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Andrei Miroiu

a School of International Relations and School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

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Intelligence and intelligence operations in Romanian anti-partisan warfare, 1944–1958

Andrei Miroiu*

School of International Relations and School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

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The Romanian anti-communist partisans constituted a small, scattered, diffused, and leaderless movement united only by nationalism and by the belief that armed struggle would contribute to the downfall of an illegitimate regime supported by a foreign power. This article provides an analysis of intelligence and intelligence operations used by the government to defeat these guerrillas, in a conflict that lasted a decade and a half. The sources for this study are mainly the collections of documents of Romanian secret police recently declassified and published.

Keywords: counterinsurgency; intelligence; intelligence operations; asymmetric warfare; communist Romania

Introduction and research rationale

Even before the Moscow-backed Romanian communists took power in early March 1945 armed groups and subversive movements were contesting their bid for controlling the destiny of this European nation. The Romanian Communist Party would go on to fight these armed groups and others formed in the following years for more than a decade and a half, until the last isolated armed rebels were captured in 1961 and 1962. While these groups never formed a unitary movement, were quite small, and were unable to pose vital threats to the regime, they did constitute an insurgency in the sense of a politically motivated, armed struggle against a central government. By mounting armed resistance, attempting sabotage, attacking, kidnapping and killing party officials and government troops they did fulfil the criteria to be considered a guerrilla movement, no matter how few there were in any given group.

Romanian counterinsurgency was, much like its Soviet counterpart, the province of the intelligence services of the communist regime. There is virtually no trace of involvement of the regular Romanian army units in dealing with the partisans, except for the very limited role, in 1945–1946, played by the army intelligence branch. There may be many explanations for this fact, ranging from...
the uncertainty that the political leaders had concerning the loyalty of the army, which was continuously purged of ‘bourgeois’ elements for a decade after 1944 to the fact that the army units were simply too large to be used effectively against the partisans. However, a more powerful argument is that the intelligence services were much better equipped to deal with the problem and, after their takeover by communist agents, the party could be assured of their loyalty.

This article provides an analysis of intelligence and intelligence operations in the fight against Romanian anti-communist partisans. The main research questions concern the structure and organization of intelligence agencies for anti-guerrilla actions, the gathering of intelligence through informant networks, interrogation, and infiltration, as well as their use in the defeat of particular insurgent groups. It is to be hoped that the present research will shed light on aspects of communist counter-guerrilla warfare during the Cold War, but also provide useful information for present-day operations against scattered, diffuse, rural-based armed rebels. The sources for this study are the vast collections of documents of Romanian secret police (Securitate) declassified and published within the last decade and a half, as well as the emerging corpus of relevant secondary literature.

**Guerrillas and their opponents**

Romanian anti-communist guerrillas were mostly small groups of up to 20 armed individuals, generally living in remote rural areas, preferably with mountainous terrain. They relied to a great measure on the networks of family and friends in these villages, providing them with shelter, food, information, and physical and moral comfort. Armed with light weapons, mostly pistols, rifles, grenades, and occasionally automatic weapons, the partisans may have had a modicum of military training due to many of them serving in the army during the Second World War. Their weapons, too, had been obtained during the war, although in some cases they were just hunting rifles and, in a very few cases, they were obtained from sympathetic officers and soldiers of the regular army. Most of their attacks were attempts at sabotage, strikes against local communists and local party buildings, or confrontations with the armed forces of the regime. Some of the guerrillas were walking a fine line between political opposition and outright banditry, sometimes being involved in robberies and theft as a means of supporting their operations. When the guerrillas maintained a good support network and were suspicious enough of any infiltration attempt, they were able to survive for extended periods of time. Some of these groups operating in remote mountain areas evaded capture or destruction for nearly a decade.

The formation of these scattered groups was more often than not spontaneous; it was a local reaction to the policies of the new communist authorities, especially those aiming at the suppression of political opponents and, further down the line, those targeting the private ownership of arable land. If anything, anti-Russian nationalism and anti-communism characterized these groups and gave them an
identity and purpose. Politically, when they had any affiliation, the partisans belonged to the entire centrist and right-wing spectrum of pre-war Romania: one could find liberals, agrarians, and conservatives, and even a few former communists in their midst. A significant number though, especially among the leaders of the most resolute guerrilla groups, had been members of the fascist Iron Guard movement who knew not to expect anything good if they were captured by the communists.6

A number of agencies were involved in the fight against the anti-communist rebels immediately after 1944. Most prominent of these was, in the early years, Siguranţa Statului (State Security), the main internal intelligence agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Romania for many decades. Its role was mainly information gathering and had to resort to police and the gendarmes when it wanted to move against a particular target. The intelligence service of the prime minister, Serviciul Special de Informaţii (SSI) operated as a dual foreign and internal espionage agency, boasting 1083 employees, 44 information centres in Romania, and 26 foreign residences in 1944.7 In the first years of communist rule, it was instrumental in dismantling subversive groups, especially those gathering political or military leaders.8 The regular police, renamed in 1949 in Soviet fashion Miliţia (Militia), was always a militarized force in Romania, and had intelligence-gathering abilities and missions at a local level. It was always used as support to more seasoned troops or in a main strike role when there was no time to summon reinforcements. The local gendarmes played a similar role, and their tradition of working in villages enabled them to be among the best informed concerning the moves of the partisans.9 They also had a tactical strike role, which is highlighted by the fact that in October 1945 36 ‘intervention platoons’ were formed by the Gendarmerie to tackle the problem of armed rebel groups. Also working against subversive groups was the Detective Corps; operating within it was a striking force designated as ‘Mobile Brigade’.10

Except for the Militia, the other agencies were all merged into Direcţia Generală a Securităţii Poporului (General Directorate of People’s Security, Securitate), an organ of the Ministry of Internal Affairs created on 30 August 1948, some immediately, some significantly later, like the SSI, which was not wholly absorbed until 1951. From now on until the capture of the last armed rebels in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the Securitate played the main role, aided in its tactical missions by the Militia. The most important elements in this fight were always the local and regional offices of the Securitate, with the central command rarely being involved in the actual campaigns against the partisans. The central leadership did indeed provide general guidance, approved some of the larger initiatives, and sent officers to enquire where inefficiencies and wrongdoings were signalled, but overall the level of responsibility and action was almost always local or regional.11

The level of threat was not considered to be high enough to necessitate an overall command, and only in 1952 was a special structure – the ‘Gangs’ Service – created within Securitate’s 3rd Division, under Lieutenant Colonel Pavel
Even after this coordination service was created, the action remained mostly local. There were good reasons for this to be the case, some related to the weakness of the rebels but most given the strength of the counterinsurgents. In terms of the information network, the Securitate had 42,187 informers as early as 1948. In terms of strength, Securitate was heavily armed and manned in comparison with the partisans, being able to use entire companies and even combined forces of multiple battalions in large-scale operations. It may not have boasted the 165,000 troops, its own artillery, and aviation attributed to it by exiled observers, but it was overwhelmingly strong in relation to its armed opponents. In addition to that, it was always able to coordinate its actions between regional units hunting the same guerrillas and to elicit the help of the Militia in the process. In the Mehedinți area, for instance, where the strong partisans led by former army Colonel Ion Uța were operating, such cooperation was instrumental in finally defeating them.

Soviet involvement

A legitimate question that arises in the case of a country occupied at the end of the Second World War by the USSR, which maintained a force of at least two divisions on its territory until 1958, was what role did the Soviet Union play in the Romanian counterinsurgency? As one knows, simultaneously with the Romanian campaign, Moscow was fighting a much larger counterinsurgency in its western borderlands, in Ukraine, the Baltic States, and in Polish territories. Indeed, cooperation against the rebels sometimes preceded the establishment of formal relations between Romania and the USSR. This was the case in Bukovina, where the elements of anti-Soviet partisans emerged even before 23 August 1944, the date when a coup d'état in Bucharest ousted pro-German Marshal Ion Antonescu and sought peace with the Allies. As early as 12 September 1944, Romanian authorities were cooperating with the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) against guerrillas, surrendering them to the Soviet army. One would therefore legitimately expect Soviet involvement in Romanian COIN in the following years, but interestingly this was not necessarily the case.

Indirect involvement, through the control of the party and Securitate leadership, was of course evident. The members of the ‘external group’ of the PCR/PMR, composed of leaders who had spent the war in Moscow and were brought to Bucharest in the lorries of the Red Army in the fall of 1944, were widely considered to be Soviet agents. Emil Bodnăraș, in charge of Romanian intelligence since late 1944, had been an agent of Glavnoe Razvedivatel’noe Upravlenie (GRU, Soviet Military Intelligence) since the 1930s. Gheorghe Pintilie, the head of the Securitate from 1948 to 1963, was an NKVD agent. To illustrate the degree of control and infiltration of Soviet agents, one need look no further that Gheorghe Pintilie’s wife, Ana Toma, herself an NKVD agent. Ana Toma was first the wife of Sorin Toma, editor in chief of the party’s official daily magazine, Scânteia, and afterwards the romantic interest of Constantin
Pârvulescu, number three in the party in 1944. In addition to that, the intelligence services were staffed with many officers with dual Romanian and Soviet citizenship and allegiance.

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

Until historians are fully able to access the archives of the Soviet intelligence services it will be hard to provide a definitive assessment of the impact of the advisors on the conduct of anti-partisan operations in Romania. Some analysts have noted that their traces are few even in the Romanian primary sources, due to the fact that they destroyed the documents before leaving. Memoirs of high-ranking Securitate officers are fairly silent on the topic, mainly acknowledging the ‘good advice’ received from the Soviet agents. The published primary sources, though, speak of a local involvement of advisors detached with regional units. In the summer of 1945 a document from Transylvania describes the contact and collaboration between the head of Nașău Gendarmerie and an NKVD captain and delegate for the region in apprehending suspected rebels. The Soviet captain was ordering the arrest of persons and seemed to have more information than his Romanian counterpart. Later on in the year, the Soviets were showing interest in an organization led by Gavrila Olteanu (‘The Haiduks’ – named as such after pre-modern folk heroes, perceived by the public as freedom fighters) and were keen to interfere. In some cases, local authorities valued the cooperation of their Soviet colleagues. For instance, the local intelligence officials from Botoșani asked Bucharest to convince Soviet partners to keep Major Tarasov, a Soviet officer, in the area for his knowledge and abilities relating to the problem of the Haiduks. However, as previously mentioned, the documents at our disposal do not provide a full picture in this regard, and the role of the Soviet advisors in relation to Romanian counterinsurgency cannot be fully understood at the moment.

Intelligence operations: Censorship and informant networks

Written rebel communications over long distances were made impossible early on through a vastly developed system of censorship of correspondence. In the mid 1950s, the ‘F’ Division of the Securitate was entirely dedicated to the purpose of controlling correspondence. In April 1956, for instance, this Division had 277 employees. This is one of the few instances when advanced,
technological means were used against the rebel groups. Previously, listening and photography equipment had been installed in 1945–1946 in the house of General Aurel Aldea as he was trying to organize the National Resistance Movement as a general command of the partisan movement. But these means were quite sophisticated and after the elimination of urban resistance were no longer employed.

Therefore, as the Romanian partisans were mostly small, scattered groups dwelling in forested areas and since they were almost completely dependent upon the local communities for food and many times shelter, the main approach of the authorities was to create powerful local information networks. These networks were the backbone of a strategy that called for the uncovering of the whole structure of the local rebel organization. Through the use of informers, local Militia and Securitate officers were supposed to uncover the identities of the guerrillas and their helpers, to penetrate these groups, and to create the conditions for mounting swift and decisive blows to arrest and destroy the entire rebel group. These information networks varied greatly in numbers and in the complexity of their operations. Against subversive groups operating in urban settings, such as those of the anti-communist students, one intelligence officer could control an entire operation with just two informers per faculty. In rural settings, where partisans were particularly strong and dangerous, dozens of informers were needed.

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

The payoff was great in the case of some of the teams sent by the CIA in the early 1950s as part of its covert program to contact the partisans, gather information, and conduct sabotage behind the Iron Curtain. For instance, one could mention the arrest of a group of three foreign-trained paratroopers in the region of Beiuș in the Apuseni Mountains in late April 1953. The group, comprising locals who had left for the West a few years before, was captured, not through the massive combing of the mountains and forests that followed the report of landings, but through informative action. A Securitate informer, a friend of the family of one of the paratroopers who had been identified by intelligence as a possible returned insurgent, was able through multiple conversations with the parents of the rebel to make them reveal his return. The Securitate arrested the three paratroopers and spread the rumour that they were never able to capture them, in order to ‘turn’ them and relay through them false information to the CIA.
In time, the composition of the informant networks became larger and larger. Against the guerrillas led by Silvestru Harsmei, the authorities created networks of informers among the categories suspected of being helpers of the group, especially relatives, former convicts, lovers and potential lovers, and persons employed in jobs including work in the forests. Patrols and checkpoints were also initiated; undercover Militia officers were infiltrated as workers in stores that might sell goods to the partisans. By the end of anti-partisan operations in the early 1960s, the Securitate had, according to its own estimates, 500,000 informers. While obviously most of them had nothing to do with anti-guerrilla operations, the number indicates the seriousness put into extracting intelligence from the population.

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

Torture played a significant part in extracting intelligence. The relatives and friends of known rebels were singled out for extremely cruel treatment at the hands of the interrogators, both to instil fear in the guerrillas and compel them to surrender and to extract information as soon as possible. A significant, though yet unknown number of those subjected to these treatments perished at the hands of their interrogators. This procedure was, of course, completely illegal, as admitted by internal investigations during the late 1960s, when the political winds had changed and the ranks of the secret service were purged. Poor professional training of the Securitate officers often led to the alienation of informers, their exposure as agents, or simply to the collection of useless intelligence. This led to an extremely slow pace of finding anything about the rebels and explains why some groups lasted for so long. Sometimes torture did yield immediate and spectacular results, such as in the case of the partisans led by Gligor Cantemir in the county of Arad, where torture was applied systematically to those suspected of being his contacts. Information thus extracted led not only to the arrest of Cantemir, a prominent legionary who had been part of the teams parachuted in by the Germans after August 1944, but also to the capture of other 70 legionaries affiliated with him and suspected of entertaining rebellious actions.

An interesting example of the organization and functioning of information networks is the case of anti-partisan operations in south-west Romania between
1948 and 1951. Despite the fact that most of the inhabitants were not sympathetic to the authorities and refused to volunteer information, there were local informers who had identified armed groups of up to five guerrillas patrolling the mountains, dealing with local shepherds, trying to obtain information and recruits. Among the best informers the local officers had were women and children, who provided regular and accurate details of their spotting of and meeting with partisans. The informers also revealed that certain local peasants were providing food and transport for the guerrillas. These reports were combined by the intelligence officers with the results of their surveillance of a large group of relatives of the known partisans. Another category of locals under close supervision were widows and women of ‘loose morals’ supposed to be frequented by the partisans.

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

Intelligence operations: Infiltration

Perhaps the most risky approach that the Romanian communist forces took when dealing with the partisans was infiltration, the placing of an agent working for the government within a particular guerrilla group. It is interesting to note that, despite the certain risks, the payoffs were estimated to be so great that the tactic was consistently used, in a wide variety of regions and against both rural and urban armed or subversive groups. Ideally, a covert agent who might or might not have been an intelligence officer was tasked to approach individuals within the support network of a partisan group, declaring their willingness to help the guerrillas or become one of them. Once inside the network or after being accepted in the armed group, the agent would identify its members, discover their hideouts and their strengths, and make all efforts to draw the guerrilla into traps and ambushes set by local government forces. When agents were allowed enough time, they could provide a wealth of information, such as those operating in the armed groups from Dobrogea, who gave extremely detailed reports on the composition and actions of the rebels. The following examples highlight the variety of infiltration actions and detail success and failure.

Infiltration was employed as soon as anti-government groups and structures were identified after 1945. The ‘Haiduks’ of Gavrilă Olteanu were
infiltrated early on by agent ‘A. Roman’, who was in reality SSI Captain Nicolae Dumitrescu; using his position as liaison between the group and General Aurel Aldea, who was the leader of the embryonic National Resistance Movement, the agent sent numerous and detailed reports on the organization for almost a year.\textsuperscript{53}

Agent ‘Iancu’, working for the Siguranța, was infiltrated into the Bucharest chapter of the ‘Haiduks’, reporting on their meetings and contacts.\textsuperscript{54} When both the Haiduks and the National Resistance Movement were destroyed through mass arrests in late May 1946, agent Roman was also imprisoned with his contacts and acted as an undercover agent in jail.\textsuperscript{55}

In the same period, intelligence officers were infiltrated among the anti-communist officers of the Sinaia-based Mountain Battalion and were reporting that, in collusion with officers of the British Military Mission, the pro-rebel officers of this unit were stockpiling weapons and preparing the organization of guerrilla formations to trap Soviet units to the west of the Carpathians in case war broke out. Although elements of the plot had been discovered through informers in November 1945, the agent that destroyed the group was infiltrated only in May 1946; a reserve officer in this unit, he already had the trust of the officers. The agent uncovered the structure of the organization and its links to other units and the Royal Guard Battalion in Bucharest.\textsuperscript{56}

The elimination of the brothers’ Parăgină legionary gang from the Vrancea Mountains on the night of 17–18 October 1949 was accomplished through the infiltration of a Securitate informer and a Securitate undercover sergeant-major. It took months to get the two into the gang, as initially they had to be portrayed in the local community as runaways and political opponents of the communists. They were verified by the insurgents through moving them repeatedly from trusted person to trusted person, interrogations, and even mock executions. After weeks of trials, they were accepted into the group and taken to the mountain camps, where the group mustered 18 fighters, mostly former intellectuals and petty-bourgeois. The insurgents would collect taxes from the villages nearby, conduct attacks on isolated police and party officials, and spread anti-communist propaganda. After gaining the confidence of the leaders of the group, the undercover Securitate agents were able to relay information as to the group’s location, and the group was eventually surrounded and captured without resistance.\textsuperscript{57}

The destruction of Traian Cristea’s group in 1956 was also achieved through infiltration. Operating against local officials in the Râcari region, just a few kilometres to the north-west of Bucharest, the group consisted of seven members and was housed by former elements of the rural bourgeoisie. The Bucharest Securitate used a turned agent, a student arrested for anti-communist activities. He became the lover of Traian Cristea’s sister and through her, after weeks of having his loyalty tested by the guerrillas, he became acquainted with the rebel who ‘recruited’ him to write political manifestos. The entire rebel group was arrested without resistance.\textsuperscript{58} In 1957, ‘Action 29’ was mounted against a legionary group from Dobrogea. The gang was infiltrated by a former classmate
of one of the members, a Securitate agent, who helped not only in the discovery of all the members of the group, but also of sympathizers from Galați, Brașov, and București. All the rebels were arrested in 1959.59

In the Apuseni Mountains, infiltration was much sought after, with other options such as increased patrols and the formation of counter-gangs rejected in favour of planting an informant in the group led by Major Dabija. The informant would parade himself as an escaped convict and would place notices on the group’s activities in secret hideouts in trees.60 This was done very fast, with a reserve officer, Lieutenant Colonel Iancu Bocan being infiltrated in the group. However, it was impossible for him to send back information before the group was discovered and attacked by Securitate troops.61

Colonel Bocan was a happy case despite his failure. For those whom the partisans discovered to be working against them, the fate was cruel. When the Bukovinian partisans of Vladimir Macoveiciuc learned that two police agents had been placed among them in December 1945, they killed both of them with axes and then hacked them to pieces.62 These discoveries happened either through accident, poor work of the covert agents, or, in one particularly important case for intelligence work, when one of the agents was simply unreliable. During the summer of 1951 the Securitate attempted to infiltrate four informers into the Northern Făgăraș group led by Ion Gavrilă, among them captured Bukovinian partisan Vasile Motrescu. Once inside the group, he revealed that the other three were traitors; the partisans executed the three on 14 September 1951.63 Motrescu’s action was not unique. In December 1950, the Securitate arrested a member of the Şușman group from the county of Cluj and tried to turn him into an infiltrated agent, however when returned to the gang he revealed his capture to his comrades.64

Despite these failures, enough victories could be reported to vindicate those officers who thought infiltration was worthwhile. Years after the previously mentioned incident concerning the Şușman group, in the summer of 1954, three of his partisans were discovered through the use as informer of the sister of two of them. One was killed; another was sentenced to death and executed. The third member, a woman, was given a life sentence.65 In the case of the Poșa group from Maramureș, the authorities penetrated both the support and propaganda network and the group itself. The legionary ‘Young Nest’ in Sighet, who were planning to join the guerrillas, had been infiltrated with an informer in November 1948, as soon as the Securitate found out about its existence. This allowed the authorities to place an agent within the partisans themselves in April 1949, and in just a few days the information received led to two fire-fights, one involving a whole Securitate platoon on 1 May and the second on 2 May, when the group was surrounded and effectively destroyed.66 The partisans led by Andrei Ghivnici were all liquidated single-handedly by a Securitate non-commissioned officer infiltrated among them in 1950–1951.67 The subversive group from the Cluj County led by Iosif Capotă was infiltrated by Securitate Major Grigore Mândruț who helped in their capture.68
A more complete story of destruction through infiltration can be told in relation to the ‘White Guard’, an organization led by Leonida Bodiu and operating in Bistriţa-Năsăud. They referred to themselves as members of a ‘National Christian League’, but for some reason the Securitate called them the ‘White Guard’, which was a term invented for a supposed counter-gang operating in the area. Leonida Bodiu, an army lieutenant, had been captured at Stalingrad and returned as battalion commander in the Soviet-organized ‘Tudor Vladimirescu’ Division. Captured by the Germans in January 1945, he was contacted by legionary elements for a possible mission but he refused. He returned to the country in June 1946, and was arrested and tried for desertion. Not held in custody during his trial, he went underground when he heard that he had been sentenced to 25 years’ hard labour. The organization formed around him was supposed to act only upon the outbreak of war between the West and the Soviet Union. Cooperation between the Securitate and Army Intelligence in trying to infiltrate the group with former military officers did not amount to much. In September 1948 an information network coordinated by both Securitate and Army Intelligence was built up in the villages where the organization was known to be operating. Some of the Army informers blew their own cover in the process, by calling their sources to official meetings in the local town halls. Acting on a carefully elaborated plan, 30 Securitate strike teams totalling 156 men went into action on the night of 12-13 February 1949 in four villages, arresting 22 suspected members of the organization. However the mission was a failure, as 29 of those known to possess weapons escaped to the mountains. Bodiu was eventually captured after the group was infiltrated by a government agent, a former good friend of his, who lured him into a trap on 21 March 1949. In July, under the pretext of trying to escape while revealing the location of some weapons, Bodiu and two other members of the rebel group were shot and killed by the Securitate. Another 63 people were tried and sentenced to prison terms for being members of or for helping the rebel group.69

Intelligence operations: Counter-gangs

The Romanian counterinsurgents also attempted the use of counter-gangs in the fight against the anti-communist rebels. This approach, which mirrored contemporary developments in Malaya, Algeria, and Kenya featured the formation of crack teams of intelligence officers operating in disguise as locals or trying to pass themselves off as rebels, in order to approach the real guerrillas, gain their confidence, and eventually attack and destroy them.70 Early in the struggle, a counter-gang was used to destroy the previously mentioned Sinaia group of army officers plotting insurrection in the spring of 1946. After the infiltrated agent had provided ample information concerning the composition, intentions, and capabilities of the rebels, the authorities planned that a crack team of Siguranţă officers in disguise as tourists would operate from a mountain cabin known to be frequented by the rebels and another would make the arrests in Sinaia. Top priority
was given to the discovery of weapons caches. During the very successful operation, 12 active and reserve officers were arrested and two other runaway rebel officers who had been members of the National Resistance Movement were arrested. Two major supply depots were discovered, with tens of thousands of rounds, dozens of artillery shells, 100 grenades, 14 guns, and 2 machine-guns.

In other instances, success was more problematic or was completely absent. In the autumn of 1949, the Mehedinți local command authorized the formation of a counter-gang composed of 12 Militia officers who patrolled the area of partisan activity disguised as forest rangers. On 24 September, they fell on three guerrillas, who managed to escape after a shootout. Similarly problematic was the activity of counter-gangs in the region of Făgăraș. The Securitate ‘group Manda’ who managed to infiltrate the partisans led by Ion Gavrila was not even meant to act against them, but against a similar partisan group on the south slopes of the Făgăraș Mountains. Later the same year (1952) a counter-gang with officers disguised as tourists was sent to track them down, without much success, despite the fact that the guerrillas used to attack tourist cabins in the mountains.

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

Conclusions

In conclusion, one could argue that in terms of intelligence, the nature of the guerrillas and the terrain in which most of them operated made the task of local agencies fairly difficult and lengthy. It took a long time to build the information networks in the areas where rebels operated and along the way personnel changes, excessive torture, or simple mistakes that blew the cover of agents and informers led to months and even years of hard work being wasted. However, good informers led many times to success even for lower-ranking officers and NCOs. The discovery of hiding places through informers or betrayals, as well as the use of infiltration were among the most efficient tactics employed by local intelligence or law enforcement officers. Less useful were counter-gangs, which by themselves never produced good results.
One must always keep in mind that the lessons we can derive from an intelligence approach to a campaign such as the one waged by the Romanian communists against local partisans in the 1940s and 1950s are tactical and limited. While the tactical lessons, regarding how to build, run, and exploit an information network or related to the use of counter-gangs and infiltration can, more or less, be interpreted as still useful and relevant, the other factors that led to eventual victory were very complex and hard to reproduce, both for moral and practical reasons. Indeed, intelligence operations were greatly facilitated by the fact that the communist government enjoyed almost complete territorial control, which was enhanced in the years after the end of the Second World War by a vast and unrelenting programme of population control, which involved the creation of a vast administrative surveillance apparatus, continuous propaganda, a total reshape of property relations in the economy, mass imprisonment of opponents, and mass internal deportations. It is unlikely and undesirable that a modern, democratic government would entertain doing anything on such a scale.

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Notes
1. For a narrative on the communist takeover of Romania as well as an introduction to the problems of resistance to communist rule, see Tismăneanu, Stalinism for All Seasons; Presidential Commission, Final Report.
3. Diener L’Autre Communisme en Roumanie, 82.
5. The most complete work on Romanian anti-communist armed groups is Dobrinu, Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România.
6. On the composition of the guerrilla groups, see a discussion in Deletant, Teroarea comunistă în România.
7. Serviciul Român de Informații, Cartea albă a Securității, 18.
8. This passage is based on Troncota, Istoria serviciilor secrete românești.
9. See, for instance, Note of Mărășești Gendarmes, 1 August 1948 in Chipurici and Rațoi, Rezistența anticomunistă din sud-vestul României (hereafter RASV), Doc. 45, 84–6.
11. For a general discussion of Securitate’s beginnings, organization, and role in the repression, see Oprea, Bastionul cruzimii.
14. See for the higher number, also used by Deletant and Cretzianu, Captive Rumania. For a correction, Banu, ‘Câteve considerații privind istoriografia Securității’.
17. Some of these groups had been trained by the Germans in special guerrilla warfare schools in the spring and summer of 1944, see Biddiscombe, ‘Prodding the Russian Bear’.


19. An analysis of these networks can be found in Oprea, _Bastionul cruzimii_.


21. Nationalist Romanian historiography often writes in xenophobic tones on this topic, trying to portray Securitate’s abuses as the work of officers of Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, and Hungarian descent. See for this, the book of Cristian Troncoță, himself a former Securitate officer, _Istoria serviciilor secrete românești_.

22. Deletant, _Teroarea comună în România_, 97, 98.


25. _Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Pseudomemoriile unui general de Securitate_.


29. Liviu Tăranu, ‘Controlul corresponsenței în anii ’50’.


31. For this as the main approach in dealing with the guerrillas, see Banu, ‘Metode utilizeză de Securitate’; Miroiu, ‘Wiping out “The Bandits”’.

32. For the need to recruit informers from the local hostile elements who might harbour knowledge of the rebels, see Address of Teleorman Securitate, 11 June 1951 in Cățănuș and Roske, _Collectivizarea agriculturii în România_, Doc. 80, 283–4.


34. See for instance Bodeanu and Budeanca, _Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România_ (hereafter RATS), 38–9.


37. For these missions and their fate, see Troncoță, _Istoria Securității_, 196–7.


40. BIASS No. 2 (1968): 5.


44. For a lengthy discussion of the poor professional standards of the time, see Troncoță, _Istoria serviciilor secrete românești_.

45. _Banu_, ‘Utilizarea rețelei informative în reprimarea rezistenței armate anticomuniste’.


51. Pleșa, ‘Împlicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată’.
57. BIAS No. 3 (1968): 50–7. However, based on an interview with a member of the group (Mihai Timaru), a pro-legionary blog (http://garziledecebal.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/grupul-ion-paragina-vrancea.html; accessed 18 February 2013) asserts that the capture was after a fierce fire-fight with numerous people killed, among them five Securitate troops.
58. BIAS No. 3 (1968); 61–5.
60. Proposal of the Câmpeni Securitate Office to the Turda Regional Office, 21 February 1949 in Buhoci, Rezistența armată din Munții Apuseni (hereafter RAMA), Doc. 4, 55.
64. RATS, 29.
65. Ibid., 46–7.
69. This entire fragment is based on Oana Ionel, ‘Anihilarea organizației’.
70. Kitson, Low Intensity Operations.
73. Report of Mehedinți Militia, 1 November 1949 in RASV, Doc. 229, 270.
76. For the entire operation, see Dobrincu, ‘Anticomunist Resistance Groups’.
77. For a larger discussion of specific military operations, see Andrei Miroiu, ‘Military Operations’.

Bibliography


