



NICOLAE ȘTEFĂNESCU – AT THE SERVICE OF THE ROMANIAN STATE AND NATION –

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Although almost unknown in the historiography of this field, Nicolae Ștefănescu is included in the gallery of famous figures of Romanian espionage and counterespionage. He started his career with the Security Police, where he distinguished himself in identifying and neutralising the Bolshevik espionage organisations. He was head of Foreign Intelligence Service on the USSR within the Directorate of Police and General Security.

His activity being recognised, “as an intelligent and cheerful element”, Mihail Moruzov proposed that he should go to the “S” Service of the Romanian Armed Forces, proposition accepted in January 1931, where he would become the head of the Counter-Intelligence Section, as a director. After a few years, he was appointed head of Detectives Corps and director of the Security Police within the General and Police Directorate. His entire activity in the service of the Romanian state and nation is a model of professionalism and commitment.

Keywords: intelligence, Romanian Armed Forces Secret Service, Siguranța Statului (Secret Intelligence Service), Niky Ștefănescu, Detectives Corps.

BIOGRAPHY

Nicolae Ștefănescu or Niky, as he was known among his relatives, was born on 20 September 1896, in Galați. His father was Captain Grigore Ștefănescu, born on 6 June 1871, in Focșani, and his mother, Elisabeta (Eliza), died of tuberculosis when he was five years old, being later raised by his maternal grandmother, Ecaterina Croia. He did not have any siblings, according to archive documents¹. He graduated from the “*Vasile Alecsandri High School*”, in Galați, class of 1916. He claimed, “*but without claiming to be taken serious, that he did a few years of law school*”. He had probably studied for a few years, because “*he was able to cope with quite a few problems that required a broader culture*”². He spoke the following languages: French, Russian, Ukrainian, but also some Polish, German, Italian and Serbian.



Photo: Nicolae (Niky) Ștefănescu,
in January 1931³

In appearance, Niky was of medium height and mobile, “*giving the impression of energy and a pleasant Greek-type physique*”, normal size, brown hair, oval face, brown eyes, and as a particular sign he had a scar in the right frontal region. He married Iraida Calimans, in January 1927, a French language teacher at the Girls’ Gymnasium in Orhei. His wife’s father was an Estonian journalist (former teacher), living in Chișinău.

Obviously, like any great spy biography, Niky Ștefănescu’s biography also has some mysteries. Legionary sources claimed that Niky had used false documents in his career, the name of a platoon leader killed

Author’s note: the current article is a new research based on primary documentary sources hosted by various archives in our country.

¹ Romanian Intelligence Service Archive (ASRI), file no. 20954, vol. 15, pp. 2-4.

² ASRI, *op. cit.*, *Raport privind pe Niky Ștefănescu*, February 1949, pp. 222-225.

³ *Ibid.*



in the war and that, at his autopsy (November 1940), it was “*established that he was circumcised*”, thus facilitating the assumption that he was Jewish, especially since his wife was Jewish (formerly Calimanson)⁴.

HIS ACTIVITY WITH THE SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (1917-1931)

Dumitru C. Dumitru, a childhood friend and former schoolmate of Niky Ștefănescu, confided to a superior from *Siguranța* (the Secret Intelligence Service) that, after primary school, he enrolled in elementary school, but he did not pass the second grade and did not continue⁵. During the World War, Niky joined *Siguranța Statului*, working “*undercover*” at the Shipyard in Galați. In December 1917, however, he “*defected*” and “*joined*” the *Battalion of Romanian Revolutionaries*, under the leadership of famous anarchist Cristian Racovski⁶. Thus, there are striking similarities between Niky Ștefănescu’s debut in the *Siguranța* and that of Mihail Moruzov. The latter also “*abandoned*” school in the second grade of high school, due to his infiltration into the youth organisation of the Bulgarian irredentist movement from Dobrogea, becoming, in 1909-1912, a trusted man of the same Cristian Racovski, a position from which he contributed to the discovery of the Russian-Bulgarian espionage activity in Romania.

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There is probably a kind of truth in all this, because, according to the organisation chart of the Ministry of National Defence, Niky Ștefănescu was hired on 15 April 1918 directly as deputy commissioner of the Tighina Security Brigade of the State Police and General Security Directorate (DPSG), a position that already required some experience and studies. As a police officer, he successively held the following positions: from 1 July 1919, sub-prefect at Cetatea Albă County; of 1 May 1920, deputy special commissioner at the Tighina Security Brigade; of 1 May 1921, deputy special commissioner the Hotin Security Brigade; from May 1922, at Tighina Security Brigade; from March 1923, at Cetatea Albă Security Brigade; from March 1923, at Tighina Security Brigade; from March 1924, at Hotin Security Brigade; from 1 July 1924, he became deputy commissioner first class at the Hotin Security Brigade; of 1 October 1924, at Tighina Security

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 222-225.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 103-107.

⁶ ASRI, file nr. 10988, vol. 1, p. 134.

Brigade; of 1 October 1925, at Iași Security Brigade; of 1 February 1926, at Tighina Security Brigade; from 1 October 1926, special commissioner at the Chișinău Security Inspectorate – as head of the Hotin Security Service; from 1 November 1928, head of the Research Service – Chișinău Security Inspectorate, until 1 January 1931, when he resigned⁷.

However, the information missing from the organisation chart was the fact that Niky Ștefănescu was the head of the *Foreign Intelligence Service* of the DPSG on the Soviet space. The appointment in such a position proves that he was a perfect expert in knowing and combating the subversive activity carried out by the Soviet state against Romania. Archive documents reveal that Niky coordinated a strong intelligence and counter-intelligence network across the Nistru River, connecting with the agents through an ingenious system of “*couriers*” covered up as “*smugglers*”. Thus, elements such as Tarak, Vladimir Sabuc or Gr. Ozarciuc are mentioned for using in the assigned missions “*pass permits given by the deputy commissioner Niky Ștefănescu which allowed the freedom of movement in the whole county*”⁸. A report by the DPSG from 12 January 1923 shows that “*several such individuals with a questionable role were discovered and reported to the Cernăuți Security Inspectorate (...), without knowing under what circumstances they passed to the Soviets*”⁹.

Among the main intelligence elements that made up Niky Ștefănescu’s network was Ilie Grigorovici Guțuleac or Huțuleac (called “*Ilinca*”), “*an elite spy*”, as characterised by those who knew him, who also became “*one of Mihail Moruzov’s gems*”. Born in 1895, in Polish Galicia (Starojineț County), a Ukrainian, Ilie Guțuleac spoke Russian, German, Polish, Ukrainian and Romanian. A former lieutenant in the Austrian army, he fought in the army of Ukrainian nationalist Simeon Petliura and then in that of Anton Denikin. In April 1920, Guțuleac came to Romania, where he became an agent within the residence of the French Military Intelligence Bureau in Cernăuți, being simultaneously exploited by DPSG and by the Second Romanian Military Bureau. Guțuleac had a “*gang of Ukrainians*” with connections with others in the USSR. Guțuleac’s resident from the Camenița-Podolsk point



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⁷ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 15, The Organisation Chart of the Ministry of National Defence, drawn up in January 1931 by Mihail Moruzov, Head of the “*S*” Service, pp. 226-229 and 245.

⁸ ASRI, P Collection, file 10998, vol. 1, p. 137.

⁹ *Ibid*, fila 136.



By using such tactics and methods, some of Niky Ștefănescu's "smugglers" managed to infiltrate the various organisations of the Soviet state, from where they received instructions and returned to Romania as "Soviet agents". As a result, our special bodies had managed to have some intelligence control over the paramilitary communist cells set up by the Soviet espionage on our national territory.

had managed to recruit a GPU (Soviet political police) official. In 1926-1927, Guțuleac appears as *"the head of the Romanian Army Intelligence Centre in Atachi-Soroca"*, having the mission to control the activity of the *Soviet intelligence centre* in Iaruga, led by a certain Keppler¹⁰. One of Guțuleac's tasks, also covered up as a *"smuggler"*, was to set up *"commandos"* whose mission was to attack postmen or bank deposits in order to obtain the money needed to pay our agency and the *"allied"* one across the Dniester¹¹. On the other hand, the interest of our special bodies in obtaining Soviet currency is an indicator of the existence of this agency, which had to be paid in local currency so as not to be compromised. At that time, the rubles were difficult to obtain because Romania and the USSR did not have official relations. In fact, Niky and his men were inspired to act in this way by the Soviet regime itself, whose commandos attacked the institutions of the Romanian state and spread terror to the right bank of the Dniester.

What is certain is that, by using such tactics and methods, some of Niky Ștefănescu's *"smugglers"* managed to infiltrate the various organisations of the Soviet state, from where they received instructions and returned to Romania as *"Soviet agents"*. As a result, our special bodies had managed to have some intelligence control over the paramilitary communist cells set up by the Soviet espionage on our national territory.

Referring to his activity during this period, Niky Ștefănescu wrote, on 18 July 1924, to his leaders (on the occasion of a promotion): *"In the past, I led an unstable life, which did not lack any dangers (I worked for the Communist Investigation Bureau, both at the Hotin and Tighina Brigades, and at the Chișinău Security Inspectorate), on which occasion I made arrests and investigations throughout Basarabia, operations which did not lack gunfire and from which I believe that the State won (...)"*¹².

Niky Ștefănescu's deeds and bravery in the service of the country are also confirmed by the head of the Hotin Security Brigade, who wanted to highlight the following in his Assessment Paper: *"Old and very good police officer, specialist in investigations. He has led the Foreign Intelligence Service very skilfully; endowed in all his actions*

¹⁰ ASRI, D Collection, file 10988, vol. 1, p. 186.

¹¹ *Ibid*, file 10988, vol. I, p. 134.

¹² ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 18, p. 121.

*with much tact and judgment, maintaining a dignified line of conduct both in relations with the staff and with the public outside the service. He is very diligent and punctual at work. Through his enthusiasm for organising the **Foreign Intelligence Service**, he was able to connect with people from Ukraine who monitored the terrorist gangs in Basarabia, which led to the discovery of the terrorist organisation and the Soviet ammunition depot in Zorojani, Hotin county. For this success, he was proposed for decoration, according to the very verbal order of Minister Tătărescu, by the General Security Inspectorate of Cernăuți. By the same means, the hosts of the terrorist group under the leadership of someone named Puiu were discovered, who, for three years, had been in the GPU service in Cernăuți [residence, A/N] and who operated in northern Basarabia, an affair that is currently being investigated by this police officer. Overall qualification grade: very good”¹³.*

Suggestive of the dangers to which the Romanian agents were exposed is the note by which the command of the I/8 Mountain Troops Battalion asked “Mr. Niky Ștefănescu whether the Ukrainian agent who gave information about the Zorojani depot is still alive or is one of the two agents killed by Bolsheviks on 3 December 1924”¹⁴.

TATAR-BUNAR UPRISING: SOVIET ATTACK ON THE ROMANIAN STATE

At the Foreign Intelligence Service, Niky Ștefănescu also had Gheorghe Stârcea, Mihail Cărare, Ion Ajocu and N. Georgescu as team leaders. Together they made an important contribution to counteracting and neutralising the Soviet uprising in Tatar-Bunar (Tătărăști)¹⁵ – the strongest foreign attack on the Romanian state after the war. But they were ready. The information showed that the *Congress of Soviet military agents* took place in Vienna, under the presidency of Egoroff, the commander of Soviet troops on the Southern Front, in this case the commander of the Romanian front, who gave the order to provoke the Bolshevik revolution in Basarabia. And “*if the uprising will engulf the entire Basarabia, irregular troops from the Soviet*



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¹³ For more details, see Pavel Moraru, *Serviciile secrete și Basarabia, Dicționar 1918-1991*, Editura Militară, București, 2008, p. 291.

¹⁴ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 18, p. 151.

¹⁵ For more details, see Sorin Aparaschivei, *Sistemul național de informații de la Regulamentul Organic și până după Războiul de Reîntregire Națională*, Editura Militară, București, 2018, pp. 411 et seq.



“The Tatar-Bunar uprising was not the work of the Communist Party of Romania nor a spontaneous pro-Soviet and anti-Romanian manifestation of the local population in Basarabia. It was caused by external circumstances for the following purposes: at the Soviet-Romanian Conference in Vienna, the USSR delegate conditioned the resuming of relations between Romania and the USSR by a plebiscite in Basarabia, adopting a clearly revisionist topic.”

army, concentrated on the Romanian border, will be crossed over the border”¹⁶. Thus, the Soviet attack on the Romanian state began on 12 September 1924, when the small town of Nicolaevka in Ismail County was attacked by a gang of 25-30 masked individuals, who entered the village and shot the mayor (Jancovski), his wife and two gendarmes (Ion Costin and Gh. Chirvase). The villagers were gathered at the fair (about 1,000 people), where they were read a *manifesto* signed by Terente Colomeez, from the village of Tașlâc, urging them to fight against the Romanian bourgeoisie: *“The bandits were saying that they were not ordinary bandits, but they are part of the Soviet troops that came to fight against the Romanian bourgeoisie”*. Then, they attacked the villages Cișmea, Tatar-Bunar (Tătăraști), Vâlcov, Periprava, Nerusai etc.

Romanian troops intervened and fought fiercely with the bandits, who were very well equipped, being captured thousands of new pistols and rifles of Soviet and German origin, assault cannons, hundreds of grenades, motorboats etc. Hundreds of bandits were arrested and tried. The investigation established that the action was definitely directed against the Romanian state, being organised and financed by the Soviet leadership in Moscow.

Referring to the causes of these events, Niky Ștefănescu considered that: *“The Tatar-Bunar uprising was not the work of the Communist Party of Romania nor a spontaneous pro-Soviet and anti-Romanian manifestation of the local population in Basarabia. It was caused by external circumstances for the following purposes: at the Soviet-Romanian Conference in Vienna, the USSR delegate conditioned the resuming of relations between Romania and the USSR by a plebiscite in Basarabia, adopting a clearly revisionist topic. To the historical-ethnographic arguments of the validity of the Union act, invoked by the Romanian delegate and supported with sympathy by all civilised countries, the USSR opposed a political-social theory, claiming that Basarabia chose a Soviet regime. Since requesting the annexation of Basarabia would have meant cynically distorting the realities, this delegate simply demanded the autonomy of Basarabia. The failure of the Soviet delegates, who, in the absence of arguments, broke off the negotiations, had profound repercussions both on world public opinion and among the Russian*

¹⁶ ASRI, D Collection, file nr. 8348, pp. 7-13.

people. The European states accused the USSR of obstruction and harassment in international relations, and in Russia the tendency to isolate the republic from its neighbours was extremely unfavourably commented. In order to justify the reinstatement of the thesis put forward by the communist delegates, an internationally resounding action was needed to take place in Basarabia. Choosing the region of the subject of this challenge cannot be considered a mere hazard. It was determined precisely by the fact that there was a minority population there, Russians and Bulgarians, who had not begun to be assimilated. **The organisation of the rebellion was entrusted not to the Basarabian peasants, but to Soviet emissaries who were trained for six months in the leading, leadership and tactics of the civil war [hybrid, A/N]. The weapons, money and even the literature and stamps of the revolutionary units were made in Russia.** The success and even the failure of the Tatar-Bunar rebellion were to confirm the validity of the USSR's point of view at the Vienna Conference. **The rebellion failed miserably, highlighting the interference of the Soviet state in organising this revolt** [emphasis added]¹⁷.

On the other hand, the Soviet failure of Tatar-Bunar remains an indicator of the performance of our national intelligence system, which was able to oppose the most dangerous espionage system in the world.

THE ORGANISATION OF INTELLIGENCE COLLABORATION IN BASARABIA

In Basarabia, Niky Ștefănescu continued to deal with the activity and foreign intelligence collaboration between the DPSG and the Romanian Army bodies, where Mihail Moruzov started his activity as well, being assigned with the organisation of the technical apparatus of the "S" Service of the Romanian Armed Forces. Niky Ștefănescu was also responsible for correlating our intelligence bodies with those of the allied residences of the *British Intelligence Service* and the French Bureau II (military intelligence) operating in the Soviet space (tasks were divided, so that there were no overlaps).

¹⁷ ASRI, file nr. 8724, "Chestiunea Basarabiei, 1930-1939", vol. 1, f. 62; Niky Ștefănescu, *cauzele rebeliunii de la Tatar-Bunar, raport către Consiliul de Miniștri*, 17 November 1936, document approved by Mihail Moruzov.



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Perhaps the most important case investigated by Niky Ștefănescu, as head of the Investigation Service, was that of Commissioner Constantin Tibacu. Niky pointed out that he discovered the case from another lead, a certain Al. Caramanov, a Soviet courier, on which occasion he “discovered the entire espionage organisation under Tibacu’s command”.

By the nature of these duties and tasks, Niky Ștefănescu worked more in Chișinău, covered as “*head of the Investigation Service*”, but, according to an internal document of 1 November 1928, he held the position of head of the **Intelligence Office of the General Inspectorate of Basarabia**¹⁸.

Among the landmarks of his activity during this period is the discovery, in March 1928, of the Soviet espionage organisation that had its residence in Nagoreni, Hotin county. The investigation established that the organisation was led by a certain Gh. Draganiuc, who worked according to the directives given by the Soviet *Espionage Office* in Camenița-Podolsk (Ukraine), having links with other Soviet espionage centres in Romania, where residents were paid for espionage – all of which were identified and neutralised¹⁹. Starting from this case, Niky Ștefănescu managed to recruit Vasile Botnariuc (alias Vasile Dogaru), one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Romania. He provided accurate information on the existence, structure, organisation and activity of all communist organisations in northern Basarabia. Dozens of agents of communist paramilitary cells were arrested, some trained in special schools in the USSR, and numerous conspiracy houses, propaganda articles and large quantities of weapons, ammunition and explosives were discovered²⁰.

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¹⁸ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 4, 1 November 1941, *Moruzov Investigation*, f. 103.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 18, f. 120.

²⁰ ASRI, D, file nr. 4702, pp. 100-113.

²¹ ASRI, file nr. 6771, “*Soviet Espionage, 1942*”, p. 41.

²² Almost all newspaper of the time wrote about the *Tibacu-Caramanov Case*, see “*Dimineața*”, 10 May 1930, “*Universul*” or “*Lupta*”.



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to Tibacu. Alone and pressed by financial worries, he tried his best to adapt to the new conditions. The salary was barely enough, around 8-9,000 lei/month, being divided between daily needs, rent and the family left far away. One day in September 1928, Granic (alias name Craiu or Olmozov) appeared in Tibacu's way, a former colleague from the Security in Chișinău, whom he knew had left his job and settled with his family in Berlin. Surprised to see him, Tibacu befriended him. Granic told him that he had left Germany in the meantime and was working in Bucharest, at a large German commercial company, being very well paid. After a few meetings, Tibacu was persuaded to be helped with money by his much better paid friend. He borrowed, with receipts, various sums, which he used to see his family in Chișinău. Then, one day, Granic told Tibacu the truth: *that he was, in fact, a Soviet agent and that he had a mission to recruit him*. Confronted with Tibacu's refusal, Granic threatened him with the compromising receipts and the fact that he would be killed by the GPU agents accompanying him. Thus, Constantin Tibacu became a Soviet agent. His wife, Reghina, born in Poland, was a very beautiful woman, and the fact that she helped her husband in the activity of betrayal made the investigators believe that she was "delivered" to Tibacu by the Soviets, being also sentenced to six months in prison.

For testing and initiation, Tibacu went to the Soviet residence in Istanbul, where he met with Visevold Balițki²³, the head of the Ukrainian GPU. Here, in the evening, they spent in luxury hotels, and during the day, Tibacu was trained in the field of encrypting and methods used by the Soviets, and everything went very well, given that Tibacu was already a professional in the field. Balițki told Tibacu that he would have to do everything possible to infiltrate the circle of relatives of Eugen Cristescu, director of State Security. Tibacu's salary was set at 20,000 lei per month, paid in advance, and if he had achievements, he could reach 80,000 lei per month. The money came via Berlin, where, more recently, the headquarters of the Soviet Central, which dealt with Romania, had moved.

The autumn of 1928 and the spring of 1929 were an intense work for Tibacu to thank his new bosses. On the evening of 15 May 1929,

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²³ On 1 August 1931, Balitsky Visevold Apolenovici was promoted among the leadership of GPU Moscow, and his place in the GPU in Ukraine was taken by Stanislav Redens.



At the end of 1929, the Soviets ordered Tibacu to steal from the Bucharest Security the file of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a former Russian anarchist refugee in Romania, about whom the Soviets learned that he had been denounced to the Security by several Communist Party leaders from Romania.

Tibacu was partying with his Soviet leaders in Berlin, where he was for a few days for new instructions. One of the Soviets, intoxicated by the drink, confessed to Tibacu that the General Security Inspectorate of Chişinău was infiltrated with the Soviets, that each of the secret reports of the Inspectorate was typed in three copies: one remained at the Inspectorate, the second left for Bucharest, and the third went directly to ... Moscow! Then, surprisingly, Tibacu had the opportunity to meet several of his former colleagues from the Security Inspectorates of Basarabia and Bucovina who now worked for the Soviets.

In Berlin, Tibacu received as new assignments the drawing up of lists with the Romanian personalities from the ministries and the General Security that could have been recruited by the Soviets and well paid. For example, for Eugen Cristescu, in case he could be recruited, the Soviets set a monthly salary of 100,000 lei. In fact, the GPU put agent Kirilov to follow Eugen Cristescu, with the task of recruiting him. When Constantin Tibacu replied to him that the matter was impossible, Kirilov replied to Tibacu that: *“The Soviets have people in Romania to whom he can neither think nor suspect, who will try to recruit Cristescu”*.

The Soviets were also interested in Mihail Moruzov and Vintilă Ionescu (the head of counterintelligence in the Security), Tibacu being questioned if he knew them. He answered negatively, although Tibacu, being from Tulcea, knew Mihail Moruzov, with whom he had even been a schoolmate (both had mothers of Bulgarian ethnicity, n.a.). According to Tibacu, the Soviets were worried about the agility of Inspector General Vintilă Ionescu, whom they considered *“the most skilled official of the Romanian Security”*.

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On the night of 8 February 1930, after months of investigations and stakeouts, Niky Ștefănescu and security agents from Chișinău knocked on his door to arrest him. Constantin Tibacu was sentenced to 10 years in prison (released in 1938). In the investigation, he tried to minimise his activity, but Niky Ștefănescu and his Service established that he worked under the coordination of important people from Soviet espionage: Leplievsky, from Kharkov, the head of the GPU from all over Ukraine; Vladimir Petrovich Karaolin, Head of Foreign Intelligence (INO) in Kharkov; Vladimir Maximovich Piescariov, head of foreign intelligence in Odessa²⁴.

However, the investigation into the Tibacu case did not stop here, but shook the entire leadership of the General Security Inspectorate of Basarabia. Mihail Moruzov and the “S” Service of the Romanian Armed Forces joined the action, establishing that the main culprit was also Zaharia Husărescu, the head of the Basarabia Security Inspectorate, who was removed from office.

THE CAREER IN THE “S”(ECRET) SERVICE OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES (1931-1940)

The fact that Niky Ștefănescu was collaborating more and more closely with the Romanian Armed Forces’ intelligence bodies, in this case with Mihail Moruzov, was not fully agreed by some Chiefs of the Security. Niky Ștefănescu was accused of all kinds of abuses²⁵. In this context, at the end of 1930, Mihail Moruzov made him an offer he could not refuse. Niky Ștefănescu’s resignation caused a real shock both in the Security and in the public opinion; even the Russian-language newspaper “*Slova Basarabiei*” headlined: “*Ștefănescu is one of the pillars of Security, he discovered a lot of espionage and communist organisations. He was decorated with a few orders. These days, he was decorated for the second time with the order of the Romanian Crown, and his departure from the Security was something unexpected even for his bosses. Inspector General Maimuca sent a telegram to Bucharest, requesting that Ștefănescu’s resignation was not granted*”²⁶.



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²⁴ ASRI, D Collection, file nr. 7328, *Activitatea SSI român despre activitatea serviciului de informații sovietic în România, Bulgaria, Turcia, Ungaria, Austria (...) anii 1918-1942*, pp. 44-53 et seq.

²⁵ For more details, see Pavel Moraru, *Serviciile secrete și Basarabia, Dicționar 1918-1991*, op. cit., p. 290.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 293.



From 1 January 1931, Niky Ștefănescu moved to the Second Section of the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, where, for some time, Mihail Moruzov organised and led the “S” Service – a mixed institution (military and civilian) adapted to the hybrid (political-military) threats proliferated by the Soviet state towards the integrity of the territory and the political regime in Romania.

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According to the organisation chart at the Ministry of National Defence (drawn up by Mihail Moruzov), Nicolae Ștefănescu – alias “I. Popescu” – was appointed team head at the Secret Service of the General Staff. He filled the following positions: from 1 July 1934, Director Class II (Decision no. 833 S[secret]); from 1 April 1937, Director Class I (Decision No. 355 S) until 5 September 1940, when he was dismissed. Under the *various* heading of the same document it was added: “N. Ștefănescu was included in the uncovered framework on 22 November 1933, by the Order of the Day no. 141 of the General Staff”²⁷.

At the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, Niky Ștefănescu started his activity at the *Chișinău Intelligence Center (“B”)* as an assistant and first collaborator of the head of the centre, Major Constantin A. Râpeanu. The range of action of the “B” Centre stretched along the Nistru River, from Atachi-Soroca to Cetatea Albă, with the sole objective of *knowing the political and military situation of the USSR*. Niky worked directly with the heads of agencies in Soroca, Orhei, Lăpușna, Tighina and Akerman (Cetatea Albă). In addition to the informant Vasile Botnariuc mentioned above, he was also helped by Dora Constantinescu, former singer at the operas in Paris and London, who hosted, at the mansion of her estate in Târnava, Soroca county, various people from the fashionable world of the Capital, including Mrs. Seletzki, from the famous Skoda business (in which the Romanian state found out about the double play of the Czechoslovaks in their relationship of “*allies*” with Romania). Niky also continued to work with Ilie Guțuleac, with the Greek Gheorghe Caragunopolus – “*who had bullet marks on his head from a capture he made in Ovidiopol – Ukraine and from which he managed to escape wounded*”²⁸, with Niculae Cociubei (the Prince) – one of the best spies on the Soviet space, alias

²⁷ ASRI, P Collection, file 20954, vol. 15, pp. 226-229.

²⁸ Romania’s National Archives/Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR), Inv. 2349, DGP (General Directorate of the Police), file nr. 58/1920.

“*Arghir*”, part of the Russian aristocracy, gathering information from Russian emigration in Warsaw, Vienna, Hamburg and Berlin.

As entertainment, Niky Ștefănescu also used the world-famous tenor Gogu Ștefănescu as an informant. He performed at “*Radio București*” and frequently toured Italy, France and even Soviet Russia, from where he gathered information for Niky Ștefănescu and Mihail Moruzov. Although, in the documents from the General Staff, they do not appear as having a brother, Niky and Gogu hang around as so at various social events, the great tenor stating to some relatives that he was “*sponsored by his older brother from the Security*”²⁹.



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MAIN COURSES OF ACTION AT THE HEAD OF THE “S” SERVICE OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES

When Niky Ștefănescu arrived at the “S” Service of the Romanian Armed Forces, Section II (Counterintelligence) was headed by a certain “*Vasea Potapov*”, nephew of Mihail Moruzov, about whom the connoisseurs stated that “*he later died in an asylum*”. This was probably the conspiratorial name of Gheorghe Moruzov, a former Security agent and son of the priest Simeon Moruzov, brother of Mihail.

Only in 1932, Niky Ștefănescu was assigned the command of the Counterintelligence Section of the “S” Service, especially the counterintelligence side³⁰. He was assisted here by Commissioner Gheorghe Comșa, who also joined the armed forces. Within the Service, Niky Ștefănescu was considered the first official after Mihail Moruzov: “*Whenever there was a more difficult mission, which exceeded the counter-intelligence attributions, it was assigned to Niky Ștefănescu. Just as, when it was a more complicated matter, Moruzov, who usually did not consult with anyone, consulted with him*”³¹.

Niky Ștefănescu’s priority remained the “*Soviet problem*”. On 20 May 1933, he wrote a report warning that the Soviets were reorganising their espionage apparatus, in which sense they initiated collaborations against Romania with Italian espionage: “*From the information we have, it appears that the Soviets created a Espionage, Propaganda and Agitation Centre in Vienna, whose area of activity includes Romania, Yugoslavia and the Balkan Peninsula. The centre*

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²⁹ ASRI, D Collection, file 10 988, vol. I, p. 134.

³⁰ ANR, Inv. 2379, file 6/1929, *Statement* – Victor Siminel, p. 7.

³¹ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 15, pp. 222-225.



As a reaction to the Soviet information hook, Niky Ștefănescu's strategy was to adapt the Romanian counterintelligence to the Soviet espionage in all its dissemination centres.

is camouflaged next to the Soviet Embassy in Vienna and has three sections: 1) the Communist Section; the Agitation Section, among the Balkan minorities, including Romania and Yugoslavia; 3) the Espionage Section. The first two sections have special leaders, subordinated to the Soviet representative, the third section was created through the collaboration in terms of espionage of Razvedupr [military espionage, A/N] with the Italian Espionage Service. To carry out this mission, the section uses as cover by representatives of TASS and IMPRECOR agencies; they are joined by SCHENKER CO. [German]; DERUT [Russian-German company] and RATO [Austro-Russian company], all with headquarters or subsidiaries in Vienna. MOPR [International Red Aid] and the company INTURIST are also helpful³².

As a reaction to the Soviet information hook, Niky Ștefănescu's strategy was to adapt the Romanian counterintelligence to the Soviet espionage in all its dissemination centres, including by penetrating it at his home in the USSR. For this, the "S" Service had to expand its external partnerships for collaboration and exchange of information.

As a result, in June 1933, Niky Ștefănescu met in Belgrade with General Romanovsky and Colonel Durov, former cadres of the Tsarist army (white Russians) who had retreated to Yugoslavia, for the purpose of an anti-Soviet intelligence deal. Niky Ștefănescu reported to Mihail Moruzov the following: "Gl. Romanovsky, as head of the Russian General Staff, used a number of agents who live today in various European countries. After the coup d'état of October 1917, he broke off contact with them, but in 1932, together with Durov, he resumed contact with some of them and gathered a series of materials. I think that Romanovsky can be trusted, and Durov, who seems to be an intelligence specialist, is the one who directs the activity of General Romanovsky's intelligence apparatus. Durov is a skilled man, cunning and sensitive to the information given to him. (...) At one point, I asked the two of them to hand me their intelligence apparatus [including in the Soviet space, A/N], showing them the immense service they can bring to anti-Soviet ideology.

(...) I noticed that Romanovsky's intelligence apparatus managed to break into the Soviet Legation [in Vienna, A/N] and that he could get information and photographs about the activity of the Soviets

³² ASRI, D Collection, file nr. 7181, *Activitatea Kominternului și spionajul sovietic în România și alte țări, 1925-1940*, pp. 148-149.

in Romania. It was agreed that the financing of the Vienna agents should not come under the form of a salary, so as not to turn these people who work only for the sake of the idea into professionals. Durov proposed that the agency's work was directed from Belgrade, but I replied that it could create problems with the Yugoslavs. The solution was reached for Durov to go to Vienna and hand over their agency from the Soviet Legation to our delegate in Vienna, who will have the task of training it on the spot. Romanovsky told me that he also had connections in Prague, but they must be checked, and that he also had connections in the Soviet cities: Kiev, Tiflis, Rostov, Vladicaucuz and Odessa. Romanovsky informed me that he was convinced of the real state of the Romanian-Russian relations and would be willing to start the activity in this direction, provided that complete discretion was ensured, and from the material obtained he would get the part regarding the state of mind in the Red Army and among UTC, and the military materials should return entirely to the Romanians"³³.

Then, Niky Ștefănescu travelled to Turkey, concluding an anti-Soviet intelligence collaboration agreement here as well. It was agreed that the exchange of information between the "S" Service of the Romanian Armed Forces and the General Security in Romania, respectively the Directorate of General Security in Turkey, should take place "according to the counter-proposals" of the Turkish party from "address no. 229 of 20 October 1933", referring to the "encryption of telegraphic correspondence"³⁴.

From Bulgaria, Niky Ștefănescu established that the main danger for Romania was the Dobrogea Revolutionary Organisation (DRO), of communist orientation, supported and financed clandestinely by both the Bulgarian and the USSR government. The activity of the DRO was coordinated by the Second Section of the General Staff of the Bulgarian Armed Forces, which organized in Silistra a "center of espionage, propaganda and terror", placed under the "orders" of lawyer Asparuh Aidemirski, President of the DRO, and of Kiril Mauloff, former Bulgarian deputy in the Romanian Parliament, who went to the neighbours in 1928 and was employed by the Bulgarian General Staff. As, in the autumn of 1933, this centre had already started a virulent



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³³ *Ibid*, Report, 19 June 1933, drawn up by Niky Ștefănescu, Head of Counterintelligence Section, pp. 151-153.

³⁴ ASRI, D Collection, file nr. 9279, vol. 1, p. 158.



As for Germany, the first collaborations and exchanges of information between the Romanian "S" Service and the German Armed Forces Intelligence Service (Abwehr) took place in the case of Soviet agent Peter Urban. In December 1936, he was found by the "S" Service when he tried to contact officers from the Romanian General Staff and members of the German Legation in Bucharest to offer their services.

action against Romania, the problem was taken over by the "S" Service and Mihail Moruzov. It should be noted that, in the matter of DRO, Mihail Moruzov controlled informatively even the wife of the former "Bulgarian" senator Hristu Toncof from Bazargic, of Russian origin³⁵.

THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE "S" SERVICE AND THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (ABWEHR)

As for Germany, the first collaborations and exchanges of information between the Romanian "S" Service and the German Armed Forces Intelligence Service (*Abwehr*) took place in the case of Soviet agent Peter Urban. In December 1936, he was found by the "S" Service when he tried to contact officers from the Romanian General Staff and members of the German Legation in Bucharest to offer their services. Niky Ștefănescu investigated the case and established that the person was in fact Akoș Domany, a Saxon from Brașov, convicted, two years before, of forgery. While in prison (in Aiud), Domany met Emil Bodnăraș, who came to the USSR in 1934, fraudulently in Romania and who worked intensely in the *Romanian Section* of the Soviet Intelligence Service and in the *Communist International*. Noticing that Akoș Domany was of German origin, Emil Bodnăraș (with a mother of German origin) recruited him and then introduced him to the Soviet Legation through his brother, Emanoil Bodnăraș. The Soviet legation instructed Domany to report to the German Legation in Bucharest and seek to infiltrate the German General Staff, requesting a meeting with important figures on the grounds that he had something pressing to communicate that interested the German General Staff. Von Pochhammer, an adviser to the German Legation in Bucharest, fell into the trap of Soviet espionage. He sent Domany to Berlin, informing that he has connections with the Soviet espionage service and that he wished to provide important information to the German General Staff. From Berlin, Domany was sent to Bucharest with a German passport, under the name Urban. Here, he tried to contact the Romanian "S" Service, posing as an envoy of the German General Staff. Through this plan, as Mihail Moruzov later stated, the Soviets wanted to present Urban to the Germans as a Trotskyist (Leon Trotsky was in conflict

³⁵ ASRI, file nr. 10 998, vol. II, p. 202.



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with Stalin, A/N) and thus infiltrate the German General Staff and the Romanian “S” Service, and deliver to them materials *prepared* by Moscow and, at the same time, to gather “*compromising evidence*” regarding the *hidden Romanian-German ties*, and present them to France and Great Britain in order to damage Romania’s relations with these states. During the perquisition, an extract from a Soviet plan on the *tactics of the armed insurrection in Romania* (street fight) was found on Urban, a document drafted by Emil Bodnăraș with the help of Soviet agents. It was also established that Emil Bodnăraș made contact, from prison, with Moscow, through the Soviet Legation in Bucharest, which sent him money and instructions through his brother. Emanoil was also the one who brought to the Soviet Legation Emil’s reports from prison on the real situation of the Communist Party of Romania following the arrests, as well as other data about the arrested communists and Soviet spies³⁶.

After completing the investigation in this case, Niky Ștefănescu went to Germany to warn the Abwehr in the matter and, if the Germans were open, to conclude an (anti-Soviet) *intelligence cooperation agreement* between the German service and the “S” Service in Romania.

Another circumstance that led to the cementing of our intelligence collaboration with the Germans was the “*Dorman case*”, which took place in the winter of 1936-1937. Dorman (the name was conspiratorial), a former tsarist colonel, pretended to be a “*representative*” of the Mexican government to make some purchases of old planes from the Romanian state, worth hundreds of millions of lei. But the Romanian “S” Service discovered that Dorman was, in fact, in the Soviet espionage service, and the purchased planes were taking the road to Spain, where they served to equip the Bolshevik (international) brigades fighting in the *civil war* in this country. The Romanians discovered that Dorman had already made similar acquisitions in Germany, informing the Abwehr in this regard. Niky Ștefănescu left for Berlin, on which occasion he was received by the leadership of the *Gestapo* (the political police of Adolf Hitler’s regime)³⁷.

At the beginning of January 1937, Niky Ștefănescu traveled incognito to Berlin, to set up a meeting with the heads of German espionage.

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³⁶ Information found by the author in a private collection.

³⁷ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 1-21.



On 21 February 1937, Niky Ștefănescu and his team attended the “Heroes’ Day” parade, an event attended by Adolf Hitler himself, accompanied by Marshal August von Mackensen. One of the conclusions reached by the Romanian side was that “the exchange of military intelligence on the USSR, made in the strictest secrecy, was sincere and without reserves, and in the future, the quantity and quality will increase; that the German authorities, in order to have as much information as possible about the USSR, will be willing to make a precise and lasting arrangement”.

The following month, a team of the “S”(ecret) Service of the Romanian Armed Forces paid a strictly secret visit to the headquarters of the Abwehr, on the “grounds” of *procuring technical equipment necessary for the Service*, but with the real purpose of *establishing contacts of intelligence cooperation on the (anti-Soviet) Eastern Front with the German side*. Although he was “the deputy head of the Secret Service and the head of the Counterintelligence Section”, ie number 2 in the “S” Service after Moruzov, this time, Niky Ștefănescu presented himself to the German side as a simple “public servant, specialist in military matters of the Eastern Front”, probably under the alias “I. Popescu”. In order to confuse the German side, Major Ionescu-Micandru Constantin, accompanied by Capt. BEng Dumitru Son and Capt. BEng Mihai Șerbănescu (the Romanians suspected that the German officers also had conspiratorial names), was introduced as the official head of the Romanian team³⁸.

Niky Ștefănescu contacted Major von Krienitz, who recommended himself to be the “assistant” of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris – the head of the Intelligence Section of the General Staff of the German Armed Forces (Abwehr). The Romanian side also visited the *Gestapo* headquarters, where it was received by Dr Best, who showed his full satisfaction for this beginning of collaboration, especially since Soviet Russia had a common border with Romania, and proposed that BEng Son and BEng Șerbănescu³⁹ should train in Berlin, at the *Gestapo*, and to use its apparatus. On 21 February 1937, Niky Ștefănescu and his team attended the “Heroes’ Day” parade, an event attended by Adolf Hitler himself, accompanied by Marshal August von Mackensen. One of the conclusions reached by the Romanian side was that “the exchange of military intelligence on the USSR, made in the strictest secrecy, was sincere and without reserves, and in the future, the quantity and quality will increase; that the German authorities, in order to have as much information as possible about the USSR, will be willing to make a precise and lasting arrangement”⁴⁰.

³⁸ ASRI, D, file nr. 3694, pp. 20-32, *Darea de seamă asupra călătoriei la Berlin, 12-24 februarie 1937*.

³⁹ On 1 November 1936, BEng Captain Mihai Șerbănescu became deputy of the head of the Technical Service from the “S” Service and, together with BENG Captain Son, started to equip the Service with modern technical machines, devices and materials purchased from Germany.

⁴⁰ ASRI, D, file nr. 3694, pp. 20-32, *Darea de seamă asupra călătoriei la Berlin, 12-24 februarie 1937*; or ANR, Inv. 2379, file nr. 24/1937, p. 23 et seq.

THE REORGANISATION OF THE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE SECTION

Here are some impressions of Eugen Cristescu regarding the organiser and trainer Niky Ștefănescu: *“Niky Ștefănescu, intelligent and enterprising person, took the Counterintelligence Section out of the routine, completely reorganising it, introduced a series of technical innovations and brought there Scarlat Grigoriu, Ștefan Enescu and Nicolae Stănescu”*, future heavy names in Romanian counterintelligence. The *“General Staff also contributes greatly to the reorganisation, both in terms of directives and in terms of investigation plan, and staffing”*⁴¹. *The counterintelligence teams were led directly by Niky Ștefănescu. Those for subversive currents were under the coordination of Gheorghe Comșa; those of stakeout, led by Albu [real name Gheorghe Untăreanu] – Rizescu [Constantin] etc. They consisted of mobile teams, with special organisation, as well as teams for the surveillance and tracking of foreign diplomatic missions. For example, for the surveillance of the diplomatic mission of the USSR, Niky Ștefănescu and Mihail Moruzov formed a special team, consisting of the best elements. At the same time, the teams of the “S” Service infiltrated with special intelligence elements almost our entire diplomatic apparatus from abroad. As a result – Eugen Cristescu underlined -, <The Counterintelligence Section becomes very strong, possessing a numerous staff, thoroughly trained at the Cadres School of the S Service, according to the most modern training methods>”*⁴².

We also add that all this reorganisation was done thoroughly and according to rational, scientific criteria, after consulting a vast documentary material on other intelligence services, especially data on the organisation of the British Intelligence Service, the French II Office and the US FBI, plus data collected on neighbouring intelligence services: Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Czechoslovak.

However, this activity met with fierce opposition from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially that of Nicolae Titulescu, who, in 1934-1936, was the dominant factor in our diplomacy and who accused the “S” Service of infiltrating the foreign apparatus of the country,



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“Niky Ștefănescu, intelligent and enterprising person, took the Counterintelligence Section out of the routine, completely reorganising it, introduced a series of technical innovations and brought there Scarlat Grigoriu, Ștefan Enescu and Nicolae Stănescu”.

⁴¹ ASRI, file nr. 17474, vol. 1, various statements of Eugen Cristescu, pp. 45-7.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 7-45.



The Butenko affair: on 6 February 1938, Hrisanfovici Theodor Butenko, the newly appointed Soviet charge d'affaires of the Soviet Legation in Romania, disappeared from his private home. The next day, at 16.00, Vladimir Bodrov, press attaché and representative of "TASS", but also the one who provided counterintelligence surveillance of Soviet personnel, presented himself at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to signal the "disappearance" of the diplomat.

and that “*diplomatic principles*”⁴³ are not respected. However, Mihail Moruzov, who did not like the pro-Sovietism shown by Titulescu and did not want any relations with the Soviet regime, channelled almost the entire intelligence and counter-intelligence activity of the “S” Service against the USSR. From the first day after the resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviets (December 1934), their Legation in Bucharest was subjected to strict surveillance and scrutiny, an action personally led by Niky Ștefănescu⁴⁴. Also, an “*anti-Soviet*” surveillance team, led by Niky Ștefănescu, frequently travelled to the Royal Romanian Legation in Geneva, at the League of Nations headquarters, where Titulescu was active, carrying an “*armored diplomatic bag*” that included a radio station⁴⁵.

Nicolae Titulescu protested against this “*suspicion*” regarding his activity and, seeing that it was not possible to remove the surveillance team, he at least demanded that the team was led by Gheorghe Cristescu, Eugen Cristescu’s brother, from Security. Gheorghe Cristescu had been in Paris for several years, sent by Moruzov, to complete his technical specialisation in the “S” Service. Titulescu trusted Gheorghe Cristescu, whom he saw as an element formed in the French school, and France, at that time, had developed relations with the Soviets. Through Niky Ștefănescu, Gheorghe Cristescu had succeeded in clandestinely photocopying the Disarmament Protocols for the Geneva Conference, which, at Moruzov’s orders, were personally handed over to Nicolae Titulescu, being of great help to the Romanian diplomat in the difficult negotiations in which he participated⁴⁶.

BUTENKO AFFAIR

The Butenko affair: on 6 February 1938, Hrisanfovici Theodor Butenko, the newly appointed Soviet charge d'affaires of the Soviet Legation in Romania, disappeared from his private home. The next day, at 16.00, Vladimir Bodrov, press attaché and representative of “TASS”, but also the one who provided counterintelligence surveillance of Soviet personnel, presented himself at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to signal the “disappearance” of the diplomat.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In the following days, the Soviet press and the Soviet government attacked virulently from all directions, threatening the Romanian authorities with armed intervention to “release comrade Butenko”, characterised as “a personal friend of Comrade Stalin, kidnapped by the imperialists in Bucharest”⁴⁷.

Then, surprise: on 14 February 1938, the Italian press announced that Butenko was in Rome and that he had left on his own initiative, because he was to be suppressed by a GPU (Soviet political police) agent.

But here are, in short, the facts of this episode: The “S” service had certain data that the GPU was going to remove Butenko (through Agent Vasile Thumanov, who arrived from the Soviet Legation in Prague). The Soviet plan provided for an *ultimatum* and possibly an armed intervention for the occupation of Basarabia. Warned by the Romanian side, Butenko “deserted” and hid for four days at the home of Mihail Moruzov (17 Sofia Street), where he was questioned by Niky Ștefănescu about Soviet news networks in Romania, agents of influence and so on. Also, Th. Butenko left several letters (holographs), in which he expressed the reasons for the gesture. One of them was addressed to King Carol II, a letter from which we read the following passage: “Sire, leaving the borders of the country, whose destinies are entrusted to Your August hands, I am deeply happy that only on its territory I woke up from the troubled Bolshevik evil dream that had torn my heart for several years.

(...) In my future career and as a Ukrainian intellectual, wishing happiness for this martyr people, I would be very happy if I could bring the least service to Your Majesty, trusting that between the Bolshevik-free Ukraine and Your Majesty’s Kingdom they will be established bonds of close friendship and mutual understanding.

Sire, on 6 February, at 7 o’clock in the evening, I, the head of the Soviet mission in Bucharest, left the building of the USSR Legation forever, to fall at Your Augustus’ feet, asking Your Majesty to grant me refuge and bring you my confession, from which it will be seen how I, a 33-year-old Russian citizen, was dragged down the infernal path of Bolshevism, as well as the reasons that determined me to break

⁴⁷ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 14, pp. 150 et seq.



On 10 February 1938, at the Jimbolia border crossing, in the table regarding the crossings of people to Yugoslavia, the name "Niky Ștefănescu, director, Romanian subject" appears.

free from them. My Person (...)"⁴⁸. Moreover, King Carol II received Th. Butenko in secret.

It is also clear from the documents that Butenko initially demanded the protection of the Octavian Goga government, but Moscow's protest was so vigorous that, in order to ease the situation, our government resigned and it was necessary to negotiate urgently with greater powers, Italy and Germany, to take over Butenko.

On 10 February 1938, at the Jimbolia border crossing, in the table regarding the crossings of people to Yugoslavia, the name "Niky Ștefănescu, director, Romanian subject" appears, accompanying a certain "Mircea Ioan Dobrescu, with passport no. 255014/938, issued by the Ministry of Interior", none other than... the famous Theodor Butenko, both travellers having as destination Rome!

But despite the evidence, the Soviets continued to claim that Th. Butenko did not flee, but was abducted and killed, and that the individual in the custody of the Italian authorities was not the real Butenko. Thus, at the request of the Italian authorities, Niky Ștefănescu repeated the visit to Rome to "recognise" Theodor Butenko. In the report to Mihail Moruzov, Niky Ștefănescu describes the brief reunion with Butenko and his surprise to see "known" figures.

However, on the occasion of his second trip to Rome, based on the relationships already created, Niky Ștefănescu, on behalf of the "S" Service of the Romanian Armed Forces, signed an anti-Soviet intelligence cooperation agreement with Italian counterparts. About this mission, Niky reported to Moruzov: "I went to Rome to check the identity of T. Butenko, on which occasion, on 20 February 1938, I contacted the head of the Intelligence Service of the Italian armed forces, Knight Santo Emanuele, with whom we discussed the need for cooperation in the face of the common danger posed by Moscow's unrest (...). We then set out to take joint action to counter the ongoing Soviet conspiracies and challenges, calling for an exchange of information with Mr Santo Emanuele on the following issues: Soviet political and intelligence activity abroad, directives on strikes and sabotage; Soviet activity and identification of Soviet ties abroad; organisation and deployment of the Red Army (...)". On this report, Mihail Moruzov signed and put

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the following resolution: “We considered this link necessary, given the needs of the “S” Service for cooperation with common interests”⁴⁹. The success of the mission in Italy is confirmed in June 1938, when it took place in secret the visit to Romania of the Italian General Valle, the chief of the General Staff of the Italian armed forces, accompanied by Della Porta, the Italian military attaché in Bucharest. On his return, the Italian General sent a congratulatory letter to the General Staff of the Romanian armed Forces for Mr. Nicolae Ștefănescu, for the way in which he took care of the good unfolding of the visit⁵⁰.

Also during this period, we note that Niky Ștefănescu was sent by Mihail Moruzov to negotiate *intelligence cooperation agreements* with counterparts in Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. For example, on 22 June 1938, Niky Ștefănescu received from the Yugoslav state the “*Crown of Yugoslavia*” by Decree of the King of Yugoslavia (communication made to the Romanian side by Yugoslav Lieutenant-Colonel Stropnik – address No. 45889 of 27 January 1939, General Staff, Section II, to the Secret Service)⁵¹.

On 7 February 1940, Niky Ștefănescu was in Yugoslavia again, this time to sign a collaboration and intelligence exchange agreement between the Romanian “S” Service and the Yugoslav Security. The intermediary was Ambassador Victor Cădere, who established the necessary contacts with Mr. Vlascalin, *Undersecretary of State in charge of leading the Yugoslav Security*⁵².

COMMANDING THE DETECTIVES CORPS AND THEN THE GENERAL SECURITY

The intensification of external risks and threats against Romania determined the state leadership to look for a new formula for streamlining the national intelligence system. Niky Ștefănescu, considered to be a good connoisseur of the realities of State Security, was delegated, in April 1937, to take over the Detective Corps⁵³ (officially, he was appointed by *ministerial decision* no. 22 267 of August 1938). By law, the Detective Corps had as its attributions the collection



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⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 152.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 232.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁵² ASRI, file nr. 9060, vol. 2, pp. 5-7; file nr. 20954, vol. 4, regarding the Moruzov investigation, p. 401.

⁵³ *Ibid*, file nr. 20954, vol. 12, p. 228.



By law, the Detective Corps had as its attributions the collection of information by all means: stakeout, informants, telephone and correspondence interceptions etc. from: extremist political parties; national minority organisations, irredentist movements; foreign legations; pursuing espionage suspects; ensuring the security and protection of the royal family and dignitaries.

of information by all means: stakeout, informants, telephone and correspondence interceptions etc. from: extremist political parties; national minority organisations, irredentist movements; foreign legations; pursuing espionage suspects; ensuring the security and protection of the royal family and dignitaries⁵⁴.

From an operational point of view, by appointing Niky Ștefănescu, the Detective Corps (body of the Ministry of Interior) was then subordinated to the “S” Service (body of the Ministry of National Defence), meaning that Niky sent daily reports to Moruzov and received major directives from him.

Niky Ștefănescu proved to be an excellent organiser at the Detective Corps as well, especially in the intelligence area. Proof of this are the reports of the time, as follows: *“At Security, Niky Ștefănescu brought a new breath, in large part this being the mentality from the Secret Service, enhanced with his personal contribution. Without going into details, it is enough to say that **the most complete internal, political, diplomatic and economic intelligence apparatus, which had been in Romania until then, was the one created at Siguranța by Niky Ștefănescu** [emphasis added]. This performance was helped by his professional capacity, which had increased, by the authority of the institution, by the fact that he had a valuable help in the person of Valeriu Ionescu, moved to the Secret Service, as well as by the large funds that had been made available to him”*⁵⁵.

Niky Ștefănescu’s so-called “staff” at the Detective Corps was made up of people brought and trained by him: Paul Abramovici, Tică Gheorghiu, Nicolae Baicu, Petrovici, Borcea, Oproiu, Taflaru, Ghițescu, Wirth, Costel Petrescu, Nae Georgescu, Mănăilă, Curelea etc.⁵⁶.

As a result, the successes of the Detective Corps continued: Niky Ștefănescu saved, *“in 10-12 turns”*, the life of King Carol II, and according to other versions, even several turns, against the legionnaires’ attempts made on the King’s life: *“It is not possible to specify in detail where is the merit of Niky Ștefănescu and if the first information regarding*

⁵⁴ For more details, see Sorin Aparaschivei, *Corpul Detectivilor – Scotland Yard-ul românesc*, available at www.Historia.ro.

⁵⁵ ASRI, file nr. 20954, vol. 15, pp. 222-225; Valeriu Ionescu, group head within the “S” Service, then the SSI, had the communists under surveillance, shot himself after 23 August 1944 (A/N).

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, file 10998, vol. 1, p. 142.

*the attack, in each of these cases, did not come from Mihail Moruzov himself; but, in any case, the technical instrumentation of the business has always been the merit of Niky Ștefănescu*⁵⁷.

At other times, a *special team* of the Detective Corps “*physically liquidated the conspirators*”, which today cannot be overlooked, although the Western services do not lack such examples. Gheorghe Comșa was also part of this *team*, who, although employed in the “S” Service, participated in the “*heavy operations of the General Directorate of Police*”. The people coordinated by Niky Ștefănescu did not overlook the activity carried out by the National Peasant Party and the Liberal Party, this being sometimes reported at an interval of a few hours away from when something happened inside these historical parties. Apart from this, Niky Ștefănescu’s vigilance did not miss “*the activity of Germans, ethnic and passport-bearers, together with that of their organisations, and it was said that perhaps **not even in Berlin there was a stricter record of their activity than in the General Directorate of Police** [emphasis added]. The economic life also, with all the combinations and underlying things of the different societies, was equally carefully reported, following step by step the infiltration of the German capital, with its political combinations, as well as its rivalry with the western one*”⁵⁸.

*

But with all this vigilance, some political events could not be prevented, although information did exist. At the end of June 1940, the Soviet government ordered Romania to abandon Basarabia, threatening with an armed invasion. Hungary and Bulgaria were also threatening Romania. King Carol II asked Germany to guarantee our borders. Our national intelligence system was moving from a *state of peace* to a *state of war*, coming under the coordination of the military. As a result, by the Decision of the Minister of Interior no. 46303 of 4 July 1940, Nicolae Ștefănescu, assigned as head of the Detective Corps, was delegated to command the Security Police Directorate of the General Police Directorate⁵⁹. On 13 July of the same year, it



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⁵⁷ *Ibid*, file nr. 20954, vol. 15, pp. 222-225.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 92.



was issued the decree law no. 49477-S, through which the General Directorate of Police merged with the Gendarmerie Corps and the Capital Police Prefecture into a single body, under the name of the *General Directorate of Police and State Security*. Niky Ștefănescu was appointed to lead this institution⁶⁰.

But things kept rushing. In the coming months, the *Gestapo* and not *Abwehr* has a say in Romania. The German leadership relied on the *legionary movement*. On 1 September 1940, by Decision no. 61765-S, Niky Ștefănescu was retired from all positions held in the *Siguranță* and returned to his position as head of the “S” Service of the Romanian Armed Forces⁶¹.

Niky Ștefănescu was a successful student of Mihail Moruzov, who, to the teachings of his master, added his own police experience and a lively intelligence, with many possibilities to adapt to different situations.

CONCLUSIONS: THE END AND LEGACY OF NIKY ȘTEFĂNESCU

On 6 September 1940, Mihail Moruzov and Niky Ștefănescu were arrested and imprisoned in Jilava, where, on the night of 26/27 November of that year, were assassinated by legionnaires⁶². Threatened by the legionaries, Iraida Ștefănescu left Bucharest and moved to Basarabia, to Orhei. A note from the Romanian Special Intelligence Service (formerly the “S” Service) shows that, during the Soviet occupation of Basarabia, she came under the attention of the Soviet intelligence agencies. After 23 August 1944, Iraida Ștefănescu made several attempts for the Romanian state to grant her a survivor’s pension⁶³.

This is, in short, the biography of Niky Ștefănescu, one of the greatest professionals that Romanian espionage and counterespionage had. Its significance for this field is also revealed by the following archive testimony: *“Niky Ștefănescu was a successful student of Mihail Moruzov, who, to the teachings of his master, added his own police experience and a lively intelligence, with many possibilities to adapt to different situations.*

He had no political convictions and, just as he followed the communist movement in Basarabia, so did he pursue the legionaries in Bucharest; its orientation being only according to the interests

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 96.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 99.

⁶² ASRI, file nr. 10998, vol. 1, p. 129.

⁶³ *Ibid*, file nr. 20954, vol. 15, p. 287.

of the State. (...) *Those who came in contact with him had a lot to gain in the speed of solving the problems and the execution without personal attitudes of the missions received from the established order*⁶⁴.

For his exceptional merits in the service of the Romanian state and nation, Niky Ștefănescu was appreciated at the highest level, being honoured with various decorations, including: *“Bărbăție și Credință Clasa I”*, *“Cavaler al Ordinului Coroana României”*, *“Ofițer al Ordinului Coroana României”*, *“Crucea de Război Franceză”*.



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⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 222-225.