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FOR A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE LOOK:
ANNOTATIONS TO THE POLICE FILE OF NICOLAE IORGA
(Summary)

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The importance of police documents during La Belle Époque does not reside only in the information provided; they also bring permanently into discussion familiar terms for historians: “event”, “context”, “causality”. It is well known that newspapers live off anything that contradicts the dullness of everyday life. However, Nicolae Iorga’s file thus acquired a shape, because a police taken by surprise fails to justify its existence. Nervous that a fact out of the ordinary may have occurred, the agents of *Siguranța* chose to deal with its symptoms, its premises. Not coincidentally, I have listed laconic, sometimes stereotypical reports, highly illustrative for a certain type of mindset: in the view of the police officer, a mere *announcement* could acquire at a certain point the value of a *precedent*. Hence, unlike the press, police practiced a type of lucidity that prevented the “event” from entering the semantic area of the word “notoriety”. The fact per se or its echoes were not important; they focused on conjecture, on the set of underlying causes, leading to some assassinate, to some suspension of diplomatic relations, to a government’s fall, etc. Without ignoring random interests and caprices or the ideas that we invoke to justify our options, the police file hereof teaches us that the *event is some kind of plebiscite*, some social test: by the degree of spontaneity in their reactions to it, people either come together or separate. The event is no longer necessarily the cause or effect of others; it is the condition of possibility for certain evolutions where *continuity* – namely the persistence of eternally similar acts – fears a potential *continuation*, one where *the same* transforms and becomes *another*; for history to choose a point from where to begin again.

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