Teohari Georgescu: a short biography of the minister who transformed Romania into a communist state

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Abstract: One of the first communists who received a portfolio in the Romanian Government was Teohari Georgescu. Working as a printer, as well as being a dedicated communist, he managed to become, in a few years, the Minister of Interior Affairs in Petru Groza’s Cabinet. In this paper, we were able to mark a few of the most important moments in Teohari Georgescu’s life and career, also revealing information on his purge, after being in charge of the Ministry of Interior Affairs for a few years.

Keywords: history of Romania, communism, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Teohari Georgescu, Petru Groza Government

Introduction

One of the most important leaders of the Romanian Communist Party (R.C.P. – between 1948 and 1965 it was called the Romanian Workers’ Party – R.W.P.) was Teohari Georgescu, responsible for numerous actions at national level planned by the party or the Soviet Union and completed with the help of the institutions that he had in subordination. In this regard, T. Georgescu has distinguished himself from other members, even those from

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the Central Committee (C.C.) of the Communist Party, concentrating the repression exerted throughout the country since the spring of 1945. He detached himself in the party by his typology, always proving himself loyal to the demands of the communists in Romania and beyond.

**Romanian or Jew?**

Teohari Georgescu was born in Chitila (near Bucharest) on January 31, 1908, in the family of a grocer, being the third child out of a total of seven. There have been several discussions among the historians on the subject of his origins, in which his Jewish ancestry was highlighted and his supposed real name of (Samuel) Bureh Tescovici was discussed.¹ That he was indeed Romanian was argued by Horia Nestorescu-Bâlcești: besides the fact that his parents were Romanian, there is a cross at his tomb in the Sf. Vineri cemetery. Moreover, at an interrogation in 1952, T. Georgescu remembered an exchange of phrases between him and the head of the Security, Nicolae Turcu: “You are Romanian. What are you looking for in this movement where there are only strangers?”² However, the style of his discourse, especially that about national minorities, would not place him among Romanians, as he was a politician who encouraged the granting of minority rights. He went to school only for a few years, finishing fourth grade at the

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“Sfinții Voievozi” school in Bucharest in 1920 and then completing only two high school years at “Saint Sava”.3

In the booklet on his biography, we can discover some aspects of Georgescu's youth. Published in 1951, it contrasts his youth in a poor family with the society affected by the consequences of the First World War (poverty generated by the “imperialist and capitalist plunder”, according to communist proselytes)4. Hunger, “exploitation” and other problems caused by the “Anglo-American imperialists” plus the Great Socialist Revolution of October, all that took place when he was just 10 years old, seemed to serve not only as a stimulus to the Romanian workers' movement, but also to Georgescu's personality. The unsigned authors of the biography suggest that the public demonstrations held in Bucharest in 1917-1918 would have led young Teohari Georgescu to embrace the principle of “class struggle”.5

The young revolutionary

His political activity can be divided into three major periods, namely the years of illegality, corresponding to the interwar years, until the act of 23 August 1944, then the period in which he worked with the Romanian Ministry of Interior Affairs (December 1944 - May 1952) and, finally, the period in which he remained a printer, not deprived of any function at the time, but stripped of any political decision-making power. Like other

3 Laurențiu Ungureanu, Radu Eremia, "Teohari Georgescu, comunistul care a prescris crimele torționarilor”, Adevărul weekend, no. 181, 9 – 11 January 2015, p. 27.
4 ***, Teohari Georgescu, Kiadja a Román Munkáspárt, 1951, p. 7.
5 Ibidem, pp. 8 - 9.
Communist leaders, after a difficult period of unlawfulness, he managed to enjoy his great prestige and increased power, before being eliminated from all his dignities.

At the age of 15 he was hired at the “Cartea Românească” printing house as a manual picker\(^6\) for a fairly long period: 1923 - 1933. In his apprenticeship, he learned to organize the pages of newspapers like “Universul” and the “Official Monitor”.\(^7\)

Regarding his political orientation or preferences,\(^8\) we know that his interest in the communist movement led him to read ideological texts in secret and later to participate in Communist Party meetings. In 1927, during a protest, he entered as a member of the strike committee of the publishing house; following his political principles, in the same year he became a communist agitator.\(^9\) In the next two years, this activity was somewhat professional, enrolling in the workers’ syndicate of the Guntenberg printing house\(^10\), but also the national Siguranța (the state secret service).

T. Georgescu made his first political step in 1929 by joining the Romanian Communist Party (functioning illegally at the time).\(^11\) Regarding his adherence to the R.C.P., the sources offer two variants: 1929 and 1933.

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\(^8\) ***, *Teohari Georgescu*, Kiadja a Román Munkáspárt, 1951, pp. 10-11.


\(^10\) Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

T. Georgescu, during the interrogations he underwent after his purge, mentions his entry into the party in the spring of 1933 at the suggestion of Avram Zighelboim and with the support of Nicolae Goldberger. But his political acts led him to several prison sentences, as he was considered an “illegitimate communist”. During the same period (1929 - 1930), he attended military training at a military school in Oradea.\(^{12}\) His hatred for the “opulent businessmen” was the main reason for joining the Communist movement\(^{13}\), as well as getting involved in illegal political activity during the 1930s.

In this sense, in 1933, at a time when he was also a member of the Local Commission of Syndicates in Bucharest, respectively of the General Council of Unitary Syndicates of Romania,\(^ {14}\) we find him spreading communist propaganda flyers in the capital, which is why he was arrested and kept for two months at Văcărești prison, then released for lack of evidence.\(^ {15}\) Actually, this was the beginning of a series of arrests. Only a few months later, in June 1934, he was arrested again for communist activity and jailed at Jilava, with Ștefan Mladin (the head of the team that arrested Ion Antonescu at the Royal Palace on the night of August 22 to August 23, 1944), Constantin Pârvulescu and Vasile Vâlcu,\(^ {16}\) but, once more, only for a short time, being released on bail.

One year later, he was imprisoned again, this time at Ploiești prison, because he did not appear at the trial\(^ {17}\) or because of compromising

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\(^{13}\) Florica Dobre (coordinator), *Membrii CC al PCR 1945-1989…*, p. 287.
\(^{14}\) *Ibidem*, p. 287
\(^{15}\) Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
\(^{16}\) Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lui tanti Varvara…*, p. 459.
\(^{17}\) Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
statements made for the Siguranța.\textsuperscript{18} His short periods of detention would come to raise suspicions about working for the national secret service, this constituting one of the reasons why he was cleansed in 1952. However, his political activity continued, in 1937 becoming secretary of Bucharest’s Third Sector, in 1938 becoming a member of the Bucharest local PCdR committee, and, the next year, becoming a member and later (starting from 1941) secretary of CC of PCdR. In those years, his job was still in the printing house, at the “Adevărul” newspaper and at the National Printing Office.\textsuperscript{19} Between 1936 and 1937 he worked in a clandestine printing house owned by the Communist Party, which functioned in a conspiratorial house in the capital.\textsuperscript{20}

**Teohari Georgescu, the politician**

For him, the year 1940 was an important milestone, because it was the year when he became a member of the Party Secretariat and also when he received his training in Moscow. Together with Ștefan Foriș, he went in the USSR for several months to be trained by Georghi Dimitrov, secretary of the Comintern, in coding and decoding messages, namely clandestine work. He had to acquire a cipher to keep in touch with the Comintern, without Foriș's knowledge, his purpose being to coordinate the special operations of the PCdR, parallel with Foriș (who was dealing with political issues).

\textsuperscript{18} Stelian Tănase, *Clieții lu’ tanti Varvara...*, p. 459.
\textsuperscript{19} Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{20} Horia Nestorescu-Bălcești, “Teohari Georgescu 1908 - 1976...”, p. 211.
But Foriș and Georgescu’s journey to Moscow must also be seen from the perspective of finding the right leader for the party, in the context of the dismantling of Great Romania in 1940 and the loss of a large number of adherents from Northern Transylvania and Bessarabia. As such, Foriș was appointed general secretary of the party, and Georgescu understood that he would be his successor. It is important to point out that at that moment he was not in friendly relations with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and that the perspective of Teohari as the leader of the party will haunt Dej for many years after the war. Some sources, however, say that the proposal would have been rejected by T. Georgescu.

At the end of 1940, when Foriș was still in Moscow, Georgescu returned to Romania (with the help of Dumitru Coliu - aka Dimitri Kolev)\(^{21}\) and met with Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the future minister of justice, who was seeking at that time to join the R.C.P. The meeting between the two ended with a warning from Pătrășcanu that Georgescu's life was in danger and recommended that he should leave the country, relying on information that dangerous people from the Siguranță had sneaked at the top of the party.\(^{22}\)

During these years, in which he illegally served the R.C.P. and the Comintern, T. Georgescu had several conspiratorial names: Ionescu (1934-1935), Andrei (1936-1937), Mihai (1940-1941) and Popov (during his stay in the USSR in 1940).\(^{23}\) General Ion Mihai Pacepa presented some data, quoted then by the historian Lavinia Betea, regarding the activity of

\(^{21}\) Stelian Tănase, *Clienţii lu’tanti Varvara...*, p. 460.
\(^{22}\) *Ibidem*, p. 411.
Georgescu and Vasile Luca (Luca László), Ana Pauker and Emil Bodnâraş (Panteli Bodnarenko) within a so-called underground army sought by Stalin in every communist state, to guarantee the success of Sovietization. The Comintern, for which Georgescu worked, would have been in the service of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Soviet Union (I.N.U.) at the request of the Kremlin leader.\textsuperscript{24}

However, in 1941, a few months after his return to the country, Teohari Georgescu was arrested from the conspiracy dwelling in Bucharest, now with Iosif Chişinevski, and received a ten-year prison sentence, switched to hard labor. He was detained in the prisons of Caransebeş, Văcărești and Târgu Jiu. At Caransebeş, he became a close friend to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. He stayed there for a year, and in 1942 he was moved to Văcărești Prison, a place where he was able to continue to carry out the printing job in the typographic workshop. The last part of the sentence was also carried out in Caransebeş,\textsuperscript{25} and he refused to adhere to a general escape plan set up by Belu Zilber's group.\textsuperscript{26}

In 1944, according to some estimates, about 150 Communists and Soviet spies were imprisoned in Caransebeş. The party cell was led by T. Georgescu, who was seconded by E. Bodnâraş, the new leader of the party and who, in his adventurous spirit, wanted to escape from the penitentiary and flee to Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{27} However, the conditions of detention were not harsh, and Georgescu would have enjoyed a semi-open regime, for the same

\textsuperscript{24} Lavinia Betea, \textit{Maurer şi lumea de ieri}, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 2001, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 128. Also see: Dennis Deletant, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{26} Lavinia Betea, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{27} Stelian Tănase, \textit{Clienţii lu’ tanti Varvara...}, pp. 155 - 156.
year he was seen on the streets of the city, dressed in a suit and selling objects made in prison. At that time, both he and other important members of the party took note of Dej’s hypothesis that Foriş was a traitor, considered the author of several arrests among the communists. This will later cause Georgescu to act against Foriş.

After the act of August 23, 1944 (when Romania joined The Allies), all Communists came out of prison, which for the R.C.P. meant the revival of its activity. Teohari Georgescu was released from the Caransebeș penitentiary with the support of Leontin Sălăjan and began his ascension to office. Some authors do not hesitate to link his political rise with the restoration of the clandestine typography of the Communists in Bucharest. However, like the other representatives of the communist elite, he did not have any experience in the democratic institutions and no idea how they functioned. The R.C.P. leaders, including Georgescu, saw a society exclusively designed to fight the bourgeoisie. For them, the Romanian society was a totally foreign environment.

Quickly becoming an opponent of the political power installed after the removal of Marshal Antonescu from the head of the Government, Georgescu constantly criticized the executives led by Generals Sănătescu and Rădescu, in the second one even taking part. His stronger rapprochement

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28 Ibidem, p. 156.
29 Ibidem, p. 346.
with the Gheorghiu-Dej – Vasile Luca – Ana Pauker group amounted to some support received from the party at the end of that year when, on November 4th, he entered the governing structure of the Interior Ministry as a sub-secretary of State for Administrative Affairs.\textsuperscript{33} The Interior Minister was Nicolae Penescu.

\textbf{In the Rădescu Cabinet}

As sub-secretary, T. Georgescu had his own contribution to the communists’ seizure of state power, by installing some of the party's loyalists in nine of the 16 prefectures in the country. His activity corresponded to the actions inside the party and the most significant frictions were those with the prime-minister, Gen. Rădescu. Georgescu attacked him in several ways, from different accusations made by him or the National Democratic Front, to violent protests such as the one at the end of February 1945. He ignored Rădescu’s request to abolish the communist militia, and, moreover, he acted to convince the prefects in the country not to listen to his orders. One of the communists’ attacks on the government was related to the failure of the agrarian reform.\textsuperscript{34} The communists’ most important desire was to gain as much power as possible in decisions regarding Romania’s actions during the war, but also in the administrative apparatus, a significant contribution being made by General Andrei I. Vișinsky, Deputy Commissary of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., the man designated to impose upon King Michael I the

\textsuperscript{33} Florica Dobre (coordinator), \textit{Membrii CC al PCR 1945-1989...}, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{34} Dennis Deletant, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 57.
appointment of a far-left government. Keeping close ties with the head of the K.G.B. agency in Romania, General Fedicikin, Georgescu began to infiltrate the communists in the national secret service, Securitate, in the Gendarmerie and the Special Intelligence Service.³⁵

Teohari Georgescu served as Undersecretary of State until February 28, 1945, accusing General Rădescu the next day of crimes against civilians following the bloody repression of the meeting held in front of the Royal Palace (where, in fact, the Communists opened fire, staging a police and security attack), also recommending to the authorities to bring him in front of the People’s Court.³⁶

**As the Interior Minister**

By appointing Petru Groza as Prime Minister, on March 6, 1945, Teohari Georgescu became the Interior minister, holding office from that day until May 27, 1952.

In January 1950, he, along with sixteen others, became a member of the Organizational Office, a section dealing with organizational work, party life, controlling the implementation of party directives on organizational issues, and choosing and redeploying cadres. T. Georgescu had a post in the Organizational Office, along with other members of the Secretary and Political Boureau: Gheorghe Apostol, Iosif Chișinevschi, Chivu Stoica,

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Vasile Luca, Ana Pauker and others. From 17 March 17 1950, he was also the vice-president of the Council of Ministers (the Government), along with Chivu Stoica and Iosif Chișinevski.

As the Minister of Interior Affairs, T. Georgescu subordinated the entire police apparatus, all order and administration structures, so that from the time of his appointment in the head of the Ministry, the communists held the entire control of the central administration and the local administrations, allowing for the gross falsification of the 1946 parliamentary elections. Moreover, after the abolition of the kingdom and the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic on December 30, 1947, the repressive system constituted after the Soviet model (in this case the General Directorate of People's Security) was also placed under his subordination. During his term in office, he remained faithful both to Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, the head of state, and to the rest of the Central Committee: Vasile Luca (the Finance Minister), Ana Pauker (the Minister of Foreign Affairs) and so on.

Having so much power in his hand, he committed regular abuses. At the end of his mandate, T. Georgescu was characterized in particularly tough terms for a man who had quasi-total control over a country for seven years: “...he entered the workers’ movement because he hated the overpowering patrons, determined to reach and outrun them. His intimate life, after achieving success, exceeded the turpitude of the patrons. He left his wife (...) and committed adultery, taking advantage of the wife of a subordinate (...). Teohari has never grasped the concept of mercy towards his neighbour.

Teohari understands theft, embezzlement, falsity and scam. He has always «walked» across the criminal code, he hated and lived opulently and shamelessly, understood and lived on the dark, criminal side of man. (...) The one named T.G. (...) is not a communist, but a cupid printer, he has printed subversive manifestations for unknown people, for money”.

Teohari Georgescu was responsible for the purge of two characters: Ștefan Foriș and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. In Foriș’s case, we are talking about Georgescu’s desire to eliminate competition, for he had been the leader of the party between 1940 and 1944, being eliminated by blackmail by Emil Bodnăraș. T. Georgescu, like his other colleagues, considered that his arrest in 1941 was due to Foriș, who would probably have pursued the unruly retention of power. The way in which Foriș was eliminated arises from a later statement by Georgescu: “In the spring of 1946 (...) General Nicolschi came to me and asked me: what shall we do with Foriș? He has been kept in this state for a long time already. (...) A few days later, I went to the party's general secretary and asked, “What shall we do with Foriș, we have been keeping him for a long time now, should we suppress him?” As for my proposal, Gheorghiu told me he agreed to suppress him. After that, I searched for Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker (...). I asked them, what do we do with Foriș? - in the sense of suppressing him. They both agreed.”

Pătrășcanu, the Minister of Justice and promoter of Stalinist cleansing in Romania, had placed into the minds of the R.C.P. leaders the idea of belonging to a possible Romanian communism, after which he was accused of bourgeois chauvinism and nationalism. Pătrășcanu’s purge appeared in the context of the lack of a unitary leadership of the party, on the leaders permanently planning a substitution by competition to “nationalize” the R.C.P.

The first to attack Pătrășcanu directly and openly was T. Georgescu in February 1948 at the First Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party (R.W.P.), bringing into discussion some of his thoughts on the disputes between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania.\(^{42}\) He denounced Pătrășcanu as “an exponent of the bourgeois ideology”, because he “underestimated the enemy's force (...) probably helped by the Western imperialist powers”.\(^ {43}\) At the same time, he stigmatized him for being a coward and a traitor, accusing him of protecting former war criminals, allowing even the fleeing of capitalists from the country.\(^ {44}\) Georgescu, although initially opposed to Pătrășcanu’s investigation,\(^ {45}\) stood at the head of his investigative commission, together with Iosif Rangheț (party secretary responsible for cadres) and Alexandru Drăghici (Deputy Chief of the Political and Administrative Section). Interestingly, at the time of his indictment, T.


\(^{44}\) Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii…*, p. 178.

\(^{45}\) Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
Georgescu reproached the slowness with which the investigation had taken place, insinuating he deliberately delayed the case.46

From 1950, Georgescu became an exponent of the nomenklatura, a privileged communist, indulging in, at least immoral, if not illegal acts to satisfy his personal and professional desires, a propagator of Stalin's cult and Stalinism in general.47

**Removal from the Ministry and purge**

In the early 1950s, T. Georgescu reported in his personal diary that there were more problems within the R.W.P. and discussed possible future sanctions and eliminations from the party.48 Apparently, the Soviet counselors had a significant role in the process of his and other colleagues’ purge from the Central Committee. The head of the Soviet advisers in Romania, A. M. Saharovski, sent, in early 1952, a series of negative reports on the work of the Luca-Pauker-Gerogescu group, blamed for putting obstacles before Dej.49

Officially, the main reason behind the purge of the Luca-Pauker-Georgescu group was the reluctance of the Minister of Finance (V. Luca) to implement monetary reform.50 But a more convincing reason is the

46 *Ibidem*, p. 145.
elimination of competition, stemming from Gheorghiu-Dej’s obsession with preventing the appearance of any fractious groups in the party, namely the emergence of one or more competitors for the head of the party. Purification will prove to be nothing more than a continuation of the cleansing process in the party, whose victims were already Foriș and Pătrășcanu. Teohari Georgescu is placed by the historian Vladimir Tismăneanu in the factional group, respectively in Ana Pauker’s area of personal ambition in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dej also copied Stalin's obsession with the “imperialist-Zionist conspiracy” where Pauker could easily be included.51

The first problems began to appear on February 19, 1952, when a controversy over the Report on the Preparation and Implementation of the Money Reform appeared in the Political Bureau. The misunderstandings between Vasile Luca, supported by T. Georgescu and Miron Constantinescu, and also by Iosif Chișinevski and Alexandru Moghioroș, were linked to the drafting of the document by the Party Committee, which was responsible for the preparation of the reform.52 At another meeting of the Political Bureau, Emil Bodnăraș expressed the intention to set up a party committee, tasked with checking the work of the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank, in order to find the reasons for the failure of the monetary reform. It was when Al. Moghioroș proposed the dismissal of V. Luca as Finance Minister.53

The involvement of the Soviets in the whole process was total. In April, a meeting of decision-makers, with a team composed of Gheorghe

53 Ibidem, p. 104.
Gheorghiu-Dej, Miron Constantinescu, Iosif Chișinevski and Gheorghe Apostol took place at Kremlin, where the purging problem was decided.\(^5^4\)

From that moment on, the path was open for the works of the Plenary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, on May 26-27, 1952.

Historian Dennis Deletant sees in the process of purification the beginning of the period of imposing dejist supremacy, masked, as Victor Funză completes, in the Stalinist principle of “exterminating the outsiders”.\(^5^5\)

It is not surprising that immediately after the purification of the three, Gheorghiu-Dej considered that “we must now prepare for Groza’s change. Let’s unify the functions of the state and the party in one hand”.\(^5^6\)

So Dej had not forgotten the proposal of 1940 to appoint Teohari Georgescu as Foriş’s successor to the Communist Party leadership and wanted to definitively eliminate any competition. The Minister of Interior’s performance was considered “good” regarding the results of the purification efforts of the “people’s democratic” society he coordinated, as he himself talked about 100,000 people removed.

The situation of the “fractious group” had therefore been “resolved” for several months. Political scientist Stelian Tănase speaks of the Plenary of the Central Committee of the R.W.P., held on May 26-27, 1952, as “a obloquy ceremony, a political execution” carried out “by the rules of the political sect in which the party remained”, in which Vasile Luca, Ana Pauker and Teohari Georgescu were subjected to “a concentric attack, orchestrated


\(^{5^5}\) Victor Frunză, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

\(^{5^6}\) Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii...,* p. 191.
behind the scenes, being accused of all the known underground diseases”.

The main accusation was the “deviation to the right” (a sort of deviation from communist principles), very serious for a member of the Communist movement. The press release published after the plenary, concluded that it “unmasked and crushed the anti-partisan and anti-state group Ana Pauker - Vasile Luca”.

The main reason for which Georgescu was removed was, officially, the fraternization with V. Luca. Georgescu had previously agreed with A. Pauker to defend Luca, so he was accused of having had a “compassionate attitude” toward Luca's “deviation”. They supposedly had been working for a long time, “weakening the spirit of leadership and endangering the party’s unity itself”. In fact, the report stated, Luca's position would have been the result of the permissive attitude of the two colleagues, Pauker and Georgescu.

Besides this major and general allegation, there would have been other, particular ones. Thus, Georgescu was accused that, during his years of running the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he did not “intransigently introduce, with revolutionary and communist conviction, the party’s line of destroying the counterrevolution”. In other words, he was accused of a small number of victims of repression. Another accusation was a settlement with a legionary leader, Nicolae Pătrașcu, who, in November 1944, returned in Romania from Germany leading a group of legionnaires, was arrested and then

57 Stelian Tănase Clienții lu’ tanti Varvara..., p. 473.
59 Gheorghe Onişoru, op. cit., p. 437.
60 Ibidem, p. 149.
investigated by the Interior Minister. Their agreement would have been advantageous for both sides, as it offered the Communists a small maneuver (shock troops) in case of problems.\textsuperscript{61}

T. Georgescu was also accused of the appointment of Șraer as Secretary General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, although he was a former agent of the Siguranța, but also for the delay in the investigation of Pătrășcanu and Remus Kofler. Another accusation referred to not taking serious measures in eliminating the representatives of the old bourgeois landowners’ structures. Thus, some people such as General Rădescu, General Vișoianu, Grigore Niculescu-Buzești (former Foreign Minister in the Sănătescu Cabinet) remained free, although they should have been arrested, thus allowing them the possibility of organizing events to destabilize the regime in Romania. Ultimately, the head of the Interior Ministry was accused of failing to channel his efforts in the fight against the “Zionists” and the “Titoists”, also regarded as disruptive factors of the regime,\textsuperscript{62} and that, together with V. Luca and A. Pauker, he would have sabotaged the start of the cooperative process in agriculture.\textsuperscript{63} In other words, Teohari Georgescu became a “working class enemy”.\textsuperscript{64}

The consequence was his dismissal from all positions, namely minister of Internal Affairs, vice-president of the Council of Ministers, secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Political Bureau and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Dumitru Șandru, \textit{Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944-1947}, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2007, pp. 94 - 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Gheorghe Onișoru, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 150.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 437.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Radu Tudorancea, „Elita comunistă din România la începutul anilor 1950. Surse inedite americane”, in: \textit{Studii și Materiale de Istorie Contemporană}, vol. 11, 2012, Bucharest, p. 77.
\end{itemize}
of the Organizational Office. The decree containing the dismissal of Teohari Georgescu from Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Internal Affairs was signed by C. I. Parhon and issued on May 27, 1952.\textsuperscript{65} T. Georgescu expected such an evolution, because, in his diary, he wrote: “After the meeting held in March 13, I considered that everything was over”.\textsuperscript{66} The loss of all the functions held in the party and state apparatus meant sending him to “the bottom labour”, but only after a lengthy investigation.

One month after his dismissal, he sent the Political Bureau of the C.C. of the R.W.P. a “self-critical” memorandum in which he tried to explain the facts and shortcomings of which he had been accused. In it, Georgescu acknowledged the error of supporting Luca in the sense of diminishing his guilt, as he didn’t understand who was responsible for the “right-wing deviation” of the Romanian finances. Thus, he considered that the “governing organisms” were guilty of the situation and not one person. He claimed he was not guilty of any “deviation from the line of the party”, for he had finally accepted both the accusations addressed to the Minister of Finance and his proposed dismissal. The accusations brought to him in the plenary held in May had surprised him even more so, since nothing had been brought to his attention beforehand: “I did not stand up against the party, I did not infringe upon the party’s decisions, and that’s why I did not expect to be accused and


\textsuperscript{66} Gheorghe Onișoru, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 151.
sanctioned so severely, with no debate in the Political Bureau.” 67 The former Interior Minister was also dissatisfied with the fact that the accusations were imposed on him in front of everyone, without being able to fight them in any way. The only offense he recognized was the closed-door discussion with Luca and Pauker of the content of the closed letter in March 1952, when the charges against the finance minister were made. 68

In another part of the memorandum, T. Georgescu listed some facts and shortcomings of which he was considered guilty. In essence, “the lack of combativeness against the class enemy” was due to the “drunkenness of success” (referring to the consequences of repressive measures) in the last years. His mistakes related to the peaceful attitude towards V. Luca during the meetings of the Political Bureau in February-March 1952, as well as his support for discussing the closed letter with Luca and Pauker, the mentioned “lack of combativeness against class enemy”, the maintenance of some “inadequate elements” in the Ministry for Internal Affairs, but also the fact that it did not “raise his ideological level”. When drawing the line, Georgescu saw the decision of the Political Bureau as correct, but he still demanded a new chance so that he could show his loyalty. 69 In October, he addressed a letter to Dej in which he reminded him that during the May plenary, he had said he would rehabilitate himself, asking Dej to receive him in an audience, as was the case with Alexandru Moghioroș. 70

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denotes a precarious state of mood, proof that even after half a year after the destitution, he had failed to overcome the storm of the moment.

**Arrest and interrogations**

Even so, on February 18, 1953, Teohari Georgescu was arrested. The stakeout made by the *Securitate* lasted several months, from June 1952. The former Minister of Interior Affairs had a follow-up file opened and his home was permanently supervised. An argument for the fact that Communist leaders did not even trust their colleagues is that their phones have been intercepted since 1948.\(^{71}\) According to some sources, the very day after his arrest, his wife (Maria Gh. Oprișescu - his third wife, the daughter of a priest from Oltenia) had thrown out the family gold from their home in Snagov Lake and destroyed a sum of money in foreign currency.\(^ {72}\) In fact, both his wife and his two children, one only a few months old, had been used as a stimulating factor for obtaining statements from him.\(^ {73}\)

Interrogations lasted for a total of three years, during which a number of serious deeds of the accused were revealed, both professional and personal. Just the day after the arrest, Major Lieutenant General Petre Socol accused him of “crimes against the Romanian people”. To begin with, Georgescu’s illegal activity was analyzed. In the interrogation report dated March 5, 1953,\(^ {74}\) we can retain that his entry into the party, mentioned above,

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\(^{71}\) Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
\(^{72}\) *Ibidem*, p. 204.
\(^{73}\) Marius Oprea, *Banalitatea răului…*, p. 556.
would have been done with the support of Nicolae Goldberger (a member of the Political Bureau of R.C.P. in the 1930s and a future official of the Communist International movement) and that the workers’ demonstrations he attended were mostly anti-fascist. Regarding the advancement in political and administrative functions, we remember that Georgescu was promoted into the Secretariat of the C.C. of the R.C.P. in 1940 by Ştefan Foriş, the one whom he proposed to be eliminated six years later. It is also important how his interrogations were conducted by the *Siguranța* in the interwar period, when several methods were used to make him speak, from intimidation, to violence; one of the persons in charge of investigating him even was the chief of the secret service, Nicula Turcu.

At the end of the first stage of the investigation, in June 1953, Georgescu was accused of “provocative activity within the labor movement”, including his bonds to the *Siguranța*. At the same time, after his release from prison in August 1944, he had ran “counter-revolutionary actions”, in partnership with V. Luca and A. Pauker.75 Another report, dated September 3, 1953, reveals some of T. Georgescu’s visit to Moscow, in 1940. Thus, the investigator received a description of the method of coding and decoding texts taught in Moscow and also received a list of people who knew Georgescu's conspiracy actions in addition to him. Although theoretically he didn’t know anything, Stefan Foriş had knowledge of the cipher in question, as well as Iosif Chişinevski. These methods of message encryption and

transmission have not been often used, both because of his arrest in 1941 and because they have not been forwarded to other people.\textsuperscript{76}

**Georgescu’s personal life, “towed” by his professional one**

Teohari Georgescu’s intimate life turned out to be extremely agitated. He was married three times. Some problems that occurred during his job time were solved in exchange for intimate favors. During the interrogations in the summer of 1953, he recalled several women whom he helped in the previous years, with various services and for various reasons. But he had not shown that, in fact, for part of these supporting acts, he had asked them to have sexual relations.\textsuperscript{77}

Based on the interrogation minutes, Adrian Pop, historian, shows that during his years in the Interior Ministry, Georgescu received intimate favors from 30 women, from simple hosts of conspiracy houses in the years of illegality, singers, teachers, to Ministry civil servants, the wife of the former governor of the National Bank, Moșoiu, the wife of the Deputy Interior Minister, Stelian Tănăsescu, an official from the Billionaires Club, even some relatives.\textsuperscript{78} The nature of these favors was diverse: the release of legionary spouses from prison, hiring or re-employing them or their husbands in some places of work, especially in the Ministry, housing assignments, passports for Israel or the German Democratic Republic (Jewish and German

\textsuperscript{76} Horia Nestorescu-Bălcesti, “Epurarea lui Teohari Georgescu, 1952...”, pp. 207-208.

\textsuperscript{77} Gheorghe Onişor, \textit{op. cit.}, interrogation report no. 23, dated June 2, 1953, pp. 445 - 446.

minorities that intended to leave Romania, but they did not have the financial or legal possibility or they were simply fugitives), cancellation of elimination decisions from the party or even money (currency) and gold. He usually had sex in his office with women coming in audience, or at home, taking advantage of the fact that they lived alone. We can interpret these customs not only as an exchange of services, but also as a weakness of T. Georgescu, who behaved in such a manner even if he couldn’t solve the problems invoked by these women or even for no particular reason. In one of the interrogation minutes, T. Georgescu spoke of a life of “deep immorality”, something he had hidden for years, this being incompatible with party life.79

Besides, some of his relationships were not isolated, but had been constant for several years, especially in the case of the wives of former legionaries arrested several times (the Elena Popescu - Lascăr Popescu80 or Zizi Dâmboviceanu - Alexis Dâmboviceanu81 cases).

In general, the former Interior minister had requested and approved, under various pretexts, the release of several former legionnaires, former Siguranță officers and police officers from prison. He may also have favorably intervened in releasing Nicolae Turcu, the former head of the Siguranță, in 1946.82 In fact, according to the statements, he would have suggested, as per his own interpretation, entering the structures of the Siguranță as an informant after his release from prison. Although we can infer from his narrative that he would never have accepted such a proposal,

81 Ibidem, p. 15.
in the 1956 report he appears to have recognized the destruction, in 1951, of the incriminating files of Turcu’s work from the Ploiești Siguranță HQ around 1935. Georgescu also asked Turcu not to talk to anyone about his bonds with the Siguranță. Although the former minister was proven to be an agent, no incriminating evidence of his work could be presented.\(^8^3\)

**From remorse to rehabilitation**

Referring to his party colleagues with whom he had been cleansed, T. Georgescu reverted to older opinions in 1955 and, this time, revealed Ana Pauker’s anti-party activity, which succeeded, with Vasile Luca’s support, in removing some party members from their administrative posts and favoring others at the same time. It is the case of Constantin Pârvulescu, general secretary after Foriș (1944) and of Alexandru Drăghici, removed from his post as prime secretary of the party in Bucharest.\(^8^4\)

In February 1956, based on a charge of indictment, Securitate officers proposed the trial and conviction of Teohari Georgescu, but at Gheorghiu-Dej’s intervention,\(^8^5\) this did not happen, so in March the former head of the Interior Ministry was released. The report drawn up by Alexandru Drăghici and Augustin Alexa says that, although the former minister intentionally made mistakes in his declarations, making incomplete and contradictory statements, it was considered that these actions, presented above, did not have


\(^{84}\) Gheorghe Onișoru, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

a counterrevolutionary character. In some cases there was no sufficient evidence for his imprisonment, so the authorities proposed to release him, with the retention of his acts for a subsequent investigation.\textsuperscript{86}

In the years during the investigation, some very acute views were expressed in the upper echelons of the party referring to the three communist leaders removed in 1952. Thus, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, in his report presented at the Second Congress of the R.W.P., accused the “fractional group deviators” of “politically injuring” the State by opposing the leaders of the party and that they would have tried to prevent the exercise of political power over the institutions in their fields of activity. Such an attitude would have created obstacles in the development of the “decisive branches of the economy” and, finally, in raising the standard of living. More specifically, the factionalists, implicitly Teohari Georgescu, were responsible for supporting the wealthy peasants (known as “chiaburime”) and preventing economical “bonds between the peasants and the townspeople”. “Crushing the deviation was a brilliant manifestation of the party's unwavering unity”, said Dej at the same Congress, confirming his tactic of intimidating and eliminating any form of opposition and fractional cores in the party\textsuperscript{87}.

After his return to his job as a printer, later director of the Romanian Book Printing House, Teohari Georgescu was able to take advantage of the changes in Romanian politics with the coming of Nicolae Ceauşescu to power. In the plenary session of the C.C. of the R.W.P. held between May 31

\textsuperscript{86} Horia Nestorescu-Bălcești, “Epurarea lui Teohari Georgescu, 1952...”, p. 213.
and June 2, 1965, the new Prime-Secretary advanced the idea of revising the political processes from the Dejist period. Ceaușescu said that “sanctions [were given] as an educational measure, and they should not impose on party members who were sanctioned or excluded for the rest of their lives, to the extent that, through their work, they have shown that they have learned their lesson and are determined to fight for implementing the party’s lineage”.88

Thus, in later years, several communist activists, including Teohari Georgescu, were rehabilitated. According to a note dated April 14, 1968, the former minister of Internal Affairs was forgiven for eliminating Ștefan Foriș, but also by the issue of cooperating with the Siguranță in the years of illegality. In general, the document reiterates the conclusions of the 1956 release, stating that the Securitate’s investigation had been abusively commenced before any decision of the Political Bureau was taken in this respect.

Following the rehabilitation (1968), T. Georgescu also became an alternate member of the C.C. of the Communist Party between 1972 and 1974. He died on January 30, 1976, in Bucharest. Central press did not mention anything about his death. Socialist historiography followed, in the 1980s, the political idea of rehabilitating former political leaders. We identify such a case in 1988: “Between 1952 and 1954, numerous state officials and cadres from the Communist Party were sentenced to private custodial sentences, under the false accusation of undermining the national economy

88 Florica Dobre (coordinator), op. cit., p. 41.
and activity against the working class”.\textsuperscript{89} It is the case of Teohari Georgescu, but also of other Communist leaders such as Vasile Luca and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu.

Therefore, Teohari Georgescu remains an interesting character for the contemporary history of Romania, a controversial one, who has accumulated colossal power. He stepped up the political hierarchy relatively easy, knowing how to get in charge of his bosses, but fell with a much higher speed, proving that a man can easily be stripped of everything he has accumulated. Mild and perverse, he took advantage of any opportunity to win. He also had the great luck of being interrogated by the Securitate after Stalin's death. He died anonymously but still rehabilitated.

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