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New Europe College  
Str. Plantelor 21  
023971 Bucharest  
Romania

[www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro); e-mail: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)  
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74



## **RALUCA MUŞAT**

Ph.D., University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Thesis: *Sociologists and the Transformation of the Peasantry in Romania (1925-1940)*

She is the author of “‘To cure, uplift and ennoble the village’: Militant sociology in the Romanian countryside, 1934-1938”, forthcoming in *East European Politics and Societies* and of ‘Prototypes for modern living: planning, sociology and the model village in interwar Romania’, forthcoming in *Social History*.



# CULTURAL POLITICS IN THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE: THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE *CĂMIN* *CULTURAL* IN INTERWAR ROMANIA

Within the process of Romania's modernisation, the question of how to transform the peasantry has held a central position on the agendas of both intellectuals and the state. On the one the hand the peasantry appeared to hold the cultural essence of the nation, while on the other, its 'backwardness' was seen as a major impediment to the development of Romania into a modern European state. This paper is part of a larger project, which I started this year at New Europe College, aimed at examining the long *durée* process of rural modernisation and development in twentieth century Romania under different political regimes. This project challenges the traditional historical barrier that separates the communist period from the regimes that preceded it after the 1918 Unification, looking at the continuing desire of the Romanian state – democratic, authoritarian and communist – to transform the peasantry and integrate it into modernity. Taking the ubiquitous but neglected institution of the village *cămin cultural* as its focal point, this study proposes to explore its history from the 1921 land reform to 1989, using it to explore the politics of culture in the countryside.

This institution offers an ideal starting point for understanding the process by which the state sought both to nationalise peasant culture and to modernise the rural community in an effort to make peasants into Romanian citizens.<sup>1</sup> The village house of culture was an institution meant to forge national culture in the midst of village life, acting as a modernising agent and as a place where local culture could be performed. This institution, although invented in the nineteenth century and consolidated in the 1920s and 1930s, was transitioned into communism and used by

the new regime in their own process of culture building and of 'civilising' the peasantry.<sup>2</sup>

This paper concentrates solely on the interwar period, when the house of culture became part of a mainstream process of rural mass education. However, in analysing the high point of this initiative, I place this in its wider context, showing the common traits this institution shared with initiatives elsewhere in Europe, in an effort to uncover its social, cultural and political function and peculiarities.

This article proposes a novel approach to the cultural politics of rural transformation, focusing on the Romanian *cămin cultural*, a variant of a widespread institution, the 'house of culture', and its establishment as an important agency of cultural modernisation in the rural world. Whilst there is no existing literature on this topic regarding Romania,<sup>3</sup> similar institutions in other countries have received some scholarly attention. For example, the village halls built in interwar Britain also marked a transformation of leisure in village life and represented the desire to organise and regulate it through voluntary and state initiatives.<sup>4</sup> Closer to Romania, the 'peoples' houses' or 'village hearths' set up in 1920s and 1930s Turkey constituted an important part of Atatürk's programme of rural modernisation.<sup>5</sup> Similar movements also took place in Belgium, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup> This points towards the link between these cultural institutions and the idea of rural modernisation in different contexts, as well as to the underlying influences that led to the spread of these initiatives. In the literature on Romania, very little attention has yet been given to the many projects and attempts to achieve the modernisation of the countryside and the integration of villagers into the nation state throughout the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, even within the existing literature, there is no study that focuses exclusively on the *cămin cultural* as such. My project seeks to show the unique perspective this institution can offer on the interplay between the state, intellectuals and the peasantry in the realm of cultural politics in the twentieth century. This article starts by setting the scene by documenting the process through which the *cămin cultural* became institutionalised within a state-driven process of rural development in the 1930s.

***The house of culture as an international phenomenon***

Houses of culture initially appeared across the more industrialised parts of Europe in response to the processes of modernisation, urbanisation and displacement of people. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one could find houses of culture in many places across Europe. The edited volume *Maisons du peuple*, which focuses mainly on the architecture of these institutions in Western Europe between 1870-1940, documents the trajectory of this institution across this period, showing its evolution from a 'working class fortress' to 'temple of social regeneration', to a 'polyvalent institution' of mass culture and finally its merger with the urban post-war civic centre.<sup>8</sup> The new buildings erected to house these institutions from the late nineteenth century onward gained a stable place within the urban and rural built environment, marking a new space and a specific aesthetics dedicated to the culture of the people. These new space of 'sociability' and education mushroomed in towns and villages under many different names. In northern Europe, especially in Belgium, such institutions, known as '*maisons du peuple*' and '*volk huis*' were connected to the rise of a working class movement. There, houses of culture were places where people working in towns could meet, eat, and discuss away from their homes and from their employers.<sup>9</sup> They were also places where the working classes could educate themselves in order to be able to represent their own interests. In other cases, houses of culture were not bound up with socialist ideals, being set up by the liberal (urban) elites as places for the education of the urban and rural masses.<sup>10</sup> Often founded by urban or rural elites, the state, voluntary associations or religious organisations, these institutions aimed to re-centre the life of urban and rural communities around 'more civilised' moral values and cultural principles. In these cases, the desire to educate the masses was not so much one of allowing or empowering the masses to represent themselves, but that of providing them with the same cultural values and vocabulary as the upper classes in an effort of creating consent and order. In most cases, these agendas were neither pure nor stable, meaning that that one cannot speak of one type of house of culture but of a new form that could be constantly filled with different ideological contents. The competitions that arose between different factions interested in setting up or leading houses of culture (like in Germany and France for example) showed the ever shifting ideas about what kind of culture was to be imparted to the working classes or to the rural masses and who was best equipped to undertake such missions.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, there were disputes over what was necessary for a house of culture to fulfil its social and cultural function. For example, eating facilities were seen as essential in the socialist varieties, whereas the liberal and philanthropic ones did not cater to these more earthly needs.<sup>12</sup>

The transfer into the countryside indicated the extension of this modern culture beyond the urban sphere, reflecting back upon the transformations of the rural world. In a country like Britain, where the countryside was slowly but surely becoming the home of commuters and of the middle classes, the village halls were used extensively to host both modern and traditional leisure practices.<sup>13</sup> In countries with peasant populations (traditional agricultural workers and subsistence farming), this leisure culture was still to be forged, as the literature on this phenomenon in the Soviet Union clarifies.<sup>14</sup> Bruce Grant shows that the Soviet house of culture shared features with its West European socialist counterpart in that it represented a new social space for workers and peasants alike as well as an educational institution. However, it also differed from it in that it was a state-driven initiative rather than a grass-root one. In this respect, it was similar to the philanthropic and liberal variants of this Western trend, by being part of a wider civilising mission meant to turn the uneducated masses into Soviet citizens.<sup>15</sup>

The same state-driven initiative seemed to underlie most of the post-WWI houses of culture built in Italy and Turkey as part of national modernisation schemes. There, the *casa del fascio* and the *Halk Evleri* embodied the mission of authoritarian ideologies (fascism and kemalism) to 'go to the people', colonising the entire social sphere, from the urban centres to the rural hinterlands.<sup>16</sup> Like their Soviet counterparts, these movements shared the same agenda of creating a culture of consent and of socialising common people into a new modern way of life (with strict ideological traits).

Apart from being means to civilise and educate the working classes and the peasantry, houses of culture were also ways of introducing control and order over the leisure time and practices of the masses. The most telling example was the Italian *dopolavoro* initiative that, as its name indicates, was specifically geared to provide a pre-packed set of leisure practices for workers.<sup>17</sup> Houses of culture therefore became important spaces where leisure practices could be seen, managed and regulated by the state and by its cultural agents. The institutionalisation of the house of culture in many parts of Europe, including Romania, in the 1930s also affected the relationship between the elites (local or national) and the masses, leading



in many cases to a recruitment and development of professional or semi-professional cultural agents who represented a centralised programme of cultural work meant to be implemented across a vast territory with the aid of a bureaucratic apparatus. This particular aspect represents the focal point of this article that deals in great part with the 'cultural work' and Social Service programmes initiated by the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti and funded by King Carol II between 1934 and 1938. Although the cultural work project only lasted until 1939, it was important because it established the *cămine culturale* as the core institution of rural development, setting up the buildings and bureaucratic apparatus that remained in place between 1939 and 1945, being then taken over by the communist regime and adapted to its new ideological requirements.

### **Evolution of the *cămin cultural* in Romania**

In the Romanian territories, the impetus for the house of culture before the First World War and the Unification was manifested in different ways, with more or less intensity. The function of these institutions reflected the different socio-economic conditions of the people (and of the peasantry more specifically) and the political status of intellectuals in the Old Kingdom and the territories that were to form what came to be known as 'greater Romania' in 1918.

In the Old Kingdom, the small-scale socialist movement set up a 'Casa Poporului' and several study centres that fulfilled similar functions as other socialist houses of culture in Western European towns.<sup>18</sup> However, as Romanian socialism remained a small-scale initiative that was limited to the few urban centres (Iaşi, Bucharesti, Braila, for example), these houses of the people were also scarce and often short-lived.

In the countryside however, village houses of culture gained more momentum, being promoted by liberal social reformers and nationalist leaders respectively as a way to enlighten the rural masses and as an answer to the heated 'agrarian question'. The two main names generally associated with this initiative are Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu and Spiru Haret.<sup>19</sup> Haret, the founder of the *Sămănătorul* review and Minister of Education under several Liberal governments (1897-1899, 1901-1904 and 1907-1910), regarded 'the agrarian question as primarily cultural and insisted that knowledge would mean a better life for the peasants'.<sup>20</sup> He therefore promoted the dissemination of useful information in the villages, using

the printed word and schoolteachers as his principal instrument. Through Haret's reforms, the village school became an established institution that guaranteed primary education in the rural areas.<sup>21</sup> Haret also promoted the *cămin cultural* as an institution meant to complement and expand the scope of the village school for the adult rural population. Moreover, since his education reforms addressed the peasantry as 'a class with well-defined social and economic needs', the acquisition of cultural capital became an important means of upwards mobility for the peasantry.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of corresponding economic and social reforms kept the peasantry at the bottom of the social ladder, in the condition of the economic mode of production generally known as 'neoserfdom'.<sup>23</sup>

A much more widespread phenomenon was that of the *cultural centres* set up by *Asociațiunea transilvană pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* ASTRA (The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People).<sup>24</sup> Privately funded, ASTRA functioned as a cultural and educational institution parallel to those of the central Hungarian state, catering for the needs of the Romanian community. Under the specific post-*Ausgleich* conditions of Hungarian state nationalism, the two main institutions that led this action and fought to keep the national spirit alive among the peasantry were ASTRA and the Romanian National Party of Transylvania. The Romanian elites saw the transformation of the peasantry through education (both practical and theoretical) as key to the advance of their entire "nation". ASTRA, alongside the two Romanian churches (Orthodox and Uniate) provided access to the peasantry. They were used to promote national mobilisation as well as to disseminate cultural and practical knowledge in rural areas. On the one hand, urban economists tried to turn peasants into prosperous farmers by publishing and distributing manuals and reviews for agricultural best practice. Whilst on the other hand enthusiasts for industrialisation organised craft schools meant to connect the peasant with the urban market. ASTRA had many local branches (*cultural centres*) and held annual plenary conferences in different urban centres (by rotation). The work of this association indicated the primarily national nature of their houses of culture and its aim of creating a sense of national solidarity between different social classes. This network kept the Romanian intellectuals connected to their peasant co-nationals in a way that was never paralleled in the Old Kingdom. After the 1918 Unification, despite an initial crisis, ASTRA remained the strongest cultural organisation that could best influence the peasantry in the region. Its activities pre-empted

those of the interwar social reformers like Dimitrie Gusti, bearing a direct influence on their work.

### ***The interwar houses of culture***

After the 1918 Unification, there was a new impetus for the creation of a national culture. The interwar period in Romania was a time of great changes in the national discourse. Once the wish of national unification had been fulfilled, the future lay open ahead for building the right state for this nation. The unification of the Old Kingdom (*Regat*) with Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bucovina had changed the ethnic composition of the population, increasing the size and number of minority groups. As the external borders were consolidated, new invisible ethnic borders appeared internally. The process of building the state and its institutions within a larger territory, with an ethnically heterogeneous population (whose rural-urban divide overlapped with the ethnic one) called for the rethinking of the nation. All these factors and many others meant that the peasant became the symbol of the Romanian nation and, as Katherine Verdery, Irina Livezeanu and Maria Bucur point out, the new central trope of the interwar economic, political and social discourses.

This centrality of the peasantry to the cultural politics of the interwar era was also motivated by deep economic changes, namely the end of neoserfdom, and by important political reforms that led to an overnight transformation in the place this social group occupied in the overall hierarchy of Romanian society. In the early 1920s, the peasants received land and the right to vote, becoming, at least on paper, equal citizens of the Romania state. The reforms gave way to lively debates about the ills of the countryside and about its social modernisation, stressing the importance of enlightening and empowering the masses through culture.<sup>25</sup> The countryside therefore became an open-air laboratory, roaming with academic groups, social activists, party representatives or state administrators. In one of his speeches from 1926, the president of the ASTRA organisation, Vasile Goldiș, lamented the fact that members from three cultural associations at the same time 'ramble through the countryside and confuse the peasants'<sup>26</sup>. One such organisation was the Prince Carol Royal Cultural Foundation that had been set up in 1922 by the prince regent as an institution for the enlightenment of the peasantry.<sup>27</sup>

This new institution complemented the other more established cultural foundations set up by the Romanian Royal Family, adding a specific

interest in the welfare and modernisation of the rural world.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, the Prince's decision to embark on this cultural mission was inspired by his travels to India, but without doubt there were many other sources of inspiration available for this both in Romania and beyond.<sup>29</sup> The main instrument of modernisation at the local level used by the Foundation was the *cămin cultural*, an institution that revived Haret's prewar initiative in a slightly revamped form. In this early stage, the Foundations wanted to set up houses of culture (*cămine culturale*) across the country, using them in the scope of rural modernisation. Like Haret, the leaders of the Foundation, sought to use these new local institutions as a way of supplementing the activity of the village school and of reaching the rest of rural population. As Nichifor Crainic put it in more poetic terms, 'the *cămin* was able to connect the periphery with the centre, spilling waves of light from the central springs of national culture to the most distant borders of the country'. The main scope of the *cămin* was, he added, that 'uplifting the rural masses from the state of nature to that of culture'.<sup>30</sup> The activity and set-up of these new *cămine* was inspired by various foreign models such as the USA, France, and Czechoslovakia. Its main sections were: the library, the museum, the depot, the infirmary, the public bath, and a general information office (*birou de asistență generală*).<sup>31</sup> The rules and regulations that surrounded these sections expressed the paternalistic tendency of this institution that often infantilised the peasantry. The Foundation's cultural missions were clearly directed from the centre to the periphery, connecting urban experts with village intellectuals and making peasants the targets of a civilising mission. The tools used were therefore adapted to this scope – the library was meant to popularise literacy and to instil a sense of morality and temperance amongst peasants; the museum was meant to counter the 'false culture', that is the external influence of urban and foreign culture upon village life by nurturing an interest in local culture and a sense of local pride; the medical aid section, including an infirmary, a bath and a barbers, was to bring an interest in and practical facilities for health and hygiene in the village; finally, the general information office was a hub where people could get assistance and advice in any matter that concerned them. Most of its activities represented alternative educational methods through which culture was to be brought to villagers: organised trips, *șezători* (social gatherings) both in the villager's own home and at the *cămin*, public reading sessions, festivities, cinema and exhibitions. Despite their great ambitions, the activity of these *cămine* remained rather insignificant especially after Prince Carol left Romania in 1927,

rejecting the throne.<sup>32</sup> It was only in 1934, four years after Carol returned to Romania to take up the throne, that the Foundations were revitalised with the launch of the new cultural work programme designed and led by its new direction, the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. In the period 1934-1939, the *cămine culturale* gained new importance as part of a new mission to 'cure, uplift and ennoble the countryside'<sup>33</sup>. In 1938, the launch of the Social Service made this small-scale institution the core of a social programme of rural development that, although very short-lived, left a long-lasting legacy for the subsequent communist regime.

### ***Dimitrie Gusti – social reformer***

Like other scholars in countries whose territories had been reconfigured by the war and the Versailles settlement, Gusti was one of the intellectuals who saw the new drive for modernisation and social reform as an opportunity to contribute to the building of a modern Romanian state.

Born in Iaşi in 1880, to a rather affluent family, Gusti was one of many young Romanians who were able to undertake their studies abroad. He received a doctorate from Leipzig University (1904) and a Habilitation from Berlin University (1907) and then spent a year in Paris to study with Durkheim. He then returned to Iaşi in 1910 to take up a position as Assistant Professor in History of Classical Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology at the Faculty of Letters of the city's university. In the inaugural lecture presenting his academic interests and intentions, he singled out the agrarian question as a potential object of research for sociologists and stressed the importance of modern and practical study methods and techniques.<sup>34</sup>

He was part of the initiators of the the *Asociația pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* (the Association for Social Science and Reform), a forum of specialists prepared to study and debate the country's social problems and inform its future reforms, that later grew into the famous Romanian Social Institute.<sup>35</sup> Two years later, Gusti moved to the University of Bucharest to become professor of Sociology, Ethics, and Politics at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. Alongside his academic career he also held many different posts in public administration and in the government.

As one of the leading figures of social research in a country in the midst of crucial social and political transformations, Gusti proposed sociology as the 'science of the nation', a discipline able to shed new light on Romania's existing social problems, starting with the rural world. Since

the fate of the rural world dominated most academic and political debates about national identity and modernisation, Gusti's focus on peasant life reflected the heightened importance of this social group after the war.

At the University of Bucharest, Gusti transformed his seminar of sociology into an active research group that became known as the Bucharest School of Sociology, (*Școala de Sociologie de la București*). The School offered students and scholars from different disciplines interested in the research of rural life the opportunity to undertake collective fieldwork in various Romanian villages. Gusti and the leaders of this group developed a unique methodology of collective field study based on the observation and recording of everyday village life that, by the early 1930s, established sociology firmly in the intellectual arena of the time.<sup>36</sup>

However, Gusti's ambitions for his discipline did not stop at academic and intellectual prestige. In his view, beyond its role of understanding social reality and producing research-based knowledge, which he termed *sociologia cogitans*, sociology also had the important role of informing and managing social reform, *sociologia militans*.<sup>37</sup> The transformation implied in Gusti's term *sociologia militans* was that of social reform or even social engineering. Understanding social reality would naturally lead towards the realisation of the ideal society, which, unlike the utopian socialist version, was not an invention but a process of discovery. However, whilst cultural work was the practical application of militant sociology, it also implied another dimension of Gusti's thought – culture and the politics thereof.

### ***The people's culture in Gusti's vision***

In a document from 1922, Gusti stated:

The fortuitous unification of the Romanian territories has brought with it a series of issues that are crucial to our national and state life. The cultural problem is certainly one of them. (...) The most important of the socio-political aspects of our cultural problem today is our spiritual unification. Furthermore, the moral upheaval and the great social waves caused by the war have made the masses more prone than ever to demagogical promises and to stronger anarchical movements. Leaving these masses, which have not yet entered or have long exited the influence of the school, without any guidance, would lead to the break-up of the present state and society. The third socio-political aspect of the matter is that of building a real democracy. A cultural activity as intense as the gravity of the problem we face is therefore absolutely and urgently necessary.<sup>38</sup>

The quote above reveals the widespread fear of social unrest at the end of the war and the trust that the education and 'guidance' of the masses would restore order in the state and in its society. Like many other intellectuals of his time, Gusti saw the reform of Romanian society as a 'cultural problem', which he engaged with in his writings and political speeches. Gusti argued for the organisation of an institution for the life-long education of the masses, called the House of the People (*Casa Poporului*), meant to supplement and expand the role of the school, already coining social reform in terms of new, extended forms of mass education and culture. The idea of a 'culture of the people' became clearer in later speeches that discussed new forms of cultural politics:

the true goal of the people's culture is the transformation of the people, a bio-social unit, into a Nation, a superior spiritual-social unit. Thus understood, culture creates the community spirit, the consciousness of national values, the consciousness of national solidarity.<sup>39</sup>

Presenting culture as the source of national self-realisation, this quote clarified its role in making the transition between the expansion of the social realm to the higher ideal of creating 'the consciousness of national solidarity'. In realising his vision, Gusti proposed to combine top-down intervention with a bottom-up approach. He criticised earlier attempts to 'civilise the peasantry' and to 'domesticate the people', explaining that culture '[could] neither be given nor imposed from above, as it had to be acquired freely, from below', the role of any cultural activists being to enable the rural population to 'develop their own culture'.<sup>40</sup> He was equally critical of initiatives of bringing culture to the people, as these were based on an uneven relationship between 'the educators' and 'the masses' and on a false understanding of 'the people's culture'. In his view, the Romanian masses needed their own culture, but this was neither a replica nor thinned down version of high culture, but an original, new product of the people themselves.

To create new forms of culture, Gusti emphasised the agency of the villagers in their own cultural awakening, through the concept of the villages' 'right to culture', which the government and society had a duty to satisfy. Rejecting other philanthropic initiatives of 'spoon feeding' the people with 'the cultural values of the time', he affirmed cultural activism as the fulfilment of a social right.<sup>41</sup> Framed as a civic responsibility, his projects revealed both modern aspirations and a direct attachment to the

authority of the state. Again, this placed Gusti within an international trend that emphasised social over individual rights and proposed society as the main unit for the state to operate with.<sup>42</sup> In this context, culture, like education, was meant to become a 'right' of the masses and therefore had to be nurtured by specialists.

In his cultural politics, Gusti drew inspiration from a wide variety of regional, national and international initiatives in Romania and abroad. Inside Romania, the work of ASTRA and of the *Liga Culturală* (Cultural League) stood as examples of significant achievements in the field of culture.<sup>43</sup> As many of his peers, Gusti also appreciated foreign institutions like the Scandinavian popular universities, the German and Austrian *Volkshheim* as well as other cultural programmes in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Turkey and Italy.<sup>44</sup> This wide spectrum of influences should not surprise us, as Romanian social reformers had cultivated direct contacts with international forums, publications and organisations, in an effort to synchronise the Romanian state and society to the most successful contemporary trends.

### ***Carol II, King of the Peasants***

In the mid 1930s, as the ethos towards mass organisation grew across Europe, Gusti was able to marry his politics of culture with those of the monarch, who appreciated and supported his ideas. In Carol's own words, rural cultural work was 'a way of offering the peasantry a better standard of living, a better understanding of their needs and obligations'.<sup>45</sup> In this he acknowledged the importance of the rural masses both as a political power and as crucial to the state's future. In contrast with the 'bad dusty roads, ditches with stale water, no bridges or flower gardens in front of any houses' of Romanian villages at the time, his vision for the future was one of a countryside totally transformed both externally and internally, in the spirit of modernisation and progress.<sup>46</sup> His wish was that villagers be taught the value of cleanliness, order, and beauty. 'Your duty is to teach everyone that fresh air is a friend, not an enemy', he said to the student teams; 'we need to teach them the simplest rules of physical and moral hygiene', he continued. 'Regarding agricultural work, and home management, there are few villages where you find a single chicken coop. All the fowl are out in the street, [often] run over by motorcars (...) This can be easily avoided through the building of small coops so that the chickens are fed in the yard, not in the street'.<sup>47</sup>



Beyond this generic modernising agenda of transforming the rural world, the monarch's interest in mobilising the countryside was also driven by the socio-political context of the 1930s, a time of economic downturn, of mass social dissent and of political extremism. Thus, Gusti's new cultural initiative served King Carol's more immediate political goal: to counteract the Legion of the Archangel Michael by using its own tools.<sup>48</sup> The fascist organisation had become the King's number one competitor for the engagement and transformation of two main social groups: the youth and the peasantry. It appeared to hold the patent on the work camp as a means of bringing urban intellectuals to the countryside for the purpose of creating a 'parallel society' based on new social values and bonds.<sup>49</sup> The first Legionary work camp was organised at Ungheni in 1924.<sup>50</sup> The camp already exhibited the core ideas that underpinned those of the next decade. Re-launched in the 1930s, these had become a successful means of recruiting and spreading the Legionary's ethos.

In this context, Gusti's project was part of a wider initiative to redirect or prevent youth and intellectuals from joining the Legion. From 1934, the Royal Student Teams coexisted and collaborated with *Straja Țării*, Carol's own youth organisation introduced by the newly elected liberal government in the same year.<sup>51</sup> Fashioned on the model of the Scouts and inspired by similar youth organisations in Italy and Germany, *Straja* imitated the Legion in rituals, symbols and denominations.<sup>52</sup> Yet, the *străjeri* did not succeed in competing with the Legion whose appeal sprung mostly from its opposition to the state, its grass-root communitarian precepts, and its religious mysticism.

Gusti's project of cultural work was aimed at university students, graduates and young professionals, offering them a state-supported form of activism that combined intellectual and manual work.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, it also facilitated the cooperation between the two organisations, the *Străjeri* and the Royal Student Teams, who worked together on development projects (building roads, repairing churches, planting trees, etc). Like the Legion, the Royal Foundations proposed an organised way of 'going to the people', giving the participants the opportunity to do their bit for the countryside, work in teams and get their hands dirty, therefore appealing to the same psychological factors as their competitors: young, sacrificial heroism and the will to change the nation's future. This was spelt out in the King's address to the teams:

It is true that this work requires sacrifices, but you have to be convinced that it will be deeply fruitful and useful to our country. You are not going there to do work just for show; instead you are going to those remote areas of the country to undertake a painstaking, meticulous labour, yet one that must have a sound effect for each village. My wish is that, on the teams' departure, the village be - as much as possible – transformed. Transformed both externally and internally.<sup>54</sup>

### ***The Theory of Cultural Work through the cămin cultural***

Cultural work was therefore not invented under the political demands of the moment, but was already present in Gusti's earlier sociological theories and in his political activity in the realm of education, public administration and the media. It is important to note that in this period many intellectuals from Gusti's generation occupied places both in academia and in public administration or governance, a fact that explains the greater advocacy for the practical application of scientific research. After serving as Minister of Education for only one year under the Peasantist administration in 1932-1933, Gusti was offered the leadership of the non-governmental FCR-PC where the monarch gave him a free hand to implement his vision of rural reform.

Until Gusti's arrival, the Foundation's achievements were rather limited. According to Henri H. Stahl, Gusti's close collaborator in the realm of cultural work, at the root of its failure lay an antiquated agenda and an old-fashioned establishment working according to the principles set out by the educationalist Haret in the previous century.<sup>55</sup> Considering culture as a top-down 'process of disseminating high culture to rural areas' for the purpose of improving the spiritual well-being of the masses, the Haretist model employed 'cultural missionaries' meant to bring culture to the countryside, published various educational papers and magazines for the villagers, and encouraged the production of village monographs written by local intellectuals. Although somewhat valuable, according to Stahl, 'the Foundation lacked a scientific grounding of their activities, a systematic record of the social problems of the village (...) that could only be studied by highly qualified specialists'.<sup>56</sup> The new leadership and administration of the Foundation appointed by Gusti was instead made up of such experts: the sociologists Stahl, Golopenția, and Gheorghe Focea, the writer Bucuța, and the journalist Neamțu were recruited to manage the new projects of FCR-PC. They were joined in their mission by some of the existing members of the institution, Victor Ion Popa, Alexandru and

Lascarov-Moldovan, who were not trained sociologists, but had an interest to adopt the scientific ethos proposed by the new director.<sup>57</sup>

### **The village hall (1934 – 1939) as the embodiment of a new vision of social reform**

Cultural work in the countryside was based on a detailed reform plan centred on four main areas of change – the body, work, the mind and the soul. These branches corresponded to a set of ‘ills of the countryside’ diagnosed by academic experts and debated in the political and intellectual spheres of the time: (the body) rural-specific diseases (syphilis, pellagra, tuberculosis, malaria), malnutrition, hygiene, infant mortality; (work) agricultural backwardness, land fragmentation; (mind and soul) rural illiteracy, ‘social diseases’ (alcoholism, prostitution and cohabitation) etc.<sup>58</sup> The teams reflected these areas of action being typically formed of: a doctor, a physical education teacher, an agronomist, a vet, domestic scientist, a priest, a teacher, and a sociologist. This assignment of duties combined the cultural agenda of ‘civilising’ the peasantry with the new scientific vision of preserving, purifying and moulding the rural population as a social, economic and biological asset of the nation state. Moreover, this also confirmed the role of sociology as a discipline able to elaborate a synthetic vision of social reality.

Within this new initiative, the hub of cultural work was the *cămin cultural*, described as ‘a meeting place of the people called to work and realise the holistic cultural programme for the villages’ and ‘the new house of the village’, alongside the ‘school, the church and the local council’ where ‘people (locals) would join forces and work together for the interests of the community’.<sup>59</sup> Its educational role was also clearly stated: the *cămin* would be ‘the school for the youth (...) and for all the smallholders of all ages (*gospodari și gospodine*)’. In the Foundation’s vision, this new institutions was to be led by local intellectuals, wealthy and diligent villagers or by the ‘sons of the village’ (*fiii satului*), a group made up by people who had left the village and had succeeded in educating themselves. This reflected the project’s underlying agenda that proposed a transfer of culture according to an existing hierarchy of education. However, the regulations for the set up of a house of culture stipulated that of the seven to twenty-one members of the board, at least four had to be peasants. Unlike urban socialist houses of culture in Western Europe, that

represented the working class culture and promoted education as a tool to criticise and fight the existing social and economic order, these rural institutions sought to 'uplift' the rural masses with the help of the elites, bringing them up to higher standards of education and thus appease them by creating social consent. This new initiative however moved away from the earlier less organised romantic ethos that represented the Foundation spirit of the 1920s to a more technocratic and social one that sought to use top-down expert knowledge to create a solid educated social base in the countryside. The opposition culture-nature was totally dismissed as Gusti and his collaborators admired rural culture and understood the complex processes of change that affected the rural world.

The four-fold agenda of cultural work (body, work, mind and soul) was clearly reflected in the principles according to which the *cămin* was to function.

In the area of culture of the body, its role was 'to improve the physical well-being/health'; in the area of work, it was meant to 'improve work practices to increase productivity'; in the areas of the mind and soul, it was meant to 'uplift the spirituality of the community' (*înălțarea sufletească a obștei*). These goals did not differ much from the earlier attempts of civilising the villages before the war and in the early 1920s. However, the vocabulary and set-up reflected a paradigm shift from an earlier missionarism to an interest in the welfare of the social body (of which the peasantry represented the largest part) and in the bureaucratisation and centralisation of rural development. The 'culture of the body' reflected this most clearly. The project of cultural work placed the countryside at the core of the social hygiene agenda, making the peasant body – both individual and social – central, as the repository of genetic information, biological strength, sexual potency and racial purity of the nation.<sup>60</sup> This was not surprising and should not be interpreted in the narrow comparison to German extreme racial theories and practices. Instead, the Romanian vision was inspired and shared many features with similar successful projects in other Eastern European countries such as the Yugoslav rural health centres initiative. In practice, the health and hygiene agenda meant incorporating a pharmacy, public baths and sports facilities into the *cămin cultural* both in the construction of the building itself and in its work agenda.

The programme regarding 'the culture of labour', as clarified in the *Îndrumător*, included: 1) agriculture, viticulture, and forestry; 2) zootechnics; 3) labour associations; 4) women's domestic work; 5) civic

work. Encompassing both paid and unpaid, productive and non-productive labour activities, this reflected the holistic definition of and approach to 'work' in the countryside and the trust that all these areas could and should be rationally improved. Translating this agenda, the practical activities of the *cămin* encompassed mainly educational activities, including lectures and practical lessons on topics that ranged from agriculture to domestic duties and to projects meant to improve the facilities of the local community. The area of domestic work revealed the project's gender dimension that saw the peasant woman both as an agent of change for her entire family, as well as a guardian of rural customs and traditions.<sup>61</sup> Thus the domestic science lessons held at the *cămine culturale* were a spill-over of a world-wide interest in regulating the private family life of the lower classes, guiding them onto a pathway towards a healthier, rational and moral future.

In the area of the mind and the soul, the role of the *cămin* was to host a variety of social and cultural events as well as to sustain and encourage various folk groups and performances. This agenda reflected the morality the project sought to inject into rural communities – a combination of religion, cleansed of its mysticism and esotericism, of respect for the nation and of preservation of local cultural customs and traditions. The importance of nurturing and preserving local customs was explained by Stahl who, aware of the erosion of traditional culture, noted: 'it is true that a part of the old peasant culture is disappearing fatally, under the influence of urban influences and that a new culture will be born out of somewhere', yet he held that 'we cannot expect the student teams to create this new culture'.<sup>62</sup> Their role was only to try to revive and revitalise old artistic traditions. It was up to the village itself to develop their cultural future with the guidance of local and national organisations like FCR-PC. Most of the newly built *cămine* would therefore have halls able to house a choir, folk dancing and other such performances.

Also as part of the culture of the mind, the *cămin* was to incorporate a village library and to promote reading groups. In the theory of cultural work, village libraries could not be simply a repository of random books, but had to be carefully organised according to the villagers' literacy levels, their own needs and taste.<sup>63</sup> As the textbook explained, 'where you find 50-60 percent illiteracy, you will know straightaway that the villagers' interest in learning is much lower than that of a population with less than 20 percent'.<sup>64</sup> The village library was planned to contain sixty percent books for peasants ('*plugari*'), thirty percent for village intellectuals and

the remaining ten percent for children.<sup>65</sup> The first category was to be filled with 'predominantly religious books and literature (stories and *taclale*<sup>66</sup>), then history, economics, etc.'<sup>67</sup> Gusti himself was fully aware and spoke against the idea that simply giving books to a village would lead to people reading them. Instead, like many of his peers, he supported the production and dissemination of books that were specially designed for rural people, books that would be written in a simpler language, would contain educational messages and would be cheap and attractive at the same time. Since illiteracy was one of the most urgent problems of the countryside, village libraries and reading events were greatly promoted. A short article in the review *Căminul Cultural* gave us an insight into the lesser-known aspects of how people used a local library. The author explained that people's interest in reading was tuned to their work cycles, with a complete halt in reading in the summer during the most intensive agricultural duties. Also, maybe against the project's expectations, locals preferred to take books home rather than staying in a reading room. This was justified by the fact that often people would stumble over longer words and try to read them aloud and that, actually, most reading was in groups rather than individual and private, with one person reading aloud to a group of villagers. Another important observation was that people read for pleasure and ignored more specialised books about agronomy, veterinary medicine, health, etc.

Apart from the library, the programme encouraged the set up of a local museum and the purchase and use of a radio where possible. The local museum was obviously meant to reinforce the interest and the pride in local culture, be it in terms of an ethnographic, a historical or archaeological leaning.

In 1934, out of the 889 *cămine* that existed across the country, only 349 were active and even amongst these only 194 were considered to 'stand out'. The vast majority of their leaders were school teachers (104) and in only 3 peasants were in charge. In terms of housing, most of the *cămine* did not have a building of their own (only 19 did), being mainly housed in schools.

Cultural work benefitted the *cămine* and their development, although its scope was initially quite reduced. The overall project did not involve great numbers of people, but participation grew steadily from 1934, when only 12 villages were visited by 98 students assisted by 56 technicians, (i.e. professionals from the designated domains), whereas, in 1937, when a total of 407 students and 404 technicians worked in 75 villages. In

1938, the programme listed 471 students and 397 technicians working in 63 villages. Over these five years, 114 villages were visited once or repeatedly across all Romanian regions.

In 1938, the first year of the royal dictatorship<sup>68</sup>, Gusti was able to transform his project of student voluntary activism into the Social Service, a programme of compulsory work experience in the countryside for all university students, graduates and civil servants. The Social Service Law, passed in October 1938 and revoked exactly a year later, made the 'reorganisation of the countryside' a matter of state, both by mobilising the entire student population to work in rural areas and by placing the leadership of the Service at the heart of the new government; the president of the Social Service was to hold a ministerial position and the running of the project was to involve 'almost the entire cabinet'.<sup>69</sup> The law stipulated that all university students would obtain their graduation certificates only after completing a period of social service in the countryside of up to a year. Similarly, one could not hold a public position and could not obtain a certificate of professional practice without undergoing this formative experience. In a strong 'high modernist vein', the project meant subordinating the intellectual elites to the state's goal of refashioning the countryside, thus turning them into specialised social servants. With regards to the modernisation of the rural world, the programme continued the same type of cultural work, further stressing the importance of the *Cămin Cultural* not only as the new centre of village life, but also as 'the main executive body' of the Social Service, constituting a 'work unit formed and led by the locals – peasants, intellectuals and 'sons of the village' - meant to 'help, strengthen and deepen the work of the Church, the School and the State Authorities'.<sup>70</sup>

With the introduction of the Social Service, the project for the *cămine* became even more ambitious, aiming to found one in every Romanian village and town. Furthermore, the *cămin cultural* became the local enforcer of the Social Service Law and the local intellectuals (priests, school teachers and local administrators) were obliged to contribute to its activities.<sup>71</sup> As part of this ambitious plan, the state launched a programme of building new *cămine culturale* across the country, continuing the activity of the student teams on a much larger scale. These new multifunctional buildings were designed to serve the wide range of activities related to cultural work with its four aspects: health, work, mind and soul. Whilst being functional and cost-effective, the architectural style of these new buildings was meant to communicate the importance, progressive spirit

and cultural roots of this institution.<sup>72</sup> The plan for the *cămin* in the model village of Dioști provides a perfect example of this wider trend as the standard for all other such institutions across the country. The *cămin cultural* in Dioști was a two-storey U-shaped building comprising of four main sections. Occupying the front section of the ground floor was the concert hall (*sala de festivități*) where various community and cultural events were organised (concerts, conferences, film showings, etc). The east and west wings were designated respectively for economic and health purposes. The first included two workshops, a kitchen and bakery, a shop and storerooms. The second was comprised of showers with changing rooms, a room for delousing, three doctors' and nurses' consultation rooms and a doctor's office. Finally, the first floor was devoted to the village's museum and library. Fifty metres long on each side, the building had a total area across all floors of about 2000 square metres.

In Dioști, the *cămin* dominated the new village civic centre, in which architectural forms articulated the relations of power between the citizens and the state or local authorities. It was placed at the centre of this square and was surrounded by the other main institutions of the village: the local Council and the *gendarmarie* (police station), the church and the school. The *cămin* therefore embodied the School's own vision of cultural modernisation that placed the community and its vital functions (education, economy and health) at the heart of the village itself, all part of a secular system of values meant to represent the nation and the state.

Although the Social Service was interrupted in 1939, the Royal Foundations continued their work in the field of rural development. After Carol II was forced to step down, the official name of this institution became the 'King Michael Royal Cultural Foundation', but the interest in setting up and maintaining the work of the *cămine* continued.<sup>73</sup> The 1943 guide to cultural work showed this most clearly. Whilst the student teams disappeared from the programme, the structure of cultural work, with its four main directions (body, work, mind, and soul) remained unchanged.<sup>74</sup> Clearly, due to the war and the ambiguous situation between 1945 and 1948, the activity in this field remained weak.

In 1948, the Foundation was taken over by the new regime. Although the personnel was dismissed, it was not closed, but the offices and their bureaucratic apparatus were simply transferred into a new model of rural development. In the initial transition phase, between 1948-1950, the new Ministry of Arts and Information, the Section of Cultural Institutions (Secția Așezămintelor Culturale) took over the Foundation's premises,



publications and the entire network of houses of culture.<sup>75</sup> This showed that this project of cultural work fitted - at least in form - to the new model of rural modernisation.

## Conclusions

Overall, the new initiative was imbued with a desire to systematise and rationalise village culture on the one hand and to preserve or revive a sense of tradition and solidarity within communities. Like houses of culture in many other countries, these were new social spaces that grew at the borders between the private and the public spheres. Specifically in the Romanian case, these were justified from above rather than from below, as rural communities already had social spaces and practices of their own. In this sense, unlike houses of culture in towns, where people did not know each other or had no designated place to meet and exchange ideas or simply eat together and feel less lonely, village life had age-old rules and customs that were hard to transform by simply setting up a new institution. However, the leaders of this programme were fully aware of these issues, as they were social researchers who had spent time in villages and had come to understand how rural life worked. At the same time, the *cămine* were also spaces where a specific model of modernisation could be introduced into village life in a managed and controlled way. The new practices pioneered by this small institution were seen as necessary for the progress of the nation as a whole: education, health, labour and beliefs were all becoming matters of state interest as the idea of society expanded further, to include even its most marginal groups. The *cămine* were therefore to be standardised, kept in line and made compliant to the ideas at the centre, although local variations and initiatives were warmly welcome. This was realised through inspections, publications and congresses that connected and allowed local leaders to exchange ideas but also be kept in line and under control. Finally, this reflected the desire to create a cultural bureaucratic machine, an initiative which the communist state easily took over and redesigned for its own purpose.

It is not within the scope of this article to explain what happened after 1948, but rather to argue that the institution of the *cămin cultural* constituted one of the many bridges that connected the regimes before and after 1948. There is no doubt that the ideas and ideology behind the institution changed to fit the dominant Soviet model. One explanation for

this is that the general goal, i.e. rural modernisation, remained the same for the Romanian state and its intellectual elites although the way this was imagined changed. Another explanation is that the Soviet Union had also developed their own houses of culture and that, although there were many aspects that differed between the two, this made it very easy for the new regime to simply adapt these institutions to fit the Soviet model.<sup>76</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I paraphrase Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Chatto & Windus, 1979).
- <sup>2</sup> The term 'civilising process' was coined by Norbert Elias who argued that the creation of modern nation states in Western Europe relied on an ongoing process of transforming societies through changing 'constraint by others into an apparatus of self-restraint'. This concept has been successfully applied to the processes of 'inculcation of disciplines that proceeded without recourse to open violence or terror', which accompanied the more coercive methods of rural modernisation, subsumed under the Stalinist '*kul'turnost*' policies in Soviet Russia, analysed by V. Volkov. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 1978); V. Volkov, "The Concept of Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilising Process," in *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, Routledge, 2000), 210–30.
- <sup>3</sup> A study on the current state of Romanian *cămine culturale* has been done by the Research and Consultancy Centre in the Field of Culture (*Centrul de cercetare și consultanță în domeniul culturii*). The summary of this study indicates some of the interesting fates of these institutions after the fall of communism. *Centrul de cercetare și consultanță în domeniul culturii, Institutia caminului cultural - o vedere de ansamblu*, n.d., [http://www.culturadata.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=105:institutia-caminului-cultural-o-vedere-de-ansamblu&catid=42:patrimoniul-si-turism-cultural](http://www.culturadata.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105:institutia-caminului-cultural-o-vedere-de-ansamblu&catid=42:patrimoniul-si-turism-cultural).
- <sup>4</sup> J. Burchardt, "Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service," *Rural History* 10, no. 2, 1999, 193–216.
- <sup>5</sup> S. Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building : Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2002).
- <sup>6</sup> A. Brauman et al., *Maisons du peuple: architecture pour le peuple*, Bruxelles (Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1984); B. Donahoe and J. Otto. Habeck, *Reconstructing the House of Culture : Community, Self, and the Makings of Culture in Russia and Beyond* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2011).
- <sup>7</sup> Katherine Verdery remains the main scholar who has dedicated a great part of her work to the experience of Romanian peasants throughout the twentieth century, including the collectivization and the de-collectivization processes. K. Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers. Three Centuries of Political, Economic and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983); G. Kligman and K. Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege : the Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011); K. Verdery, "Seeing Like a Mayor. Or, How Local Officials Obstructed Romanian Land Restitution," *Ethnography* 4, no. 11, 2002, 5–33. Another piece of work that offers the villagers' direct experience of the communist 'coerced modernisation' process is A. Mungiu-Pippidi, *A Tale of Two Villages : Coerced Modernization in the East European Countryside* (Budapest, CEU Press, 2010).
- <sup>8</sup> Brauman et al., *Maisons du peuple*, 8.

- <sup>9</sup> A. Brauman and Brigitte Buysens, "Victor Horta et la maison du peuple de Bruxelles," in *Maisons du peuple*, Bruxelles, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1984, 10–33; B. Buysens, "Inventaire visuel des maisons du peuple en Wallonie et à Bruxelles," in *Maisons du peuple*; Bruxelles, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1984, 33–63.
- <sup>10</sup> B. Podrecca, "Le savoir est pouvoir, les maisons du peuple à Vienne," in *Maisons du Peuple*, Bruxelles (Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1984), 125–141.
- <sup>11</sup> J-L. Cohen, "Les bourses du travail au temps des loisirs...les avatas de la sociabilité ouvrière (France, 1914-1939)," in *Maisons du peuple: architecture pour le peuple*, Bruxelles, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1984, 159–185.
- <sup>12</sup> Brauman and Buysens, "Victor Horta et la maison du peuple de Bruxelles," 34.
- <sup>13</sup> Burchardt, "Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service."
- <sup>14</sup> A. White, *De-Stalinisation and the House of Culture : Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, 1953-1989*, London: Routledge, 1990; B. Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995; B. Grant, "Epilogue: Recognizing Soviet Culture," in *Reconstructing the House of Culture : Community, Self, and the Makings of Culture in Russia and Beyond*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2011, 263–276.
- <sup>15</sup> Grant, "Epilogue: Recognizing Soviet Culture."
- <sup>16</sup> F. Caprotti, *Mussolini's Cities: Internal Colonialism in Italy, 1930-1939*, New Jersey, Cambria Press, 2007; Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building*.
- <sup>17</sup> V. DeGrazia, *The Politics of Leisure: The Dopolavoro and the Organization of Workers' Spare Time in Fascist Italy, 1922-1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- <sup>18</sup> Z. Ornea, *Viața lui Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Bucharest: Ed. Compania, 2003).
- <sup>19</sup> N. Marin-Dunăre, "Hasdeu și satul model," *Căminul Cultural* V, no. 5, 1939: 409–10; Spiru Haret, "Chestia țărănească," in *Operele lui Spiru Haret*, vol. VIII, XI vols. (Bucharest: Ed. Cartea Românească, n.d.).
- <sup>20</sup> Haret, "Chestia țărănească."
- <sup>21</sup> A. Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture. Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 150.
- <sup>22</sup> I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Cornell University Press, 1995, 202.
- <sup>23</sup> The term *neoiobăgie* (neoserfdom) was coined by the Romanian socialist Constantin Dobrogeanu Gherea in his theory, inspired by the works of the Russian populists and by Marxism directly, posited that the penetration of capitalism in the Romanian Principalities in the second half of the nineteenth century had the unexpected consequence of enserfing the peasantry who,

- although *de jure* free, became dependent *de facto* on the large landowners. Gherea's term has been broadly used by historians to analyse the processes of economic, political and social modernisation in Eastern Europe. The best analysis of the Romanian successive land reforms is still D. Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant in Rumania: The War and Agrarian Reform (1917-21)*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press; O.U.P., 1930. The same author discussed the end of neoserfdom in Eastern Europe after the First World War and its consequences in D. Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant: a Study in Social Dogmatism*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1951.
- 24 K. Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1860-1914*, Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999, 49.
- 25 One of the important forums of these debates was the Romanian Social Institute that held public conferences on the most important topics of the day and published the prestigious *Archive for Social Science and Reform*.
- 26 Goldiș V. *Discursuri rostite în preajma Unirii la Asociațiunea Culturală "Astra"*, Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1928, 147.
- 27 The most recent work discussing the history of this organisation is Zoltán Rostás, "Fundăția Culturală Regală 'Principele Carol' sau mișcarea Echipelor Studențești Voluntare," in Z. Rostás, *Strada Latină nr.8, monografiști și echipieri la Fundăția Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"*, 11–23, Bucharest, Curtea Veche, 2009. Also see D. Gusti, *Les Fondations Culturelles Royales de la Roumanie*, Bucharest, Union des Fondations Culturelles Royales, 1937.
- 28 Z. Rostás, "Fundăția Culturală Regală 'Principele Carol' sau mișcarea echipelor studențești voluntare," in *Strada Latină Nr.8. monografiști și echipieri la Fundăția Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"*, Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009, 11–23.
- 29 *Fundăția Culturală Principele Carol 1922-1925*, Bucharest: Fundăția Culturală Regală "Principele Carol," 1926.
- 30 Gheorghe D. M, Crainic, N. and Voiculescu, V., *Căminul cultural: îndreptar pentru conducătorii culturii la sate*, Bucharest, Fundăția Culturală Regală "Principele Carol," 1924, 8.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 32–54.
- 32 For the work of the Foundations in these early years, see *Fundăția Culturală Principele Carol 1922-1925*.
- 33 *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate: 1936*, Bucharest, Fundăția Culturală Regală „Principele Carol”, 1936, 29.
- 34 D. Gusti, "Introducere în cursul de istoria filosofiei grecești, etică și sociologie," in *Sociologia Militans*, Bucharest, Fundăția Culturală Regală "Regele Mihai I," 1946, 30–47.
- 35 In 1919, the Association was transformed into the Romanian Social Institute (*Institutul Social Român*). D. Gusti, "Aniversarea Institutului. Zece ani de la înființare.Cuvântarea Președintelui Institutului Social Român, D-I Dimitrie Gusti," *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* VIII, no. 4 (1929): 527.

- 36 See R. Mușat, "Sociologists and the Transformation of the Peasantry in Romania, 1925-1940" (unpublished PhD diss., University College London, 2011).
- 37 D. Gusti, *Sociologia militans*, Bucharest, Fundația Culturală Regală "Regele Mihai I," 1946.
- 38 D. Gusti, "Cultura poporului," in *Opere. 3. Politica*, vol. 3 (Bucharest, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1970), 229.
- 39 D. Gusti, "Politica culturii și statul cultural," in *Politica culturii. 30 de prelegeri și comunicări organizate de Institutul Social Român*, Bucharest, 1933, 484.
- 40 D. Gusti, "Idei călăuzitoare pentru munca culturală la sate," in *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate : 1936*, Bucharest, Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol”, 1936, 27.
- 41 Ibid., 29.
- 42 Rabinow, *French Modern*, 168–210.
- 43 ASTRA was founded in 1861 by Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania and functioned as a privately funded cultural and educational institution for the Romanian community. One of ASTRA's most important goals was the 'enlightening the peasantry' through education and knowledge. After the 1918 Unification, ASTRA remained one of the most important cultural institutions in the area up to the end of Second World War. V. Moga, "Astra" și societatea: 1918-1930, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003. On the eugenicists involved in ASTRA, see M. Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).
- 44 Gusti, "Politica culturii și statul cultural," 478–479; D. Gusti, *Un an de activitate la Ministerul Instrucției Cultelor și Artelor: 1932-1933*, Bucharest, Tipografia "Bucovina," 1934, 537–539.
- 45 *Cartea echipelor*, Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol," 1937, 14. Od. 1935
- 46 Carol II, "Cuvântarea Majestății Sale Regale Către Echipetele Studentești," *Căminul Cultural I*, no. 1, November 1934, 3.
- 47 Ibid., 2–3.
- 48 Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală," 16; Gh. Lăzărescu and Z. Rostás, "Ni s-a făcut o primire sărbătorească" – Gh. Lăzărescu. (interview 2006)," in *Strada Latină Nr.8. monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 60; C. Marinescu and Z. Rostás, "Partea forte a gustismului" – C. Marinescu," in *Strada Latină Nr.8. Monografiști Și Echipieri La Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"*, Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009, 158–159.
- 49 The most recent work on the Legion's work camps is R. Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the 'New Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Historical Journal* 51, no. 4, 2008, 943–44.
- 50 M. Polihroniade, *Tabăra de Muncă* (Bucharest: Editura Ziarului "Universul," 1936), 1; A. Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihai"*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006, 210–214; 260–263; Haynes, "Work Camps," 946.

- 51 Manolescu Gh., Nedelcu C., and Sidorovici T., "Straja Țării," in *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 485.
- 52 The word *strajă* is a synonym of *garda* ('guard') and the denomination of the levels of the organization also reflected further similarities. As in the Legion, the smallest unit of the *Străjeri* was a *cuib* (nest), whereas the largest was a 'legion'. *Ibid.*, 488.
- 53 As Haynes has shown, 'beyond the practical aim of the work camp, there was also an "educational mission" which was to "ennoble manual work". Through this, the Legion sought and partly succeeded to erase the shame attached to intellectuals doing manual work, bridging the gap between classes and professions by co-opting them to work together for the creation of a new social order. Haynes, "Work Camps," 946.
- 54 Carol II, "Cuvântarea Majestății," 3.
- 55 Henri H. Stahl, *Amintiri și gânduri*, Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1981, 279–283.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 282.
- 57 Z. Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Interviuuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2000), 197.
- 58 All of these issues were summarised in a publication prepared for the 14<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Sociology meant to take place in Bucharest in 1939. D. Gusti, N. Cornatzeanu, and G. Banu, *Rural Life in Rumania. An Abridged English Version of a Monograph "La Vie Rurale En Roumanie"* (Bucharest: Fourth International Congress of Sociology, 1940). Another comprehensive study of the rural world and its 'ills' is George Banu, ed., "Problemele sanitare ale populației rurale din România," *Revista de Igienă Socială X*, no. 1–6, 1940.
- 59 *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate: 1936* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol”, 1936), 30.
- 60 Bucur's book discusses this new paradigm in depth with reference to Romanian eugenics. Bucur, *Eugenics. Îndrumător 1936*, 325.
- 62 H.H. Stahl, "Experiența echipelor studențești la sate," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale 2*, no. 1–3 (January 1935): 146.
- 63 *Îndrumător 1936*, 354–5.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 348.
- 65 More details about how books should be divided between different sections. *Ibid.*, 373.
- 66 *Taclale* is translated in all Romanian dictionaries as 'conversation', 'chit-chat'. However, in this context, the *taclale* appear to be folk conversations or dialogues that were collected alongside other forms of folklore (stories, legends, poems, etc). D. Furtună, ed., *Cuvinte scumpe: taclale, povestiri și legende românești*, Bucharest: Librăriile Socec, 1914.
- 67 *Îndrumător 1936*, 366.

- 68 The Royal dictatorship, announced in February 1938, represented Carol II's attempt to deal with the internal threat of the Legion and externally to prepare for the advent of war. Marking the shift from a constitutional to an authoritarian regime, the King dissolved the parliament and the 1923 Constitution, instituting his new 'government above the parties' and a new corporatist Constitution. See K. Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 420–423; H.L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Yale, London: Yale U.P; Cambridge U.P, 1951, 206–222; F. Nedelcu, *De la restaurație la dictatura regală: din viața politică a României 1930-1938*, Cluj: Dacia, 1981; Gheorghe Savu, *Dictatura regală (1938-1940)*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1970.
- 69 "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social," incorrectly filed as 1923, FCR-C/1923/46/64-75, Arhivele Naționale (ANIC); "Organizarea Serviciului Social," incorrectly filed as 1923, FCR-C/1923/46/75, ANIC; D. Gusti, *Principiile și scopurile Serviciului Social* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1939); Z. Rostás, "Serviciul Social sau obligativitatea muncii culturale," in *Strada Latină Nr.8. monografii și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 228–230.
- 70 "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social" FCR-C/1923/46/64-75, Arh. Naț.
- 71 *Căminul cultural. întocmire și funcționare*, Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol," 1939, 7.
- 72 Most of the projects for cămine culturale show a faith in a modern functional style with traditional and classical additions. A counter-example that reinforces this preference was the design of the Cămin Cultral in Drăgănești, Olt, which was rejected because of its overly ornate style. "Various Architectural Plans Including Plans for the Model Village Dioști," 1936, FCR-C/1936/21/39-49, ANIC, 38.
- 73 The Royal Cultural Foundations kept detailed records of each *cămin cultural* in their jurisdiction. See *Fondul Fundației Cultural Regale – Cămine* at ANIC.
- 74 *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate: 1943*, Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Regele Mihai I," 1943. This can also be seen in the Foundation's archives, that maintain uninterrupted files on the *cămine* until 1948.
- 75 The archival documents of this institution are held at ANIC in *Fondul Ministerului Artelor și Informațiilor*. After 1950, these were subsequently transferred to the Ministry of Culture.
- 76 Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*; S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992; D. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); T. Starks, *The Body Soviet Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.



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