

Ph.D. paper summary

**Bureaucrats of the Power and Repressive Politics in Communist Romania (1948-1968).
Study Case: Alexandru Drăghici**

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This paper proposes the analysis of the Alexandru Drăghici's biography and the examination of the main repressive practices from the first period of the Romanian communism. The purpose of my approach is to show the part that Drăghici had in the communization of Romania, the implementation of different repressive strategies, but also the assertion of Gheorghiu-Dej as the supreme leader of RCP/RMP. Beyond the wish of knowing a disputed period, which is inherent to the historian, I am trying a mutation of perspective in the Romanian communism discussion, which would not emphasize only his so called diabolical side.

This approach of Alexandru Drăghici's biography started from a rigorous analysis of the archive materials, some older ones, and also some which entered recently in the scientific circulation or those who were neglected as sources by the historians and researchers.

From the close examination of the identified sources, I showed that Alexandru Drăghici cannot be reduced as a communist leader at only a few epithets ("instrument" of Gheorghiu-Dej, agrestic, brutal and violent). He was more that his contemporaries say about him in the moment of his fall and in their memoires, that were published after 1989. The examination of the main sources indicate the fact that there are at least three of that kind of images, which were determined by the relations between him and those who left a characterization of the ex-minister, but also by the socio-political context in which they were generated.

Alexandru Drăghici from 1936, in the time when he was a young activist, is portrayed by his lawyer as an intelligent young man, who joined the communist party as a sequel of the experiences which formed him (the consequences of the First World War, the unemployment, the economic crisis from the end of the 20's and the beginning of the 30's). Those like Alexandru Drăghici represented an exotic figure amongst the other communists, especially because the authorities from that time were underlining and sustaining the idea that in the communist movement were entering only "allogenes". And amongst them, only those who had betrayed the hospitality of the country that had taken them in. Therefore, his gesture of joining a party that was known as one that belonged to the traitors and enemies of the interwar Romania was seen in the epoch as a betrayal gesture. Assuming a political identity, Alexandru Drăghici was part of the composition of a highly ideologized generation, whose representatives became in the interwar period members of one of the two totalitarian movements: Communism and Nazism.

Although, most of his Romanian contemporaries chose the legionary movement, Alexandru Drăghici chose to become a member of a marginal party, which had very little chances of affirmation in the Romanian society. His hierarchical advancement itinerary was a

long and difficult one, which involved not only a long detention in the interwar period, but also a fiery fight for survival within the party after 23rd of August, 1944.

At the same time, in making it on this road, he faced a series of difficulties, determined by economic, social and political causes (the affirmation and survival within a movement, which was devouring his adepts regularly). But at the end of this road, that was full of great dangers, Alexandru Drăghici became what Michel Foucault calls „the almost Homeric mark of the power”. He was not only a ”repressive body”, but also the leader of this structure for 13 years. And this happened in a period when the heads of this ”repressive body” were periodically replaced, and some of them would even become victims of the institutions that they have led. Alexandru Drăghici did not appear in the moment that he became minister of Internal Affairs, but was gradually modelled as a consequence of his forming experiences, relations and very powerful ”systematical and situational factors”, which transformed him into one of the most influential and powerful men of communist Romania. Therefore, even from the moment he joined the party, Alexandru Drăghici goes through a radical transformation process, which began in the period of his detention, when he meets Gheorghiu-Dej, and continue in the postwar period. In prison, he learns not only the stratagems of the Bolshevik speech, but also the obsessions of the Romanian communists (suspicion, mistrust), the main feature of them (obedience towards the absolute leader), the conviction that all those who are not with them, meaning the communists, are their enemies and the Marxism Vulgate that was taught in prisons (which meant ”learning by heart the officious short History of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of The Soviet Union and other Stalinist treaties course. These were added up to his cultural format, filled with elements that were specific to the Romanian peasant.

At the beginning of the 60’s, Alexandru Drăghici was one of the most powerful and influential communist leaders. The power that he amassed transformed him not only into an individual that inspired fear amongst his contemporaries, regardless if they were members of the communist elite, or simple citizens, but also into one of the most detestable communists. At the same time, he was one of the main candidates for ruling the party after the death of his mentor. He had, as Mary Ellen Fischer noticed, two out of three qualities that would entitle a communist to play the supreme part in the communist party (revolutionary prestige and the capacity of controlling the repressive apparatus). The fear of the almighty Internal Affairs minister led to the coalition of the others members of the Political Bureau against him. His elimination from the party elite, although it was fast, was realized in more stages.

Studying his interwar path, and especially the confinement period, indicates the fact that at the origin of some repressive practices, such as the reeducation from Aiud, also stood his imprisonment experience. A condition of the iteration of the reeducating in mass the legionaries also represented finding a ”scapegoat”, modelled on the case of Tudor Sepeanu, the head of the Inspections Service between 1950 and 1951, in the person of Gheorghe Crăciun.

Within this paper, my aim was to underline that the different repressive actions were not the marginal work of some uneducated and sadistic individuals, as we can fairly understand from some memoires and certain studies, but an authorized action of the communist state, fulfilled by an elite body specialized and accustomed with this kind of strategies. Also, applying different repressive measures also involved the dehumanization of

the enemies of the regime, which also meant their exclusion from "the human community of the torturers" and taking away their constitutional rights, even after were arrested by the Securitate or the communist penitentiaries (investigation and fair trial, legal rights). At the same time, at the beginning of the 60's, the external factors became very influential in the communist state repressive politics, which led it being redefined and crossing from extreme measures (executions, imprisonments, deportations) la some prophylactic ones (unmasking and warning), which lacked of physical, and especially psychic violence. The purpose of rethinking the repressive strategy was represented by the fact that Romania wanted to obtain political and economic support in preserving the relatively autonomous course towards Moscow, and most of all maintaining the politics of socialism construction in the basis of the ideology that was acclimatize from the interwar prisons. The exposures and the warnings made possible the transition towards Nicolae Ceaușescu's repressive politics.

One of the main concepts of the present approach is the repression, which is defined as being the power exercised by the communist state with the purpose of imposing its domination or restoring it where it was questioned, and the bureaucrats of the power as those state functionaries whose who authorized to use physical compulsion between the borders of a certain territory. Within the communist regimes, the repression has had multiple forms. Amongst those are the extrajudicial executions, the political trials, getting people admitted in work unites and colonies, forced military service, exclusion from the party, and other measures more or less coercive. The purpose of those repressive practices was not only "the crush" of the civil society, ans of any form of resistance towards the communist authority, but also the elimination of the elite of a socio-professional group and its intimidation by using different punishing strategies. At the same time, through this foucaulian disciplinary strategies, the state wanted to transform the citizens of the communist state from citizens with full rights in "docile bodies", through a constant coercion process.

Beyond recovering autobiography of the character we are talking about, writing this paper involved an ample research of the main stocks regarding the History of the communism in Romania before and after 23rd of August 1944 and of other categories of sources (memoires, periodicals), studying am impressive amount of documents. Therefore, one of the main methods used in writing this paper was the qualitative and quantitative analysis archive material, which was identified. The selection of the documents that I used in this paper was determined not only by the historian's need of establishing the facts, but also by the identification of the most important of them and the establishment of relations between them. Unlike Tzvetan Todorov, this "work of selection and combination", which is characteristic to the historian, was not oriented towards searching the good, but towards identifying those documents that contained veridical information, that could be confronted with other archive materials. The biographical genre is one of the main methods used in achieving this Ph. D. paper. Because writing a biography requires a certain empathy with the chosen subject, or seeing him as a devil, taking into consideration the character, I have chosen to use in this thesis the so called "glacial empathy". Robert Gerwarth defines the term as the attempt to reenact the life of a character "through a critical distancing" of the chosen subject and "without interpreting the History through nowadays context and without committing the sin of confusing the part of the historian for that of the prosecutor in the trial of a war murderer". At the same time, following the pattern of this historian, my intention was "to avoid the

sensational and redeeming tone”, which is commonly used in the case of biographical studies about former heads of Securitate, and to analyze the biography of Alexandru Drăghici, starting from his ”actions, language and behavior”, that were identified in the documents he produced in his communist career.

This paper is structured in five parts, and each part is divided in chapters and subchapters. ”The revolutionary youth” of Alexandru Drăghici is analyzed in the first part, which examines the main events from his political biography: him joining the communist party, his arrest, his trial and his detention, and also his escape from the Camp for political inmates from Târgu Jiu. The functions of Alexandru Drăghici and his ascent within the communist elite after 23rd of August 1944 are examined in the second part of the paper. Here I advanced a couple of explanations for the ascent of the former minister of Internal Affairs: his relation with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the natural catastrophes (the earthquake from Doftana in 1940) or political assassinations (the deportation of the Jewish communists from the Camp of political inmates from Târgu Jiu and their extermination in Transnistria). Amongst the events narrated and interpreted in this part is also his participation at Congress of the Communist Party from Albania from November, 1948, which represented one of the experiences that marked him.

Some of the repressive practices and politics from the first period of the Romanian communism are reenacted and examined in the third part of the Ph. D paper. Because the communist repression is one of the main subjects approached by the Romanian historiography after 1989, I analyzed only a couple of them: the extrajudicial executions, the deportations from the Yugoslavia border and the reeducation from Aiud. Those also represent the three analyzed and examined case studies.

The next part of the paper discusses the climax of Alexandru Drăghici and his dismissal from the communist elite, in two distinct chapters. The part of Alexandru Drăghici in the ”Independence Declaration” from April 1964 and the succession of Gheorghiu-Dej represent the two main themes of the ninth chapter, and the display of the Plenary session of CC of RCP from 23rd-25th of April 1968 is examined in the tenth chapter. Unlike most of the papers about the succession of Gheorghiu-Dej, I insisted and analyzed the fight for the power within the party leadership. The main motive why it did not act out of the small party elite was the fear of the participants of ”factionousness” and of the reappearance of certain fights for power, similar to those from the beginning of the regime. Gheorghiu-Dej’s succession is analyzed in the basis of some unpublished archive sources: the unpublished memoirs of Gheorghe Apostol, one of the main candidate for the function of prime secretary, who was also indicated by the memoirs of the former nomenclatures as the successor chosen by the defunct communist leader, but also the file of informative tracking of a former communist leader and collaborator of Alexandru Drăghici: the major general Ady Ladislau, adjunct minister between 1953 and 1955. One of the central arguments of this section is that a confrontation between two of the main contenders, Alexandru Drăghici and Nicolae Ceaușescu, was inevitable. It was part of the logic of function of the communist systems. Such a confrontation was seen as possible by some of the Romanian communists, and also by the Soviets.

The consequents of the Plenary session from 23rd-25th of April 1968, the remarks that followed up within the Securitate, Alexandru Drăghici’s audience by the party commission

and the attempts to send him to court during the communist regime, and also after December 1989, are analyzed in the last part of this paper. In the last case, the attempts of the Military Prosecutor, although they failed, they created a case in point, which made possible in the last years the condemnation of some former functionaries of the communist repression.