

LEGIUNEA DE JANDARMI CHILIA ÎN ANUL 1944

*

THE LEGION OF GENDARMES CHILIA IN 1944

*

LÉGION DES GENDARMES CHILIA EN 1944

prof. univ.dr. Gheorghe MINCULETE¹
mr. drd. Marcel IOAN²

Rezumat: Având în vedere evoluția situației operative pe frontul estic la începutul anului 1944 și avansarea forțelor sovietice pe teritoriul național, unitățile de jandarmi au fost alarmate și au primit ordine privind executarea manevrelor de retragere din Basarabia. În acest context, Legiunea Jandarmilor Chilia, subordonată Inspectoratului de Jandarmi Chișinău, a primit misiunea de retragere în județul Argeș. Întrucât punctul de trecere prin portul Ismail se afla sub controlul trupelor sovietice, retragerea a fost ordonată în două eșaloane distincte. Prima coloană, alcătuită din subunitățile Arciz, Tătărăști și Tărutino, a primit ordin să parcurgă traseul de retragere împreună cu armata operativă, traversând Dunărea în direcția Tulcea. Al doilea eșalon, format din subunitățile Tașlac, Caramahmet și efectivele Reședinței Legiunii, a fost direcționat către portul Chilia Nouă, pentru a ajunge la Chilia Veche, județul Tulcea, iar mai târziu, prin zona Balți, la garnizoana Tulcea. Întreaga operațiune de retragere a fost efectuată în condiții ostile, sub presiunea constantă a aviației inamice, care a necesitat abandonarea mijloacelor materiale și a echipamentelor hipo, pentru a asigura mobilitatea și supraviețuirea forțelor implicate.

Cuvinte-cheie: jandarm, evacuare, retragere, inamic

*

Abstract: Given the progress of the operational situation on the eastern front in early 1944 and the advancement of soviet forces on national territory, the gendarmes units were alarmed and received orders to execute the withdrawal maneuvers from Basarabia. In this context, the Legion of Gendarmes Chilia, subordinated to the Inspectorate of Gendarmes Chisinau, received the mission of withdrawal in Argeș County. As the crossing point through the port of Ismail was under the control of soviet troops, the retreat was ordered in two distinct echelons. The first column, made up of the Arciz, Tătărăști and Taratino subunits, was ordered to go through the retreat with the operative army, crossing the Danube in Tulcea direction. The second echelon, consisting of the Tașlâc subunits, Caramahmet and Legion Residence, was directed to the port of Chilia Nouă, to reach Chilia Veche, Tulcea county and later, through the Balți area, to the Tulcea garrison. The entire operation of the retreat was carried out under hostile conditions, under constant pressure from enemy aviation, which required the

¹ Universitatea Națională de Apărare „Carol I” București, conducător de doctorat, Școala Doctorală – domeniul Științe Militare.

² Universitatea Națională de Apărare „Carol I” București, Școala Doctorală – Domeniul Științe Militare.

abandonment of material means and hypo equipment, to ensure the mobility and survival of the forces involved.

Keywords: *gendarme, evac, retreat, enemy*

*

Résumé: *Compte tenu de l'évolution de la situation opérationnelle sur le front oriental au début de 1944 et de l'avancée des forces soviétiques sur le territoire national, les unités de gendarmes ont été alarmées et ont reçu l'ordre d'exécuter les manœuvres de retrait de la Bassarabie. Dans ce contexte, la Légion des Gendarmes de Chilia, subordonnée à l'Inspection des Gendarmes de Chişinău, a reçu la mission de retrait dans le comté d'Arges. Comme le point de passage à travers le port d'Ismail était sous le contrôle des troupes soviétiques, la retraite a été ordonnée en deux échelons distincts. La première colonne, composée des sous-unités Arciz, Tătăraşti et Taratino, a reçu l'ordre de passer par le repli avec l'armée opérationnelle, en traversant le Danube en direction de Tulcea. Le deuxième échelon, composé des sous-unités de Taşlâc, Caramahmet et la résidence de la légion, était dirigé vers le port de Chilia Nouă, pour atteindre Chilia Veche, comté de Tulcea, puis, par la région de Balti, la garnison de Tulcea. Toute l'opération de la retraite s'est déroulée dans des conditions hostiles, sous la pression constante de l'aviation ennemie, ce qui a nécessité l'abandon de moyens matériels et d'équipements hypo, pour assurer la mobilité et la survie des forces impliquées.*

Mots clés: *gendarme, évacuation, retraite, ennemi*

*

After a period of relative stability on the territory of Bessarabia, the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 mark a decisive moment in the deployment of military forces in the space between the Prut and the Dniester³. Soviet troops launched a massive offensive, forcing the forced withdrawal of civilian populations, public institutions and, implicitly, security and order structures in areas within the country. Given the complexity of the actions carried out in the process of withdrawing gendarmes units, in this article we intend to analyze the conditions under which the evacuation orders were executed, as well as the short-term operative reaction capacity of the subunits of gendarmes of the Chilia Gendarme Legion, in the context of a tense general atmosphere and under the constant pressure of Soviet aerial bombardments.

This study is mainly based on the analysis of the archive documents from the funds of the Central National Historical Archives and the County Service of the Ilfov National Archives, the unpublished majority, which bring to the fore relevant aspects regarding the way in which the operational attributions of the Chilia Gendarmerie Legion were performed. In addition, the study aims to highlight the attitude of enemy troops in the context of signing the armistice of August 23, 1944 and changing Romania's strategic position by joining the United Nations coalition.

³ Valeriu-Florin, Dobrinescu, Ion, Constantin, *Basarabia în anii celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial*, Institutul European, Iaşi, 1995, p. 274.

Following the Order of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie (IGJ) of March 11, 1944, the Chilia Gendarmerie Legion⁴ reported significant difficulties in implementing evacuation measures, citing in particular the lack of wagons necessary for transport. In this context, according to the provisions of the Order no. 2111 of March 11, 1944, the legion ordered that the materials, archives and other assets provided for in the order be urgently evacuated by means of horse-drawn carts, accompanied by strictly necessary security, on the itineraries established in accordance with the Instructions no. 1710/1944, to the areas designated for resettlement. At the same time, the remaining personnel, especially the gendarmes who were not directly involved in the evacuation activity, were maintained in operation to ensure the continuity of public order missions and local security⁵. Also, in March 1944, the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie informed the Historical Service of the General Staff about the localities where the archive of the Inspectorates and Legions of Gendarmes was evacuated, as a result of the operational situation on the Eastern Front. Thus, the archive of the Inspectorate of Gendarmes Chisinau, together with the archives of the Legions of Gendarmes Bałți, Lăpușna, Orhei, Soroca and Tighina, was relocated to Cornești - Bălți and the archives of the Legions of Gendarmes Chilia, Cahul, Ismail and White Fortress were transferred and stored at the Legion Residence of Gendarmes Cahul⁶.

During the same period, namely March 1944, the Chilia Gendarmerie Legion received, by cipher telegram, an order from marshal Ion Antonescu, ordering that a measure be communicated to all gendarmerie posts, including those of lower levels, regarding the collection and centralization of all boats, skiffs and motorboats located on the Dniester, Prut, Transnistrian, bessarabian coast, including in the liman of these regions, had to be collected and routed, including in the limans of these regions under the supervision of the gendarmerie posts, to the nearest police headquarters, respectively for the Danube mouth area (Ismail) was done in Vâlcov⁷.

On August 9, 1944, the gendarmes carried out significant operational actions in the context of intensified Soviet infiltration activities in the territory still under romanian administration. In the Chilia area, the gendarmes managed to capture two soviet paratroopers, radiotelegraphy operators, on the territory of Cismele commune, being parachuted in April 1944, in the proximity the village of Sărata. On the same day, the gendarme post from the village of Neamț Monastery arrested another parachute agent, identified as Andrei Cojocar, originally from Grigoriopol (Tiraspol). Upon his arrest, an automatic pistol, cartridges, a compass and a military map were discovered, indicating a clear mission of orientation, recognition and infiltration.

⁴ Anghel, Andreescu, Octavian, Burcin, Neculai, Munteanu, Viorel, Andronie, *Istoria Jandarmeriei Române*, Tipografia Ministerului de Interne, București, 2000, p. 85.

⁵ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond *Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei*, dosar nr. 8/1944, f. 30.

⁶ *Ibidem*, dosar nr. 13/1943, f. 83.

⁷ *Ibidem*, dosar nr. 8/1944, f. 168.

According to reports, the agent had been parachuted in May 1944 and his objective was to cross the front line⁸.

According to Order no. 17.449/1944, issued by the Chişinău Gendarmerie Inspectorate, regarding the losses recorded in the context of the withdrawal from Bessarabia in August 1944, it appears that, starting on August 21, after receiving information that the enemy troops were advancing without encountering significant resistance, it was ordered the partial reposition of the subunits on the main communication lines, in sectors considered less exposed to tactical risks. However, following the intervention of the Great Operative Unit, the initial order was cancelled and a new order was issued instructing each formation to return to their previously held positions⁹.

On August 21, 1944, in the context of the break of the front in the Chisinau area of operations, the residence of the platoon stationed at the Ferma Lăpuşna post was attacked by a significant number of paratroopers and partisans infiltrated in the wooded area. As a result of this attack, the platoon was forced into action, executing a combative withdrawal until near Hânceşti–Leuşeni road. In these circumstances, it was no longer possible to recover neither the platoon's equipment or the personal belongings of the gendarmes. On the route between Lăpuşna and Huşi, the platoon dispersed and the soldiers remained isolated, each individually trying to identify a safe way across the Prut river. Later, during the retreat, in the area between Bârlad and Folteşti, the platoon was intercepted by soviet troop columns. The soldiers were captured, stripped of all their equipment and military uniforms, being left only in their underwear¹⁰.

On the evening of August 22, 1944, an order was received from the Inspectorate of Gendarmes in Chişinău, to assess the possibilities of crossing the Danube amid the rapidly deteriorating operational situation. Due to the increasing pressure from the advancing soviet troops, the execution of the provisions of Order no. 1111, as well as the implementation of the evacuation plan, could no longer be properly carried out. When enemy forces entered the commune of Dumitreşti, an order was issued to withdraw the formations in the ports of Ismail, Chilia and other strategic crossing points of the Danube, in order to continue the maneuvers to rescue the available personnel and materials¹¹.

On August 23, 1944, in the context of the withdrawal of Romanian troops from Bessarabia, the Chilia Nouă Gendarmerie Legion acted on operative information that soviet troops had entered the territory under the legion's jurisdiction. Consequently, its commander issued the withdrawal order in two distinct columns. The first column,

⁸ Valeriu Avram, *Comandouri paraşutate în România*, în Revista Jandarmeriei serie nouă, anul IV, nr. 15-16, august 1994, p. 3.

⁹ Serviciul Judeţean Ilfov al Arhivelor Naţionale, fond *Legiunea de Jandarmi Chilia*, dosar nr. 2/1944, f. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, f. 14.

composed of the Arciz, Tătăraști and Tarutino Sections, was placed under the command of the captain (rez.) Martin Ioan and followed the retreat route alongside the operational army, through the port of Ismail, crossing the Danube river in Tulcea direction. The second column, made up of the Tașlâc and Caramahmet Sections and the personnel of the Legion Residence, under the command of Major Andone Partene, the legion commander, was directed to the port of Chilia Nouă, with the intention of reaching Chilia Veche, Tulcea county and from there, through Bălți area, to Tulcea. This decision was determined by the fact that the withdrawal through the port of Ismail had become impossible, the route being already controlled by soviet troops¹².

Also, on the same day, August 23, 1944, at 11:00, the Tarutino and Tătăraști Sections reported that soviet troops were advancing rapidly and had already entered their territorial area. Under the pressure of intensified enemy fire, some of the gendarmerie's posts withdrew. As a result of the withdrawal, contact with the Tarutino and Tătăraști Sections was lost. However, they took measures to ensure the retreat of their subordinate posts, in coordination with the army subunits in the area, after having previously been actively involved in the organisation and gathering of fugitives. No order for withdrawal or additional repatriation was issued from the Grand Unit and the link with it was interrupted when the withdrawal also began. In parallel, information was received that the city of Bolgrad was under threat and the retreat routes toward it had become impassable¹³.

The soviet troops were advancing toward the village of Caramahmet, located approximately 12 kilometers from the headquarters of the Chilia Nouă Gendarmerie Legion¹⁴. The Romanian troops retreated toward the port of Chilia, without offering any further organized resistance. Following the withdrawal order for the subunits, measures were taken to evacuate the Legion's headquarters, which subsequently retreated to the port of Chilia Nouă, where the commander of the Grand Unit was located. Under his command, the Legion's subunits took part in loading vehicles, weapons and personnel onto various boats. The evacuation process continued until the morning of August 24, 1944, at 08:00, at which point they crossed the Danube to the village of Chilia Veche, in Tulcea County, while the enemy was rapidly approaching the town. At the same time, other formations continued retreating across the Danube as circumstances allowed, but communication with the Chișinău Gendarmerie Inspectorate, located in Cahul, was lost¹⁵.

After the soviet forces took control of the cities of Ismail and Chilia, they pressed on with an aggressive advance into the Danube Delta region. During the withdrawal of Romanian forces toward Tulcea, the columns of the Legion, attempting to cross the Danube through the ports of Chilia and Ismail using improvised vessels, came under concentrated enemy fire. These attacks were supported by a diversified

¹² *Ibidem*, f. 2.

¹³ *Ibidem*, f. 14.

¹⁴ *Ibidem* f. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 14.

arsenal, including infantry weapons, artillery and notably, the onboard armament of fighter aircraft, which strafed the crossing points, destroying the floating bridges and boats used to transport the gendarmes. The air raids continued as far as the vicinity of Tulcea port, where the retreating gendarmes were relentlessly pursued and subjected to crossfire, even in the marshlands of the Danube Delta¹⁶.

In accordance with orders, gendarm pl. Constantin Gherghinoiu, the Secretary of the Security Section within the Police Bureau of the Chilia Gendarmerie Legion, was the last to leave Chilia Nouă, conducting his retreat toward Chilia Veche¹⁷. The withdrawal took place under intense bombardment, sustained by both aviation and artillery and infantry fire. In order to preserve their lives, the gendarmes were forced to swim across the Danube, abandoning their personal equipment and animal-drawn transport on the riverbanks.

Although the armistice had been signed on August 23, 1944, soviet forces continued their offensive, treating the captured gendarmes as enemies and seizing all their possessions, considering them spoils of war¹⁸.

Regarding the transportation means available to the units, it is noted that the subunits had a limited number of vehicles, which were only made available upon receiving the order. Vehicles that had been held at the headquarters of the formations until that point were released. This situation was reported to the Grand Unit and the order given was to cease advancing, as no vehicles were left at the headquarters, making further evacuation across the Danube impossible. Both the subunits and the Gendarmerie Legion's headquarters crossed the Danube through various crossing points, especially via Ismail, thanks to the support provided by the Commander of the Ismail Gendarmerie Legion, lieutenant colonel Mihalache, as well as through the port of Chilia and other crossing points. However, the number of those who managed to escape to Galați and other crossing points over the Prut River was extremely small¹⁹. Regarding the cooperation between the commander of the Legion and the civilian authorities, most of the latter were evacuated in time. The gendarmes provided all possible support to the authorities and officials still present in the area.

The evacuation was no longer carried out according to the established plan, which had been organized in stages and on specific dates, due to the rapid unfolding of events that made these measures impossible to implement. In certain sectors, the gendarmerie formations were the last elements remaining in the area, evacuating individually and crossing the Danube. Some of them were surrounded and had to cross the river either by boat or swimming, leading to significant material losses, except for those who had been evacuated earlier.

Due to the fast pace of events and the rapid unfolding of circumstances, the decision was made to revert to the order of keeping the headquarters of the subunits

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 214.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 14

and the vehicles, while the retreat routes were closed. The last-minute difficulty in finding other vehicles and the challenges of crossing the Danube led to the abandonment of equipment on the riverbanks, as the units continued their retreat under enemy fire. Soviet aviation carried out constant attacks through bombings and the use of onboard armament, causing additional losses and the destruction of materials.

Due to the large influx of people and the lack of boats, as well as the continuous bombings, many boats sank, resulting in the loss of a significant portion of the materials evacuated from the Legion's headquarters. This occurred especially on the Pardina Canal, where they were attacked by enemy aircraft with onboard weapons. Most of the lost materials were due to the sinking of the boats, the lack of vehicles for transport and the capture of these materials by the Soviet army during the retreat. The departure from the village of Chilia Veche was carried out with the help of a tugboat, together with general Leoveanu, the commander of the Grand Operative Unit. Along the route, they were constantly attacked by soviet aviation, as well as by german aircraft²⁰.

Following the analysis of statements from gendarmes involved in the evacuation from Bassarabia in August 1944, a series of significant events can be identified that reflect the difficult conditions faced by the law enforcement forces and the direct impact on their equipment and logistics.

According to the statement of Gendarme sgt. maj. Pavel Victor from the Tătăraști Gendarmerie Post, during their movement toward Pitești, the unit reached Valea Buzăului (Buzău Valley), at which point they were intercepted by a column of soviet forces. Following the encounter, the personnel was disarmed and the military and logistical equipment they had was lost²¹. At the same time, plt. sgt. Casapu Dumitru, from the Galilești Gendarmerie Post, specifies in his statement that, to ensure the transfer of equipment and logistical materials, he ordered them to be loaded onto a cart intended to cross the Danube through the Ismail port. However, the vehicle never reached its destination, resulting in the loss of the military equipment²². A significant aspect regarding the morale of the military personnel is reflected in the testimony of sergeant Andrei Sârbu, from Dumitrești Gendarmerie Post, who reports that, due to overcrowding at the crossing point, he managed to find a boat to transport his equipment and cross the Danube. During the crossing, the horses became entangled with the boat and the personnel faced imminent danger as enemy aircraft began bombing the Ismail port. In the panic caused by the airstrike, sergeant Sârbu managed

²⁰ The statement of plt. sgt. Volosciu Ion, head of the Enichioiu Gendarmerie Post within the Chilia Gendarmerie Legion (Serviciul Județean Ilfov al Arhivelor Naționale, fond *Legiunea de Jandarmi Chilia*, dosar nr. 2/1944, f. 29).

²¹ Serviciul Județean Ilfov al Arhivelor Naționale, fond Legiunea de Jandarmi Chilia, dosar nr. 2/1944, f. 25.

²² *Ibidem*, f. 27.

to mount one of the horses and cross the river, while the boat, left behind in the water, sank, resulting in the loss of both the means of transport and the equipment²³.

In the afternoon of August 26, 1944, the commander of the Chilia Legion departed in a convoy consisting of 16 carts and 96 gendarmes, with the destination being the Argeş²⁴ – Bascov Legion²⁵. On August 28, 1944, gendarme Vasile Tiron, the head of the Săgar Gendarmerie Post within the Tătăraşti Gendarmerie Section, reported an incident during which, while crossing a forest in the village of Brătianu, Brăila County, they were intercepted by a Soviet column. Their stop was followed by a search, during which several items were confiscated²⁶.

Additionally, the gendarmes from the Burgugi Gendarmerie Post were forced to abandon part of their equipment on the banks of the Danube due to the impossibility of crossing the river, given the presence of the Soviet army²⁷. In a similar situation, pl. sgt. Manole Badea from the Jibrieni Gendarmerie Post stated that the entire equipment of the post was sent by cart before crossing the Danube, but the person responsible for the transport reportedly drowned in the Padina port while attempting to cross the river²⁸. Furthermore, the gendarmerie formations from the Jibrieni Gendarmerie Post, on their way to Piteşti, were intercepted by the enemy army in Ialomiţa County, in the Făurei area²⁹.

Although an armistice had been signed, the attitude of the soviet army was hostile and the gendarmerie units were subjected to an attack. On August 29, 1944, the Tropocla Gendarmerie Post, while passing through the village of Stâlpu, Buzău County, was looted by a soviet column³⁰.

Between September 10 and 17, 1944, the gendarmerie units arrived in the village of Teiu, Argeş County, where they remained for a period of reorganization. During this time, the gendarmes carried out personal hygiene, organized their equipment and handed over the animals and vehicles they had used for transport to custody. On September 17, 1944, the gendarmes continued their movement, reaching the village of Bascov, Argeş county, where they had their final destination³¹.

In accordance with Order No. 103,597 of September 15, 1944, from the General Staff of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie (IGJ), the following territorial gendarmerie units were disbanded: the Chişinău Gendarmerie Inspectorate and the

²³ *Ibidem*, f. 36

²⁴ Sergiu, Balanovici, *Măsurile elaborate la sfârşitul anului 1943 – începutul anului 1944 referitoare la operaţia de evacuare a zonelor de est şi de nord-est ale ţării*, în *Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis II*, Editura Axa, Botoşani, 2002, p. 211.

²⁵ Serviciul Judeţean Ilfov al Arhivelor Naţionale, fond *Legiunea de Jandarmi Chilia*, dosar nr. 2/1944, f. 15.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 28.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 37.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 38.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 172.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 39.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 15.

Gendarmerie Legions of Lăpușna, Tighina, Cahul, Cetatea Albă, Ismail, Chilia, Hotin, Cernăuți and Storojineț. The Chișinău and Cernăuți Gendarmerie Inspectorates issued certificates of cessation of pay, documents which were handed over to the host inspectorates for the reallocation of financial rights starting from October 1, 1944. Regarding the material assets under the management of the disbanded units, these were taken over by the host units, according to the handover protocols, categorized by management: clothing and personal equipment, weapons and ammunition and barracks materials. Additionally, the host gendarmerie legions issued receipt slips for all the items taken from the disbanded units³².

In conclusion, the events presented not only reflect the difficulties encountered by law enforcement forces in the face of an unstable and dangerous environment but also the direct impact on military equipment and logistics, as well as on their morale and operational capacity. Following the presentation of the events, we can observe acts of bravery and heroism, showcasing the gendarmes' ability to carry out their missions under extremely difficult conditions.

Bibliografie selectivă

- Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond *Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei*;
Serviciul Județean Ilfov al Arhivelor Naționale, fond *Legiunea de Jandarmi Chilia*;
Anghel, Andreescu, Octavian, Burcin, Neculai, Munteanu, Viorel, Andronie, *Istoria Jandarmeriei Române*, Tipografia Ministerului de Interne, București, 2000;
Avram Valeriu, *Comandouri parașutate în România*, în Revista Jandarmeriei serie nouă, anul IV, nr. 15-16, august 1994;
Balanovici Sergiu, *Măsurile elaborate la sfârșitul anului 1943 – începutul anului 1944 referitoare la operația de evacuare a zonelor de est și de nord-est ale țării*, în Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis II, Editura Axa, Botoșani, 2002;
Dobrinescu Valeriu-Florin, Constantin Ion, *Basarabia în anii celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial*, Institutul European, Iași, 1995.

³² Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond *Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei*, dosar nr. 38/1944, f. 294.