

Becoming Romanian: The Transition of a Former Tsarist Policeman (1908–1925)

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Abstract

With the disintegration of the Russian Empire, Romania annexed Bessarabia, a region on its eastern border, in 1918. The integration of the new region was implemented through a centralized process in which the security forces played a significant role. This article examines the beginnings of the Romanian police in Bessarabia, the main security force in its urban areas, focusing on the development of the police and its workforce. It presents a case study of one of the 14 police stations Romania opened there, focusing on the career of a former tsarist policeman and his various attempts to join the new police force. In this way, this study contributes to a better understanding of the role law enforcement played in building a homogenized Romanian nation-state, an issue that has been poorly researched. Relying on archival documents of the tsarist and Romanian administrations and building upon studies on police history which have tried to determine the degree of centralization of the new police systems, as well as using studies on post-imperial administrations that discuss the strategies the new states applied to integrate former imperial structures, I demonstrate that Romania built the police in Bessarabia from scratch and with the army's help. It selected its police workforce centrally and regarded loyalty as a key qualification. This was achieved not by selecting employees from among former tsarist civil servants or the local population, but by importing policemen from pre-1918 Romania. The beginnings of the Romanian police in Bessarabia reveal an institution in the making, conceived mostly as a career springboard for civil servants from other parts of the country, an institution that also sought to be independent from the army troops stationed there.

Keywords

Bessarabia, police development, police history, Romania, Russian empire

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Introduction

When Romanian troops marched into Bessarabia, formerly part of the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, in early 1918, 51-year-old Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii fled with his 39-year-old wife, Anna Georgievna, in the direction of Kyiv.¹ The former tsarist policeman arrived in Ukraine in March 1918 as the coalition forces of Germany and Austria-Hungary entered Kyiv.² When the Central Powers lost control over Ukraine and with the advance of the Bolsheviks, Brazul'-Brushkovskii returned to Bessarabia at the end of November 1918.³ He intended to resume his position as a policeman, but the Romanian police rejected his application to be hired.

A central task for the newly created nation-states after the First World War was to organize their police to assure internal stability and maintain territorial integrity. The now enlarged police forces were active in the regions of the former empires where security forces had had a different history and organization. Strongly centralized, the new nation-states aimed to level out the inherited multi-ethnic structures through nationalizing policies.⁴ The integration and transformation of former imperial institutions also took place, as the new states aimed to prove that they were doing a better job at administering the regions than the former empires.⁵ As much as they insisted on using their own resources and on following their own models, post-imperial legacies played a significant role. Pieter M. Judson has called the new states 'little empires' and suggested that several of them 'discreetly retained imperial laws, imperial structures of rule, imperial judicial systems, and even the same personnel in positions of authority'.⁶ Andreas Wimmer demonstrated in his study on nation-building that a strategy of forging new loyalties was accomplished by building new structures upon, not in opposition to, former imperial ones.⁷

When it comes to the police, an institution with a representative and authoritative function, the case of Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii suggests that relying on former imperial institutions was not the norm. The growth of the police in newly enlarged Romania after 1918 took place with resources provided by the central government and with the army's support. Since the beginning of modern policing in the second half of the nineteenth century, in many states it had been common practice to recruit police officers from among former soldiers who then underwent training.⁸

¹ For place names, I use the official current designations, although there were different official spellings under the Tsarist Empire, for instance instead of Russian Kiev I use Ukrainian Kyiv.

² Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (London 2016), 209–10.

³ Felix Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens. Gewalträume und Gruppenmilitanz in der Ukraine, 1905–1933* (Hamburg 2012), 172–6.

⁴ Marie-Jeanine Calic, *Südosteuropa. Weltgeschichte einer Region* (Munich 2016), 437–48. Ulf Brunnbauer and Klaus Buchenau, *Geschichte Osteuropas* (Ditzingen 2018), 220–9.

⁵ Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Der Balkan im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine postimperiale Geschichte* (Stuttgart 2019), 100–1.

⁶ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA 2016), 388.

⁷ Andreas Wimmer, *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart* (Princeton, NJ 2018), 69–77.

⁸ Neil Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', *The Russian Review*, Vol. 44 (1985), 45–68.

Romania belonged to the winners of the war, acquiring territory from both the Habsburg and Romanov empires. Besides moulding the new regions into a homogenized nation-state, another priority for the state was to prevent a Bolshevik expansion further to the West and fulfil the role of a 'buffer' zone.⁹ These tasks proved not to be easy. Bessarabia, the region of Romania that shared the longest border with the Soviet Union, was considered difficult to administer and defend. The lack of international recognition of Bessarabia's unification with Romania and the fear, well founded at the start of the interwar period, of a Bolshevik takeover preoccupied the authorities. In addition, Romania did not enjoy much support in Bessarabia. The region's multi-ethnic population as well as the Romanian-speaking population (both groups made up almost equal proportions in 1918) identified little with the Romanian state and had mixed feelings towards the new government.¹⁰ Bucharest declared a state of emergency on the eastern periphery and made security forces a central component of the state apparatus. The policemen, responsible for keeping order in the urban areas, and the gendarmes, who were mostly active in the rural areas and fulfilled various duties for the army and the police, belonged to the main state representatives in Bessarabia. The existence of several security services, which also competed with each other, made interwar Romania, as Oliver Jens Schmitt has explained, a 'police and intelligence state'.¹¹

Given the importance of the police in Bessarabia under Romanian governance, it is surprising that only a few studies have dealt with its history.¹² They offer an overview of its organization and bring to light key figures and notable activities.¹³ Little is known about the first steps that were taken to reorganize the police, about the collaboration between the various security forces or about the interaction of the new police departments with the local population. No research has been conducted on post-imperial legacies regarding police institutions, and a study comparing their importance for each new region is still lacking.

My article aims to address these issues by presenting a case study of one of the 14 police stations that Romania opened in Bessarabia in 1918. The station in question is that of Soroca, a town of 15,000 inhabitants, mostly Romanians, Jews and Russians, located in North Bessarabia, close to the border with Soviet Russia. Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii had served in Soroca prior to the First World War and resettled there after escaping the Bolsheviks at the end of 1918. Due to its sensitive location,

⁹ Svetlana Suveica, *Post-Imperial Encounters: Transnational Designs of Bessarabia in Paris and Elsewhere 1917–1922* (De Gruyter 2022), 33.

¹⁰ Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, CA 1999), 32–41; Brunnbauer and Buchenau, *Geschichte Osteuropas*, 228.

¹¹ Schmitt, *Der Balkan*, 99–100.

¹² For an overview of the research stand on police and gendarmerie history in south-eastern Europe see: Schmitt, *Der Balkan*, 99–100.

¹³ Pavel Moraru, *La hotarul românesc al Europei. Din istoria siguranței generale în Basarabia, 1918–1940* (Bucharest 2008); Pavel Moraru, 'Organizarea și activitatea serviciilor de informații și siguranță românești din Basarabia în perioada anilor 1918–1944' (PhD thesis, Institutul de Istorie al Academiei de Științe a Moldovei, 2016); Alin Spănu, *Istoria serviciilor de informații și contrainformații românești, în perioada 1919–1945* (Iași 2010).

the central authorities paid attention to the early development of state structures in Soroca. The focus of this article is on Brazul'-Brushkovskii's transition from a tsarist policeman and civil servant to a would-be member of the Soroca Police. By trying to understand the position of the former official in the new police force, this article provides the first comprehensive study of the beginnings of the Romanian police force in Bessarabia. It examines the function of the new police force, its structure and staff composition. It addresses only marginally aspects concerning its scope, performance and effectiveness. Why was an experienced policeman like Brazul'-Brushkovskii not allowed to join the new police force? Was this part of a strategy, and if so, what were its implications? Who were the first policemen to contribute to the establishment of Romanian rule in Bessarabia?

Police institutions reflect the character of a government, and, in the particular case of Bessarabia, its development after 1918 reflects the transition from empire to nation-state from the perspective of the state and its newly appointed representatives and local actors. The nationalizing policy, combined with the state of emergency Bessarabia was placed under after 1918, determined, as the main argument of this study proposes, that the government regarded loyalty as a central requirement when it selected its civil servants. Brazul'-Brushkovskii, although he was close to joining the new police, failed to do so because he did not pass the loyalty test. As I will demonstrate, even if loyalty was a subjective and situational category that could be discretionally applied, the police made only a few exceptions when it came to hiring non-ethnic Romanians. Although the police represented a key institution of the Romanian state in Bessarabia, it was not a channel through which the state tried to build ties with the local population.

Unlike the poorly researched police history, other aspects related to interwar Romanian and Bessarabian history have drawn more interest. My analysis relies and builds upon the few existing studies on the police but also on works that deal with Bessarabia's administrative and cultural integration after 1918. Alin Spănu's studies on security forces, together with Pavel Moraru's work on key figures of the Bessarabian police, provide insights into the historical context and help position the police inside the security system.¹⁴ Irina Livezeanu was the first to analyse the struggles of the newly enlarged Romanian state. Her work and Petru Negură's study on the school system in Bessarabia point out key mechanisms of cultural politics.¹⁵ To understand the political developments and gain an insight into Romania's confrontation with the Bolsheviks, the study of Alberto Basciani and that of Ludmila Rotari are mandatory reading, while Francesco Magno's study on the judicial system, Florin Sora's research on the district administration and Svetlana Suveica's research on local administration

¹⁴ Alin Spănu, *Istoria Serviciilor de Informații / Contrainformații în perioada 1919/1945* (Iași 2012); Alin Spănu, *Informații, propagandă și contraspionaj în Transilvania, Ungaria și Banat (1918–1920)* (Bucharest 2020); Pavel Moraru, *La hotarul românesc al Europei*; Pavel Moraru, *Serviciile Secrete și Basarabia* (Bucharest 2008).

¹⁵ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY 2018), 89–127; Petru Negură, 'Construction nationale et étatique à travers l'enseignement primaire des minorités ethniques dans les zones rurales de Bessarabie roumaine et de Transnistrie soviétique dans l'entre-deux guerres (1918–1940)', *PLURAL*, Vol. 6 (2018), 140–58.

help us get a sense of the new administration.¹⁶ A more recent book deals with the integration of the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia into the Romanian Orthodox Church. Here, the introduction of a new calendar, a symbol of the new state, led to strong opposition and, eventually, to the violent separation of large parts of Orthodox believers from the national church.¹⁷

What all these works reveal is the widespread mistrust the central government had towards the eastern border region. This led the Bucharest elites to govern Bessarabia in a centralized manner, with little or no intention of involving the Bessarabian population. The realities 'on the ground' were often so different and the resources so meagre that the ministries in Bucharest and the Holy Synod had to constantly adapt and revise their expectations.

The lack of a police history was, for a long time, related to the difficulty of accessing archives.¹⁸ Although this impediment has not entirely disappeared, the opening of the archives after 1990 allows us to use extensive material and gain multiple perspectives. Archives in Ukraine (Kharkiv) and Russia (Moscow) have preserved documents related to Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's biography and professional career before 1918, whereas those in Romania and Moldova have documents on his whereabouts after 1918. Documents related to the Bessarabian Police and to Soroca after the First World War are split between the archives in Bucharest and Chișinău. In addition to state-produced documents, such as reports of the Ministry of Interior and police reports, which form the basis of this article, memoirs of various civil servants and policemen add a personal touch to otherwise formal reports. Most of these memoires are written out of the enthusiasm of the functionaries for 'liberating' Bessarabia from the Bolsheviks in 1918. Written after 1945, when Bessarabia no longer belonged to Romania and was a Soviet Republic, there was also a tendency to overstate the accomplishments of Romanian rule. Similar to official documents, which are often partial, memoires, too, should be used cautiously due to their biased perspective.

The article begins with an insight into Brazul'-Brushkovskii's experiences in Bessarabia prior to the First World War and describes what a career in the tsarist regular police looked like. The second part deals with the first months of Romanian rule, between the army occupation of Bessarabia and the opening of the first police stations. Like no other institution, the police were built up from scratch in Bessarabia, and the main struggle from the beginning was the lack of qualified personnel. The third part

¹⁶ Alberto Basciani, *La difficile unione. La Bessarabia e la Grande Romania 1918–1940*, Prefazione di Keith Hitchins (Rome 2007); Ludmila Rotari, *Mișcarea subversivă din Basarabia din anii 1918–1924* (Bucharest 2004); Francesco Magno, 'Nazionalismo, modernizzazione, eredità imperiale. L'unificazione legislativa e giudiziaria della Bessarabia alla Grande Romania (1918–1928)', *Ricerche di Storia Politica*, Vol. 2 (2022), 153–74; Francesco Magno, *Dagli imperi alla nazione. Eredità giuridiche asburgiche e zariste nella Grande Romania, 1918–1927* (Roma 2023); Andrei Florin Sora, *Servir l'État roumain. Le corps préfectoral, 1866–1940* (Bucharest 2011); Svetlana Suveica, 'Die Verwaltung Bessarabiens in der Transformation. Legislativer Rahmen, Institutionen und Beamtenchaft (1918–1928)', in *Südost-Forschungen*, Vol. 71 (2012), 183–232.

¹⁷ Andreea Kaltenbrunner, *Für den Glauben, gegen den Staat. Der Altkalendarismus in Rumänien (1924–1936)* (Oldenbourg 2021).

¹⁸ Spânu, *Istoria Serviciilor de Informații*, 12; David H. Bayley, *Patterns of Policing: A Comparative International Analysis* (New Brunswick, NJ 1990), 17.

analyses Brazul'-Brushkovskii's integration into the Romanian police. Although he was suspected of supporting Bolshevism, he managed, through connections with influential officials, to dispel the suspicions the Romanian authorities had about him. The fourth part looks at the challenges that the police workforce struggled with in the first years and the few options non-ethnic Romanians had to work for the police. The fifth part reveals why Brazul'-Brushkovskii eventually failed the loyalty test and how this relates to broader developments within the police. Of the new institutions, the police were most likely to have the most intensive contact with Bessarabia's multi-ethnic and urban population; however, the majority of its staff comprised Romanians from the Old Kingdom (the territory that belonged to Romania before 1918, made up of Wallachia and Moldavia). The police offered low civil servants from the Old Kingdom the possibility of moving up the professional ladder, while access was largely restricted for former tsarist civil servants.

A Career in the Tsarist Police

Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's detailed employment records reveal that serving the empire was a family tradition, and they speak of a carefully planned career. There were no moments of hesitation or questioning of the tsarist order. In 1905, when many civil servants joined the Revolution, he continued his duties and believed in the empire's survival until the very last moment. This loyalty explains Brazul'-Brushkovskii's anti-Bolshevik stance. He left Bessarabia when the region was almost entirely under Bolshevik control and returned there when the fall of the empire was a definite thing. Bessarabia was one of the many places where he served the empire, and at the end of 1918 it was almost the last place where he could hope to find remnants of the old regime. His biography also reveals the difficult situation and uncertainty 'former people' faced in 1918.

Brazul'-Brushkovskii belonged to a noble family of low rank with roots in Wallachia. As tsarist troops crossed the Danube principalities during the Russo-Turkish wars of the eighteenth century, the family joined them.¹⁹ Eventually, various ennobled family members began to serve as officials in the tsarist administration.²⁰ In the middle of the nineteenth century, due to internal upheavals, the tsarist government began to extend its police system.²¹ Thanks to a decision from 1862, the police no longer had to rely on transfers of active-duty soldiers but could hire civilian personnel.²² Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's father was born in 1840 in the Chernihiv region, joined the police force and became a prison director in the city of Novyi Oskol in the Belgorod *uyezd* (district) of the Kursk Governorate. In fact, many senior police officials came at

¹⁹ Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii, Gerbovnik, <https://gerbovnik.ru/arms/3501.html> (accessed 17 August 2022); Petrovskij Poltavskij Kadetskij Korpus, <http://histpol.pl.ua/ru/petrovskij-poltavskij-kadetskij-korpus/ppkk-vospominaniya-pitomtsev-i-prepodavatelej?id=12087#96> (accessed 17 August 2022).

²⁰ Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii genealogy, <https://www.geni.com/people/Евгений-Бразуль-Брушковский/6000000033071590279>; <https://forum.vgd.ru/post/941/63636/p2112114.htm> (accessed 17 August 2022).

²¹ Jonathan W. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege: Security Police and Opposition in Russia 1866–1905* (DeKalb, IL 1998), 12–48.

²² Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 52.

the end of the nineteenth century from the class of 'poor nobles', most of whom were of Russian origin and Orthodox faith.²³ Young Yevgenii received a private education and opted for a career as a policeman. Due to the difficulties associated with filling the police ranks, admission requirements were not strict, and professional training was neither required nor provided.²⁴

In July 1884, aged 17, Brazul'-Brushkovskii started working in an administrative position for the police in the Berdychiv *uyezd* of the Kyiv Governorate, and he climbed the professional ladder in subsequent years by taking various positions in the regular police and provincial administration. He became a policeman at the age of 36 in the Kovel' *uyezd* of the Volhynian Governorate.²⁵ When he arrived in Bessarabia in 1908, he was 41 and an experienced administrator and policeman. In Soroca, he was promoted to the position of district chief (corresponding to the post-1918 position of prefect). Brazul'-Brushkovskii ascended to the top of the regional hierarchy: he was centrally appointed and subordinate only to the provincial governor.²⁶

He never worked at the core of the empire but always in the western borderlands, in ethnic heterogeneous places that, similar to Bessarabia, were parts of the Pale of Settlement which therefore included a sizable Jewish population. Besides Russian, he most likely understood some Ukrainian and Yiddish, and during his time in Bessarabia, he acquired basic knowledge of Romanian. As district chief in Soroca, he had little interaction with the countryside where the majority of the Romanian-speaking population lived.²⁷

At the time of his arrival in Soroca, security forces were recovering after nearly collapsing during the failed Russian Revolution of 1905.²⁸ In the provinces, at the local level and in rural areas, mass revolutionary movements of the late-1890s led to the expansion of the security police system.²⁹ Despite this history, a main characteristic of the tsarist regular police remained a low ratio of patrolmen compared to the population, with the exception of St Petersburg and Moscow.³⁰ As district chief, Brazul'-Brushkovskii's primary task after the Revolution was to maintain the existing order. As Nail Weissman has demonstrated, the tsarist police were 'universal administrators'.³¹

²³ Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, 29.

²⁴ Jonathan W. Daly, *The Watchful State: Security Police and Opposition in Russia, 1906–1917* (DeKalb, IL 2004), 4–15; Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 52–4.

²⁵ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), 103, 328, 5 [Delo Departamenta Politsii. Formularnyi spisok Sluzhb" Benderskago U"zdnago Ispravnika, Tituliarnago Sov"tnika Yevgenii Semenovicha Brazul'-Brushkovskago].

²⁶ GARF, 103, 328 5 [Delo Departamenta Politsii. Formularnyi spisok Sluzhb" Benderskago U"zdnago Ispravnika, Tituliarnago Sov"tnika Yevgenii Semenovicha Brazul'-Brushkovskago]; for more details on the role of a district chief see: Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 47.

²⁷ Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 49.

²⁸ Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, 185.

²⁹ Ibid., 51, 140.

³⁰ Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 46–7.

³¹ Ibid., 56.

In 1915, Brazul'-Brushkovskii was moved to Bendery, on the western bank of the Dniester. In both places, he fulfilled his duties in an exemplary manner. His work necessitated a combination of administrative tasks and the organization of public events for staging and publicizing imperial rule. For example, in 1912, Brazul'-Brushkovskii organized a celebration of the centennial of the Patriotic War, for which he was granted a medal in 1913. There was no mention of the fact that 1912 also marked 100 years since Bessarabia had been conquered by the Russian Empire. The district chief organized a celebration for the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty and helped the army in 1914 by mobilizing troops. The governor of Bessarabia was impressed that Brazul'-Brushkovskii had 'repaired the buildings of the Soroca prison, with considerable savings of treasury funds'.³²

As the end of the tsarist regime approached, Brazul'-Brushkovskii's awards continued to accumulate. From the Governor of Bessarabia to the Ministry of Interior, all thanked him for strengthening the regime. He was an honorary member of the Red Cross and a member of the Bendery *uyezd* school board. He also did not neglect his relationship with the Orthodox Church; the Orthodox Kamchatka Brotherhood recognized him 'as Honorary Trustee of the Brotherhood with the right to wear the Brotherhood's Cross of the First Degree'.³³ Just a few months before the outbreak of the February Revolution of 1917, the governor expressed his 'gratitude for the exemplary order in Bendery' to Brazul'-Brushkovskii.³⁴ This appreciation from both local and administrative representatives almost certainly strengthened his loyalty to the regime and cultivated his identification with the empire.

As much as he disliked the idea of being unable to fulfil his duty to the imperial state, Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii worried about a Bolshevik takeover in Bessarabia. Rumours in Soroca had it that his two sons, the 21-year-old Vsevolod and the 20-year-old Leonid, had joined the White Army. One of his brothers, Boris Semionovič Brazul'-Brushkovskii, was in Harbin, China – a centre where many White Russians had fled when the February Revolution broke out.³⁵

From Soldiers to Policemen – The Beginnings of the Romanian Police in Bessarabia

Alarmed by Bolshevik activities in Bessarabia and the possibility that violence might spread to Romania, the Romanian army entered Bessarabia in January 1918.³⁶ As the short-lived Moldavian Democratic Republic was unable to prevent Bolshevik troops

³² GARF, 103, 328, 4–10 [Delenie Departamenta Politsii. Formularnyi spisok Sluzhb" Benderskago U"zdnago Ispravnika, Tituliarnago Sov"tnika Yevgenii Semenovicha Brazul'-Brushkovskago].

³³ GARF, 103, 328, 4–10 [Delenie Departamenta Politsii. Formularnyi spisok Sluzhb" Benderskago U"zdnago Ispravnika, Tituliarnago Sov"tnika Yevgenii Semenovicha Brazul'-Brushkovskago].

³⁴ GARF, 103, 328, 4–10 [Delenie Departamenta Politsii. Formularnyi spisok Sluzhb" Benderskago U"zdnago Ispravnika, Tituliarnago Sov"tnika Yevgenii Semenovicha Brazul'-Brushkovskago].

³⁵ Mark Gamsa, *Harbin: A Cross-Cultural Biography* (Toronto 2021), 201–17.

³⁶ Rebecca Haynes, *Moldova: A History* (London 2020), 113–14.

from penetrating deeper into the region, its national council, the so-called *Sfatul Țării*, proclaimed the unification of Bessarabia with Romania in March 1918.³⁷ The Romanian government rejected holding a referendum whereby the population would decide where the region belonged, while the Soviet Union refused to accept the loss of Bessarabia, and the two countries did not have diplomatic relations until the 1930s. In the following months, Romania took control of the region, pushing back Bolshevik troops over the Dniester River. Although this is a key period in the history of Bessarabia, there is still little understanding of the first weeks and months after the arrival of Romanian troops in the region. In addition to frequent Bolshevik incursions and armed raids into Romanian territory by White troops and Ukrainian nationalists, which are well documented, there are plenty of reports (for instance, from French militaries and Romanian authorities) that testify to the violence of the Romanian Army.³⁸

Former leading representatives of the tsarist regime in Bessarabia reacted differently to the events of early 1918. Some waited to see what Romanian rule would bring, while others left in search of the old imperial regime or with the hope of the old order being reinstated. The former mayor of Chișinău, for example, boycotted Romanian rule from Odesa, where he gathered loyal supporters.³⁹ Brazul'-Brushkovskii and some of his colleagues left for Kyiv, the capital of both the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian state, under hetman Pavlo Skoropats'kyi.⁴⁰ The government, supported by the Central Powers, recruited imperial-era officials for its new administration.⁴¹

³⁷ King, *The Moldovans*, 33.

³⁸ Alberto Basciani, 'The Other Thermopylae of Europe: Greater Romania and the Red Menace', in Valentine Lomellini, ed., *The Rise of Bolshevism and its Impact on the Interwar International Order* (Basingstoke 2020), 55–74, here 63; Glenn E. Torrey, *Henri Mathias Berthelot: Soldier of France, Defender of Romania* (Iasi 2001), 222–6. Possibly one of the most conclusive documents on the relations of the Romanian law enforcement authorities towards the Jewish population in Bessarabia in the first months of 1918 is the testimony of Yehuda Leib Tsirelson (1859–1941), chief rabbi of Bessarabia. Interviewed by an agent of the Romanian secret police, who pretended to be a journalist for a French newspaper, Tsirelson complained about members of the Romanian army because of their abusive treatment of the Jewish population, see: ANR, DGP, 47.1919, 12–13 [Report on the mission of gathering information on rabbi Israël Heger; Meeting with Leiba Tzirelsson; Report issued by a secret agent and sent to the Ministry of Interior, 27 June 1919]. Other sources on the misdemeanours of the Romanians are the reports of French militaries dispatched to Bessarabia. See for example the report on a meeting of French representatives with the Romanian General Officer in charge of the troops that occupied Chișinău: Report issued by the French Legation in Romania on the situation in Bessarabia, 27 February 1918, in France's Diplomatic Archives, La Courneuve, Guerre 1914/1918, Russie-Bessarabie, 703, 17–29, here 22–3.

³⁹ Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Direcția Generală a Poliției (DGP), 29.1918, 179–80 [Report on the activities of the former mayor of Chișinău, Alexander Schmidt, issued by the Chișinău Police, 5 August 1919].

⁴⁰ Mark von Hagen, 'The Entangled Eastern Front and the Making of the Ukrainian State: A Forgotten Peace – A Forgotten War and Nation-Building', in Helmut Rumpf and Ulrike Harms, eds, *Bewältigte Vergangenheit? Die Nationale und Internationale Historiographie zum Untergang der Habsburgermonarchie als Ideelle Grundlage für die Neuordnung Europas* (Vienna 2018), 283–319; Mark von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland: Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine 1914–1918* (Seattle, WA 2007); Mark von Hagen, 'The Entangled Eastern Front in the First World War', in Eric Lohr, Vera Tolz, Alexander Semyonov, and Mark von Hagen, eds, *The Empire and Nationalism at War* (Bloomington, IL 2014), 9–48.

⁴¹ Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 210–11.

From the available sources and research, we know that for former officials to stay and wait for the Romanian Army carried some risk. General Popescu of the Romanian Army recalled that when the troops entered Cetatea Albă, a city in southern Bessarabia, to his surprise, the district chief was still in office. According to the general, tsarist functionaries who questioned the presence of the Romanian Army were 'persuaded to keep silent'.⁴² A former mayor of Chișinău, Panteleimon Sinadino, wrote to an acquaintance that there were only a few civil servants left in Bessarabia and that these were under pressure by the Romanian authorities to prove their loyalty.⁴³

At first, Romania intended, at least at some level, to keep experienced tsarist functionaries, as long as they were loyal. In this regard, the government introduced an oath. The district administration received new leadership, while the local administration (*zemstva*) continued to function with former tsarist officials. The government continued with a step-by-step transformation of the local administration.⁴⁴ The situation looked different in the border districts, where the central government imposed stricter control. The Ministry of Labour ordered an investigation of all non-ethnic Romanian functionaries there, and if no irregularities were found, they were allowed, for the time being, to maintain their positions. All new employees had to be exclusively functionaries of Romanian nationality.⁴⁵ Large parts of the new civil servants were Romanians from the Old Kingdom.⁴⁶

There are some similarities in the integration of the administrative apparatus with that of the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia with the Romanian Orthodox Church, an institution of significant importance in the cultural and national homogenization process. The Holy Synod did not have the resources or the power to undertake major staff changes. The church named new clerics at the very top level, while at the parish level, it continued to work with former priests of the Russian Orthodox Church. These were mostly Romanian-speaking, as the villages they served were predominantly Romanian, but they had been educated in Russian Orthodox institutions and were deeply attached to the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church. To gain their loyalty and support, the state introduced financial subsidies while enforcing the integration of their parishes through a series of reforms.⁴⁷

The police, by comparison, did not take over either the former imperial infrastructure or its personnel. Six months after the army had entered Bessarabia, when the situation had stabilized slightly, the army supported the Ministry of Interior to open police stations in each major Bessarabian city by shuffling some of its resources. The first policemen who assumed their positions at the beginning of July 1918 were soldiers who had been stationed in Bessarabia at the end of the war.⁴⁸ Within a few months, the army was solely in charge of imposing order; it showed no interest in recruiting personnel from

⁴² ANR, 60.620 1–24, here 22 [Bessarabia, Memoirs by Popescu Sanitaru].

⁴³ Suveica, 'Die Verwaltung Bessarabiens', 203–4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁵ ANR, Ministerul Muncii, 11.1920, 29 [Copy of an order issued by the Cabinet of Ministers, 8 June 1920].

⁴⁶ King, *The Moldovans*, 43.

⁴⁷ Kaltenbrunner, *Für den Glauben, gegen den Staat*, 35–56.

⁴⁸ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 161.1921 [Various lists regarding the workforce of the Soroca Police].

among the local population. This finding corroborates David Bayley's explanation of the development of modern police. According to him, if 'the legitimacy of new state institutions is jeopardized, administrative resources of the state will be mobilized centrally in their defence'.⁴⁹ The Ministry of Interior was not prepared to accomplish this task alone, most probably because in previous months, it had expanded the police structures in the regions of the former Habsburg Empire and therefore had to collaborate with the army in Bessarabia.

The gendarmerie was even more intertwined with the army than the police. While the first gendarmes in Bessarabia were former soldiers, and only some of them had been professional gendarmes from the Old Kingdom (Romania), the gendarmerie troops were led by army members. Moreover, the gendarmerie had a total of over 30,000 personnel in 1921, compared to the police, which had only 7000 employees and was thus the main beneficiary of the army's resources.⁵⁰ Whereas the police were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, the gendarmerie was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War to that of the Ministry of Interior in 1929, when it also received a separate intelligence service.⁵¹

What was the ratio of policemen to inhabitants in Bessarabia and how many policemen were there compared to the pre-war period and compared to other regions of Romania?⁵² The personnel of the Soroca police bureau consisted of 100 individuals, 94 of whom were policemen while the rest were administrative staff – a figure similar to other police stations in Bessarabia.⁵³ The police-to-population ratio was one policeman to 159 inhabitants. One would have expected Chișinău, the capital of Bessarabia, to have a higher police presence than Soroca, but it had one policeman to 251 inhabitants. The difference from the tsarist period was striking. According to Neil Weissman, in the tsarist period, the ratio of patrolmen to inhabitants in towns often reached 1:700 or more. Although tsarist police officials set an ideal ratio of one patrolman to 500 inhabitants, they never achieved this goal.⁵⁴

Considering that besides the police, there were gendarmes and army employees active in Bessarabia, the presence of the new security forces was hard to ignore. In a letter to an acquaintance in November 1919, the former mayor of Chișinău, Panteleimon Sinadino,

⁴⁹ Bayley, *Patterns of Policing*, 53–73.

⁵⁰ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 54.1921, 77 [Draft Expenditure Budget, 1921–1922]; 145 [General summary of the proposed expenditure budget, 1921–1922].

⁵¹ ANR, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, 1929/1, 1–11 [Outlining the motives behind the suggestions for modifying the Gendarmerie's 1929 Organizational Law]; Ilie Nuțu, *Jandarmeria 1918–1940. Legislație și organizare* (Bacău 2012) 59–68.

⁵² To determine the ratio of policemen per inhabitant, I used budget lists of the Ministry of Interior for 1921. Each district administration (*prefectură*) and each police station issued lists of their employees and their income. Policemen appear under different names, depending on the function they performed. As policemen I considered: policemen, heads of bureau, police inspectors, commanders, officers and sergeants. For the statistics, I have removed the administrative staff of police stations such as: archivists, telephone operators, maids, accountants, photographers, typists, drivers, lawyers, copyists, doctors, veterinarians and couriers.

⁵³ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 56.1921, 79–83 [Lists of police employees in Bessarabia, 1921–1922].

⁵⁴ Weissman, 'Regular Police in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914', 47–8.

best captures how Chișinău's inhabitants perceived the new situation. While Sinadino complained that the Romanian officials, whom he deemed 'sycophantic, corrupt scoundrels', were taking control of Chișinău, he could not ignore the fact that 'gendarmes and police forces' were 'everywhere'.⁵⁵

The situation was better developed in other parts of the country. For example, Fălticeni, a town in the Old Kingdom of similar size to Soroca, had a ratio of only 1:339, while Iași, the capital of Moldova, had a ratio of 1:398.⁵⁶ Further statistics found in the archive of the Ministry of Interior reveal that in 1921, Bucharest had one policeman to 227 inhabitants, a number similar to that of Chișinău, while Cluj and Cernăuți, cities gained from the former Habsburg Empire, had ratios of 1:290 and 1:343, respectively.⁵⁷ Altogether, these numbers indicate a high police presence in the small towns of Bessarabia, which was higher than in larger cities and probably the highest in the country. The police presence was not higher in the large cities named above, most probably because the police received support from other forces, such as the gendarmerie.

A high ratio did not automatically mean professional services, as a report from October 1920 outlined. Without taking over former staff, there was a concerning lack of qualified personnel, and the existing workforce was 'totally unsuitable'.⁵⁸ The professional background of the first policemen (if they had any) lay in the civil services and security forces of the Old Kingdom.⁵⁹ Soldiers were willing to serve in the police force of Bessarabia, motivated by higher payment and because joining the police meant promotion.⁶⁰ However, the majority of soldiers lacked the linguistic skills and training to work in a multi-ethnic and politically unstable environment. Ion Brichiuș, a 22-year-old peasant from the Old Kingdom, wrote about his experiences as a policeman in Soroca. Brichiuș belonged to the troops that annexed Bessarabia in the spring of 1918, and after he joined the gendarmerie, he switched to the police. Here is how he remembered this transition: for a soldier, '[a]nyone who had a weapon in his hand was an enemy. Without weapons, he was a human being'. To be a policeman, on the other hand, meant 'that every person, as long as he was not examined, was suspect'.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Suveica, *Post-Imperial Encounters*, 227.

⁵⁶ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 54.1921, 100 [Table with the repartition of police staff, Nr. 10 Iași; Nr. 13 Fălticeni].

⁵⁷ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 54.1921, 102 [List with police staff of the capital city, București]; 119 [List of police personnel in Cernăuți]; 58.1921, 115–18 [Budget proposal for the police in Cluj for the year 1922].

⁵⁸ Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova (ANRM), Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1415, 9 [Report of the Soroca Police to the Regional Inspectorate of the Chișinău Police of 25 October 1920 concerning the condition of the police station in Soroca].

⁵⁹ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 161.1920–1921 [Documents of the Soroca Prefecture regarding police employees and their income beginning with July 1918, 30 November 1920].

⁶⁰ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Direcția Contabilități, 161.1920–1921 [Documents of the Soroca Prefecture regarding police employees and their income beginning with July 1918, 30 November 1920]; Ion Brichiuș, *Strajă la Nistrul* (Bucharest 2009), 116.

⁶¹ Brichiuș, *Strajă*, 116.

According to investigations led by the Bessarabian central authorities, the Soroca Police was failing to fulfil its main tasks and was unable to ensure order and control the border crossings in the first years of Romanian rule. As the officials insisted, this situation was worrying because Soroca was a large district, and the number of illegal border crossings was growing at an alarming rate.⁶² Reports of French militaries dispatched to Bessarabia in the immediate post-war period also mention problems within the new police force that contributed to Romania's unpopularity in the region. In a report from June 1919, they wrote, '[t]he majority of the population has hostile feelings towards the Romanians. These feelings are caused by the lack of proper organization, the poor and abusive administration, and the arrogance and brutality of the lower ranks of the Romanian police and army'.⁶³

This evidence suggests that long after the army occupied Bessarabia, it maintained extended responsibility for aspects related to internal security. By developing a police institution in Bessarabia, the Ministry of Interior compensated for the lack of a qualified workforce in quantity. The numerous police staff members were a symbol of state presence and suggested legitimacy. Before we look more closely at how the lack of a qualified workforce was reflected in the development of the police, the next section provides an analysis of the new police force's reactions to Brazul'-Brushkovskii's return.

'Terrorist' or 'Loyal Citizen'?

Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his wife entered Romania through the border town of Otaci on the southwestern bank of the Dniester; their two sons joined the family in 1921.⁶⁴ There is no exact information about Brazul'-Brushkovskii's whereabouts during the previous months. The last entry in his tsarist employment records is from the 10th of May 1916. He told the Romanian authorities that he had worked as a policeman and had tried to enrol his sons at the University of Kyiv. The fact that Brazul'-Brushkovskii left the area just when the German army retreated, and the Bolsheviks were advancing, indicates that he might have worked in the Ukrainian administration.

There was a widespread perception among Romanian authorities that refugees from the Soviet Union were Bolsheviks and that former tsarist civil servants had not given up their power willingly.⁶⁵ In the immediate post-war period and beyond, the insecurity that weighed on the disputed territory led Romanian authorities to associate everything

⁶² Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova (ANRM), Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1415, 9 [Report of the Soroca Police to the Regional Inspectorate of the Chișinău Police of 25 October 1920 concerning the condition of the police station in Soroca].

⁶³ Weekly Report issued by the 1er Groupe de divisions d'infanterie Armée du Danube, 8 June 1919, in the Service historique de la Défense, Vincennes, GR 20 N 753. For more on France's role in Bessarabia see: Glenn E. Torrey, *Henri Mathias Berthelot*; Glenn E. Torrey, *Romania and World War I: A Collection of Studies* (Iași 1998).

⁶⁴ Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Kharkiv's'koi Oblasti, NKVD Ukrainskoi SSR, P6452, 1, 66950 [Postanovlenie, Boris Semenovich Brazul'- Brushkovskii, 16 February 1938].

⁶⁵ Z. I. Husărescu, 'Mișcarea subversivă în Basarabia', in Florin Rotaru, ed., *Suferințele Basarabiei și Răpirile Rusești* (Bucharest 1996), 233–350, here 290; ANR, DGP, 29.1918, 94 [Copy of a telegram sent by the representative of the Ministry of Interior in Bessarabia to the Ministry of Interior informing him about plans of the

that was 'Russian' with Bolshevism and to impose strict rules on the local population.⁶⁶ With Kyiv's fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, rumours reached new levels. The Romanian security forces now believed that former tsarist officials who had left for Ukraine in 1918 had changed sides, and, with communist support, they were about to 'organize a revolution' in Bessarabia.⁶⁷ Their plan was to occupy the region, entering from the north.⁶⁸ The numerous clashes that occurred in this period speak of the existence of a real threat. In Hotin in November 1919, in Bendery in May 1919, and in Tatarbunar in 1924, to name a few violent episodes, the local population rebelled, with communist support against Romanian rule, trying to destabilize the region.⁶⁹

Arriving from Kyiv and entering the country from the north in December 1918 – just when clashes between Bolsheviks and White troops, on the one hand, and the Romanian army, on the other hand, were taking place at the border of the Soroca district – made Brazul'-Brushkovskii look suspicious.⁷⁰ This conflict explains the harsh treatment the family faced once they crossed the border into Romania. Brazul'-Brushkovskii, together with his wife and sons, went from the most respected family in Soroca to refugees with uncertain status. The police also put Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons on a list of 'terrorists'. Since the district was considered a centre of Bolshevik propaganda, suspects who arrived in the city required permanent surveillance.⁷¹ Soroca had 120 registered suspects, a number which grew to 160 – a much larger number than in the neighbouring district of Orhei, which had a similar population but only 51 people under surveillance. There were two categories of suspects: first, those who were suspected of various illegal activities and, second, the so-called 'terrorists'. The latter were newcomers from Bolshevik-controlled areas, who were perceived as secret agents and spies. It seems that a police employee automatically considered Brazul'-Brushkovskii a 'terrorist' and

Bolsheviks to attack Bessarabia with support they were receiving from Kyiv and from former tsarist civil servants in Bessarabia, 16 February 1919.

⁶⁶ Basciani, *La difficile unione*, 140–2, 162–6; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 98–9; King, *The Moldovans*, 42.

⁶⁷ ANR, DGP, 29.1918, 13 [Note on Bolshevik propagandists from Kyiv active in Romania issued by the Galați Police, 2 February 1919]; 22 [Note on Bolsheviks entering Bessarabia from the North following clashes at the border, issued by the Police Directorate/Headquarters 31 January 1919]; 94 [Copy of a telegram sent by the representative of the Ministry of Interior in Bessarabia to the Ministry of Interior informing him about plans of the Bolsheviks to attack Bessarabia with support they were receiving from Kyiv and from former tsarist civil servants in Bessarabia, 16 February 1919].

⁶⁸ ANR, DGP, 29.1918, 55 [Report on a planned attack of Bessarabians who took refuge in Ukraine, issued by the Soroca Police, 18 February 1919]; 109 [Report on the plans of the Bolsheviks of occupying Bessarabia, issued by the Bendery Police, 24 February 1919]; 150 [Report on Racovski's plan to occupy Bessarabia with troops and resources from Kyiv, issued by the Cetatea Albă Police, 1 March 1919]; 174 [Report on the situation in Russia, issued by Romanian secret agents in Odessa, 12/25 February 1919].

⁶⁹ Basciani, *La difficile unione*, 72–102; Andrei Cusco, 'Bessarabien in den Jahren 1917–1918', in Klaus Bochmann, Vasila Dumbrava, Dietmar Müller and Victoria Reinhardt, eds, *Die Republik Moldau. Republica Moldova. Ein Handbuch* (Leipzig 2012), 54–8; Igor Casu, 'Exporting Soviet Revolution: Tatarbunar Rebellion in Romanian Bessarabia (1924)', *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2020), 224–43.

⁷⁰ Basciani, *La difficile unione*, 134.

⁷¹ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției-Personal, 75, 32–6, here 33 [Inspection Report of the Orhei City Police by the Regional Inspector Constantin Maimuca, sent to the General Director of the Police, Bucharest, September]; Husărescu, 'Mișcarea subversivă în Basarabia', 254.

a Bolshevik spy because he spoke Russian and had just returned from areas under the control of the Bolsheviks. Being registered as a ‘terrorist’, Brazul’-Brushkovskii could not hold any public office, could not obtain Romanian citizenship and could not move freely from one place to another. He also had no right to a pension.⁷² According to police reports, Brazul’-Brushkovskii was unemployed after 1919, and thereafter the family invested its savings in real estate and was involved in money exchange.⁷³

As much as being a refugee and being under surveillance seem harsh, those who entered the country illegally later faced a much more uncertain future. Romania, and more precisely Bessarabia, was confronted with a surge of refugees after the First World War; a great number of these were Jews from the Russian Empire, but they also included soldiers of the former Tsarist Army, as well as Romanian and Ukrainian peasants. The government admitted between 40,000 and 100,000 refugees and expected them to leave the country immediately.⁷⁴ The widespread mistrust of refugees was reflected in the dysfunctional asylum system. The handful of studies available on this topic indicate that not everyone was offered equal chances to stay, and border guards could play a significant role in deciding to which category each newcomer belonged. Brazul’-Brushkovskii was ‘lucky’, first not to be shot while crossing the border, as often happened, and second, not to be sent back, as this was a common practice too.⁷⁵ More unusual was the fact that he was allowed to stay in Soroca. Refugees under suspicion were often imprisoned, sent to detention camps or forced to live in faraway places in southern Romania.⁷⁶ Still, Brazul’-Brushkovskii’s status was precarious. The authorities often revised the cases of ‘illegal refugees’, and pushbacks into the Soviet Union could happen at any time.

This uncertainty made Brazul’-Brushkovskii work hard to prove that he was a loyal citizen. As an experienced functionary, he quickly understood the new system and observed its flaws. He became close to influential people in Soroca, who helped him

⁷² ANR, Ministerul Muncii, 11.1920, 83 [Report over the rights of former civil servants to acquire a pension, issued by Cabinet of Ministers, 4 June 1920].

⁷³ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 14 [Copy of a report sent by Domănescu to the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia concerning Yevgenii Brazul’-Brushkovskii’s activities in Bessarabia after 1918, 3 February 1926].

⁷⁴ Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe since 1492* (Princeton, NJ 2019), 68–9; Vadim Guzun, *Indexabilității: aspecte mediatice, umanitare și de securitate privind emigratia din Uniunea Sovietică în România interbelică* (Cluj-Napoca 2013); Vadim Guzun, *Chestiunea refugiaților de pe Nistru: documente diplomatice și ale Serviciilor Române de Informații, 1919–1936* (Cluj-Napoca 2012); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Mitten im zivilisierten Europa. Die Pogrome von 1918 bis 1921 und die Vorgeschichte des Holocaust* (Munich 2022), 307–30; ANR, DGP, 31.1921, 53 [Report on Ukrainian refugees in Romania, made up of soldiers and officers, issued by the Police Headquarters, 14 March 1921].

⁷⁵ ANR, DGP, 29.1918, 161 [Report on Jews shot by Romanian border guards while they were trying to cross the Dniester, issued by the Chișinău Police, 11 November 1920]; Alexandru-Murad Mironov, ‘Sur le Dniestr paisible. Vie et mort à la frontière entre la Roumanie et l’Union Soviétique, 1918–1940’, *Studia Universitatis Moldaviae*, Vol. 10, No. 110 (2017), 193–219; Alberto Basciani, ‘From Collectivization to the Great Famine: Eyewitness Statements on the Holodomor by Refugees from the Ukrainian SSR, 1930–1933’, *Holodomor Studies*, Vol. 3, Nos 1–2 (2011), 1–27.

⁷⁶ ANR, DGP, 31.1921, 53 [Report on Ukrainian refugees in Romania, made up of soldiers and officers, issued by the Police Headquarters, 14 March 1921]; ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1, 3522, 41 [Declaration of Iftode Spătaru, 12 January 1932].

raise his case with Zaharia Husărescu, the head of the Bessarabian Police. The latter received a report about Brazul'-Brushkovskii's personality and career in December 1924, and after reading it, he decided to remove Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons from the list of terrorists.⁷⁷ Four years after the family's flight to Bessarabia, Brazul'-Brushkovskii was no longer a *persona non grata*; he could move freely and acquire Romanian citizenship.

Brazul'-Brushkovskii's struggles provide a unique perspective on the function and workforce of the new police force. In a report written and signed by Constantin Arghiropol, the new head of the Soroca Police, Arghiropol stated that he knew Brazul'-Brushkovskii well and argued that putting him on the list of terrorists had been a mistake, which was made 'due to biased information'.⁷⁸ To convince Husărescu about Brazul'-Brushkovskii's honest intentions, Arghiropol depicted the former tsarist official as a Romanian patriot. Instead of giving the Russian version of his name, Arghiropol called him 'Eugen Breazul'. The report offers no exact details on Brazul'-Brushkovskii's career before 1918, but it does claim that he had relations only with trustworthy persons in Soroca, that he was intelligent and willing to work, that he was about to acquire Romanian citizenship and that he hated 'the current form of government in Russia'.⁷⁹ The last points mentioned by Arghiropol are particularly relevant: Brazul'-Brushkovskii would do 'in each position a great job' since he was a monarchist and a member of the People's Party. As Arghiropol was formulating his report, the People's Party, a promising political party, was on the cusp of taking over the government for the second time after 1918. It is not known whether Husărescu was a party member, but it is known that both Arghiropol and the prefect of Soroca, Dimitrie Iov, were. 'Rehabilitating' Brazul'-Brushkovskii was thus a purely political affair, meaning that the ruling party was focused on placing its members in leading positions in the district administration. In exchange for his removal from the list of suspects, Brazul'-Brushkovskii accepted working as an informant for the police.

The People's Party was led by Army General Alexandru Averescu, known in Romanian history for helping to suppress the Peasant Revolt of 1907 and for his achievements in the First World War. After 1918, Averescu gathered the available conservative forces, mainly military officers and big landowners, and founded the People's Party with a populist message that was addressed to the peasants.⁸⁰ In March 1926, after a dispute

⁷⁷ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 8 [Request of the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia to the General Siguranța Office in Bucharest and to the 4th Army in Iași from 7 February 1925 concerning eliminating the named suspects from the suspects lists and depriving them of further control]; 10–11 [Complaint of Constantin Domănescu to the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia from 3 February 1926 concerning removal of Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons from the suspect list of the Soroca Police].

⁷⁸ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 6 [Report Constantin Arghiropols to the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia concerning Eugen Breazul's (Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's) rehabilitation, 1 December 1924].

⁷⁹ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 6 [Report Constantin Arghiropols to the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia concerning Eugen Breazul's (Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's) rehabilitation, 1 December 1924].

⁸⁰ Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930–1940)* (Munich 1997), 56–7; Sabrina P. Ramet, 'Interwar East Central Europe, 1918–1941: The Failure of Democracy-building, the Fate of Minorities – An Introduction', in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Interwar East Central Europe, 1918–1941: The Failure of Democracy-building, the Fate of Minorities* (London 2020), 1–34, here 5.

inside the ruling National Liberal Party, King Ferdinand appointed Averescu as prime minister. As it was common in interwar Romania that ruling parties with no majority in parliament could request new elections, the People's Party set the dates for the new elections in May and June 1926. In Bessarabia, the party enjoyed great popularity due to Averescu's personality and the fact that he was originally from Ismail in South Bessarabia.⁸¹ The party won the election in 1926, receiving 56.3 per cent of the votes in Bessarabia, but it proved to be an unstable political force, and the party lost power in subsequent years.

Brazul'-Brushkovskii built closer ties with the district administration between 1924 and 1925, probably also because he realized that remaining in Romania was a safe option. In the Soviet Union, beginning in 1924, former police officers of the tsarist regime were put on a special list and faced various charges.⁸² Life became difficult for Brazul'-Brushkovskii's brother, who had remained in Kharkiv (at that time, the capital of Soviet Ukraine) and worked in the Finance Department of the Northern Railway. In 1927, he was arrested for the first time.⁸³ It was not only the family's history and noble origins that were suspicious in the eyes of the Soviet regime but also the family's deep roots in the tsarist police system. The episode is an example of multi-institutional cooperation and of the police's entanglement with the district administration, revealing less obvious ways members of the police workforce could be instrumentalized for political purposes.⁸⁴

The story of Brazul'-Brushkovskii's integration into the Romanian police might have ended here if it were not for a new policeman who came to Soroca and had a different view of his case. There was high staff fluctuation in the police workforce at that time as a result of Romania's large import of officials. The fluctuation only increased as the Interior Ministry forced police employees to change locations to sanction illegal conduct and prevent policemen from establishing close ties with the district administration. The first months already indicated the challenges of relying on a police workforce from outside of Bessarabia, and these problems became more acute in the following years.

Importing Loyalty – The Soroca Police Station, 1921–1925

At the end of 1920, the Interior Ministry announced budget cuts as high as 20 per cent. The cost of war weighed heavily on the country, and the government struggled at first to rebuild the damage the country's agriculture and industry had suffered.⁸⁵ An order issued

⁸¹ Svetlana Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic (1918–1928): Modernizare prin reforme* (Chișinău 2010), 85.

⁸² Daly, *The Watchful State*, 217.

⁸³ Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Kharkiv'skoi Oblasti, NKVD Ukrainskoi SSR, P6452, 1, 66950, [Postanovlenie, Boris Semenovich Brazul'- Brushkovskii, 16 February 1938].

⁸⁴ This finding is supported by other studies. Svetlana Suveica mentioned how the police supported the district administration in organizing elections in 1919, see in: Suveica, *Post-Imperial Encounters*, 373.

⁸⁵ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford 1994), 290–1.

on 17th December 1920 stated that budget cuts should be achieved by cutting personnel costs.⁸⁶ Following this, the Soroca Police Station fired 30 of its 100 employees.⁸⁷ The other 13 Bessarabian police stations also obeyed the order and reduced their staff, a decision that the top army representative in Bessarabia immediately contested.⁸⁸

While the order affected low- and high-ranking police employees, those who had been hired for their translation skills were particularly affected by this measure. Policemen from the Old Kingdom worked in Bessarabia predominantly in Russian-speaking urban centres and relied on translators to understand the local environment. Most of the police stations and even some of the district administrations laid off their translators, explaining that their services were no longer of use.⁸⁹ This level of coordination leads us to assume that functionaries of the Ministry of Interior, who probably had no clue that the state apparatus in Bessarabia relied on translators, considered translators superfluous staff, and issued specific orders in this regard. This would have direct consequences for Brazul'-Brushkovskii's case.

Another reaction to the budget cuts of 1921 was that many police employees quit their jobs. Disappointed with their reduced incomes and the increased workload, many could no longer afford to live in Bessarabia.⁹⁰ With many positions vacant, the Ministry of Interior saw an opportunity to hire new policemen with no connection to the army. The ministry did not choose ethnic Romanians from Bessarabia but sent its own policemen from the Old Kingdom to take up top positions and lead the district bureaus.⁹¹ This was for tactical reasons rather than structural ones. There was certainly not enough qualified personnel, but there was also a widespread lack of trust by the central authorities towards the local population.

The policemen hired at the beginning of the 1920s were slightly better prepared than the soldiers who took up their positions in July 1918. Some of them even had experience working for the police in other newly acquired regions. Arghiropol, the new head of the Soroca Police, who had helped Brazul'-Brushkovskii so much, was a 54-year-old civil servant from Moldova. His predecessor was Constantin Constantinescu, a 51-year-old

⁸⁶ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 63–6, here 63 [Explanations on the budget proposal of expenses and revenues of the General Secretariat of the Interior and of the official services subordinated to it in Bessarabia for the year 1921–1922].

⁸⁷ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 91 [List of reduced personnel at the police and administrative bureaus in Bessarabia, 1921–1922].

⁸⁸ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 63–6 [Explanations on the budget proposal of expenses and revenues of the General Secretariat of the Interior and of the official services subordinated to it in Bessarabia for the year 1921–1922]; 58.1921, 24–5 [Report on the many police employees who are quitting their jobs, issued by the Comandamentul Militar din Basarabia, 22 February 1922].

⁸⁹ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 63–6, here 65 [Explanations on the budget proposal of expenses and revenues of the General Secretariat of the Interior and of the official services subordinated to it in Bessarabia for the year 1921–1922].

⁹⁰ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 133 [Report on the situation of civil servants in the Soroca district, issued by the Soroca prefect, Rădulescu Dobrogea, 29 March 1921]; 58.1921, 24 [Report on the many police employees who are quitting their jobs, issued by the Comandamentul Militar din Basarabia, 22 February 1922].

⁹¹ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 42, 14–16, here 15 [Report of Constantin Domănescu to Secret Police in Chișinău regarding the situation at the police station in Soroca, 31 January 1926].

civil engineer from the Old Kingdom who had some experience in the new police in the former Habsburg region of the Banat. Arghiropol's successor, Constantin Domănescu, was a 51-year-old gendarme from the Old Kingdom who, before his dispatch to Bessarabia, had worked for the police in the Banat.⁹²

In the border districts, members of minorities could apply to work for the police only as agents and informants. Furthermore, the police there had a deal with refugees without asylum status – those like Brazul'- Brushkovskii. The police could help these people, who, from a legal point of view, were in a vulnerable position, by offering them the prospect of obtaining legal papers. Refugees mentioned in their declarations that in order 'to be allowed to stay in Romania', they had to work for at least 'three months as an informant in favour of Romania'.⁹³ This arrangement appealed to, for example, Iftode Spătaru, a 31-year-old peasant who was married with three children. He had fled from Soviet Ukraine to Soroca in 1930 when collectivization was at its peak, and since he spoke both Romanian and Russian, he started working for the police in Soroca as an informant.⁹⁴

These findings contradict the strategy discussed by Andreas Wimmer. Instead of a slowly 'indigenizing bureaucracy' that would have maintained 'high levels of professional competence, recruited and promoted on the basis of merit and [developing] an ethos of dedication to the public good', Romania built the new police force with people from outside the region. Not merit but loyalty was the key requirement for joining the police workforce, and loyalty also played a central role when it came to promotion.⁹⁵

The Ministry of Interior worked to improve the conditions, and as a report from 1926 states, the Soroca Police Department made a better impression compared to the first inspection conducted in 1920. Whereas in 1920, the police bureau was located in a rented two-room house with rented furniture and no heating system, six years later, the Interior Ministry was renting a house with five rooms.⁹⁶ There was proper heating, and the station had a stable telephone connection.⁹⁷ The lack of qualified personnel was still a pressing issue. The appointees had little knowledge about the local population, had no Russian language skills and were poorly trained. Moreover, their income reflected that they had a low status in the new state apparatus. Compared with other top state employees in Bessarabia, high-ranking police employees were on the lowest income

⁹² ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 885 [Employment Records, Constantin Domănescu].

⁹³ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1, 3522, 38 [Declaration of Iftode Spătaru, by the Regional Inspectorate of the Police Chișinău, 8 January 1932].

⁹⁴ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1, 3522, 41 [Declaration of Iftode Spătaru, 12 January 1932].

⁹⁵ Wimmer, *Nation Building*, 78.

⁹⁶ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1415, 9 [Report of the Soroca Police to the Regional Inspectorate of the Chișinău Police concerning the condition of the police station in Soroca, 25 October 1920].

⁹⁷ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 42, 1–5 [Report to Central Police and Secret Police Office in Bucharest concerning inspection at the Soroca Police, 20 February 1926].

scale. The chief of the Soroca Police Station had a monthly income of 755 lei in 1921, while the Soroca district chief earned 2295 lei.⁹⁸ A top gendarmerie employee in Soroca, since he was an army member, earned 1800 lei.⁹⁹

There was a widespread conception among police employees that their deployment to the eastern border, where austere and dangerous working conditions prevailed, was not fully appreciated. The lack of motivation and dissatisfaction, both financially and socially, explain why there were hardly any leading police employees who had not been accused of illegal conduct and corruption. Arghiropol, for example, was accused of being bribed by Brazul'-Brushkovskii to send the report in his favour to Zaharia Husărescu. Arghiropol's predecessor, Constantinescu, had a long list of bribery allegations – among them was that he made a financial profit from the refugees. Only when Constantinescu released a group of imprisoned smugglers from Odesa in exchange for a bribe was he dismissed.¹⁰⁰ His successor, Liviu Murgău, was also involved in corruption and was eventually suspended for bribery.¹⁰¹ To most of these problems, the Ministry of Interior reacted with 'disciplinary relocations' – another reason for the staff fluctuation.¹⁰²

Seven Years of Surveillance

The analysis so far sheds some light on why Brazul'-Brushkovskii did not consider working for the district administration, an institution that was not as closed to former tsarist officials and not as exclusively Romanian as the police. This was not just because he was not fluent in Romanian, but because the district administration alone could not help him clear his records. Police co-opted refugees who, in exchange, could obtain legal papers. Since Brazul'-Brushkovskii was a refugee and a suspected Bolshevik, more effort was required from his side to close a deal with the police. It was his experience in the tsarist regime, his vulnerable position as a refugee and the timing (as the district administration needed political support) that were decisive for him in coming close to obtaining a position in the police.

⁹⁸ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 71 [List of personnel of the General Secretariat of the Interior Department in Bessarabia].

⁹⁹ ANR, Ministerul de Interne-Contabilități, 56.1921, 22 [List of employees of the Gendarmerie and their income, 1921–1922].

¹⁰⁰ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 1415, 70 [Report to Siguranța Bureau Chișinău concerning Constantin Constantinescu taking bribery and releasing a group of smugglers from Odesa, 12 September 1921].

¹⁰¹ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 10–11 [Complaint of Constantin Domănescu to the General Inspector of Siguranța Bessarabia concerning the removal of Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons from the suspect list of the Soroca's police, 3 February 1926]; ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 42, 1–5 [Report to Central Police and Secret Police Office in Bucharest concerning inspection at the Soroca Police and the employees of the station, 20 February 1926].

¹⁰² The biggest corruption scandal within the Bessarabian police in the interwar period involved Zaharia Husărescu, whom the Ministry of Interior accused of abuse of office and corruption. For the political context and the course of the scandal, see: ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției-Personal, 58, 1–9 [Summary and documents of the Disciplinary Commission addressed to the Minister of the Interior regarding the penalties imposed to Zaharia Husărescu, 1 November 1930]; Moraru, *La hotarul românesc al Europei*, 227–29.

Did Brazul'-Brushkovskii have other options after he understood that the new administration was not open to employing former civil servants? Svetlana Suveica demonstrated that numerous former civil servants openly boycotted Romanian rule. They managed financially with the support of various Russian organizations from abroad, a fact that made those who accepted this help even less trustworthy to the Romanian authorities.¹⁰³ In the seven years that the police carried out surveillance on Brazul'-Brushkovskii, there was no sign of open criticism and no evidence that he was in any way connected to any organization abroad. We can therefore assume that what Arghiropol wrote about his intentions to be an asset to the Romanian administration and that he had considered applying for Romanian citizenship were true. Still, Brazul'-Brushkovskii did not manage to convince the new Soroca police chief of his loyalty. As much as it helped Brazul'-Brushkovskii that the police staff often changed, it soon also became something that was to his disadvantage.

In December 1924, two weeks after Arghiropol's appointment in Soroca, he sent the report in favour of Brazul'-Brushkovskii to Chișinău. It was decided to remove Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons from the list of suspects in February 1925. Immediately thereafter, Arghiropol took paid leave due to health issues, and he never returned to Soroca. Arghiropol led the Soroca Police for a very short time, and it seems that one of his main tasks was to rehabilitate Brazul'-Brushkovskii's reputation.

The Interior Minister appointed Constantin Domănescu, a gendarme from the Old Kingdom, to take Arghiropol's place. One can identify in Domănescu's reports a certain mindset that he brought from the Old Kingdom: he had arrived at a dangerous periphery where minorities were to be mistrusted and perceived as enemies of the Romanian state. Domănescu wrote in one of his first reports to Chișinău that 'in this corner of Bessarabia at the bank of the Dniester, our role is very important in matters of State Security and therefore a titanic work is required'.¹⁰⁴ The main issues Domănescu identified were the high number of refugees and the meagre surveillance of Jewish communities. He had a strong belief in meritocracy and was convinced that if he did his best, he would be promoted to a police station in a bigger city. He built a network of informants and began to improve his control over the situation at the border. He also asked for translators and more resources to register and supervise all the refugees in order to improve his control in the city – his bureau still had no translators at all. He had learned French in school and some German while staying in the Banat, but these skills were not of much use in Northern Bessarabia.

Domănescu reviewed Arghiropol's work and when he came across Brazul'-Brushkovskii's case, he could not believe his eyes. Domănescu considered Brazul'-Brushkovskii's rehabilitation a mistake but had no power to rescind the decision, as the legal term had passed. He reported the case to Zaharia Husărescu, whom he indirectly criticized by implying that the latter had made mistakes.¹⁰⁵ To prove that

¹⁰³ Suveica, 'Die Verwaltung Bessarabiens', 204.

¹⁰⁴ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 42, 14–16, here 16 [Report of Constantin Domănescu to Secret Police in Chișinău regarding the situation at the police station in Soroca, 31 January 1926].

¹⁰⁵ ANR, Direcția Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 10–11 [Complaint of Constantin Domănescu to the General Inspector of Siguranță Bessarabia concerning removal of Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his sons from the suspect list of the Soroca Police, 3 February 1926].

Brazul'-Brushkovskii was a ‘terrorist’, Domănescu sent Husărescu a summary of the reports of secret agents who had supervised the former tsarist official between 1918 and 1925. Domănescu’s report offers valuable insights into how day-to-day surveillance had taken place over these seven years. The most incriminating fact about Brazul'-Brushkovskii was his alleged collaboration with the Jewish community, although few details are provided that explain what this collaboration looked like. Probably due to language barriers, the secret agents only noted that Brazul'-Brushkovskii regularly met with the ‘well-off’ Jewish inhabitants of the town. Thanks to his connections, the former tsarist official at one point found a job as a driver for one of his sons. The owner of the transport company his son worked for was Jewish, and taxis operated by such companies were also the only way to travel to Soroca, as the nearest railway station was 30 kilometres away. This connection meant that Brazul'-Brushkovskii and his son were aware of who entered and left Soroca, and to the police, this was utterly suspicious.¹⁰⁶

Brazul'-Brushkovskii’s unpatriotic feelings were revealed to Domănescu by the former’s reaction to a speech by Ion Zelea Codreanu, the father of the future fascist leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, delivered in Soroca in 1919.¹⁰⁷ Secret agents reported that upon hearing about the greatness of Greater Romania, Brazul'-Brushkovskii was not enthusiastic at all. Admittedly, expecting a former tsarist official to clap and cheer at Codreanu’s speech might have been a bit unrealistic. Although Brazul'-Brushkovskii realized that the old tsarist rule no longer existed, giving up his identity only a year after his return to Bessarabia and absorbing the Romanian nationalistic discourse were impossible, especially considering the hostile welcome he had received in Romania. He must have been relieved that Romania had halted the advance of the Bolsheviks, but his family certainly still suffered. Members of his extended family lived in areas occupied by the Bolsheviks, and his two sons were allegedly active in the White movement. It also remains unclear how much of Codreanu’s speech Brazul'-Brushkovskii actually understood. In 1919, he had only been in Bessarabia for 10 years, during which he had mostly served in a Russian-speaking administrative system.

In the summary, Domănescu cherry-picked the most incriminating accusations to pass on to Husărescu. He included copies of the reports of the secret agents, but they got lost in the files that I could access in Bucharest. Surely Domănescu did not omit any details, as his aim was to stop the ‘terrorist’ from escaping. Overall, however, the accusations against Brazul'-Brushkovskii were ultimately harmless, and his story can be regarded as one that recounts the struggle of a member of the former elite to use his connections to regain a respected position and provide for his family.

Brazul'-Brushkovskii enjoyed his new status. In fact, Domănescu reviewed the case only because ‘a respected official from Soroca’ had informed him that the former policeman was telling everyone how easy it had been to clean up his records. Domănescu’s

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ For more details on Ion Zelea Codreanu’s activities in Bessarabia see: Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Căpitan Codreanu. Aufstieg und Fall des rumänischen Faschistenführers* (Vienna 2016), 22–3.

predecessor, Constantin Arghiropol, supposedly visited Brazul'-Brushkovskii at home and took the registers and reports of the secret agents with him. The former tsarist official was not only aware of who kept records on him but also had insight into how the Soroca Police functioned. He was proud of himself, and his house became, as in the old times, a place where important people in the town would gather.¹⁰⁸

There was a mix of reasons related to real and symbolic power that made Domănescu intervene against Brazul'-Brushkovskii. Arriving in Bessarabia and noting that representatives of the former tsarist elite were still influential must have been frustrating for Domănescu. Unlike Brazul'-Brushkovskii, Domănescu could not easily connect with the local elite due to language barriers. Behind his determination to punish Brazul'-Brushkovskii was his need to prove himself and his hope, as he explicitly suggested, to acquire a permanent position. Domănescu did not know that by digging into the work of his predecessor and complaining to Husărescu, he had spoiled the political calculations of the district administration. The reactions from Chișinău were clear. A few days after Domănescu complained, Husărescu sent a commission to inspect his work. It could not find any irregularities.¹⁰⁹ Domănescu was moved over the next few months to positions in remote places for which he was overqualified. After some time, when the possibility for Domănescu to return to Soroca was open, the prefect of Soroca, Dimitrie Iov, warned the Siguranță in Chișinău: 'With the bad atmosphere he created here and with the troubles he made, even to our people, please let the [Interior] Minister know that there is no way Domănescu can return to Soroca'.¹¹⁰

A report about Domănescu that was sent to Chișinău after Domănescu left Soroca provides additional insights. The prefect, Dimitrie Iov, was furious because Domănescu opposed hiring 'various persons', 'electoral agents', who helped the Peoples' Party during the election campaigns, most probably among them was Brazul'-Brushkovskii, as well as any secret agents working for the People's Party.¹¹¹ Domănescu put them on a waiting list and waited to see whether they would provide any valuable information. Since they did not, as they were working for the party, he explained, 'Government positions are not for people who do not produce anything. The positions are to pay persons for important information strictly concerning the state security'.¹¹² In short, Domănescu made it clear to Iov not to even try to force the security office to contribute financially to the electoral campaign of the People's Party.

¹⁰⁸ ANR, Directia Generală a Poliției, 27.1924, 14 [Copy of a report sent by Domănescu to the General Inspector of Siguranță Bessarabia concerning Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii's activities in Bessarabia after 1918, 3 February 1926].

¹⁰⁹ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 42, 1–5 [Report to the Central Police and Secret Police Office in Bucharest concerning inspection at the Soroca Police and the employees of the station, 20 February 1926].

¹¹⁰ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 885, 29 [Telegram Dimitrie Iov to Husărescu regarding Domănescu's activities in Soroca, 29 August 1926].

¹¹¹ For more details on Dimitrie Iov's activities as prefect of Soroca see: Suvica, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic*, 101–2.

¹¹² ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 885, 39–40 [Report of Dimitrie Iov to Husărescu regarding Domănescu's potential return to Soroca, 27 August 1926].

Domănescu's traumatic experience in Bessarabia, due to the continuous relocations, as he personally described it, ended in March 1927, when he was transferred to the Crișana region in western Romania.¹¹³ There, he became chief of the Siguranță in Salonta, a Hungarian-speaking town roughly the same size as Soroca and not far from the border with Hungary. Whereas in Soroca, almost half of the population spoke Romanian, in Salonta, only 2061 of the 15,297 inhabitants were Romanian. In any case, Domănescu had by then gained some experience of getting along in surroundings he poorly understood.

While there is no indication that Brazul'-Brushkovskii got a paid position as a secret agent, at least, with the help of Arghiropol, he had clarified his legal status, which allowed him to acquire Romanian citizenship. In 1927, Brazul'-Brushkovskii, who was then 60, was still settled in Bessarabia. A return to the Soviet Union, where some of his relatives were still living, would most likely have led sooner or later to persecution. His younger brother was dismissed from the Northern Railway and fell victim to the Great Terror in 1938. He was accused of criticizing the Soviet system, praising the old times, intentionally disorganizing the tariffing of goods and spying for Japan, a common accusation at the time.¹¹⁴

Brazul-Brushkovskii's strained relationship with the new Romanian authorities was shaped by his imperial biography and the legacies that he transferred into a new political context. One cannot sufficiently emphasize the widespread anti-Bolshevism of the Romanian elites as a result of Bolshevik actions in Bessarabia and elsewhere. This did not lead the new authorities to look for supporters among the locals or former imperial functionaries. The tensions in Bessarabia grew after the Soviets established the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova on the right bank of the Dniester in 1924. When Brazul failed once again to convince the new authorities of his loyalty towards Romania in 1925, just as he had failed when he had entered the country in November 1918, the government was just taking back control of the southern Bessarabian districts after the Tatarbunar revolt, the greatest Bolshevik incursion in the region. Whether having to deal with plundering bands or with Bolshevik attacks, there was a constant confrontation at the eastern frontier that challenged state institutions and underlined the need for great precaution.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The negative reputation of Romanian policemen and gendarmes in Bessarabia spread quickly, and by the beginning of the 1920s, newspapers abroad became aware of this issue.¹¹⁶ *The New York Times* reported how the population was forced to greet security

¹¹³ ANRM, Inspectoratul regional de siguranță din Basarabia, 680, 885, 54 [Telegram sent by Constantin Domănescu to Zaharia Husărescu considered leaving Bessarabia due to unsuitable working conditions, 14 November 1927].

¹¹⁴ Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Kharkivs'koi Oblasti, NKVD Ukrainskoi SSR, P6452, 1, 66950, [Postanovlenie, Boris Semenovich Brazul'- Brushkovskii, 16 February 1938].

¹¹⁵ Basciani, 'The Other Thermopylae of Europe: Greater Romania and the Red Menace', 63, 70.

¹¹⁶ 'Rumanian Officer on Trial. Alleged Murder of Russians Entering Bessarabia', *The Guardian*, 1 December 1925, 14.

representatives with a precise formula and highlighted the cruelty of the Romanian administration.¹¹⁷ Most probably, the newspaper relied on information from supporters of the former tsarist regime from Bessarabia who had found refuge in the West. Besides the agrarian reform, which distributed land to peasants but caused great dissatisfaction among big landowners, the second concern for these 'former people', as the old tsarist elites were called after 1917, was the security system being installed by the Romanian state. The history of the Romanian police in Bessarabia was marked by this contradiction: on the one hand, there were those in opposition to Romanian rule, Soviets and supporters of the former tsarist regime who accused Romania of being an abusive regime, and, on the other hand, there were the Romanian authorities who rejected any criticism. For many historians in Romania, the topic has been perceived as too sensitive to conduct thorough research.

This article has attempted to understand why the Romanian police system caused so much dissatisfaction in Bessarabia, while following the path of Yevgenii Brazul'-Brushkovskii, a tsarist policeman and civil functionary, in the new Romanian Police. By doing this, it also tried to establish whether or not the new police workforce played an integrative role, meaning whether the Romanian police offered former tsarist policemen the possibility to continue their careers in Romania. While tradition plays a significant role in building police systems, major historical events, such as revolutions and wars, might determine new police structures and the networks of influence from which groups policemen are to be recruited.¹¹⁸ The development of the police in Bessarabia after 1918 was connected to the way Romania acquired this region, that is, by occupying it and making the army responsible for restoring order. In the first phase, the Romanian Army supported the creation of both the police and the gendarmerie in Bessarabia. As explained, there was an urgency from the side of the Interior Ministry to take control of and establish the function and structure of the new police. Further political developments influenced police development, as Romania was having a difficult time after 1918 in internationally justifying its acquisition of Bessarabia. From the beginning, the police were established in opposition to former imperial structures. While studies on other representative institutions Romania built in Bessarabia after 1918 have identified certain structural continuities, this was not the case for the police. There was no physical continuity, as Romania rented new buildings for its police bureaus, nor was there continuity when it came to personnel.

This break made Brazul'-Brushkovskii's case an exception because the Romanian administration did not offer much scope to former leading tsarist officials. Contrary to his initial intention to 'be again district chief', as he had planned when he returned to Bessarabia, the police became an option for Brazul'-Brushkovskii when he realized that it was the only institution that could help him prove he was not a Bolshevik and that could help him acquire legal status in Romania. His transition from an imperial civil servant to a would-be member of the Romanian police system required him to lower his expectations.

¹¹⁷ 'Citizens Must Salute Rumanian Officer', *New York Times*, 16 December 1925, 11.

¹¹⁸ Bayley, *Patterns of Policing*, 53–73.

Recruiting a new workforce for the police was not an issue for the Ministry of Interior. What the ministry struggled with was finding qualified personnel. A social profile of leading police employees demonstrates these concerns. The policemen sent to Bessarabia at the beginning of the 1920s were average civil servants from the Old Kingdom, over 50 years of age and with some experience in working for the police or the gendarmerie, who went to Bessarabia expecting to be promoted. In reality, compared to other state employees there, policemen were poorly paid and had no prospect of a long career in Bessarabia. In summary, the article concludes that the police in the first years of Romanian rule were a weak institution, which was poorly financed and dominated by a lack of qualified workforce and corruption.

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