

The Hajduks of Cotovschi



A short history of The Hajduks of Cotovschi, an anarchist communist partisan organization from Romania, that pursued its activity in Bucharest, between 1939 to 1941.

The name of the organization was chosen to honor the name of Grigory Cotovschi (alternate spelling: Kotovski) and was created by Ion Vetrila in 1939, being active in the period when the legionaries from the "Legion of Archangel Michael" were collaborating with Antonescu government. The Hajduks of Cotovschi were organized according to a classical scheme: basically 5 people in a group. The purpose of the organization was the promotion in Romania, in both cities and villages, of the partisan revolutionary war. In September 1940, the organization had a central group, 2 groups of 5 members and other 3 groups, incomplete, of 3 members. Altogether 25 people. The ages of the members ranged from 14 and 18 years old.

During the crisis of September, which ended with the resignation of the King Carol II government, the hajduks start a partisan war. Until November 1940, the Hajduks of Cotovschi undertake between 18 and 22 armed actions and in December 1940 - 20 armed actions. Their primary purpose was the liquidation of the legionaries, government army soldiers, the gendarmes and destruction of the Legionnaire propaganda machine. Thus, the hajduks burned a warehouse belonging to the Legionnaires that housed propaganda material. This action in itself was planned by Ion Vetrila who was 16 years old at that time. The hajduks used conspiratorial methods, disguising themselves in Legionnaires, the gendarmes and remaining unknown to police. On 10 november an earthquake occurs in which 8 hajduks lose their lives while 2 get disabled. However, in January 1941, the Hajduks of Cotovschi include 69 members: 9 complete groups of 5 people and 8 incomplete groups of 3-4 people.

On January 21, the legionary rebellion starts, directed against the Antonescu government. On 22 January, the Hajduks of Cotovschi successfully attacked one of the district police stations in Bucharest, where they lose four comrades. The organization is arming. Receiving the news that the legionnaires are attacking Jewish neighborhoods, Ion Vetrila decides to divide the organization into 2 groups. A large group took over the task of defending the Jewish neighborhoods and the second group, smaller and under the leadership of Vetrila took over the mission to attack a weapons depot of the Legionnaires. In the night of of January 23 both

groups were destroyed. Attacking the armory, Vetrila's group was surrounded by 350 legionaries and after a hard fight they were destroyed. The other group (consisting of 40 people) was destroyed at night in a Jewish pogrom. After the fight, Vetrila wounded in both legs, along with a friend wounded in the chest and head are transported to the slaughterhouse, where legionaries gathered the Jews to be skinned. There the partisans were raised on hooks thrust into the ribs, the Legionnaires writing with hot iron on their backs the names "Marx" and "Bakunin". After having been subjected to torture, the Legionnaires shot Vetrila in the head .

Hajduk (or haydut, haiduk, haiduc, hayduck, hayduk) is a term most commonly referring to outlaws, highwaymen or freedom fighters in the Balkans, Central- and Eastern Europe.

The Legion of Archangel Michael , also called the "Iron Guard" is the name most commonly given to a far-right movement and political party in Romania in the period from 1927 into the early part of World War II. The Iron Guard was ultra-nationalist, fascist, anti-communist, and promoted the Orthodox Christian faith.