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19 October 1951
NLLABORRUMANIATRADE UNIONS IN CONSTANTA

Since autumn 1945 the port workers of CONSTANTA have been organized in a Labor Union, which was set up with the main aim to put the Communists in power in this important harbor town on the Black Sea. This syndicate was given great assistance by the government and the Party to carry out extensive propaganda and organizational work in order to attain a firm grip over all activities in the port. It has for instance four special propaganda vehicles which are touring the town and the surrounding localities; in case of special campaigns, of course, additional trucks are being requisitioned for such purposes; it has its own movie theater, where almost exclusively Soviet propaganda pictures are shown, and runs several clubs where political and cultural meetings and lectures are arranged.

According to refugees from CONSTANTA, the actual president of this syndicate is a Greek Communist, ORCULA Epimonda, who himself is not working at the port, but is only loafing around among the longshoremen. The chief of the administrative office of the syndicate is DIACONU Nicolae, who is in charge of the so-called "politico-organizational work" among the members. He organized the cadres, and built up a net of informers to spy on the dock workers.

The dock-workers of CONSTANTA are working in groups of 30 called "posta," organized by the syndicate. Up to 1948 they were working without a permanent contract, but took jobs more or less on an ad hoc agreement basis. They were unloading in those days American, British and Argentine ships, which called quite frequently at the port. For a night-shift they were paid as much as 2,000 Lei, a high sum unheard of since 1938. However, since 1949 they have been forced to work on fixed salaries, 4,500 to 7,500 Lei per month, plus occasional premiums, by which they can increase their total monthly income sometimes to 10,500 Lei. This sum is not too much in view of the present high costs of living and the workers are in general always short of money. In addition

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there frequently are periods when they have no work at all and have to be content with the basic salary of 4,500 Lei.

Up to 1948 there were also occasional workers working in the port, paid by the hour or per day, but these have now been banned from the port, unless they joined the syndicate as regular dock-workers.

Under the chief of the working groups (Cap de Posta) there is a foreman (Conducator de Munca) in charge of the work, who gets 4 per cent of the total income earned by the workers of his "posta." When the longshoremen were working still on an agreement basis, these foremen made as much as 60,000 Lei to 100,000 Lei per month. But even now their monthly income amounts still to as much as 20,000 to 30,000 Lei. The badly paid regular dockers are constantly complaining against "the bourgeois exploitation" by these Communist foremen, they courageously present their grievance at many syndicate meetings, but apart from repeated promises nothing had been done about this adverse situation. The foremen are all reliable Communists and the Party is backing them up.

Administratively the syndicate is divided into various sections and has a number of propagandists employed to agitate among the crews of foreign vessels and of the ships of the "Sovromtransport" while in port. Their task is to mingle with the seamen, to accompany them on shore leave, to take them to political meetings instead of pubs and also to spy on their activities while on shore. The most active propagandist among the dock-workers and the visiting sailors are: STEPANESCU (fmm), STANESCU (fmm), MIRCEA Nicolae, COCA Dumitru and PRICU Ion.

In addition to these agitators of the syndicate in the port, the crews of the ships are separately organized in syndicate groups under the leadership of Communist officials. The latter separately organize meetings and lectures on board of the ships. Like the meetings of the dockworkers, also the former are frequently reported and discussed in the "Scanteia" or the "Viata Sindicala." The participants in these meetings are not allowed to criticize the policy of the regime or of the Party, but can freely bring up other questions, criticizing certain shortcomings in every day's life, discuss the collective contract, the wages, the food in the canteens and similar problems. Such questions are answered by the syndicate officials, usually in the form of promises, which are, however, never kept. These meetings have thus no other practical purpose than to enable the officials to find out the reactions of the syndicate members and to keep a hand on the pulse of the public opinion.

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The directives pertaining to all these questions are arbitrarily laid down by the regime and complaints, criticism, and dissatisfaction of the working masses cannot change anything. Those who appear to be too insistent in advocating the rights of the workers and become thus a nuisance for the authorities, are sooner or later eliminated as "enemies of the people."

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 1945 - 1948

EVAL. COMMENT: Source : fairly reliable
Information: confirmed by other sources