6.

<sup>91</sup> Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2014, p. 52.

<sup>92</sup> Glaeser, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

<sup>93</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 161.

movement's past in his book *For the Legionaries* (1936), and the prisoners methodically reinterpreted these events to "expose" Codreanu's account as infantile mystification. Codreanu began his book with an oath that he says he convinced twenty of schoolboys to swear in the Dobrina forest to combat Bolshevism in Romania. He wrote that "we decided to procure arms and munitions, to keep everything perfectly secret, to undertake reconnaissance and war games in the forest and to find a way to hide our intentions."<sup>95</sup> In their account of the same incident, the prisoners wrote that:

"As a result of the unhealthy education they received from their families, schools, the Church, the army, and others, these youth would have agreed to participate in anything, to take any risk and even to give their lives for whichever ideal inspired them so long as it gave the illusion that they were serving the community they were part of. Codreanu gave them that illusion, which is why they never realized how ridiculous the situation was. Despite the disguises, pretended attacks from hostile groups, childish fears about battle, improvised weapons, and other farces, they did not notice how inappropriate their means were to achieving their goals, they did not understand how absurd their goals were, and they did not even know who they were preparing to fight, who they were defending, or what they had to gain or lose if they decided not to fight"<sup>96</sup>.

The prisoners asserted that illusions mattered more to Codreanu than reality, and now they realized that they had only ever followed simulacra. Codreanu had deceived them, they wrote, and they were actually moral and social degenerates who were a danger to society and to themselves. "Codreanu was not just a photogenic actor," the book claimed, "he was a great director" who "only thought of theatrical solutions" to social problems hoping to increase his popularity.<sup>97</sup>

The book claimed that Ion Zelea Codreanu had been an atheist who associated with Darwinist circles as a young man, but under A. C. Cuza's influence he submitted to a church marriage and forced his children to say their prayers; beating them if they made any mistakes.<sup>98</sup> Cuza himself did not really believe in either Christianity or antisemitism,

---

<sup>95</sup> Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, Bucharest, Editura Scara, 1999, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 38.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 163.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 19, 24, 27.

and did business with Jews when it suited him.<sup>99</sup> “Codreanu knew the Bessarabian peasants,” they wrote, “he knew that they were very backward and seized by all sorts of superstitions. He exploited the ignorance and mysticism of these people to the extreme.”<sup>100</sup> Both Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and his father behaved religiously for political gain, but both also apparently came to believe in their own messianic claims.<sup>101</sup> “Codreanu made God into an ally, dumping all responsibility for his actions on Him,” the collective wrote, and the fact that he never seemed to be punished for his crimes convinced him that God really was supporting him: “He became aware of a divine mission and behaved accordingly.”<sup>102</sup> Codreanu’s vision of the Archangel Michael in Văcărești prison was nothing more than a “hallucination,” the blood oaths he asked Blood Brothers to swear in 1923 were described as a “pagan ritual,” and he distributed sacks containing soil from Romanian battlefields as a way of cynically manipulating “primitive ways of thinking with symbols and replacing reality with his own images.”<sup>103</sup>

Codreanu’s family apparently prayed pompously before meals and associated themselves closely with the defrocked priest Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa – who had been released from Aiud in 1962 after accepting reeducation – in order to impress visitors with their feigned holiness.<sup>104</sup> Legionary devotion to God was not genuine, however. Dumitrescu-Borșa had been sent to Borșa as a missionary priest in 1929, but “he took a mistress and worked harder to convert glasses of brandy than people who had strayed from the ways of the Church.”<sup>105</sup> The legionaries who guarded the icon of the Archangel Michael were no better. “Some of them were murderers, others had just tried to murder people, and others would kill later on; but now they wanted to risk their lives so that no-one would hurt

---

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20. Cuza did, in fact, do business with Jews while publically promoting antisemitism. Jean Ancel, *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*, vol. 1, New York, Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986, pp. 18-20.

<sup>100</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 146.

<sup>101</sup> Stere ed., *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 55, 70, 109.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167. On Dumitrescu-Borșa, see ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar nr. 104485, f. 2; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, pp. 78-94.

<sup>105</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 130.

an icon. They lived with mistresses, committed adultery, beat and injured unarmed Jews, held loud parties and corrupted the nuns in the monasteries, and at night, solemn and silent, they guarded the icon.”<sup>106</sup> Vasile Purice illustrated the epitome of legionary irreverence in a picture of Codreanu and his father farting, with the caption “The Holy Spirit is in us!”



Figure 1: “Corneliu, my boy, the Holy Spirit is in us!”<sup>107</sup>

Ridiculing legionary religiosity not only undermined discourses that treated the Legion as a spiritual movement, it also made a mockery of the attempts of imprisoned priests to resist reeducation through prayer and mysticism. Orthodox Christian mysticism had not been a prominent legionary practice under Codreanu, but from 1941 onwards a handful of legionaries led by Traian Trifan began cultivating spiritual disciplines such as the prayer of the heart, fasting, and celebrating the sacraments

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 164.



and religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas.<sup>108</sup> The prisoners involved in reeducation derided these “mystics” as fools and hypocrites who promoted a cult of “holy legionary madness.”<sup>109</sup> They caricatured the idea of having inmates pray for an hour each “for Horia Sima, for the Legion, for the country” as being simply a way for Ilie Nicolescu, who organized these “prayer chains” to satisfy his ambition to become a guru in front of his peers, and implied that prisoners who searched the Bible for apocalyptic prophecies that might apply to the Legion were insane.<sup>110</sup> Gheorghe (Nicon) Popescu apparently went so far as to appoint himself twelve “Apostles” among the prisoners who then assumed the identities of biblical figures such as Paul, John, Peter, and even Judas Iscariot.<sup>111</sup> The mystics refused to participate in reeducation, and in response the collective labelled their attitude as “alarmingly vicious” and expressed concern that they had “begun to stir up resistance even among inmates who were less altered.”<sup>112</sup> These prisoners had become so “fanatical,” they complained, that they would not even believe that Soviet cosmonauts had flown into space.<sup>113</sup> Unable to change their behavior, legionaries involved in reeducation effectively ignored the intransigent mystics, while continuing to ridicule them lest others be tempted to follow their example.

In order to combat the idea that the Legion had been about Romanian nationalism, *On the Legionary Movement* dwelt at length on Codreanu’s bloodline. According to this book, the paternal grandfather of the Legion’s hero and leader was a Pole named Nicolae Zelinschi, and his mother was a German whose maiden name was Eliza Brauner.<sup>114</sup> A. C. Cuza, Codreanu’s mentor and a leading antisemite, was apparently Armenean, suggesting that none of those who championed Romanian

---

<sup>108</sup> Ianolide, *op. cit.*, passim; Ursu and Ursu eds., *Aiudule, Aiudule*, passim; Virgil Maxim, *Imn pentru crucea purtată*, Bucharest, Editura Antim, 2002; Monahul Moise, *Sfântul închisorilor*. Alba Iulia: Asociația Synaxis, 2007; Nicolae Trifoiu, *Studentul Valeriu Gafencu: sfântul închisorilor din România*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Napoca Star, 2003.

<sup>109</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 64.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 72, 74.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 213.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 15, 27.

nationalism were ethnic Romanians.<sup>115</sup> Nor did Codreanu's antisemitic forebears have pure motives. The book argues that his father, Ion Zelea Codreanu, became an antisemite because his father-in-law's business rivals were Jewish, and that A. C. Cuza was in the pay of the Hungarians.<sup>116</sup> Constantin Pancu, in whose Guard of the National Conscience Codreanu cut his teeth as an activist in 1919, was apparently in the pay of wealthy industrialists, who were manipulating his naive anti-Bolshevism as a way of keeping control of their workforce.<sup>117</sup> Constanța Ghica, a noblewoman who supported Codreanu financially apparently only did so because she was having an affair with his father.<sup>118</sup> Nothing about Codreanu was genuine – all of the Legion's most hallowed figures were duplicitous fools whose words, actions, and motives had no correlation with reality.

### Marionettes

The book attributed the Legion's early success to the support of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, a National Peasantist politician who supplied Codreanu with money, free train passes, and campaign advice while also keeping him out of prison and free from police brutality. In return, Vaida-Voevod used the legionaries to bully his political opponents and to undermine Romanian democracy. The fact that Codreanu hid his (fictive) relationship with Vaida-Voevod from his followers was used as evidence that legionaries had been campaigning under false pretenses. Instead of supporting a revolutionary youth organization, as they had thought, *On the Legionary Movement* argued that legionaries had been the pawns of the corrupt and wealthy political aristocracy all along.<sup>119</sup> In the words of the collective, "the Romanian bourgeoisie saw a possible legionary government as a way of consolidating its position by taking control of Jewish businesses."<sup>120</sup> Claims that legionaries were being controlled by unseen forces become increasingly extreme as the story progresses, with King Carol II taking the place of Vaida-Voevod and manipulating the Legion by recruiting prominent legionaries as Siguranța (secret service)

---

<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 18, 46.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 150-155, 184.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 175.

agents.<sup>121</sup> Conveniently, none of the Siguranța agents mentioned in the book were prisoners at Aiud and so they could neither confirm nor deny these accusations. Several of those listed, such as Luca Bugheanu and Florin Becescu, were genuinely employed by the Siguranța, but there is no evidence implicating senior legionaries such as Andrei Ionescu and Horia Sima, whose involvement with the Siguranța would have been devastating for legionaries.<sup>122</sup> As if that was not enough, Carol ordered his close friend, Virgil Ionescu, to join the Legion by donating large sums of money to it, putting the organization at Carol's disposal. Ionescu apparently received the money from the industrialist Nicolae Malaxa, further implicating the Legion in the machinations of the bourgeoisie.<sup>123</sup>

According to *On the Legionary Organization*, the movement came firmly under the control of Mihail Mozurov once Horia Sima took control of the Legion in 1938. This story was concocted by Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, a rival of Sima's who Colonel Crăciun placed in a cell for several months in 1960 together with a very demoralized Victor Biriș. Dumitrescu-Borșa convinced Biriș to collaborate his accusations and the fact that Biriș had been one of Sima's closest collaborators during the late 1930s lent a degree of credibility to this account.<sup>124</sup> Sima apparently gave Mozurov information about those legionaries "who were still aligned according to their old beliefs" and had not thrown their support behind Sima. Mozurov then liquidated them after Armand Călinescu's assassination, solidifying Sima's position as Codreanu's successor.<sup>125</sup> Sima proved difficult to work with after the government murdered so many prominent legionaries, but Carol II sent groups of prominent legionaries to Germany to try and convince Sima to work with the royal dictatorship. Radu Mironovici led the first of these missions, and his involvement in reeducation meant that

---

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>122</sup> Gheorghe Buzatu and Corneliu Bichineț eds., *Arhive secrete, secretele arhivelor*, vol. 2, Bucharest, Editura Mica Valahiei, 2011, pp. 336-337; Gheorghe Buzatu, Stela Acatrinei, and Gheorghe Acatrinei eds., *Românii din arhive: studii și documente*, Bucharest, Editura Mica Valahiei, 2011, p. 484. The available Securitate files of Andrei Ionescu and Horia Sima do not mention having collaborated with the Siguranța. ACNSAS, fond Penal, dosar nr. 14005, vol. 11, f. 24-72; Dana Honciuc-Beldiman, *Dosar Horia Sima, 1940-1946*, Bucharest, Editura Kullusys, 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, pp. 178, 181.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 309, vol. 2, pp. 79-84; Demetriade, *Victor Biriș*, p. 79.

<sup>125</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, pp. 310-312.

the very people being accused of working for the king verified this account.<sup>126</sup> Once Sima agreed to collaborate with the king he apparently became his unquestioning supporter, only resigning because his own ambitions and his jealousy at seeing other legionaries enjoying ministerial posts outweighed his loyalty to his royal benefactor.<sup>127</sup>

Determined to undermine the idea that legionaries were autonomous actors fighting for the good of their country, the collective consistently suggested that important legionary decisions were actually taken by enemies of the Romanian people. The legionary coup d'état of September 1940, for example, took place at Hitler's bidding, just as the Legion was ultimately overthrown because the Germans wished it.<sup>128</sup> The fact that legionaries were never really in control of their own destinies made their entire regime into a facade. Sima's alleged treason gave a carnivalesque feel to the regime's mass funerals, with organized columns of priests carrying the cremation urns "of legionaries killed because of Sima's betrayal."<sup>129</sup> Loyalty and convictions were antithetical to the legionaries, and Sima turned against Moșurov as soon as he had the ability to do so, murdering him in November 1940 while he was imprisoned in Jilava.<sup>130</sup>

Always duplicitous and always under German control, as soon as it became clear that the legionary rebellion was doomed, Sima fled the country "in Andreas Schmidt's trunk," abandoning the other legionaries to their fate as rebels against the government.<sup>131</sup> The book sustained the idea that legionaries were puppets and that their actions were simulacra that only had meaning within the spectacle throughout the rest of the Legion's history from 1941 until 1964. Legionaries in the Rostock concentration camp who rebelled against the Germans did not actually know why or on whose orders they were disobeying.<sup>132</sup> Not only was the legionary "government from Vienna" a Nazi puppet government; it was also a "masquerade" of individuals who called themselves "ministers" but

---

<sup>126</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 323.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 331-333.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 337, 432.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 365.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 387.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 453.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 43.

actually had no control over anything.<sup>133</sup> Inmates at Aiud who had also been held in German concentration camps during the war testified to the others about the terrible treatment they had received at the hands of the Germans, and used this to explain that legionaries joined Sima's army out of desperation, not because they wanted to fight other Romanians.<sup>134</sup> Next, the book claimed, "at the collapse of Hitler's Germany, Horia Sima and other legionary leaders outside of Romania turned immediately to another master who, if he was not more understanding at least he was more generous. ... They found, quickly and conveniently: the Americans."<sup>135</sup> The Legion's struggle against the Romanian Communist Party was thus not an ideological battle but the actions of mercenaries always looking for more money and power.

### **Sexual Deviants**

One prominent aspect of reeducation at Aiud involved forcing inmates to admit to sexual depravity. One of the first victims of reeducation, Victor Biriş, confessed that as a child he had practiced "infantile sexuality with little girls his age." His friend Pişta "initiated" him into masturbation, "the sin of children," at twelve years old. "I was an abject being," he concluded, "vicious, individualistic, and compulsively selfish. I was fanatically ambitious and lacked scruples: I was an immoral person."<sup>136</sup> *On the Legionary Organization* extended these sorts of revelations to the movement as a whole, focusing in particular on Codreanu's family as a clan of sexual perverts. In doing so, the book emphasized that far from creating "new men" as Codreanu had promised, the Legion had actually entrenched the most depraved aspects of bourgeois culture. After introducing the young intellectuals who associated themselves with the Legion as "social climbers" and credulous dupes, the book dryly noted that "it was later proved, through a scandal in the press that had legal repercussions, that some of them were homosexuals" – a harsh indictment in a rabidly homophobic culture such as 1960s Romania.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps because the purpose of reeducation was to

---

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 141.

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Demetriade, *Victor Biriş*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>137</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 179. On homophobia in socialist Romania, see Erin K. Bieuyck, *The Collectivisation of Pleasure: Normative*

demoralize the inmates, all of whom were men, the book focuses almost entirely on male legionaries and rarely mentions female legionaries as actors in their own right. Women played important roles as activists in the Legion, but one would never know it from reading *On the Legionary Organization*.<sup>138</sup> Whereas legionary ideology of the 1930s had underscored sexual fidelity and the importance of treating women with respect, the Legion portrayed by the inmates at Aiud was an organization that abused women for the sake of satisfying male desires.<sup>139</sup>

The book presented Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's father as a drunkard who killed his wife with a broken bottle after he caught her in bed with a younger man.<sup>140</sup> His son, Codreanu's father, was forced to marry Codreanu's mother because her father was afraid he was about to abandon her after they had lived together for some time.<sup>141</sup> As a student, Ion Zelea Codreanu apparently engaged in orgies and procured girls for A. C. Cuza, but the two families came to blows when the latter's son impregnated Codreanu's sister and refused to marry her.<sup>142</sup> Ion Zelea Codreanu appears as a drunken womanizer throughout the book. He arrives uninvited to a legionary work camp and then demands that they bring legionary girls to his tent each night. Eventually the camp organizers become so desperate that they pay one of the poorer girls to sleep with him for the duration of the camp.<sup>143</sup> Codreanu's own behavior was reputedly no better than his father's. He lived with his wife for a long time before marrying her, and the book comments that she should not have worn white at her wedding because "the two heroes were not as

---

*Sexuality in Post-1966 Romania*, "Aspasia", Vol. 4, 2010, pp. 49-70; Ioana Filat and Shannon Woodcock, *La Littérature homosexuelle en Roumanie : une lutte pour trouver une place et vivre sous l'oppression*, "Inverses: Litteratures, Arts et Homosexualités", Vol. 10, 2010, pp. 185-204.

<sup>138</sup> Roland Clark, "Die Damen der Legion: Frauen in rumäinischen faschistischen Gruppierungen," in Armin Heinen and Oliver Jens Schmitt eds., *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts: Die "Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien 1918-1938*, Munich, Oldenberg Verlag, 2013, pp. 193-216.

<sup>139</sup> On the sexual morals promoted by the Legion in the 1930s, see ACNSAS, fond Penal, dosar nr. 11784, vol. 19, f. 73; National Archives, Cluj County, fond Personal Vasile Coman, dosar nr. 4/1980, f. 100-101.

<sup>140</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 15.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 20-23, 78-79.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

immaculate as they might have wished and even after [they married] they did not become any better in matters of morality.”<sup>144</sup> In 1938 Codreanu became friends with a young man named Victor Szilagy, who he soon caught in bed with his wife. After trying Szilagy in a kangaroo court, Codreanu decided not to kill him so as not to cause a scandal.<sup>145</sup> Fights within the Legion frequently arose over sexual matters. The inmates wrote that a few years before the incident with Szilagy, Codreanu had raped one of General Cantacuzino’s servant girls and so upset the general that he threatened to leave the organization. Codreanu appeased him with gifts of land and the girl’s honor was quickly forgotten.<sup>146</sup> Vasile Puric, one of the illustrators of *On the Legionary Organization*, represented the hypocrisy of the movement’s leaders in an image portraying the Buchenwald concentration camp during the Second World War, when one of the Legion’s leaders who has just impregnated a woman tells his colleague to practice abstinence while they are in prison. Legionaries in the book are dominated by their passions and lack even basic self-control. Unable to keep even their own desires in check, they were obviously unfit candidates to run a country.

---

<sup>144</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 99.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104.



Figure 2: “Practice abstinence, comrade, just as I do!”

Legionary memoirs frequently portray legionaries as the epitome of healthy manhood. Nicolae Păun described Sebastian Erhan as “a man built like an athlete; one would think he was one of the archers of Ștefan Vodă,” and Dumitru Leontieș says that Codreanu “was the most imposing and handsomest of all the young men.”<sup>147</sup> In *On the Legionary Organization*, however, they are wracked by venereal diseases. Codreanu apparently contracted syphilis from having too many partners, but his health continually deteriorated because he refused to follow proper medical treatment. Both he and one of his close friends, Radu Mironovici, slept with a girl named Ada Anton, and Mironovici contracted syphilis through her so badly that his wife found him almost paralyzed when she came home one day.<sup>148</sup> Many of these relationships were multi-

---

<sup>147</sup> Dumitru Leontieș, “Cum l-am cunoscut pe Căpitan,” in Gabriel Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, Norcross, GA, Criterion Publishing, 2001, p. 145; Nicolae Nicu Păun, *Un soldat pe baricadă idealului legionar: “Audiatur et altera pars”*, Brașov, n.d., p. 117.

<sup>148</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, pp. 101-102.



generational, with the young legionaries seducing the wives of their older supporters. Mironovici apparently slept with Professor Ion Găvănescu's wife, and Ilie Gârneața's wife committed suicide because of her husband's affair with the wife of Professor Corneliu Șumuleanu.<sup>149</sup> The implication here is clear: the prewar generation of antisemites represented by Găvănescu and Șumuleanu had been cuckolded by the legionaries, who stole both their ideology and their women. The juxtaposition of cuckoldry with venereal disease further emphasizes the decay of Romanian nationalism once it was appropriated by the legionaries, who filled the nation with sick bodies that were the result of a diseased morality.

### **Thugs**

Of all the accusations levelled against the Legion during the reeducation campaign at Aiud, the most convincing was the suggestion that legionaries were simply thugs. Legionary activism had indeed been characterized by hooliganism and violence, but Codreanu's rhetoric asserted that legionaries were primarily victims of state violence rather than perpetrators in their own right.<sup>150</sup> *On the Legionary Organization* countered this rhetoric with two accusations: (1) legionaries were genuinely violent delinquents; and (2) accounts of legionary heroism were exaggerated and fraudulent.

As usual, the theme of violence appeared first in relation to Codreanu's family. The book argued that Codreanu's grandfather was a brawler and a murderer, and that his father was a hooligan and murderer who beat his children for minor offences.<sup>151</sup> Led by Codreanu and Ion Moța, antisemitic student activists during the 1920s were interested in nothing other than attacking Jews, and demands to reduce the number of Jewish students enrolled in the universities were empty rhetoric designed to justify their lust for violence.<sup>152</sup> The inmates described the Blood Brotherhoods established by Codreanu and Moța for training their young followers as "a true school of murder." They wrote, "Codreanu said of his legionary organization that it is a school which one enters as a man and leaves as a hero. The "Blood Brotherhood" was in reality a school which

---

<sup>149</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 103-104.

<sup>150</sup> Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2015, pp. 28-62, 95-121.

<sup>151</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, pp. 16-24.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

people entered as men and left as beasts.”<sup>153</sup> Codreanu awarded medals and honors to anyone who committed a murder, holding killers up as models for other legionaries to emulate. “In this way,” the book said, “the legionary organization introduced itself into Romanian public life and developed violence and assassination as forms of political activism. Through the legionary organization, the Romanian bourgeoisie created a paramilitary force parallel with that of the army which could assure its class domination.”<sup>154</sup> Once legionaries came to power in September 1940, they gave their violent tendencies free reign, “demonstrating their aptitude in theft, abuse, maltreatment and bestiality.”<sup>155</sup> The inmates listed one instance after another of legionaries maltreating Jews in order to steal their money or businesses, and characterized the entire regime as one of terror.<sup>156</sup> By January 1941, Sima had apparently become so terrified of his rivals within the Legion that he decided to liquidate them in a bloodbath that would have resembled the Bartholomew’s day massacre of 1572.<sup>157</sup> Legionaries practiced violence not only against their enemies but also against each other.

Legionary violence continued in the prisons, and the inmates asserted that legionaries had invented the torture methods used during reeducation at Pitești while in prison at Rostock during the Second World War.<sup>158</sup> Torture at Pitești was portrayed as a clear continuation of previous legionary violence, placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the prisoners and exonerating the authorities of any involvement.<sup>159</sup> Legionaries continued to fight with each other while in prison, and sometimes only transfers to another prison could stop violence between inmates.<sup>160</sup> Accounts denigrating legionary violence in prison mattered because violence, like religious mysticism, was a way for legionaries to resist the prison authorities. Inmates sometimes assaulted individuals who attempted to convince them to join reeducation, and portraying these assaults as characteristic of irrational legionary violence protected

---

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 117.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 396.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 396-404.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 420.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, pp. 42-44.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 162.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 68-69.

the collective from any suggestion that the pro-reeducation group, rather than those who resisted reeducation, might be the guilty parties.<sup>161</sup>

Whereas the collective reinterpreted moments of apparent legionary virtue as hooliganism and brutality, it also claimed that accounts of legionary heroism were fanciful exaggerations. Codreanu's claim to have attempted to fight in the First World War was a lie, the book claimed, and in actuality his father had done his best to prevent either of them from having to face danger in the line of duty.<sup>162</sup> Similarly, his claim to have heroically faced off hundreds of angry, striking workers at the Nicolina factory in 1919 was also fraudulent.<sup>163</sup> In fact, Codreanu had been protected by rows of gendarmes from workers who could not have cared less if he erected a flag atop the factory or not.<sup>164</sup> In 1922 Codreanu claimed to have heroically demanded that the University of Iași begin the year in prayer, facing down the authorities and other students in order to press his demands. "Agitating powerlessly," the book said, "the group of turbulent students felt the need for some act of heroism, of a lesson taught to the progressives, atheists, and all the enemies of national unity; something that would forever remain in the history of the university."<sup>165</sup> The irony here is that the best they could do was to break down a door, threatened by and threatening no-one.

Legionaries prided themselves on their fortitude under suffering in prison during the interwar period, but prison for Codreanu was apparently never actually that bad. "Codreanu and his apprentices received their meals from outside through specially organized teams," the collective wrote. "They had a great deal of freedom and communicated with whoever they wanted. Thursdays and Sundays ... a genuine pilgrimage took place to Văcărești prison."<sup>166</sup> Compared to the harsh and isolated conditions the inmates were suffering at Aiud, Codreanu's experience of prison was a walk in the park. Most legionaries were actually cowards, the book argued, and when peasants threatened members of the first "death teams" – which had sworn to carry out

---

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>163</sup> Codreanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>164</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 1, p. 43.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 140.

propaganda even if they died trying – the legionaries fled in terror.<sup>167</sup> The stories of heroism passed down to younger generations of legionaries who had joined in the late 1930s or 1940s were apparently just stories and had no basis in reality.

### Conclusion

Reeducation involved blaspheming whatever legionaries had held most sacred, which tells us what it was that inmates at Aiud believed constituted the core of legionary ideology. With no core text or doctrine that they could disavow, prisoners denigrated honesty, religiosity, purity of intention, self-sacrifice (for the nation), self-control (demonstrated through sexual morality), and heroism. These virtues may not have been what had actually motivated legionaries during the interwar period, but by 1964 former legionaries were using them to define the Legion. If these virtues were fake, they implied, then the whole legionary project had been a fraud.

Unravelling legionary accounts of the movement's past through reeducation aimed to demonstrate to the inmates that they had been following a fantasy; simulacra woven together by a compulsive liar and his credulous followers. The reeducated prisoners implied that they had nothing good to look back on and in fact prison had been the best part of their lives. There was no "good life" from which their prison experiences were a fall. Instead, prison had enlightened them to the reality that they had no pasts worth recovering and that only the future had hope.<sup>168</sup> Reeducation erased the past in order to secure the future, and during one reeducation exercise in 1962, prisoners in cell 356 resolved that:

- 1) "The legionary organization was a criminal organization;
- 2) It was an organization established by the bourgeoisie as a diversion for the working classes in order to end the class struggle;
- 3) It raised criminals, spies, and traitors to the country;
- 4) Through the confusion sowed by demagogic slogans it attracted a series of honest people, leading them into error and transforming them into criminals.

---

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and its Destruction in Late Ottoman Anatolia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 53-58.

In conclusion, analysis and the dissection of their actions led the participants to realize their guilt and to regret what they had done, to seek the clemency of the state and their reintegration into socialist society<sup>169</sup>.

Having abandoned any faith they had in their legionary convictions, inmates were left with no moral compass and had no choice but to submit themselves to whatever the socialist regime had in store for them. The men that emerged from Aiud in 1964 were broken, cowed, and found it almost impossible to continue their lives with any sense of conviction or purpose.

---

<sup>169</sup> Stere ed., *Despre organizația legionară*, vol. 2, p. 207.