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FIELD: HISTORY

**THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT IN THE LUDUȘ
AREA (1929-1990). HISTORY AND MEMORY**

-SUMMARY-

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Key words: Romania, Turda, Mureș, Luduș, radicalism, totalitarianism, right, between the two world wars, war, Codreanu, legionnaires, anti-Semitism, jews, rebellion, anti-communism, security, prison, dictatorship, terror, stalinism

INTRODUCTION

The well-known historian of the 19th century, Tony Judt, in his work *Reflecții asupra unui secol XX uitat*, states that: "Nowadays, we are inclined to consider the 20th century as an age of political extremes, tragic mistakes and reckless choices; an era of deception that, fortunately, I left".¹

The 20th century, the century of extremes, as Hobsbawm named it, was marked by the two ideologies, communism and fascism, which created the great dramas of humanity. Two ideologies that governed the consciousness of many people, communities, including the Luduș space. The legionnaire movement, born as a reply to communism, created followers all over Romania, marking an important moment in contemporary history, very little known, avoided by historiographical research.

Therefore, I considered that a topic with the theme *Mișcarea Legionară din zona Luduș (1929-1990). Istorie și memorie* it can bring a lot of information about the followers of the movement, the reasons for the following, the local peculiarities of the phenomenon, the social impact and about the memory of the phenomenon in the public consciousness.

A first reason was that this subject responds to the need to know the legionnaire phenomenon at the level of the entire country, in general, and at the level of the Luduș area, especially. Undoubtedly, the evolution of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area occurred in close connection with the events that took place throughout the whole country.

The legionnaire problem at the level of Luduș locality drew my attention in 2010 when I discovered documents on this topic in the C.N.S.A.S. Archives in Bucharest, and later in the National Archives from Cluj-Napoca and Târgu Mureș, important documents regarding the past of the Legionnaire Movement from the Luduș area. These are novelty documents, not studied so far. Vague information about the Legionnaire Movement and about the legionnaires in the area was transmitted only orally among the inhabitants of the Luduș locality and neighboring towns over the years, but without having a scientific basis. These stories had circulated mainly before 1989 in some discretion, due to the fact that former legionnaires in the area had been persecuted by various methods and means by authorities over the years. Much of the information was passed on orally and only within the families, from grandparents to grandchildren. Fearing reprisals, former legionnaires often, in the 50s and 60s, avoided family discussions on the topic. Because of this, in the research activity, the

¹ Tony Judt, *Reflecții asupra unui secol XX uitat. Reevaluări*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2011, p.21.

information obtained through interview from the legionnaires' descendants were, unfortunately, very little.

A second reason was that the evolution of the Legionnaire Movement in the period between the two world wars, as well as the aspects related to the life of the former legionnaires in the communist era represented for me a problem of historical consciousness, through the desire to know a phenomenon, apparently unnatural in the life of the Romanians from Luduș. In Luduș there was a Greek-Catholic community, led by priests who went through the culture of Blaj, and where the capitalist competition didn't generate conflicts between the ethnic groups from the region. The events of 1848, when the region was the scene of violent movements, were no longer relevant in the public consciousness.

The research activity was based on the study of existing documents in the National Archives of Romania, in the Archives of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives and in the National Library, with the mention that the documents I used are over 90% novelty.

Along with the documents from the archives, I studied the publications that appeared in the period between the two world wars, in many of them reflecting many important events from the past of the Legionnaire Movement from the Luduș area. The legionnaire bibliographic fund is one very rich. The legionnaire books were published in large number, both during the legionnaire governance and later, at the legionnaire publishing houses in the country or at Romanian publishing houses in exile, during the years of Romanian communism. After 1990, most of the legionnaire books published in Romania before 1941 was reissued in the country, but also those that appeared in exile during the communist period.

The oral history is a rich source of information for the researcher of historical events from the contemporary period. But, during the period in which I investigated through the techniques of oral history the past of the movement, the oral testimonies mostly targeted the descendants of the former legionnaires. About 80 years had passed since the period between the two world wars, and in 2017 when I started the documentary activity there were no survivors among the former legionnaires from the Luduș area. One person contemporary with the years in which the legionnaires came to power was interviewed, having at the time of writing this thesis (2019), the age of 96 years.

When we refer to the Legionnaire Movement from this area, we first consider the factors that stimulated and maintained it. The truth is that the radical right-wing had many followers, this aspect making all those involved in this movement to be closely watched by all Romanian secret services, starting the 30s to the early 90s, more than 60 years. The former

legionnaires, who reached the age of over 70 in 1989, together with their descendants, were kept under surveillance by specific means in the legionnaire problem.

Along with the historical events reflected in the documents, the memoir was another source of information, but especially of understanding the phenomenon in the area. The most important events in the Luduș legionnaire past were reflected in *Memoriile legionarului Vasile Coman*. After a historical point of view check, the accountings from these *Memorii legionare* regarding the events that took place in the Luduș area or those at the national level, in which the Luduș people participated, were used in the pages of the present doctoral thesis.

To write the text of the thesis I used several research objectives that were based on the exhaustive analysis of the main sources of information regarding the Legionnaire Movement from the Luduș area and the study itself of existing information in these sources, in order to observe the impact of the movement at local, regional and national level, critical evaluation of the obtained information, to structure the information into chapters and the final synthesis of the accumulated material, in order to provide the imprint of personal, correct interpretation, based on scientific rigor.

The documentary information consisted of gathering information, the data contained in documents and publications, in order to further elaboration of effective means of research, of synthetic and analytical processing. This endeavor was particularly useful to highlight the causes that made the Legionnaire Movement in the area extremely well represented and organized at one time. In order to find out the causes that led to the strong development of the radical right-wing in the Luduș area, for the beginning I proposed a presentation of the geography of this space. A natural introduction, according to our opinion, history and geography intertwine, to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to identify between them an autonomous space. Especially in the “small histories”, in the local history, the presentation of the historical factual is made mandatory in close connection with the so-called geographical framework, with the environmental conditions. Essentially, geography is nothing but a history in space, while history is geography in time.

Although it is a plateau area, made up of hills with smooth slopes and valleys, people have called it a plain due to the high cereal production obtained on fertile soils. A region par excellence agrarian, with a predominantly rural population, established on traditions, with a greater disposition for political currents built on the Christian tradition, conservative, reluctant to change, ethnic and nationalist.

This aspect also results from the presentation *Evoluția populației în zonă începând cu secolul al XIX-lea*. Luduș was in the middle of the 19th century a commune composed mainly of Romanians with agriculture as their primary occupation. The locality, typical in terms of

appearance and economic activity for those times, didn't differ from the other localities in the area. But, due to multiple factors, the ethnic structure changed substantially after 1860, the cause being the economic development, favored at the beginning by the settlement of the locality on the road that connected Cluj and Târgu Mureș, important localities in those times, but today as well. On this route, the locals could transport more easily the goods than before when the road bypassed the town to the south. The positioning of the locality on this important connecting road among the big cities of Transylvania, has led to an evolution in terms of increasing the importance of the locality.

Raising the rank of the locality at the level of center-commune estate made a lot of public institutions appear in Luduș. These institutions, of which I mention: *Court, Cadastre, Post Office, Financial District, Headquarters of the Estate*, etc. determined a large number of trained, educated people to enter the locality. During the dualism, many Hungarians settled in the locality. Thus, the number of Hungarian ethnics increased from year to year, to which the Austro-Hungarian state also largely contributed.

The development of railway transport represented the main factor that led to the unprecedented development of trade in Luduș. The trade, which cannot be developed without a transport infrastructure, favored the establishment of a meaningful number of Jews in the area, whose occupation was trade in grain, animals and animal products.

The development of trade led to the appearance of a large number of traders who settled in the area. These were mostly Jews and had an important role in the purchase of cereals and other agricultural products in the area, which they commercialized in all parts of the Empire until 1918, or in Romania, after the Great Union. The commercial activities brought significant sums of money to the local budget. These sums were used by the administration members for various investments that over time transformed the old village of medieval features into a "thriving town", typical for the time between the 19th and 20th centuries. The center of the Luduș locality was dominated by new, durable, tall buildings, built of burnt brick with different destinations, from private homes, shops or headquarters, to different institutions. The weekly fairs of Luduș became, shortly after their appearance, after 1850, recognized in the whole area of Transylvania. Goods from these fairs reached as far as Vienna or other remote parts of the Empire. The Luduș fairs, organized every Tuesday, were attracting thousands of people. Every three months a "country fair" was organized, in which horses were traded in addition to the ordinary products. In the locality were organized several markets according to the products sold: cattle, pigs, cereals, poultry, vegetables-fruits, meat, manufactured products, etc. This abundance that characterized the trade in the area was beneficial for a small part of the population. Those in the lower classes, made up mostly of

Romanians who dealt exclusively with agriculture, didn't enjoy to the same extent the advantages that trade in the area brought. After 1918, they considered themselves entitled to access to a better social status, through state policy.

Local and national policies are another benchmark in trying to understand the period between the world wars political phenomenon. The changes that took place in the status of Transylvania after 1867, when the Austro-Hungarian dualism was created, and this space, was attached to Hungary, also marked the Luduș locality. This commune (which belonged to Turda-Arieș County) became part of Hungary. From that moment until the year of the Great Union, the laws and decisions taken by the Budapest government were applied here as well, that created a discriminatory status for Romanians, especially in culture, in education. In fact, the entire constitutional system was centered on the idea of a Hungarian national state, considered being "unitary and indivisible."

In this context, between 1903 and 1905, the Budapest Government colonized several hundred Hungarian families in Luduș. The intention presented publicly was to change the demographic ratio in favor of the Hungarians. This is how the villages of Roșiori, Avrămești and Fundătura appeared through colonization. Due to these policies implemented by the dualist state, during the period between 1850 and 1910, but also due to the evolution of the locality from an economic point of view, we are witnessing a radical change of the ethnic structure of the population of Luduș locality. All this made the national feeling among the Romanian population increase towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

The daily life of the Luduș community changed after 1918. The Great Union of December 1, 1918 partially changed the ethnic and confessional landscape of the locality. This situation brought hopes for a better life for the Romanians from the area. Soon, the Romanian authorities began the *Agrarian Reform*, which, however, didn't completely solve the problems of the peasantry from the area. The rapid growth of the population and numerous families made the agricultural land to be insufficient for a large part of the peasant families. The standard of living was quite low, the population faced various problems, from lack of money and low purchase prices for agricultural products at the weekly fairs, to problems regarding the health of the population. An increasing problem was the reduced amount of drinking water in the locality. The water source was represented by the springs located on the edge of the locality. To ensure the necessary water, it was brought from the left bank of the Mureș with the barrel. Against the background of problems related to ensuring hygienic-sanitary conditions, infant mortality was quite high in those years.

Public culture transmitted and maintained a different mentality. Romanians were reading the newspapers of the time, in some of them anti-Semitism was cultivated, the Jews being considered guilty, along with corrupt politicians, of all the evils in the country. Corruption made many proselytes, including within the church. In those years, in some villages appeared the new Protestant cults to which they joined at the beginning, a smaller number of people, but which aroused concern among the Romanian Orthodox or Greek Catholics. To these were added, after the war, the attempts of the Russian Bolsheviks to spread communism in our country through sympathizers living in the country or in the cities. The radical right-wing, through the members of the Legionnaire Movement, also appeared as a reaction to a possible development of the Romanian Communist Party, considered by the authorities of the time an extremist left formation.

All these problems couldn't be solved by the Romanian politicians from Bucharest, and the dissatisfaction among the Romanian population in the area amplified starting with the years 1926 and 1927 when nationalism spread more and more, and acceded to the ideas of the right more and more locals.

Taking into account the research topic with a specific local, but which manifested itself in a national and European context, the documents containing important information constituted one of the main sources of documentary information. In this attempt to restore the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area, an important aspect was the one regarding the credibility and the type of investigated sources. Any information related to the history of the Legionnaire Movement was verified from multiple sources, including the information in the chapter dedicated to the legionnaire memoir, where only the credible texts from a historical point of view were selected.

In recent years, the literature on the Legionnaire Movement throughout the entire country has become quite rich. After 1990, books published from the period between the two world wars or in exile were reissued (for example: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari, vol.I*, book published at the „Totul pentru Țară” Publishing House in Sibiu in 1936, reissued in 1999 in București), Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Doctrina Mișcării Legionare*, Lucman Publishing House in București, reissued in 2014, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Circulări și Manifeste*, Blassco Publishing House in București, reissued in 2010, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Însemnări de la Jilava*, Evdokimos Publishing House in București, reissued in 2016, Horia Sima, *Doctrina legionară*, book published at Majadahonda Publishing House in București, reissued in 1995, Horia Sima, *Era libertății, volumele I și II*, reissued at Gordian Publishing House in Timișoara in 1995, Neculai Totu, *Însemnări de pe front*, published at Evdokimos Publishing House in București, reissued in 2018, Ion Moța, *Cranii de lemn*,

reissued in 2012, published at Vicovia Publishing House in Bacău, Faust Brădescu, *Guvernul de la Viena*, published at Majadahonda Publishing House in București, reissued in 1997, Ștefan Palaghiță, *Istoria Mișcării Legionare*, Roza Vânturilor Publishing House in București, reissued in 1993, and the list can go on with many other works displaying the history of the movement.

In the last three decades, several Romanian authors have studied the legionnaire phenomenon. Of these, I remind Ion Cristoiu, *Statul versus Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu*, work published at Mediafax Publishing House in București in 2018, Alexandru Florian et al., *Ideea care ucide. Dimensiunile ideologiei legionare*, book published at Noua Alternativă Publishing House in București in 1994, Tatiana Niculescu, *Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu. Mistica rugăciunii și a revolverului*, published at Humanitas Publishing House in București in 2017, Zigu Ornea, *Anii '30. Extrema dreaptă românească*, Polirom Publishing House, 2015 (work written largely before 1989), Elena Netcu, *Povestea unui legionar*, biography appeared at Letra Publishing House in Snagov in 2016 and many other works.

About the Romanian radical right-wing in the period between the two world wars wrote over the years, in the country or in exile: Liviu Brânzaș, *Raza din catacombă-Jurnal de închisoare*, work published at Scara Publishing House in 2001, Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră: Suferințele evreilor din România 1940-1944, vol.I*, work published in 1946 at Socec Graphic Workshops in București, Filip Păunescu, *Un rezumat al doctrinei legionare*, work published at Carpații Publishing House in Madrid in 1985 and so on.

The works of some foreign authors are very important that have appeared in Romanian, such as the following: Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941 - Mistica ultranaționalismului*, an exceptional work that also appeared in our country at Humanitas Publishing House in 1993; Armin Heinen, *Die Legion „Erzengel Michael”*, translated in Romanian and published in 1999 at Humanitas Publishing House, considered a valuable monograph of the Legionnaire Movement, Eugen Weber: *Romania în The European Right: A Historical Profile*, University of California Press, 1965 (Eugen Weber, *Dreapta Românească*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1999); Roland Clark, *Sfânta tinerețe legionară: activismul fascist în România interbelică*, translation published at Polirom Publishing House in 2016 and more recently Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea „Căpitanului”*, another exceptional work published at Humanitas Publishing House in București in 2016. There are currently sites with a rich documentary background: <http://www.miscarea-legionara.net/> or <http://www.miscarea.net/>.

The National Archives, the archives of state institutions, but also various libraries, have numerous publications from the period between the two world wars, some of them in

digital format. In these newspapers and magazines there are numerous articles about the activities of the Legionnaire Movement, both at the level of the country and locally. Likewise, important information was taken from the files found in the Archives of the C.N.S.A.S. which constituted an important support in restoring the organization scheme of the Legionnaire Movement until after World War II, but also important elements regarding the life of the former legionnaires during the communist period.

Almost unknown in the Romanian cultural space, the Romanian Library in Freiburg is one of the oldest institutions of the postwar Romanian exile, a source of prime importance for the study of the history of exile through the richness of written testimonies ranging from press articles or books to archival documents, some of them reflecting the activity or the actions of the Romanians who "chose freedom". The impressive book fund here has been of real use to me in my research activity.

The history of the Legionnaire Movement didn't end either after the Legionnaire Rebellion or after the communists come to power. The history of the Legionnaire Movement ended between 1990 and 2010, when the former legionnaires from the parts of Ludaș all went to heaven.

The subject of legionnaire dogma still provokes heated and often contradictory discussions. The sensitivity of a part of the Romanian society towards Codreanu and the legionnaire movement became visible in our country in the debates that followed the adoption of Law 217 of 2015 by emergency ordinance "on the prohibition of fascist, legionnaire, racist or xenophobic organizations and symbols and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes".²

Although in recent decades the issue of the radical right-wing in Romania has been widely debated, especially after 1990, there remain some questions that I have tried to answer at the end of the research activity:

1. *What were the factors that made the Legionnaire movement have many followers in the Ludaș area?*
2. *If the Legionnaire Movement in the area of Ludaș had national impact or it was just an episode of an event that took on a national dimension.*
3. *What was the fate of local legionnaire leaders, but also the fate of ordinary members during the communist period?*

The approach preceding the research activity itself was preceded by the following stages:

² Mihai Stelian Rusu, *Fascism românesc, charismă politică și mesianism național: reflecții bibliografice asupra Mișcării Legionare*, in „SAECULUM” no 45/July 2018, p. 131

- study of general and specialized bibliography;
- study the press of the period between the two world wars;
- interviews with different people on *the Legionnaire Movement topic in the Luduș area*;
- study the documents from the Archive of the Romanian Library in Freiburg, Germany;
- study the funds of *Luduș Estate Headquarters, Luduș Town Hall, Luduș Greek-Catholic Archdiocese* within the National Archives, Mureș County Service;
- study of the funds having as theme *the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area* within the Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives.

Because of the situation after World War Two, generated by the politics of the communist authorities, the legionnaires remained in the attention of the repression institutions being supervised, pursued, and in some cases punished with years of hard detention. Thus, the persecution of former members of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area, begun in the late 1920s, ended only in 1990, when the main enemy of the radical right in Romania, the Communist Party, disappeared from the Romanian political scene.

Through the research activity on this topic, I have set out as my main objective was to reconstruct the history of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area throughout its existence, whether we refer to the political party or its members who made it up. This reconstruction is presented in the following chapters:

1. *The Legionnaire Movement in Romania in the European context*
2. *The causes and the context of the emergence of the radical right-wing in the Luduș area*
3. *The history of the Legionnaire Movement from the former Luduș district Luduș during the National-Legionnaire state*
4. *The Luduș Securitate and the legionnaire problem in the years of communism*
5. *The destinies of the leaders of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area*

In order to reconstruct the past, however, the historian needs information about it, in other words, *historical facts*. Thus, a distinction must be made between historical events and historical facts, the latter representing the information gathered by the historian about the past reality, including historical events. The process of collecting historical facts for this research theme has generated numerous difficulties, related to the actual volume of historical facts found and how to select them. Another aspect analyzed, very important, was related to the type and credibility of the investigated sources. Thus, both the primary sources (books, magazines, periodicals, photographs, archival documents, testimonies) and the secondary

sources (works dealing with the subject itself or collateral) had to be carefully studied and analyzed in order to present the events in as objectively as possible.

In the chapter *The Legionnaire Movement in Romania in the European context*, I presented the main aspects related to the history of the Legionnaire Movement in our country, as well as the European context in which it appeared. These events also took place in the Luduș area or were related to the legionnaires from the Luduș area, part of them active participants at regional or national level.

In the chapter *The causes and the context of the emergence of the radical right-wing in the Luduș area*, I presented all the factors that determined the emergence of a powerful radical right-wing movement in the Luduș area.

Luduș during the National-Legionnaire state is a chapter in which the local administration during the legionnaire governance is presented, as well as what happened after the Legionnaire Rebellion between January 21 and 23, 1941.

The destiny of the legionnaires in the years of communism is rebuilt in chapters V and VI: *The Luduș Securitate and the legionnaire problem in the years of communism* and *The destinies of the leaders of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area*.

The conclusions regarding the activity of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area result from the VI chapters that make up this doctoral thesis, which ends with bibliography and appendices.

The study on the history of the Legionnaire Movement from the Luduș area is accompanied in the *Appendices* by *Fragments* carefully selected by *legionnaire recollection and memories* from the writings of the Luduș legionnaire Vasile Coman discovered at the National Archives in Cluj Napoca. In addition to the fragments of legionnaire memoirs, the appendices also contain documents, photographs and essential information that come from the sources studied during the research activity.

CHAPTER I. THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT IN ROMANIA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The Legionnaire Movement in our country has come up in a European context that influenced the period between the two world wars political ideologies, the nationalism typical of the Romanian radical right, the evolution of the Romanian radical left and its role in the involuntary challenge of the radical right-wing. Against the background of the revolts produced by the communists and the workers' movements in Iași, the Legionnaire Movement developed, an important role being played by the students grouped around Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu who founded the Legion of Archangel Michael in Iași, in March 1923. On this occasion, the Romanian radical right-wing began to develop and, at the same time, the legionnaire doctrine with the 4 basic principles that were taken over by the legionnaires from Luduș. Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, leader of the Legionnaire movement, made his political debut with an assassination. In fact, the series of assassinations would become a habit in those years in our country. Romanians recorded the sad record in Europe, for four prime ministers to die assassinated by legionnaires, I. G. Duca, Armand Călinescu, General Gheorghe Argeșanu and Nicolae Iorga. The Carlist Restoration strongly influenced the destiny of the Legionnaire Movement. The years of Carol's reign turned the king into a real enemy of death for the supporters of the radical right-wing, especially after the 1937 elections when the legionnaires achieved third place in the parliament elections for the Chamber of Deputies. The period of King Carol II's royal dictatorship meant the banning of political parties, including the Legionnaire Movement. Romania's tragic situation after the territorial concessions in 1940 caused a wave of discontent among the population. Ion Antonescu's appointment as president of the Council of Ministers and the final departure of King Carol II favored the coming to rule of the legionnaires led by Horia Sima. A new era was beginning, known as the National-Legionnaire state. The disagreements that soon appeared between Sima and Antonescu, resembled "two swords that didn't fit in the same sheath", were the main reasons for the dismantling of the national-legionnaire state. The legionnaire rebellion between January 21 and 23, 1941, suppressed by the army under the command of the head of state, General Antonescu, represented the moment of the definitive elimination of the Legionnaire Movement from the Romanian political scene. The legionnaires continued their activity after this event in the National Army and in the Government of Vienna until the war ended, and then in exile, in several western states. The rebellion was also attended by the Luduș legionnaires. After the legionnaire failure, some of the Luduș legionnaire leaders were arrested and some left Romania.

CHAPTER II. THE CAUSES AND THE CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT-WING IN THE LUDUŞ AREA

THE ORIGIN OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT IN THE LUDUŞ AREA

The legionnaire phenomenon through the radical right-wing movement entitled “The Legionnaire Movement”, found in the Luduş area a favorable land for the spread of right-wing ideas in the period between the two world wars.

The legionnaire dogma developed in the period between the two world wars due to several factors. The propaganda activity coordinated by Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu himself was a real success due to the fact that this region had been for a long time a space almost mostly inhabited by Romanians, but under foreign rule. The road and rail transport networks have favored the creation of conditions for economic development. We are talking about a relatively well-determined phenomenon over time, with a special importance in the evolution of the Legionnaire Movement in our country, in the spirit of ideas promoted in the Epoch in many parts of Europe, this fact representing a moment that marked our contemporary history. The locality of Luduş underwent profound transformations after 1850. The construction of the railway and the development of trade meant that a significant number of Jews settled in Luduş and its surroundings, becoming an attractive area for traders. Along with the migration of the Jews, through the policy of the Austro-Hungarian authorities in the years between 1867 and 1910, a significant number of Hungarians settled in Luduş. Although agriculture and trade were two very well represented economic activities in the Luduş area, the majority of the population lived in quite difficult conditions, sometimes on the brink of poverty. This continued to persist after 1925, although some of the population benefited from land plots as a result of the agricultural reform. This reform, however, was not enough, as long as the Romanian state failed to achieve proper policies. Taken as a whole, Luduş of the 1920s was an economically developed commune, but with many poor families, with an ethnic structure modified by the policy of the Austro-Hungarian state, which generated a feeling of frustration, revenge, aspects very well exploited by the legionnaire populist propaganda. Another cause that favored the spread of nationalist ideas specific to the radical right-wing was the anti-Romanian policies at the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Under these circumstances, the Romanian radical right-wing movement has been able to easily enter the area. About a decade after the grand event, amid threats about the expansion of communism, but also because the Jews were supporters of this political trend, some of the Luduş people had right-wing views, being followers of the anti-Semitic ideas promoted in those years by L.A.N.C. representatives.

CHAPTER III. THE HISTORY OF THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT FROM THE FORMER LUDUȘ DISTRICT

THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT FROM LUDUȘ ESTATE

In Luduș, a locality with an agricultural profile, but with a flourishing trade and a numerous Jewish population, there has been a strong anti-Semitic trend since the Christian National Defense League. There was an L.A.N.C., its president being the trader Victor M. Tilincă. A first involvement of the Luduș people in the Legionnaire Movement belonged to Amos Horațiu Pop, who was part of the "Committee of 100", starting with August 15, 1928. The members of this committee contributed for a year with the amount of 100 lei for the payment of the installments of the Legion truck, called "Căprioara (The Deer)".³ In another issue of the legionnaire newspaper we find that "on October 14 (1928), Mr. Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu baptized in Ludoșul of Mureș, Turda County, the child of the Romanian private first class Amos Horațiu Pop. He is one of the leaders of the national movement in that area and is part of the Committee of 100 of the Legion."⁴ Thus, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu's first visit to Luduș took place in 1928. Amos Horațiu Pop, a merchant from Luduș, owner of a restaurant, wrote a letter inviting the Captain to baptize his son. Then Codreanu brought for the first time the ideas of the Legionnaire Movement in Luduș, where, from that moment, he won many members and sympathizers. According to the estimates of the correspondent of the newspaper "Pământul Strămoșesc (The Ancestral Land)", in Luduș there were in 1928 between 800 and 1000 Jews. "A lot of people came from Maramureș and stay at first hidden, then come out after they first put together their beards and sideburns, for where they come from is not precisely known, but they come with the messy beards and sideburns."⁵ The legionnaire movement from the former Luduș estate, which belonged at that time to the former Turda County (during the 50s, Luduș district, Cluj Region), was set up in 1929, organized by Amos Horațiu Pop. At the beginning, for the purpose of organizing the Legionnaire Movement, Amos Horațiu Pop received help from the students in the city of Iași as well as from the center in Bucharest. Thus, against the background of intense propaganda, a legionnaire organization was founded in Luduș, which quickly became an important legionnaire center. Important information about this period is found in the evidence file on the objective of Luduș commune, located in the archives of C.N.S.A.S.

Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu was several times in Luduș, these visits being presented in detail in this chapter.

³ *Committee of 100* in „Pământul Strămoșesc”, no 16/August 15, 1928, Iași, p 8

⁴ *Information* in „Pământul Strămoșesc”, no 21/November 1, 1928, Iași, p.8

⁵ *From Ludoș*, in the „Pământul Strămoșesc” newspaper, no 1/June 15, 1929, p.7

CHAPTER IV. LUDUȘ DURING THE NATIONAL- LEGIONNAIRE STATE

When they didn't expect it anymore, the legionnaires came to power. This event caught them rather unprepared, unable to control it as they should have. There were different reactions among the leading members of the Legionnaire Movement. The intoxication of power began on September 14, 1940, when the Legion concluded an alliance with General Ion Antonescu to form a government of the "National-Legionnaire State."⁶

The prefect of Turda County was appointed Vasile Hanu teacher. "Vice prefect was named the former prefect of Mureș, Pantea⁷ (...) due to Matei was named consul in Cluj Nicolae Chinezu teacher who wasn't a legionnaire. (...) Mayor of Turda was appointed Niculaie Șerb lawyer, a legionnaire sympathizer who had defended the legionnaires in lawsuits. The legionnaire county head was Ion Mareș lawyer, assistant legionnaire commander. The head of the Police was appointed Braicu lawyer, sympathizer, and assistant mayor was appointed Boroș lawyer. The head of the legionnaire garrison was named Dordai legionnaire, the head of the cross fraternities was Rusu student, and the head of the legionnaire Police was named I, Vasile Coman, with Vasile Olteanu teacher as assistant."⁸

In the Luduș commune, Amos Horațiu Pop, the leader of the legionnaires in the area took over the position of mayor on September 6, 1940. In the position of assistant mayor was appointed Hoza Partenie, member of the Legionnaire Movement. The manager of Luduș estate was appointed Octavian Miron and Ioan Drăgan was the public notary of Luduș estate.

As long as the legionnaires were in power, a mass enrollment of young people took place in the Luduș area and a significant number of citizens were attracted as sympathizers of the party. This was also due to the fact that during the first days of the legionnaire governance they organized a series of demonstrations to which they succeeded to mobilize the inhabitants, and a large part of them received various goods from the legionnaire leaders, and the youth was attracted, both in Luduș commune as well as in the surrounding villages, to training for the formation of legionnaire battalions.

⁶ Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, Publishing House, p.279

⁷ This appointment was made at the proposal of Coriolan Matei, a mathematics teacher who had a great influence in Bucharest. Matei felt indebted to Pantea because he spared him from death after the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu, in his place being shot other legionnaires from Mureș, without positions. He didn't hold positions in the short legionnaire governance because he didn't enjoy enough appreciations from Horia Sima.

⁸ ANR-DJCJ, *Vasile Coman personal fund*, File 3 *Memorii legionare*, vol. III, p.105

CHAPTER V. THE LUDUȘ SECURITATE AND THE LEGIONNAIRE PROBLEM IN THE YEARS OF COMMUNISM

There are many files in the C.N.S.A.S. archives received from the former Securitate. These documents contain data regarding the legionnaire problem in the Luduș area and are grouped in objective files (D.O.) or problem files (D.P.).

One direction of the Securitate in the 50s was the removal of "bandits," as anti-communist partisans were called. Due to the landscape, the Luduș area was not suitable for partisan groups. However, in the years 1950 and 1951, there were reported in the Alba, Târnava Mică, Luduș regions three partisans led by Cornel Diac. They were part of the group of partisans Leon Șușman (lawyer from Ocna Mureș, legionnaire), who acted in the Valea Arieșului - Turda area between 1948 and 1957.

In the 50s, all those who in one way or another opposed the new regime were eliminated one by one. Under the new regime, opponents were arrested, investigated, tortured, convicted in staged trials or even killed. Thus, in 1950 the Securitate suggested that several inhabitants of the Luduș commune and its surroundings be admitted to work colonies. The reasons for the decisions are very interesting (and at the same time amazing)— a statement made at anger or a joke on the political regime, could have brought locking into labor colonies without the need of being judged. The case of priest Vasile Samoilă is as eloquent as possible to describe those years in which terror was established in our country.

The activity of the Luduș Securitate regarding the legionnaire problem was amplified with the opening of the problem files. The number of agents in this issue (collaborators, informers) increased from year to year. A consequence of this informative work carried out by the Securitate employees was the identification of all the former local legionnaires or those established in the area coming from other places. Every activity directed against the regime or every statement considered tendentious was recorded in the information notes, reports or Securitate records. The general conclusion reached by the employees of the Luduș Securitate in the early 50s was that the majority of former legionnaires in Luduș district "are carrying a hostile activity against our regime".⁹

⁹ *Sinteză informativă privind activitatea legionară în raionul Luduș*, no 313/October 6, 1953, ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, File no D0007400, vol.IX, f.580

CHAPTER VI. THE DESTINIES OF THE LEADERS OF THE LEGIONNAIRE MOVEMENT IN THE LUDUȘ AREA

THE ROMANIAN SECRET SERVICES AND THE LEGIONNAIRE PROBLEM

One of the main "tasks" of the Communist-era Securitate was the supervision of former legionnaires, mainly those who held positions in the organizational structure of the Movement. The same role was played by the Romanian secret services prior to 1948. Since the beginning of the Legionnaire Movement, the members of the organization were targeted by the Secret Services: the Secret Intelligence Service (1924-1944), the Intelligence Service (1944-1945), the Special Intelligence Service (1945-1948). Some of the data in the files of the legionnaires drawn up by the former Communist Securitate came from the former Security, which dealt with this problem in the period between the two world wars.

The means used in the informative-operative work were represented by: the informative network, the operative technique, the monitoring, the censorship, the investigation, the on-site research for the taking of material evidence, the expertise, and so on. These were used by officers to supervise, monitor and document the hostile activity of the subject being pursued. When closing a file by not confirming the data or the suspicion that was the basis for its opening, the commander had to verify whether the officer had documented that the information is not confirmed by evidence, certain data and thoroughly verified; only then could he approve the closure of the file and its filing. "Once opened , the file had a deadline to settle and was permanently supervised by the head, and the officer could use all forms and means of informative-operative work, of course justified: *the information network, the technical means of listening at home, at work and outside it, the total monitoring or on "operative" moments, meaning by this a meeting with an individual, a special concern, a visit to a connection or edifice - a valuable or protected institute, the investigation for the urgent clarification of some information that emerged as a novelty in the file; expertise to clarify the authenticity of a document or object in question, and so on.*"¹⁰

Among the legionnaire leaders who activated in the Luduș area or in Turda County or who were Luduș natives, were pursued by the Communist Securitate: Mureșan Ioan, Coman Vasile Via, Gherasim Ioan, Coman Emil, Stoica Victor, Hanu Vasile and Hoza Partenie. The files of these people are presented in this chapter.

¹⁰ Colonel (r) Gheorghe Bănescu, *Demers pentru adevăr. Consemnări*, Târgu Mureș, 2010, p.72

CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, the little fair on Mureș was an important center of the legionnaire movement, where the Legionnaire Battalion III Luduș-Turda came to existence. To this status contributed the ethnic structure of the locality, the emergence of a group of followers, the visits of Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu and of the other legionnaire leaders who managed to attract some priests and simple people to the Legionnaire Movement. Other political ideologies spread in the period between the two world wars in the Luduș area were liberalism, peasantry and socialism. All these ideologies, strongly represented in the area, except for socialism, were in a continuous competition during the years between 1930 and 1941, in the context in which democracy and nationalism were the main axes of the Romanian political debate.

Following January 23, 1941, the radical right-wing was outlawed. However, some legionnaires in the area continued to activate clandestinely.

In the political context between the two world wars, the introduction of universal suffrage, at the level of men, allowed for large masses of people to be easily manipulated. First of all, nationalism was one of the easiest means of political propaganda, which most parties used. The Union of December 1, 1918 made Transylvania an integral part of Greater Romania. The expectations were very high, the accomplishments fewer. Added to this is the politicking of the parties, which were found in a constant struggle for power, corruption, which characterized the political class of the period between the two world wars, these maintaining a state of mistrust. The dissatisfactions of the Romanian inhabitants, the majority in the area, were added towards different aspects of daily life, the difficulty of assuming otherness, a situation exploited by the legionnaire propaganda. For a Romanian trader, newly entered into the world of trade, it was very difficult to accept the competition of the Jewish or Hungarian trader. The presence of an important number of Jews in Luduș, in the middle of a population with a rural mentality, established only a few decades ago in the locality, created serious problems of adaptability to the natives. An important role played the priests, teachers and students, through the ideas taken from the university centers of the country, especially from Iași, where some of the intellectuals came from, especially teachers, settled in Transylvania for the bonus of 50 to hundred obtained at salaries and other benefits, house, merit bonus, land. In Iași, in the early 1920s, there was an open struggle between the right-wing nationalists and sympathizers of communist ideas, against the background of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The messengers of the radical right presented among the population of the Luduș area the doctrine of the Legionnaire Movement, the faith in God, the

fanatical trust in the legionnaire mission, and, the whole ritual, through specific songs and poems, of the formation of solidarity, camaraderie.

During the period between the two world wars, the Luduș legionnaires went through many difficult moments, difficult to tolerate in a society that largely shared democratic values, with a Christian education obtained through school and church. This situation of the members and sympathizers of the legionnaire movement continued even after the arrival of the communists, all the legionnaires being taken under observation by the communist Securitate members, in some cases until the end of their lives. For the former legionnaires at an old age after the fall of the communist regime, the removal from the records of the pursuit members occurred in 1990, after the fall of the communist regime.

The Luduș legionnaires were more or less actively involved in all the important historical events that took place at national level. For some of them, destiny was also influenced by the events in which they were involved. In this regard, I recall: the elections in Neamț in 1931, the elections of 1932, the assassination of Prime Minister I.G. Duca, the organization of the student Congress in Târgu Mureș between April 3 and 5, 1936, the elections of 1937, the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu on September 21, 1939, the governance during the National-Legionnaire State, the Legionnaire Rebellion, the activity in exile and so on.

An important source in the legionnaire activity was also *Fragmente de amintiri și memorii legionare* that the former Luduș legionnaire Coman Vasile wrote in Germany, during the period he was in exile. Coman Vasile's memoirs are a valuable source for reconstructing the history of the Legionnaire Movement in the Luduș area, but in Romania as well. Coman Vasile described in detail the relationship he had with the Captain, his participation in the electoral campaigns, the main legionnaire events that took place in Luduș, the visits of Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu in the Luduș area, as well as all his legionnaire activity in the country and in exile after the Rebellion of 1941, until the end of World War II.

The main objective I set out at the beginning of the research activity, which was to reconstitute the Legionnaire organization in the Luduș area, I consider it was achieved.

In conclusion, I consider that by reconstructing the history of the legionnaire movement I have tried through a balanced narrative to present the birth of the movement, its activity in the Luduș area, offering the opportunity that through archive documents to provide details about the history of the radical right-wing, the profile of the people involved, both socially as well as intellectually, the members' mentality, the fanaticism that characterized also them and the life in the totalitarian left-wing, communist regime. Through short biographies, I tried to highlight the personality of the group of local leaders, under constant

surveillance, especially those who remained faithful to the legionnaire creed, but also their compromises and collaboration with the communist regime, its instruments of torture, with the Securitate.

By virtue of the moral principles promoted by an anti-totalitarian, humanist conscience, I believe that through my doctoral thesis I managed to offer a page of history, from the perspective of local history, which highlights the associations, disagreements and behavior of ordinary man in the century of extremes, as Hobsbawm called it.

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