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DO STARVING PEOPLE REBEL?
HUNGER RIOTS AS *BAB'Y BUNTY*
IN SPRING 1946 IN SOVIET MOLDAVIA
AND THE RESISTANCE DEBATE

Abstract

The postwar famine in the USSR has received scarce attention in both post-Soviet and Western historiography. Based on newly disclosed archival materials from the former civil police and party in Chișinău and Moscow, this article focuses on the food riots in Soviet Moldavia on the eve of the 1946-1947 famine. Out of 30 food riots in the Spring 1946 registered in the Moldavian SSR, 18 were dominated by women (called *bab'y bunty* by Lynne Viola, 1996). The author tries to understand the agency and contingency in the outbreak of the food riots as well as the public and hidden transcript related to the way the Soviet regime tried to deal with earlier signals of the famine. The larger question to be raised is why people resist to food policies at certain moments of food crises and not at all in some others.

Keywords: Late Stalinism, Soviet Moldavia, hunger riots, bab'y bunty, open protest, resistance.

Hunger riots are among the most visible forms of protest resulting from deprivation and severe food shortage. In every regime, food riots are at the heart of the polity's existence. The very social contract and legitimacy are under question if the political authority cannot guarantee the minimum living standards that ensure survival. This study is about how the Soviet regime dealt with the hunger riots in postwar Moldavia, in the Spring of 1946, just at the threshold of the all-Union famine of 1946-1947. Statistically, about 30 riots were registered in late February-early June 1946, especially in the southern and central Bessarabian districts. Available data on 25 hunger riots cover such aspects as the number of participants, their social and gender composition, and their conclusion. In 70 percent

of them (18 out of 25), the participants were overwhelmingly women. The conceptualization of the hunger riots primarily as riots of women is thus justifiable. The *open* protests against the lack of food or *overt* attacks on the state granaries, whether they were dominated by women or not, did not occur in any other region or republic of the Soviet Union in the famine's wake. The explanation of this fact lies, I argue, in Bessarabia's pre-Communist history, the local political culture, and the peculiarities of the initial phase of Sovietization in the South-Western USSR's borderland.[1]

This paper, which will become a chapter in a broader undertaking on famine in the MSSR in the Soviet and European context, raises for the first time in historiography the question of why the Soviet state failed to address a severe hunger crisis in the early stages of the mass famine of 1946-1947. It also sheds new light on when and how protests occur during mass starvation. I draw on Lynne Viola's analysis of peasant protests and especially *bab'y bunty* (women's riots) at the beginning of collectivization in the Soviet Union in early 1930. The "Spring fever" in Soviet Moldavia, in comparison to the "March fever" of 1930, was not connected to collectivization, though. A food shortage triggered the riots in a not yet collectivized countryside. Rumors that a war between the USSR and Western allies, America and Britain, was imminent served as "a catalyzer for mobilization". Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, published in the Soviet press, served as confirmation that the war was a matter of time. Many rioters believed that after the war Bessarabia would become part of Romania again. The need to address the issue is essential and imperative to the extent that the geography of food riots in Soviet Moldavia largely overlaps that of the famine to unfold in the fall of 1946 and reach its peak in winter-spring 1947. It is equally important to understand the factors contributing to the emergence of such a peculiar phenomenon as an *open* non-violent protest and the consequences of how the regime dealt with them.

I will argue that the Soviet regime did not deny agency to the participants in hunger riots. Hunger riots and how the authorities perceived them as a whole had consequences for those in power and for society's structures. The official discourse on the food disturbances varied from one institution or official to another. Although, on occasion, party and militia accounts on riots did acknowledge them as legitimate or quasi-legitimate and interpreted them as a weapon of the weak, the view of the security organs prevailed. The latter's perception was that class enemies were behind the protesters, and, furthermore, that there were national dimensions

embedded in the rallies. The protests themselves and especially their *open*, *defiant* character, were read as proof of resistance against the Soviet power and justified, in turn, harsh measures against those who had organized and supported them. In failing to solve a subsistence crisis with peaceful and non-violent means, the peasant protest later evolved into more violent and brutal forms that served, sequentially, the regime's rationalization of peasant dissent as class war with all the consequences attached.

A Short Note on Historiography, Sources, and Methodology

Lynne Viola is a pioneering historian who analyzed both the rebellions and women's roles in the late 1920s - early1930s Soviet Union.[2] Her work inspired this subject. As to Soviet Moldavia, this study's topic has not been addressed systematically so far in historiography. A volume of documents on the postwar famine in Soviet Moldavia published back in 1993 included, for the first time, a few cases of food riots (Brânzenii Vechi and Ochiul Alb/Nicoreni, see the list and map).[3] A year later, in another volume of documents on late Stalinism in the MSSR, Valeriu Pasat published an MGB document detailing the food riots in Ialpujeni and Dercăuți. In a second document, a speech to local chekists, the plenipotentiary of MGB and MVD of the USSR in the MSSR, N. Golubev, criticized the state security organs for not anticipating it and for taking insufficient measures to prevent it. Golubev called what happened "volynka" (diminutive for riots) and, alternatively, "otkrytoe antisovetskoe vystuplenie" (open anti-Soviet outbreak, or unrest).[4] In 2011, Pasat included several other cases of food riots in his book on the immediate postwar years. He mentioned several food riots such as the one in Țânțăreni, Dărcăuți, Hagi-Abdul quoting fonds of the former KGB in Chișinău destroyed in 1994. Pasat also referred to the ones in Brânzenii Vechi, Dezghingea, Marienfield, and three neighboring villages, and Chirsova.[5] I have myself mentioned in a 2014 book, republished in the following year, a few cases of food riots, namely the ones in Brânzenii Vechi, Marienfield, and in other three villages in the vicinity, as well as Nicoreni, Dezghingea, Chirsova, and Colibași.[6]

Therefore, this study contains ten new, previously unknown, cases of hunger riots, whilst also providing further details about others we did know already. These data come from the party archives in Chișinău and the Ministry of Internal Affairs archives, the latter being accessible for a short time in 2010-2011. In addition to the new empirical data, this study

is the first attempt to conceptualize local granaries' attacks as hunger riots in late February-early June 1946 in Soviet Moldavia. There were no other hunger riots to the best of our knowledge, be they dominated by men or women in other old or new territories of the Soviet Union on the eve of the mass famine of 1946-1947.[7] The famine was indeed an all-Union phenomenon, but people reacted in its earlier stages in different ways throughout the USSR. The focus on a small territory like MSSR offers the possibility to grasp the whole picture from an in-depth analysis of just a portion. As the MSSR was a borderland union republic and the majority of the population non-Slavic, sharing history and language with a neighboring country under the Sovietization process, Romania, it is useful investigating if there was a national dimension of the hunger riots. The documents issued by political police officials would be helpful in this regard.[8]

In some cases, reports related to one or another food riot offer different narratives regarding causation and agency. The timeframe on their elaboration and the institution producing them explains, if only partially, these variations. Sometimes, an official's agency is decisive. The oral sources so far, unfortunately, do not shed light on these episodes, and thus a historian cannot count on other sources than the official ones. These circumstances pose a challenge. There was an inbuilt hierarchy in the Soviet regime's institutional structure, alleging the party had a hegemonic role over militia and security organs, but this is more accurate for Moscow than for local, regional and republican settings.[9]

Oral sources are as essential as the official documents in the reconstitution of things past. There are several hundred interviews with famine witnesses and survivors in Soviet Moldavia published. However, they are silent on the subject of this study. Memory seems to retain the most dramatic events only, and in the context of the period, the food riots were far from being the most critical.[10] As to the press, it does not mention hunger riots either, because this kind of news was deemed very sensible for the Soviet regime.

Food and Political Legitimacy in *Ancien Regimes*

Food crises have been more frequent in human history than periods of plenty. As the resources of food were often scarce and inevitably limited, conflicts and wars ensued. Food is intrinsically related to power. Rulers able to secure more food for their communities could be perceived as

more legitimate to their fellow countrymen. On the contrary, inspired by Thompson and Scott, John Bohstedt has argued that a ruler who cannot guarantee the minimal subsistence for its people faced discontent, food riots, and rebellion from their subjects.[11] In, Russia, Tsarist or Soviet, as Tamara Kondratieva has argued, feeding the population was intimately related to power politics. Moreover, the capacity to secure food was at the very center of political stability and legitimacy question.[12]

As a supreme ruler in medieval France, the King had a moral duty to feed everybody under his jurisdiction.[13] In times of ecologic catastrophes, floods, droughts, or destructions brought by war, the King was responsible for safeguarding the needed supplies and making food prices affordable, otherwise facing sedition from the part of his subjects.[14] Crop failures were fraught with political instability. Hence, the monarch resorted to all-out wheat requisition from the peasants in the common good's interest. Meanwhile, however, the latter could keep other cereals such as rye and barley for their consumption.[15]

The hierarchical order of the medieval world permeated all aspects of every day, including food consumption. Aristocrats were entitled to better rations, especially meat and white bread, not only because they were more affluent and could afford to, but because of ideological reasons as well. Lowest on the social ladder, the peasants were entitled to a specific menu commensurate with the feudal order's moral design and their supposed lack of intellectual abilities.[16]

The pre-modern economy was very much a cereal and subsistence economy. Steven Kaplan resumes this as follows:[17]

The subsistence problem has dominated life in old regime Europe in a relentless way. No issue was more urgent, more pervasively felt, and more difficult to resolve than the matter of grain provisioning. Cereal-dependence conditioned every phase of social life. Grain was the pilot sector of the economy; beyond its determinant role in agriculture, directly and indirectly, grain shaped the development of commerce and industry, regulated employment, and provided significant revenue for the state, the church, the nobility, and large segments of the third estate. Subsistence needs gave cereal-dependence its most telling expression. The vast majority of people in the old regime derived the bulk of their calories from cereals. Never did the old proverb" a man is what he eats" hold truer. Because most people were poor, the quest for subsistence preoccupied them relentlessly; the study of how they dealt with their never-ending subsistence problem tells us a good deal about who and what they were.

In modern times, the danger of sedition due to the lack of food increases. Among other causes, a food crisis triggered the French Revolution and shattered the legitimacy of the monarchy. More than a century later, the Romanov dynasty ended its 305-year rule in February 1917 due to the outbreak of a food crisis in the capital in the context of a devastating war.[18]

The *ancien regime's* logic in the food-legitimacy relation was perpetuated into interwar Romania, including Bessarabia and much of Europe. Most of the former Tsarist territories, part of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union after 1922, would experience another type of political authority that would radically differ from the old regimes, including in the food policy domain.[19] The Bolsheviks would use food as a weapon against the undesirables of all sorts and award generously those playing on their side.[20] To that end, they imposed a hyper-centralized food supply system, dismantling the decentralized system of granaries that proved crucial in *preventing* famines in many instances in the past.

Food Policy in the Romanian-Tsarist-Soviet Borderlands before 1946

Bessarabia, the eastern half of the medieval and early modern Principality of Moldavia, became a part of the Tsarist Empire in 1812 as a result of a Russian-Ottoman war. The Tsarist Empire lagged behind the principal continental and overseas empires of the time. But throughout the 19th century, it tried to catch up and synchronize its policies with the West.[21] One of them was to adopt a food security policy. In the mid-1830s, Petersburg extended its food security policy to Bessarabia by creating grain storehouses at the volost and village level. Initially, under the coordination of the Marshall of the Bessarabian nobility and after 1861 under the purview of Zemstvo, local granaries played an essential role in securing peasants with minimal subsistence grain in bad harvest years.[22] To this end, the state granted low-interest loans to the peasants, payable in a few years. Millions of peasants in the Tsarist Empire involved in the state-sponsored cooperative movement did enjoy even better conditions. In case the repayment proved not to be affordable in a few years, the peasants received fiscal amnesty. As Yanni Kotsonis has argued, this had to have somewhat mixed results in developing progressist capitalist relations in the countryside in what he has dubbed as the Making Peasants Backward policy.[23]

Notwithstanding the corruption and mismanagement involved, the local granaries did help prevent mass mortality in most of the period up to the Revolutions of 1917. During the last century before its demise, the Romanovs experienced a local mass famine in Finland due mainly to local administration failures,[24] and another famine in 1891-1892, this time empire-wide.[25] Bessarabia fared pretty well, avoiding mass mortality due to the role played by the institution of local granaries. Only isolated areas in the north, close to Prut river (today in Râșcani and Glodeni districts), experienced food shortages and cholera in 1891-1892.[26]

During the First World War, especially from 1916 onwards, Bessarabia experienced a food crisis that was common to the whole empire. The war effort depleted the grain reserves. The mass requisitioning of horses for the war effort and the mobilization of about 250,000 Bessarabians in the Russian Army impacted agriculture's productivity.[27] The burden of filling the gap in workforce shortage fell upon the women. The food supply worsened in 1917-1918, owing to revolutionary turmoil, political instability, and economic disruptions, which would continue up to the mid-1920s.

Meanwhile, Bessarabia became part of Greater Romania in March 1918. The Romanian Army would continue requisitioning grain and other agricultural produce in the next years, much as the Russian Army did in 1916-1917. However, the phenomenon was not limited to Bessarabia alone, being extended to other Romanian provinces as well.[28] For a while, Bessarabian agricultural goods were not accepted across the Prut River in the old Kingdom until the prices fell to the minimum and were bought for almost nothing by tradesmen and speculators.[29] After the agrarian reform of 1918-1924, the food supply improved, and productivity stabilized in the main. However, Bessarabian peasants and other Romanian peasants always complained that the grain prices were too low to be fair relative to industrial goods' costs.[30] The peak of the peasant unrest came during the Great Depression years, but mass famine was avoided, unlike in the Soviet Union. Strikes in 1929-1933 Romania involving workers were widespread and violent, notably in two instances resulting in fatalities, at Lupeni mines and Grivița railway depot. Workers' strikes due to severe cuts in living standards and increasing prices for food supplies were an often occurrence. This potential was used aptly by the Comintern through the illegal Communist Party of Romania (PCdR) and other quasi-legal satellite organizations.[31] To that end, the 6th Congress of Comintern issued specific recommendations on how to involve more women in skirmishes

with police. The women workers had more motives to be dissatisfied than the men workers, as the former received 50% less pay for the same amount of work.[32]

A severe drought touched Bessarabia and other Romanian provinces in 1923-1925 causing food shortages and a spike in hunger-related illnesses. As a result, the mortality in Bessarabia increased by about 15,000 in three years.[33] In 1935, another severe drought in Bessarabia was about to provoke a famine with mass excess deaths. However, the Romanian government's expedient measures and the Romanian Red Cross avoided humanitarian catastrophe. About 125,000 individuals enjoyed access to food through a public kitchen network established in 1935-1936. Besides, other regions of Romanian received several thousand Bessarabian children in need of special recovery treatment.[34] Several thousand still died from starvation.[35] Overall, the *ancien regime's* food relief worked better than the Soviet one. The involvement of the state and other agencies in the earlier stages of the food crisis as well as the free or quasi-free press proved crucial.[36]

The Bolsheviks were aware of the hazardous role the food issues could play in power politics. Memory about women participating in the hunger rallies, which accompanied the fall of the Romanovs, was fresh. Acknowledging the importance of food, they established the first modern dictatorship based on the monopoly of food distribution.[37] While blaming the Tsarist food policies and the tribute model of modernization, in reality, the Bolsheviks embarked much on the same model,[38] called alternatively internal colonialism.[39] However, the Soviet pattern of modernization was by no means a mere continuation of the Tsarist one.[40] It aimed at implementing a radical social engineering program and knew no restraints in using violence to this end.[41]

Unlike Romania and most of Europe in the interwar, Soviet Russia would experience severe food shortages and famines with high excess deaths. Triggered by revolutionary turmoil resulting in the disruption of the whole economy, the mass famine was a constant during the Russian Civil War, reaching its peak in 1921-1922. Under Herbert Hoover, the American Relief Administration allowed Lenin to give a hand to the starving Russians, saving several million from certain death, and unintentionally, the Bolshevik regime itself from demise.[42] The Tambov peasant rebellion and Kronstadt uprising determined Lenin to give up utopian plans of total control over the economy, introducing the New Economic Policy in March 1921. The grain crisis of 1926-1927 would prompt, among other

factors, Stalin's Revolution from Above in 1929. Agriculture and peasants were to pay a tribute in grain and manpower for the Soviet Union's rapid industrialization. In conjunction with bad weather and a collectivization drive at any cost, it would result in the mass famine of 1932-1933. Between 5,5 and 6,5 million died of hunger, half in Ukraine alone, and more than a million in Kazakhstan.[43] State relief would be slow, late, and insufficient to be able to avoid the catastrophe. Though originating from various factors, the way famine unfolded displayed a disciplinary dimension concerning the peasants. It also served as a motive to reverse the Ukrainization policy in place since the early 1920s, heralding a radical change in the Soviet nationalities policy to survive until the late 1980s.[44]

The wholesale collectivization campaign resulted in a dramatic decrease in agricultural output and, subsequently, in a food crisis in 1930-1931, culminating in the mass famine of 1932-1933. Rebellions against collectivization and open, violent dissatisfaction with the politics of provisions predated the mass famine. The peak of the mass resistance came in the spring of 1930. About 13,000 peasant rebellions and food riots, with more than two million participants, were registered in that year alone. In about one-third of the disturbances, women represented the majority. While the context of the postwar famine is different from the early 1930s, there are some similarities in how the regime perceived and reacted to the food riots, particularly those Lynne Viola labeled as *bab'y bunty*, or women's riots.[45]

What is often absent from most narratives on the Soviet famines, especially the Great Soviet famine of 1932-1933 known as Holodomor in Ukraine, is that these are a result – among other factors – of a fundamental change in the food security policy following the abdication of the Tsar. It was about the introduction of the grain monopoly by the Provisional government in the Spring of 1917, perpetuated by the Bolsheviks after October that same year. Besides, the Soviets had liquidated the granary system as a decentralized institution serving as the critical pillar in preventing and fighting hunger. The Soviet regime introduced instead a hyper-centralized food distribution system immediately after the October Revolution, reinforcing it again after 1929 among other Civil War practices. Praised as efficient by many in war conditions, including during the Second World War,[46] the Soviet food supply system was often dysfunctional and fraught with catastrophic consequences during peacetime. In 1946-1947, that would prove to be the case again. The permanent scarcity of food will accompany the Soviet Union up to its demise owing to the fact that the

collectivization of the countryside brought control over the peasants but prevented making agriculture a thriving domain of the Soviet economy.[47]

During the war, Romania delivered oil to Germany and large quantities of food, especially grain and corn.[48] Already in late 1941, the Romanian government introduced rationing to staple food. The civil population's supply was somewhat acceptable, without significant major disruptions, or mass famine, as was the case in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the lack of food was a constant issue caused by the shortage of workforce and exports to Germany. Besides, most of the supplies went to the sizeable Romanian Army of half a million and an initial 62,000 Wehrmacht contingent stationed in Romania, reduced to 26,000 in 1942. In early 1942, the food becomes increasingly insufficient, and the authorities introduced differentiated rations. The military received the best rations that included one kg of white bread per day and 1,5 kg of meat per week. The civil population's main rations instead were beans and cornbread (*mămăligă*, a sort of polenta).[49] Eating cornbread in excess, without or little fats, provokes severe diseases, like pellagra. In the immediate postwar Romania, pellagra increased by 250 percent.[50] In contrast to the civil population, Romanian Jews and Roma did starve and died *en masse* during the war, especially those deported to Transnistria due to the racial policy adopted along German lines.[51]

The Soviet home front excess mortality during the war – not counting Leningrad under the blockade – has been estimated to at least 1 million. If not for American aid in food, the death toll would have been much higher. Providing food for the soldiers was the priority, but given the loss of the leading grain-growing regions, their rations were relatively scarce till early 1944.[52] The military received the lion's share of the lend-lease bread and other food. Still, sometimes it reached Gulag inmates as well.[53] In the Soviet territories occupied by the Nazis, the food situation was much worse. The Germans put in action the infamous Backe Hunger plan, especially in Ukraine.[54]

When the Soviets returned to Bessarabia at the end of the war, the dominant perception of the administration toward the local population was a combination of contempt and envy as to the existing living standards, particularly the possibility of getting bread and other staple food. These perceptions were especially widespread among the military and were partially responsible for the high criminality cases against the local population.[55] The republican party and government institutions as well as the civil police (NKVD) were asking for the punishment of the

Red Army delinquents, but to no avail.[56] This speaks to the fact that the Soviet military institutions had their priorities in waging the war at any costs, thus paying less attention to public sensitivities. In contrast, the local party-state institutions seemingly felt a responsibility in administering a certain territory and wanted to avoid further antagonizing the civilian population.

In a June 1945 interview to the Commission for the Chronicle of the Great Patriotic War, Nicolae Vizitei, the first postwar mayor of Chișinău, stated that upon his arrival a day after the Germans had left (August 24, 1944), there were no food supplies at all in the city. But in a matter of days, the peasants started to bring all the best they had to the market. Without many headaches for the Soviet authorities, the peasants with entrepreneurial spirit Vizitei praised solved the food crisis.[57] But the food situation in Bessarabia in 1944 was better only in comparison. It would worsen in the following period partly due to the long-lasting impact of the war, bad weather, crop failures in 1945-1946, and Sovietization policies. With hindsight and in comparison, according to some accounts, the Romanians were barely taxing the peasants.[58] Of course, it has been an exaggeration of the Antonescu regime's fiscal burden that befell upon the peasants.[59] Still, the impression is worth mentioning as it shaped the Soviets' attitude toward the locals in the next period.

In the north and, partially, in the center, with the notable exception of Chișinău, the Soviets had already introduced their wartime food distribution model and fiscal policies by May 1944.[60] The primary military operations of August 1944 and the attrition war in the previous months took place in the central part of Bessarabia.[61] It would have severe consequences on the immediate peacetime period as a whole and agriculture in particular. The evacuation of the population from a 25 km-strip close to the front line imposed in mid-May 1944 in central Bessarabia brought additional hurdles for the postwar reconstruction efforts.[62] The republic's leadership tried to consider this fact, asking Moscow to reduce procurement plans for the central districts.[63] These efforts had uneven results. Along with the southern areas, the ones around Chișinău will experience the most disastrous losses in human life during the famine to unfold in the fall of 1946 and winter-spring 1947.

By late 1944-early 1946, the situation in Bessarabia was hardly unique. The Smolensk region in Central European Russia experienced dire food shortages following the liberation in the spring and summer of 1944.[64] The same goes for the Kalinin region (now Tver'), one of the first Russian

regions to be liberated.[65] All the Soviet territories, either under the Nazi occupation or not, went through similar hurdles. Criminality skyrocketed, and popular discontent grew steadily. The fact that food shortages were an all-Union problem should not downgrade the importance of embarking on case-studies in a more systematic way. While focusing on a case-study however one is supposed to keep in mind a broader picture since a local phenomenon could not be understood in isolation from larger developments.

Food Riots in Soviet Moldavia, Spring 1946

The impact of the war and the liquidation of the communal granaries, compounded by a bad harvest in 1945, anticipated a severe food crisis in the following year's spring-summer period. The food shortages first afflicted urban dwellers, the rural inhabitants following the lead. Since mid-1945 and the beginning of the next year, bread shortage was felt only in some isolated areas. By spring 1946, it started to become more of a general problem. Initially extremely acute in various districts throughout the Right Bank (Bessarabia), particularly in the north,[66] the food crisis extended to the republic's south and central districts. In the fall of 1946 and the spring of 1947, the north would fare better than the south and center. Starting with April-May 1947, however, the famine would be as deadly in the north as in other regions.[67]

The deterioration of the food supply situation, mainly concerning bread shortage, has been recorded as early as mid-summer 1945. In less than a week alone, July 5-10, 1945, the military censorship of the Moldavian political police (People's Commissariat for State Security; NKGB, in Russian) intercepted 300 letters on the subject. That seemed a temporary setback. In 1946, however the signals of the coming famine resumed on a higher scale. The State Security of the Moldavian SSR (renamed MGB in March) reported 313 similar messages in April alone, their number increasing to 538 in May and almost tripled to 883 in June relative to mid-Spring.[68] Tellingly, the queues for bread in Chișinău and other Moldavian localities increased dramatically. As noted above, the phenomenon was not, however, limited to the Moldavian SSR. In other Soviet republics, mainly in south-eastern Ukraine and Russia, similar cases were registered.[69] Though only in the MSSR, more precisely in its Bessarabian part, the food shortages' dissatisfaction would take the

form of a widespread *open* protest. The phenomenon, then, deserves an explanation. It pertains to multiple factors I will refer to after giving a detailed description of what one can grasp from the available sources.

The *open* protests materialized in storming the local grain storehouses, the *Zagotzerno*, in reaction to the authorities' unwillingness to address the food crisis. These events were by no means unprecedented. Attacks on local granaries were recorded earlier in 1945 and later, from August to December 1946. However, in contrast to the previous and later assaults, the Spring ones were mainly peaceful. The initiators and participants behaved in a very particular way. They were non-violent or, more precisely, employed violence only in a limited way, excluding physical injuries and aiming at getting access to the grain stores in broad daylight, in a kind of public performance setting. It was a form of open protest and, at the same time, an act of sedition in that it exhibited a peculiar culture of opposition to the authorities. As if the protesters were saying, "we know that what we are doing is not legal, but it is not illegal all the same, because our very survival is at stake, i.e., we have nothing to lose." And besides, "we do not hide our discontent by acting openly, in a fair manner, in contrast to the criminals who are stealing during the night, using weapons and violence against the warehouses' wards, police, and officials." Semi-spontaneous, semi-organized, and scattered, the Spring 1946 food riots in Soviet Moldavia in Spring had something in common, as if following a pattern and being organized by a central body. But there was no organization behind them, and in this, they were rather spontaneous representing an authentic grassroots movement.

The assaults on grain storehouses started in late February and ended in early June 1946, reaching 30 in total. Information about almost half of them is relatively scarce, but fortunately, for some of them there are detailed descriptions. As already mentioned, all sources about these disturbances have official provenance. Somehow surprisingly, however, the reports do not converge on the same plot as a whole and sometimes are utterly divergent as to the causation, the distribution of blame, and their significance. The first food riot occurred on February 27, 1946, and, unlike most to follow, would be dominated by men. More exactly, about 200 peasants attacked the grain storehouse in the village of Țânțăreni, Telenești district, Bălți county, some 60 km north of Chișinău. A report of the State Security (MGB) stated that the storehouse's devastation failed on that day due to the authorities' expedient measures. On the next day, six women repeated the attempt. They were apprehended by warders and

local activists while breaking the locks and entering the storehouse. Shortly after, an MGB group arrived on the spot and arrested two men thought to be the real instigators. As Valeriu Pasat rightly notes, without broad support from other villagers, the tentative was doomed.[70] This first incident aiming at plundering a local grain storehouse anticipates in many ways the next ones in terms of organization and shifting the blame from the real perpetrators to alleged ones. The authorities tended to view women at this stage as lacking agency and not capable of acting independently. Hence, the authorities were to look for causes and initiators somewhere else.

Three weeks later, on March 17, 1946, the next attack ensued. Lacking bread to feed their families, about 100-120 desperate individuals, mostly women, attacked the local grain warehouse, *Zagotzerno*, in Brânzenii Vechi, Răspopeni district, Orhei county. They broke the padlocks and confiscated four tons of grain. Moldavian SSR's prosecutor Simon Kolesnik reported the attack took place with the connivance of the storehouse director, D. P. Cecan, and guardians V. G. Camerzan and F. I. Ojog. By provoking the riots, the culprits aimed at concealing the evidence of embezzlement they were allegedly involved in.[71] One can assume the crowd was indeed encouraged by the director and guardians of the storehouse as the archival sources often mention theft and misappropriation of grain by the *Zagotzerno* administration in the MSSR, and across the USSR.[72] However, participating in a food riot was a dangerous enterprise and the decision to partake had to be pondered carefully. Slightly disconcerted as to who participated in the assault, the militia noted that the "main bulk of participants directly involved in the despoliation of grain represented poor people among them women, teenagers, wives of the Red Army recruits and invalids of the Great Patriotic War." Under these circumstances, the attackers did hardly fit into the category of class enemy. On the contrary, participants in the rebellion incarnated the very social basis for which the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, the poor and the discriminated against. Usually, as Lynne Viola has shown for the early 1930s, a class enemy to shift the blame on had to be identified or invented in such cases.

In the Brânzenii Vechi food riots, Maria Banari, the main instigator, supposedly belonged to kulaks. An aggravating element pertained to her family biography. The Soviet political police had previously arrested her brother, thought to be an ex-far-right anti-Semitic party member in interwar Romania, the so-called cuzists (followers of A.C. Cuza).[73] The MVD report indicated the responsibility was of those in charge of the storehouse, i.e.,

men, perceived as superior in political consciousness to women, and thus fully eligible to be blamed on and sentenced harshly. All of them, labeled as belonging to the anti-Soviet elements, faced criminal charges compounded by their alleged participation in the Holocaust, as war criminals.[74] One of the guardians, Camerzan, was supposedly involved in the arrest of Jews and confiscation of their property during the war. The other one, Ojog, was allegedly a policeman in Ukraine during the war. Neither Camerzan nor Ojog, however, could be found in the list of Holocaust perpetrators preserved in the former KGB archive in Chișinău. The deportation of 1949 targeted specifically former collaborators with German and Romanian authorities during the war, and their names are not listed there either.[75] It seems, then, that the initial allegations included in the report were fabricated. The hunger riots and their extent, social and gender composition, caught the militia unprepared and created a sense of alarm. Thus, the authorities' first impulse was to use the ritualic formula in explaining what was happening according to the ideological prescriptions of the *Short course of the TsK VKP (b)* and subsequent instructions on the issue, i.e., to look for class enemies behind the purpoted inimical manifestations.[76]

The main culprit's testimonies are extremely valuable as they shed light on the collaboration between women and men during the preparation stage. Maria Banari, testified to the militia that manager Cecan counseled her back in February 1946 on how to get grain. She was supposed to select a few persons responsible for mobilizing a big group of women, especially among the Red Army recruits' poor and wives, and organize an attack on the grain storehouses. When Banari replied that this was dangerous and fraught with criminal charges, Cecan replied that "if you are in big numbers, nobody will sentence you".[77] Banari mobilized the women but personally did not participate directly in storming the grain storehouse. One can infer thus that she was only partially convinced about the reassurances given by Cecan. She participated in the food riot through proxies instead, sending her children. Even though children were less prone to face criminal charges, it was nevertheless dangerous. By delegating her children to participate in the riots, Banari solved however her dilemma on whether it is correct to instigate the action and not participate in it. Anyway, neither she nor her children were convicted. Her gender identity seemed to be crucial. At this stage of the food riots, the authorities chose to be lenient towards women. Besides, she testified that men were the real instigators, and that helped the militia in shifting

the blame. It is more difficult to explain why Cecan and others were not convicted either. Probably the explanation pertaines to the local patronage system that allowed the culprits to avoid being punished.

Other assaults on the local granaries followed in April and reached their peak in May. The attack against the grain storehouse in the village of Marienfield, Cimişlia district, in the south, leaves no room for doubt as to the real culrpits and the participants' motivation. On April 17, 1946, about 45 women from the neighboring village of Ialpujeni broke the storehouse's window and appropriated grain. The reason for such drastic action was the refusal of the storehouse's manager to allot them one pood (16.3 kg) of wheat each. Most of the participants in these food riots were women with children in tow and teenagers. Their husbands were still serving in the Red Army.[78] The Ialpujeni riot is the first to give a real headache to the authorities because it broke out spontaneously, no instigators being identified outside the participants. And the latter were wives of Red Army recruits, i.e., representing the social basis of the Soviet power in the village.

When hunger riots multiplied in the following month, the approach toward women changed. In fact, it had already changed in late April. The Chirsova disturbances (April 24) resulted in the arrest of three women identified as the real perpetrators.[79] In another food riot, held the next day (April 25) in Hagi-Abdul, Vulcăneşti district, Cahul county, by arresting two women, the authorities made clear again that punishment cannot be ruled out for them as well.[80] In the peasant rebellions of 1930, Lynne Viola established that the woman "like an unruly child or a butting goat, she was not held responsible for her actions, even in cases when she was subject to reprimand or punishment".[81] This observation might be valid for the 1946 food riots in Soviet Moldavia. But as the information in our case is scant, it is difficult to substantiate it entirely. Additional research on how Soviet officials' perceptions of women changed after WWII relative to the 1930s is needed to answer this question. It is safe to assume however that by arresting women in late April when the food riots were rampant, the authorities signaled that nobody should count on condescension. Containing the food riots was perceived as ideologically extremely challenging to deal with because of their *open* and *peaceful* character. Somehow paradoxically, it was easier for the authorities to deal with criminals employing *covert* strategies and *violence* against the warehouses' guardians, activists, and militia.

Other attacks on grain stores followed almost the same pattern and social composition. On April 24, 1946, about one hundred individuals,

mainly women, raided the local *Zagotzerno* in Chirsova, Comrat district, Bender County. In this instance, the preparations were ahead for some time. Two weeks before, the main culprit, Maria Celac, appealed to the village poor and asked the women to join in a collective action to seize grain from the granary. She succeeded in convincing Uliana Hagi, Nadejda Radu, and Stepanida Radu in organizing the mobilization of the population to this end. However, no precise plan was adopted except the storming was supposed to occur on a specific date at a given hour. When the day came, a group of women led by Nadejda and Stepanida Radu headed for the village administration to ask for bread. On approaching the village hall, they met Uliana Hagi, who told the group that it was senseless to ask the local authorities for food assistance. Agreeing on that, the women went directly to the grain warehouse.

Meanwhile, the main organizer, Maria Celac, joined the group. The storehouse' guards were missing, making the crowd's task easy to accomplish. There was probably some connivance with the guardians involved. The rioters had only to remove the wattle walls and seize the corn, about one ton per total. Three initiators, Maria Celac, Uliana Hagi, and Nadejda Radu, were shortly placed under arrest. The civil police investigation on the spot also identified a man who was supposedly involved in the riot's organization, one Ilya Burdji, the local government plenipotentiary for agriculture.[82]

Large numbers of participants in the food riots made the authorities suspect the protests had an organized character. Indeed, it is hardly a coincidence that 50, 60, 100, or hundreds of persons met just occasionally on a specific date in a particular place. In many cases, the preparation for the manifestations started days or even weeks before. In Ialpujeni, Cimișlia district, Bender County, Ana Sprînceanu had started to mobilize the wives of Red Army recruits and war widows as early as April 10 for an event scheduled to take place a week later, on April 17, 1946. In Chirsova, Comrat district, the same County as Ialpujeni, some 65 km south of Chișinău, Maria Celac commenced talking to women and tried convincing them to participate in the raid on the *Zagotzerno* on April 10 for a manifestation coming to fruition two weeks latter, on April 24, 1946.[83]

Several reports point to another critical aspect. Namely, the actions themselves had an open character, but the preparations of the riots implied using mobilization techniques in a more or less transparent fashion.[84] The quasi-public and open nature of the preparation stage lends another peculiarity to the hunger riots. In comparison to both previous and later

protests spurred by food shortages, the preparations, if any, would bear more of a covert and clandestine nature.

The actions in defiance of the state authority were seemingly synchronized in some instances, though unlikely in the two previous ones (Ialpujeni and Chirsova). That happened undoubtedly on May 1, 1946, when in several neighboring villages of Cimișlia district, food riots broke out simultaneously. On that date, about 500 individuals from four contiguous localities Mereni, Javgur, Cenac, and Grădești, organized an all-out assault on the local grain warehouse (located in Mereni). The majority of the participants were women, making the uprising the largest in the period under scrutiny. In this case, at least women from Javgur have been inspired by a previous riot taking place in the neighboring Ialpujeni two weeks prior.[85] In another food riot held in Dezghingea on April 29, women acted in the frontline while men stayed in the back, ready to intervene in case of danger.[86] This scene resembles many registered in 1930 during the "March fever" in the old Soviet territories analyzed by Lynne Viola. Possibly, the same pattern of action occurred in other hunger riots, but the information on about half of them is rather scarce, and it is difficult to say with certainty. Mikhail Sholokhov did refer in his famous novel *The Virgin Land* to such a peasant resistance model in the North Caucasus in the early 1930s.[87]

Most of the hunger riots, either dominated by women or not, took place in villages with a Romanian majority (19 out of 24 cases). In some of them, Gagauz represented the majority, and in one community, the population was mixed, 50/50 Gagauz/Bulgarian (Chirsova). Ethnic Romanians were subject to all-out mobilization in the Red Army, 281,563 participating on various fronts between March 1944 and May 1945.[88] By early 1946, many had not returned home yet or had fallen on the frontline.[89] The Gagauz and Bulgarians, however, were subject to selective recruitment due to their categorization as diaspora ethnic groups, i.e., quasi-enemy nations because their "homelands" fought on the side of Nazi Germany (Turkey, and Bulgaria). In Dezghingea, a Gagauz village, by spring 1946, conscription touched only 18 men in a village of 1200 households.[90] It is safe to admit then that in the Romanian villages, the incidence that women were acting independently without a husband at home to rely upon was higher than in Gagauz ones. The Chirsova and Dezghingea riots are cases in point. While women participated in the incidents, their husbands were at home.[91] It might seem a contradiction that ethnic Romanians also belonged to an 'enemy nation,' still conscripted *en masse*. The explanation

is that from the Soviet perspective, ethnic Romanians were Moldavians, a different nation.[92]

It was not by accident that women dominated among those attacking the state grain stockpiles. But although women dominated most of the food riots, as Viola noticed on the 1930 "March fever," women's riots were a part of the peasant culture of revolt and moral peasant economy writ large.[93] Traditionally women were in charge of feeding their family, and their maternal instinct prompted them to act in whatever manner to deliver food. They would sacrifice food to their children during the incoming famine in the Winter and Spring of 1947. Evidence from the Great Irish Famine suggests that women were much more active in defending their families and securing the minimum food reserves.[94] In general, women would also prove more resilient and resistant to food shortages. However, as Ion Druță, the most celebrated Soviet Moldavian writer would point out in his autobiographical novel *The Burden of our Goodness* (1969), this would have a catastrophic effect on women's health over the years. He describes how starting with 1950, mortality among women increased dramatically due to their sufferings 3-4 years prior.[95] This was true of the rank-and-file women peasants, but even women accepting to collaborate closely with the regime, in what has been called *zhensovety* (women's delegates), did not fare better during the immediate postwar difficulties, including famine.[96]

In several cases, the reports on the food riots mention war rumors. Some of the riots' participants thought a war between the USA and Great Britain against the Soviet Union was imminent. It was expected thus that Bessarabia would become part of Romania again and the famine would be a thing of the past. Romania's image is idealized, many choosing to leave for Romania, either legally or illegally.[97] Few knew that Romania itself experienced a severe food crisis at the same time, especially but not exclusively in Western Moldavia. In contrast to the MSSR, however, food shortages did not evolve into mass excess deaths in Romania.[98]

The rumors of a possible war with the West were fueled by the official Soviet press, especially with regard to Churchill's speech on March 5, 1946, on the Iron Curtain.[99] The hunger riots of Spring 1946 in Soviet Moldavia then occurred in a different context to those from the Spring of 1930. It pertained to the uncertainties of the beginning of the Cold War and hopes of large swaths of the population that Bessarabia could become part of Romania again.[100] The food riots in Soviet Moldavia had a pronounced gender and national, ethnic component (see more in the map and graphs).

Different and Divergent Views on Hunger Riots among Officials

Nikolai Golubev, the Moscow plenipotentiary in MSSR responsible for supervising the local political and civil police, expressed that plainly in a speech to MGB officials in early June 1946. Referring to the outburst of food riots in late February that year, he pointed to the Bessarabian nationalist diaspora in Romania, believed to intensify its covert activity in the MSSR in Spring 1946 by spreading rumors of a possible war between the USSR and the USA and Britain. Notably, he did not mention the women and teenagers who had played a preeminent role in the Spring food riots. He shifted the blame entirely on class and on external enemies.[101] Lynne Viola pointed to the fact that women in the Soviet official discourse were perceived as the most backward part of the peasant world and, in addition, they were viewed as classless. Golubev neglected the gender component in the food riots altogether, probably because he shared this view. It became hegemonic in the MGB milieu, though less so in the MVD one. Iosif Mordovets, the chief of political police, expressed a slightly diffirent view to Golubev's in that he thought the Red Army's wives and widows' requests for bread were legitimate. Except for this difference, he also blamed class enemies for being behind the riots' organization and scolded the party for not addressing the issue properly.[102]

There was no unanimity in the party related to what was happening either. Bychkov, the Bender county party first secretary, for instance, thought that material wants and a severe food crisis did not exist as such. More like Golubev, he blamed the occurrence of protests entirely on the class enemies' instigations, the kulaks, and on other anti-Soviet elements. Another official of the same status in another county looked for faults somewhere else. According to Korneyev, the first secretary in Bălți county, the lack of vigilance from party organs' as well as MVD and MGB explained the phenomenon. The local authorities supposedly allowed for the protests to occur, especially by not strengthening the grain storehouses' protection.[103]

Nikita Salogor, the *ad interim* first secretary of the CC of C(b) of Moldavia, received reports on the protests from local party organs, MVD and MGB. Along with Fyodor Butov, the chairman of the Moscow's Bureau in the MSSR, and Golubev, Salogor thus seemed to be the most informed person in this regard. He left a comment on a report about the food riots in Brânzenii Vechi (March 17) sent on March 23, 1946 by the minister of Internal Affairs of the Moldavian SSR, Fyodor Tutushkin, that

reads plainly as "the famine comes indeed".[104] On another report sent to him by Tutushkin as well, Salogor added a longer comment: "They are otherwise law-abiding citizens. And they resorted to these illegalities because of the famine".[105] This time, it was about the hunger riots in Ordăşeni and Zaim (May 18-19, 1946). Witnessing the famine of the early 1930s in the Moldavian ASSR,[106] Salogor seemingly did know how to read such alarming signals. Subsequent events will eventually confirm his grim premonition. By using the word famine at least twice, even though it was about secret documents, Salogor broke a taboo. His comments represented an example of speaking un-Bolshevik, forestalling a reprimand of some sort or another. More than in the 1930s, using the word "famine" to Soviet postwar realities was however fraught with much more severe consequences. After 1945, the famine became associated with Nazi policies in occupied Soviet territories.[107] In any case, it is not improbable to admit that Salogor's crossing the red line contributed to his demotion in mid-July 1946. It was by no means the only motive of his falling into disgrace. Another reason was his letter to Stalin in June 1946 in which he asked for the inclusion of the south Bessarabian territories on the Danube mouths and the Black Sea shores into the MSSR in detriment to Ukraine.[108] Unlike Lev Kopelev,[109] however, Salogor did not arrive to become a dissident. He would not repent his participation in the collectivization campaign of the 1930s in the old Soviet territories. Nor would he revisit his role in the Sovietization of Bessarabia in the first two years following the return of the Red Army in the former Romanian province.

More than reporting, Fyodor Tutushkin had his view on the hunger riots. In a missive to the Central Committee of Moldavia in early June 1946, he blamed the food riots on the intensifying activity of the the anti-Soviet elements. However, the militia chief shared a less ideologically driven perspective than some party or state security officials. He acknowledged that the poor and middle peasants did represent a majority among the participants in the *volynki*. i.e., rural social categories perceived by the Communist ideology and the regime as their allies in the countryside. In the same vein, Tutushkin pointed out that the persons embarking on criminal activities during 1946 were by no means recidivists. The majority of delinquents belonged to popular classes, not the well-to-do peasants, the *class enemy* in ideological parlance. In December 1946, he reported that the percentage of the 'new' criminals increased to 96,8%, i.e., representing the desperate people striving to survive and avoid starving to death.[110] Thus, his premonition expressed in the summer came true in late autumn.

In contrast to the gender composition of the hunger riots, men were dominant among the 'new criminals', even though women also took part in stealing food and other goods.[111] Otherwise, Tutushkin informed his superiors in Moscow, Sergey Kruglov, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, about the major hunger riots in the MSSR as they unfolded. In the semester reports to Moscow, however, there was no word about the food riots.[112] Women attacking grain storehouses was indeed an uncomfortable reality and not so criminal to be included in criminality reports. Hunger riots were illegal but legitimate.

According to Tutushkin, the pacification of food rioters involved two methods. The first, repression, consisted in the arrest of 3 to 10 persons labeled as instigators and anti-Soviet elements, which were further indicted and convicted. The second, propaganda, represented the authorities' soft instrument and explained 'objective causes of the food problems' to rioters. A summary report dated August 1, 1946, registered April and May as the peak months with 21 hunger riots, most of them taking place in southern areas, Cahul, Bender, Chișinău counties. The Orhei County, in the center-north, and Bălți County, in the north, counted fewer cases, while Soroca, the second northern County, none. At the same time, there was no attack on *Zagotzerno* on the Left Bank of the Dniester River, i.e., in the former interwar Moldavian ASSR already collectivized in the early 1930s.[113]

Why Were There No Hunger Riots on the Left Bank and in Other Old Soviet Territories?

In the spring and summer of 1946, food shortages were worse in Transnistria than Bessarabia.[114] That supports Boshdedt's contention that the food shortage in itself is not enough for food riots to emerge. There are other factors at work, such as political culture and general attitude and knowledge of a given political regime and how it reacts to open protest manifestations.[115] Transnistrians knew the Soviet system from the interwar period and were less keen to go for an open protest. They tended to chosoe other forms of protest, less visible and thus less risky such as sabotage of the work in the kolkhoz, leaving for work in either better-off north Bessarabian or Western Ukrainian areas. In Transnistria, formally collectivized, only about half of the *kolkhozniki* honored their workload (*trudodni*). That was a phenomenon widely occuring in other old territories

of the Soviet Union, being labeled by the Canadian historian Jean Levesque as part-time *kolkhozniki*.[116] It seems thus that the already collectivized peasants acquired an useful experience in terms of survival strategies during food shortages and famine. In comparison to the Bessarabian districts of the MSSR, the number of dystrophies and excess deaths will be proportionally lower in Transnistria.

The hunger or food riots in Soviet Moldavia are similar to those of the USSR's early 1930s. They are explainable both in terms of the peasant culture of revolt and the moral peasant economy. But there are some dissimilarities between the interwar and postwar riots. The 1946 riots in Soviet Moldavia occurred in a different social, cultural, political, and *geo*political post-WWII context. The hunger riots, most dominated by women, were just one form of *open* protest against the food supply policy in postwar Soviet Moldavia. A weapon of the weak, the phenomenon was triggered by the bad harvest of 1945 when the amount of grain harvested was 2,5 times less than in 1940. The high procurement quotas and the military operations in March-August 1944 involving the three armies left their profound impact. But there was another factor explaining why only Bessarabian districts witnessed food riots. It pertains to the recent history of the province as part of interwar Romania. The interwar Romanian regime was far from a fully-fledged democracy. At most, it was an ailing institutional democracy and increasingly authoritarian, especially after 1930, when King Carol II took the reign. In 1938, he established a totalitarian state on the Italian model. Siguranța, the Romanian political police, was extremely repressive and abusive, especially in Bessarabia, where an almost permanent curfew existed partly because of the Soviet guerilla groups permanently sent in throughout the interwar period to destabilize the situation.[117] Regardless, interwar Romania allowed some room for open protest until 1938, albeit less so afterward when the royal dictatorship was established.[118]

The Romanian interwar regime did use repression methods against various social and political groups, but it did so on a small scale and in a restrained manner, on the model of other *ancien régime* countries. Peasant revolts in modern Bessarabia were not a rare occurrence. In the late 19th-early 20th century, under the Tsarist regime, open protests and violent clashes were widespread in Bessarabian villages due to hard material conditions and injustices inflicted by big landowners or state officials.[119] In the interwar period, under the Romanian royal regime, the fiscal burden, high-interest rates for debts, and rising prices for consumer goods triggered

many peasant revolts as well, especially in 1918-1919, 1934, and 1939, notably in the Lăpușna (Chișinău) and Bălți counties. The geography of these revolts in the Tsarist and Romanian periods overlaps somehow with the Spring 1946 hunger riots'.[120] The *longue durée* perspective thus is another one in understanding the peasant revolt in general in the early Sovietization period in Soviet Moldavia. In the Tsarist period, women were seemingly not very active among the protesters, but that pattern changes in the interwar period. Women protesting against authorities was a frequent site in Romanian Bessarabia, especially in the second interwar decade. For instance, in the late 1930s, women with children in tow often protested against their husbands' recruitment into the Romanian Army. Fearing they would not be able to feed their offspring, they requested the authorities to help them with bread and other goods.[121] After 1944, women continued to behave the same way when faced with hunger. Deep inside, they seemed convinced that no regime would let them die of starvation.

While open protest in the wake of famine was specific only to Soviet Moldavia, it does not mean other old and new Soviet territories did not experience dissent in general due to food supply problems. But it took different forms, such as theft, killings for food, speculation, refusal by workers to dine in the workers' canteens or critical remarks in the kitchen, semi-private and semi-public spaces about the supply issues.[122] The religious revival was another response to material hardships.[123]

The way the MSSR authorities as a whole dealt with hunger riots would have a profound impact on the famine to unfold in the fall of 1946 and reach its peak in winter-spring 1947. Soviet Moldavia would have the highest excess deaths among all Soviet republics, proportionally.[124] Failure of employing peaceful methods triggered the emergence of other, more violent forms of resistance, including armed ones perceived by Soviet authorities in an ideological framework as a declaration of war against the regime.[125]

Conclusions

The attacks on grain storehouses in Spring 1946 Soviet Moldavia has so far been a neglected subject. This phenomenon represented a particular form of *open* protest and *defiance* of authority triggered by a region reduced to famine and a severe crisis of *legitimacy* for the new authorities. *Women* dominated much of what I refer to hunger riots,

labeled as such because their primary aim was to get bread for starving families. The food crisis was an all-Union one, experienced by both old and new Soviet territories, occupied or not by the enemy between 1941 and 1944. As it unfolded in 1945-1946, the subsistence crisis *originated* in WWII's devastation but was *aggravated* by Soviet policies. Although the subsistence crisis and the subsequent famine were an all-Union problem in 1944-47, the causes and responses *differed regionally*. I argue that the hunger riots in Soviet Moldavia in Spring 1946 represent a particular pattern of societal response in the famine's wake, a *weapon of the weak* (Scott). Similar disturbances were registered across the Soviet Union in late 1929-early 1930s in the context of all-out collectivization, analyzed in detail, and conceptualized by Lynne Viola as *March Fever* and *bab'y bunty*.

After the Second World War, however, the pattern of open protest accompanied by seizing grain in a *ritualized form of public performance*, *quasi-peaceful* and *non-violent*, is specific only to the *Bessarabian districts* of the Moldavian SSR. The Left Bank districts, Sovietized in the interwar period, did not register such actions. The explanation lies in the fact that Sovietization made people understand this form of protest was counterproductive and fraught with *criminal prosecution*. By 1946, the Bessarabian population still shared the *protest culture* practiced in interwar Romania and Tsarist Russia. According to this *moral understanding of society*, economy, and politics, protesting for subsistence was legitimate. When peaceful means were exhausted, peasants resorted to other forms of protest, *covert* and *violent*. By underlining rioters' social composition as poor peasants and women, i.e., a classless category, MVD reports hinted the authorities should address the causes, not the crisis's effects.

The official discourse on food riots varied from one *institution* and official to another. There was *no unanimity* among county party officials, some castigating class enemies, while others aimed at the Party, MVD, and MGB. The *ad interim* first secretary Salogor empathized with the rioters at least in two instances. Notwithstanding, the Security organs' view on *scapegoating* participants in hunger riots as class enemies and denying the facts that women, and teenagers, *prevailed*.

The food riots in Spring 1946 Soviet Moldavia have relevance to the broader discussion on *resistance* in postwar Soviet Union as a whole. In contrast to the Baltic republics and Western Ukraine, where resistance was widespread and violent from the begining, the pattern in Soviet Moldavia is different. In the latter, opposition to the new regime between

1944 and mid- 1946 was mainly *peaceful*, as witnessed by a peculiar way of attacking grain storehouses. Only after the Soviets failed to satisfy the *legitimate request* for bread did violent forms of resistance occur, beginning in summer and fall of 1946. In turn, more *societal violence* gave an excuse to the authorities to embark on more repressions against a community striving to make ends meet. The peasant protest evolved later into more *violent* and *brutal forms* that subsequently served the regime's *rationalization of peasant dissent as class war* with all the consequences to follow.

ANNEXES

List of Hunger Riots in Soviet Moldavia,
late February – early June, 1946

Locality / district	Present day district	warehouse	Date	Number	Composition	Result / region
1. Țânțăreni, Telenești	Telenești	Țânțăreni	February 27	200	**men**	Incomplete, North.
2. Brânzenii Vechi, Răspopeni	Telenești	Brânzenii Vechi	March 17	120	**Women**, teenagers; invalids' wives	Complete, 3-4 tons; North
3. Ialpujeni, Cimișlia	Cimișlia	Marienfield	April 18	45	**Women**, poor.	Complete, 1 ton; South
4. Chirsova, Comrat	UTAG	Chirsova	April 24	100	**Women**; men watching	Success,1 ton; South
5. Dărcăuți, Zgurița	Soroca	Dărcăuți	April 24	30	**women**	Complete, 1 ton, North
6. Hagi-Abdul (Al. I. Cuza), Vulcănești	Cahul	Hagi-Abdul	April 25	100	**30 women, 70 children** 8-12 years old	Complete, 1 ton, South.
7. Dezghinja, Comrat	UTAG	Dezghinja	April 29	100	**Women**, teenagers	Complete,3 tons; South
8. Șamalia, Baimaclia	Cantemir	Șamalia	April 29	-	-	Incomplete; South
9. Mereni, Cimișlia	Cimișlia	Mereni	May 1	500	**Women**, wives of war invalids	Incomplete; South
10. Javgur, Cimișlia	Cimișlia	Mereni	May 1	Part of 500, went to Mereni	**women**	Incomplete, South
11. Grădești, Cimișlia	Cimișlia	Mereni	May 1	Part of 500, went to Mereni	women	Incomplete, South

Locality / district	Present day district	warehouse	Date	Number	Composition	Result / region
12. Cenac, Cimișlia	Cimișlia	Mereni	May 1	Part of 500, went to Mereni	**women**	Incomplete, South
13. Vulcănești	UTAG	Vulcănești	May 4	150	**women**	Incomplete, South.
14. Nisporeni	Nisporeni	Nisporeni	May 6	70	men	Incomplete, Center
15. Etulia, Vulcănești	UTAG	Etulia	May 7	400	**women**	Complete, 1 ton; South
16. Cișmichioi, Vulcănești	UTAG	Cișmichioi	May 7	300	**women**	Incomplete; South
17. Gaidar, Ceadîr-Lunga	UTAG	Ceadîr-Lunga	May 14	400	men	Incomplete; South
18. Mihăileni, Râșcani	Râșcani	Mihăileni	May 15	-	men	Complete, 9 tons; North
19. Vărzărești, Nisporeni	Nisporeni	Vărzărești	May 16	60	**Women**, teenagers	Incomplete; Center
20. Colibași, Vulcănești	Cahul	Colibași	May 16	20	**Women**	success; unknown tons; South
21. Negureni, Răspopeni	Telenești	Ordășeni	May 18	400	**Women**, teenagers	Incomplete; Center
22. Zaim, Căușeni	Căușeni	Zaim	May 19	60	Men	Incomplete; South
23. Ochiul Alb, Râșcani	Drochia	Nicoreni	May 21	80/200	**Women**, teenagers	Incomplete; North
24. Tănătari, Căușeni	Căușeni	Căușeni	May 22	40	men	Incomplete; South
25. Șcerbaca, Brătușeni	Râșcani	Șcerbaca	June 8	30	**Women**	Complete, 1 ton, North.

HUNGER RIOTS IN SOVIET MOLDAVIA
late February-early June 1946
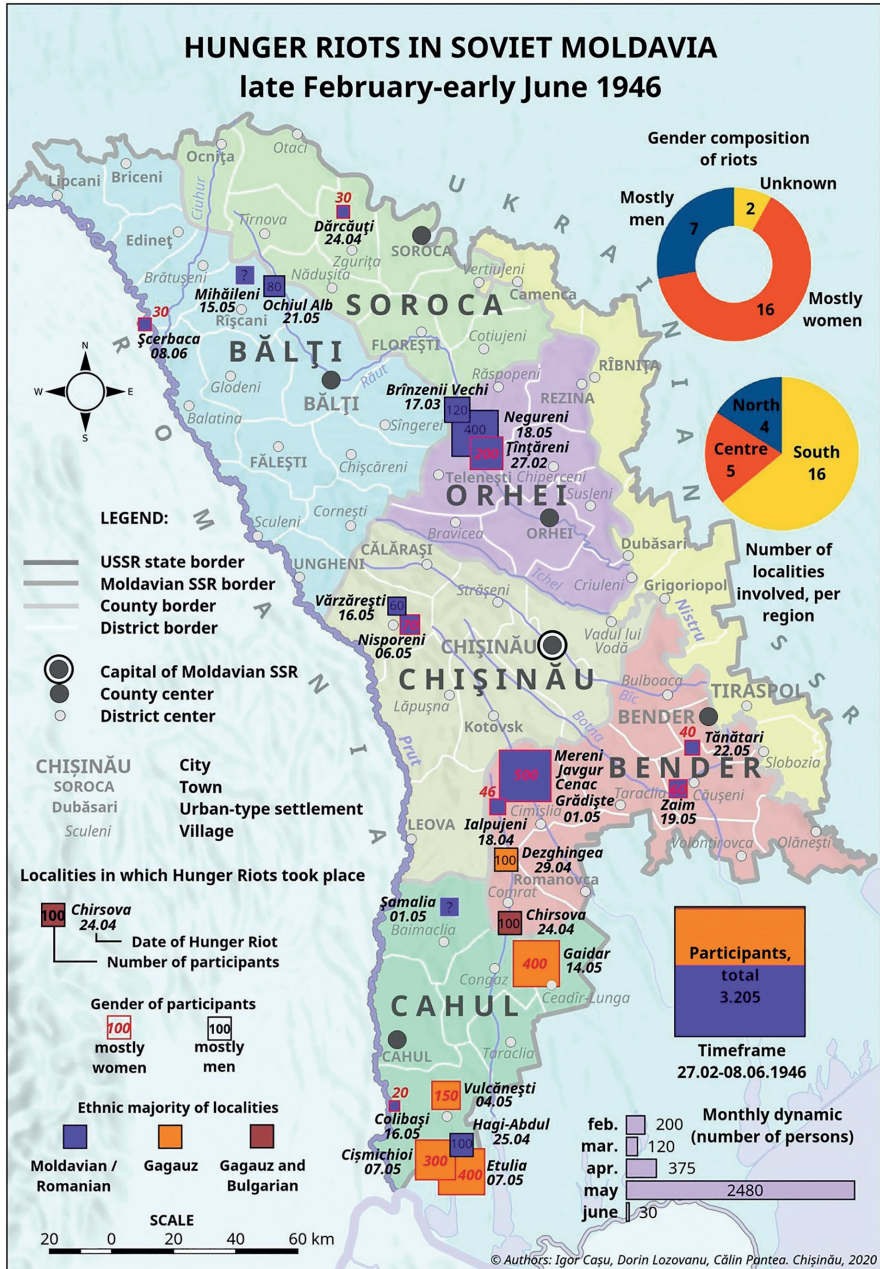
NOTES

[1]   I thank my colleagues at NEC Bucharest for their feedback on my earlier version of this text. And to Cristina Diac and Carter Johnson for reading the last draft and for their useful comments.

[2]   Lynne Viola, *Peasants Rebels under Stalin. Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 132-182, 183-20; women riots were analyzed in another national settings, in the context of the collectivization drive as well. On Romania, see G. Kligman, K. Verdery, *Peasants under Siege. Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962* (New Jersey: Princeton University Pres, 2011), pp. 25, 35, 38. See also Dorin Dobrincu, Constantin Iordachi, eds., *Edificarea orânduirii socialiste. Violență și luptă de clasă în colectivizarea agriculturii din România, 1949-1962* (Iași: Editura Universității Al. I. Cuza, 2017), pp. 313, 321-322, 327-331.

[3]   *Golod v Moldove*, pp. 185, 197.

[4]   Valeriu Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy istorii Moldovy, 1940-e-1950-e* (Moscow: Terra, 1994), pp. 226-229, 231-233. For the English translations of the Russian words as *volynka* and *vystuplenie*, I follow Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, pp. 134-135.

[5]   Valeriu Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, pp. 269-273.

[6]   Igor Cașu, *Dușmanul de clasă*, pp. 195-197.

[7]   V. Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946-1947 gg. Proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (Moscow: RAN, 1996); N. Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946-47 in Global and Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); E. Zubkova, *Russia after the War. Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-195* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Kees Boterbloem. *Life and Death under Stalin. Kalinin Province, 1945-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Zubkova, E. *Pribaltika i Kreml', 1940-1953* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2008); Iurii Kostyashov, *Povsednevnost' poslevoennoy derevni. Iz istorii pereselencheskikh kolkhozov Kaliningradskoy oblasti, 1946-1953* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2015); James Heinzen, *The Art of Bribe: Corruption under Stalin, 1945-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); R. G. Pikhoia, *Sovetskii Soiuz. Istoriia Vlasti, 1945-1991* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 2000); V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov, N.S. Plotnikova, eds., *Lubyanka. Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR Smersh, 1939-mart 1946* (Moscow: Fond Demokratiia, 2006); Khaustov, V. P. Naumov, N.S. Plotnikova, eds., *Lubyanka. Stalin i MGB, mart 1946-mart 1953* (Moscow: Fond Demokratiia, 2007); O. Khlevniuk et al., *TsK VKP (b) i regional'nye partiinye komitety, 1945-1953* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004); Stephen Wheatcroft, "The Soviet Famine of 1946-1947, the Weather and Human Agency in Historical

Perspective", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 64, no. 4 (July 2012), pp. 987-1005; Jeffrey W. Jones, *Everyday life in the "Reconstruction" of Soviet Russia during and after the Great Patriotic War, 1943-1948* (Pittsburgh: Slavica Publishing, 2008); Vanessa Voisin, *L'URSS contre ses traîtres: l'Epuration soviétique, 1941-1955* (Paris: Editions Sorbonne, 2015). Besides, I have looked through the RGASPI and GARF depositories and could find nothing on the matter. I take the opportunity here to thank The German Historical Institute in Moscow for a two-month fellowship in the summer 2019 that made possible my research at the Russian archives.

8   Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, p. 232.

9   I am elaborating more on this issue in the article "Party vs Chekists and Militia? The Limits of Institutional Cooperation in the Late Stalinism Soviet Moldavia" to be published in a Western peer-reviewed journal.

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17   Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy,* p. XVII.

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19   Peter Holquist, "What's so Revolutionary about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and New-Style Politics, 1914-1921", in D. L. Hoffman, Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity. Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 98-105.

20   Pitirim Sorokin, *Golod kak faktor. Vliyanie goloda na povedenie lyudei, sotsial'nuyu organizatsiiu i obshchestvenuyu zhizn'* (Moscow: Academia, 2003).

21   Cyril E. Black, *The Transformation of Russian Society. Aspects of Social Change since 1861* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960); Jane Burbank, David L. Ransel, eds., *Imperial Russia. New Histories for the Empire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998); David L. Hoffman, Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity. Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (London: Macmillan, 2000). D. L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses. Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

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27   V. I. Țaranov, ed., *Istoriia Moldavskoi SSR* (Chișinău: Știința, 1984), pp. 241-242.

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29   N. Enciu, *Populația rurală a Basarabiei, 1918-1940* (Chișinău: Epigraf, 2002), pp. 166-171.

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33 Enciu, *Populația rurală a Basarabiei*, p. 81. For the impact of the drought on other Romanian provinces, see Dumitru Șandru, *Populația rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale* (Iași: Editura Academiei, 1980), pp. 14-43; Ioan Scurtu, coord., *Istoria românilor*, vol. VIII: *România întregită (1918-1940)* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), pp. 125-173.

34 Mihai Gribincea, *Basarabia în primii ani de ocupație sovietică, 1944-1953* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1994), pp. 77-79.

35 Enciu, *Populația rurală a Basarabiei*, p. 85.

36 Alfani, G., C. Ò'Grada, eds., *Famine in European History*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

37 Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia,* pp. 137-166.

38 Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin. Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

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vol. I: *Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (New York: Penguin, 2014); idem, *Stalin*, vol. II: *Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941* (London: Penguin, 2017).

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[44]   Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 302-308.

[45]   Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, pp. 4, 183.

[46]   Wendy Goldm*an,* Donald Filtzer, eds., *Hunger and War. Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 44-97, 98-157, 265-237.

[47]   On the issue of scarcity as embedded in the Soviet project see Elena Osokina, *Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927-1941* (London: Routledge, 2015); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Natalia Lebina, *Pasazhiry kolbasnogo poyezda. Et'yudy k kartine byta rossiskogo goroda, 1917-1991* (Moscow: NLO, 2019).

[48]   ANIC, Fondul Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, dosar nr. 73/1942, 1-75; Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, Regele Carol și Antonescu. Relațiile germane-române, 1938-1944* (București: Humanitas, 1994), pp. 193-204, 240-248.

[49]   *Monitorul Oficial al României*, no. 167, July 17, 1941; no. 188, February 25, 1942; ANIC, Fond PCM, dosar nr. 82/1942, f. 40; 73/1942; 83/1942; 88/1942; Alesandru Duțu, *Războiul (1941-1945). O altă abordare* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2019), pp. 262-278, 449-453.

[50]   Keith Lowe, *Savage continent. Europe in the Aftermath of the World War II* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 39.

[51]   Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Washington, D.C.: John Hopkins University Press, 2010); Diana Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

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53 Ada Federol'f, *Kolyma. Pervyi reis, 1938-1947* (Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2018), p. 221.

54 Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War,* pp. 190-199.

55 AMAIRM-MVD, F.16, inv. 1, d. 6, f. 17.

56 See endnote 9.

57 NA IRI RAN, f. 2, razd. IV, op. 21, d. 13, ll. 5–6.

58 NA IRI RAN, f. 2, razd. IV, op. 21, d. 15, l.2 verso; AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 47, ff. 40-45, 78-79.

59 NA IRI RAN, f. 2, razd. IV, op. 21, d. 1, ll. 12, 15-17; *Monitorul Oficial al României*, no. 167, June 17, 1941; *Buletinul provinciei Basarabia*, no. 3, 1942; ANIC, Fondul PCM, 83/1942.

60 AOSPRM. F. 51, inv. 2, d. 17, ff. 58-59.

61 See more in David Glantz, *Red Storm Over the Balkans. The Failed Soviet Invasion of Romania, Spring 1944* (Kansas: Kansas University Press, 2006).

62 AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 1, f. 2-15; NA IRI RAN, f. 2, razd. IV, op. 21, d. 13, l. 6; Ibidem, razd. VI, op. 21, d. 4, l. 12.

63 *Golod v Moldove*, pp. 173-174.

64 RGASPI, F. 17, op. 122, d. 77, ll. 65-67, 71-84.

65 Boterbloem, *Life and Death under Stalin. Kalinin Province*, pp. 43-76.

66 *Golod v Moldove*, pp. 203-204.

67 AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 5, d. 590, ff. 18-30.

68 Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, pp. 242-243.

69 Nicolas Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946-1947 in Global and Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 51.

70 Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, p. 269.

71 AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d.49, f. 46. A similar case when a warehouse's manager had stolen a great amount of goods and set up for a robbery as cover-up was depicted in a later Soviet movie, *Operatsiia Y i drugie prikliucheniia Shurika* [Operation Y and Shurik's other Adventures] (Mosfilm, 1965), part 3. Though a comedy, it reflected a recurrent and widespread Soviet reality.

72 AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 42, ff. 51-52; d. 32, ff. 19-24.

73   On the Romanian interwar extreme right and antisemitism, see Leon Volovici, *Nationalism Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991); Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919-1941* (București: Humanitas, 1993); Eugen Weber, *Dreapta românească* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1995); Armin Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail"* (București: Humanitas, 1999); Viorica Nicolenco, *Extrema dreaptă în Basarabia, 1923-1940* (Chișinău: Civitas, 1999); Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreapta românească* (București: Cartea românească, 2015); Roland Clarck, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Traian Sandu, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier. Un fascism românesc* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2019).

74   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 241. On Holocaust in Romania, see note 51.

75   I had access to the KGB archive in Chișinău for years working initially as vice-chairman of the Presidential Commission for the Study and Evaluation of the Totalitarian Communist Regime in the Republic of Moldova in 2010 and later on identifying the names of the Holocaust perpetrators in the framework of a project signed between the Moldovan and American governments in March 2011 following the visit to Chișinău of the then US vice President Joe Biden. Neither Camerzan or Ojog have a file in the KGB archive. They are not in the list of repressed either in MVD archive. See *Cartea memoriei. Catalogul victimelor regimului totalitar comunist*, vol. 1-4 (Chișinău: Știința, 1999-2004) or unpublished supplemental lists that are available at various archives in Moldova.

76   M.V. Zelenov, D. Branderberger, *Kratkii kurs VKP(b). Tekst i ego istoriia*. Vol. 1 (Moscow: Rosspen, 2016); Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, pp. 231-233; for the changes brought by the war in the categorization of enemies, see Vanessa Voisin, *L'URSS contre ses traîtres*, pp. 169-212.

77   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 242.

78   Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, p. 271-272; AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, ff. 36-37.

79   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, ff. 293-294.

80   Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, pp. 272-273.

81   Viola, *Peasants Rebels under Stalin*, p. 182.

82   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, f. 36; AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, ff. 293-294.

83   Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, p. 272; AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, f. 36; AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, ff. 293-294.

84   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 293; AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, ff. 36-37; Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, pp. 231-233.

85   Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, p. 228.

86   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 26, f. 28.

87   Mikhail Sholokhov, *Podnyataia Tselina* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1977).

88   Veaceslav Stăvilă, *De la Basarabia românească la Basarabia sovietică, 1939-1945* (Chișinău: Tipografia Centrală, 2000), p. 60.

89   On the fate of WWII Soviet veterans, see Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

90   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, f. 37.

91   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, ff. 293-294; d. 26, f. 28; AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, ff. 36-37.

92   The best Western, English language contributions on the identity issue are Charles King, *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1999), and Rebecca Haynes, *Moldova: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

93   Lynne Viola, *Peasants Rebels under Stalin*, pp. 202-203.

94   C. Reilly, "Nearly starved to death": The female petition during the Great Hunger", in C. Kinealy, J. King, and C. Reilly, (eds.) *Women and the Great Hunger* (Hamden, CT: Quinnipiac University Press, 2016), pp. 50-51.

95   Ion Druță, *Scrieri*, vol. 2 (Chișinău : Literatura artistică, 1990), pp. 216-228.

96   Diana Cașu, "Sovietizarea Basarabiei și politica față de femei (1944-1945). Crearea adunărilor de delegate", in *Tyragetia*, no. 2, 2010, pp. 251-256.

97   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 47, f. 40-45, 57, 59-62, 78.

98   Dorin Dobrincu, "Fuga de foamete. Migrații temporare din Moldova în vestul și sudul României, 1946-1947", în Victor Spinei, coordinator, *Migrații, politici de stat și identități culturale în spațiul românesc și European.* Vol. 1: Flavius Solomon, Alexandru-Laurențiu Cohal, Leonidas Rados, editori, *Ipostaze istorice ale mișcărilor de populație și modele identitare etnolingvistice actuale*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2019, pp. 313-336.

99   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 37, ff. 116-120.

100   Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, pp. 231-233; AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 47, f. 40-45, 57, 59-62, 78.

101   Pasat, *Trudnye stranitsy*, pp. 232-233.

102   Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, pp. 272-273.

103   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 46, f. 39. In this, either he was aware or not, Korneyev resonated with Andrei Zhdanov, the main Stalin's ideologue in this period until his premature death in 1948. According to Zhdanov, organizational measures were the key to success in every domain. See more on that in Shaun Morcom, "Enforcing Stalinist Discipline in the Early Years of Postwar Reconstruction in the USSR, 1945-1948", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 68, no. 2, March 2016, pp. 312-344.

[104]   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 243. In original: "а ведь начинается голод".

[105]   AMAIRM-MVD), F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 295.

[106]   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 1, d. 101, f. 4; d. 100, f. 7; RGASPI, Salogor's personal file, party card no. 06709-120 (1954), party card no. 12795-445 (1973); Marius Tărîță, Lilia Crudu et al., eds., *Instituțiile și nomenclatura sovietică și de partid din RASSM și RSSM, 1924-1956* (Chișinău: Cartdidact, 2017), pp. 158-158.

[107]   Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War,* pp. 190-199.

[108]   AOSPRM, F: 51, inv. 4, d. 64.

[109]   Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer* (New York: Harper & Collins, 1980). Salogor died in Chișinău in 1981 at the age of 80.

[110]   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 327; d. 26, 183-184.

[111]   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39, f. 324-327.

[112]   AMAIRM-MVD, F. 16, inv. 1, d. 33, 34, 35.

[113]   AMAIRM-MVD), F. 16, inv. 1, d. 39 f. 323; d. 26, f. 28.

[114]   AOSPRM, F. 51, inv. 4, d. 157, ff. 1-342.

[115]   Boshdedt, *The Politics of Provisions*, pp. 37-48; Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).

[116]   Jean Levesque, 'Into the grey zone': sham peasants and the limits of the kolkhoz order in the post-war Russian village, 1945–1953", in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between reconstruction and reinvention*, London & New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 103-120.

[117]   Pavel Moraru, *La hotarul românesc al Europei. Din istoria Siguranței Generale în Basaraba, 1918-1940* (București: INST, 2008), pp. 435-448 ; Alberto Basciani, *Dificila Unire. Basarabia în componența României, 1918-1940* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2018), 113-197, 341-357; Bogdan Bucur, *Sociologia proastei guvernări în România interbelică* (București : RAO, 2019), pp. 126-151, 374-375.

[118]   N.V. Bereznyakov et al., *Lupta oamenilor muncii din Basarabia pentru eliberarea și reunirea ei cu patria sovietică, 1918-1940* (Chișinău: Cartea Moldovenească, 1973), pp. 760-761.

[119]   I. G. Budak, ed., *Polozhenie krest'yan i obshchestvenno-politicheskoe dvizhenie v Bessarabii, 1861-1895* (Chișinău: Cartea Moldovenească, 1964), pp. 39-40, 180-181, 266-268; Ia. S. Grosul, ed., *Khrest'yanskoe dvizhenie v Moldavii v epokhu imperializma. Dokumenty i materialy, 1899-1917* (Chișinău: Știința, 1961), pp. 157-161, 358, 360-361, 408-409.

[120]   Țurcanu, *Relații agrare*, p. 183-204 (185); Bereznyakov, *Lupta oamenilor muncii din Basarabia,* pp. 274-286, 584-592, 645-666.

[121]   Bereznyakov, *Lupta oamenilor muncii din Basarabia,* pp. 760-761.

[122]   Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946-1947 gg.,* pp. 96-128; Donald Filtzer, *The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia. Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards,*

1943-1953 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 163-253; Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, pp. 40-50; E. Zubkova, T. Zhukova, eds., *Na "krayu" sovetskogo obshchestva. Sotsial'nye marginaly kak ob'ekt gosudarstvennoy politiki, 1945-1960-e gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2010).

[123] Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946-1947*, pp. 73-78; Pasat, *RSS Moldovenească în perioada stalinistă*, pp. 274-275.

[124] Ellman, "The 1947 Soviet Famine", pp. 603-633; Cașu, *Dușmanul de clasă*, pp. 189-233. For more on that, see I. Cașu, "Why the Mass Famine in Soviet Moldavia was the most lethal in the USSR in 1946-47?" (forthcoming 2021).

[125] Carter Johnson, "From Resistance to Civil War. Why Violence escalated in Lithuania but not in Moldova during Soviet annexation, 1944-1952", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2020, pp. 1-25; Petru Negură, Elena Postică, "Forme de rezistență a populației civile față de autoritățile sovietice în RSS Moldovenească (1940-1956)", in *Dystopia. Journal of Totalitarian Regimes and Ideologies*, vol. 1-2, 2013, pp. 59-77; see also Lynne Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism. Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Arvydas Anusauskas, ed., *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the Baltic States*, Vilnius: The Genocide and Resistance Research Center, 2006; Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Abbreviations

AMAIRM-MVD – Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Interne a Republicii Moldova, fostul Minister de Interne al RSSM [The Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, former Ministry of Interior of Moldavian SSR, MVD]

ANIC – Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [National Historical Central Archives of Romania]

ANRM – Arhiva Națională a Republicii Moldova [The National Archive of the Republic of Moldova]

AOSPRM – Arhiva Organiațiilor Social-Politice a Republicii Moldova [The Archive of Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova]

NA IRI RAN – Nauchnyi Arkhiv Instituta Istorii Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk [Scientific Archive of the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Science]

RGASPI – Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no Politicheskoi Istorii [The Russian State Archive of Social-Political History]

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SURVIVING AS SMALL STATES BETWEEN GLOBAL POWERS:
ARMENIA ON THE CROSSROADS OF THE EU AND THE EAEU

Abstract

The paper addresses how small states shape and conduct their foreign policy while caught between rival interests of global powers in a regional context, using Armenia as a case study.

By assessing the evolution of the interplay between Armenia and the European and Eurasian Economic Unions and discussing the nature of commitments and depth of Armenia's participation in the EAEU and the EU's bilateral agreements and neighborhood programs, the paper investigates the extent to which Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union affects its Eurointegration policy, providing possible explanations of Armenia's interests vis-à-vis the European Union and the main motives for the subsequent change of its integration model.

Keywords: European Union, Eurasian Economic Union, European integration, South Caucasus, Republic of Armenia, Small states.

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that all states share the concepts of sovereignty and autonomy, there are certain features that influence how small states operate in the international system and build their foreign policy priorities. With a limited set of human and material resources to engage larger powers, while vulnerable to asymmetrical power relationships, small states need to adopt particular strategies to ensure their survival, such as balancing or complementing. Apparently, the process of setting foreign and security policy priorities for small states becomes a vital aspect of their approach to security than for greater states. In contrast to larger states, small states operate within narrow margins, as any ill-considered policy or reckless

move may have serious consequences for their very national existence (Walt, 1985; Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017; Thorhallsson, 2018).

The research presented in this paper addresses how small states shape and conduct their foreign policy while caught between conflicting interests of global powers in a regional context, using Armenia as a case study. The issue of shaping Armenia's foreign policy in the rival environment of global actors is of particular interest and relevance especially in the context of clashing interests of European and Eurasian integration processes in the South Caucasus region.

For much of its history, Armenia has been trapped in its intricate geopolitical location. Situated at an unrewarding crossroads of clashing interests of different empires, civilizations, and religions, over time the country lost its foreign policy clout in the competition with larger powers. At the early stages of Armenia's independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to difficulties in state-building, severe socio-economic conditions, dire shortage of energy resources, the burden of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey resulting in the country's near total isolation, the country has adopted Russia-oriented foreign and security policies as evidenced by bilateral security and economic agreements between the two states.

Nevertheless, owing to its Indo-European origin, as well as due to various political, geopolitical, economic, and security reasons, Armenia has always been interested in integration into European structures. Since the adoption of the policy of "complementarity" and "engagement" as an external security strategy doctrine — meaning that, along with strategic cooperation with Russia, Armenia will simultaneously develop relations with all states (and organizations) with interest in the region and will actively engage in both regional and international integration processes (National Security Strategy, 2007) — cooperation with European structures has grown significantly. Since the 1990s Armenia has been actively and effectively involved in the bilateral and multilateral projects of the European Union (EU), including European Commission (EC)'s Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Armenia, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Black Sea Synergy (BSS), and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). However, with a rather successful track of the country's progressive integration into EU models and standards, in September 2013 the Armenian administration announced that it intended to join the Russian-led Customs Union and subsequently

engaged in the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), thereby jeopardizing the process of the country's Eurointegration.

The existing studies explain Armenia's receptivity to EU templates and the abrupt shift towards the EAEU in terms of "cost-benefit analysis of the EU's offer against country's specific regional, political, and economic context" (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015, p. 492). Armenia's U-turn is also explained by Russia's growing antagonism with the West in the wake of the EaP initiative and Association agenda, which led to Russia's more assertive "near abroad" policy, designed to stop the EU's further advancement into the sphere of its vital interests (Emerson and Kostanyan, 2013; Delcour and Kostanyan, 2014; Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2012; Giragosian, 2015). Studies show that Armenia's shift towards the EAEU emanates from precarious regional environment and traditional security challenges in the face of which Russia was perceived as an irreplaceable strategic ally and security guarantor. (Terzyan, 2016). Some authors view the September 3rd decision of the Armenian government as predetermined, given political and economic overreliance on Russia (Popescu, 2013; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015). Alternatively, Armenia's opting for the Eurasian path is explained by its relative insignificance for the West, given the broader geopolitical concerns and risks, and the EU's inability or unwillingness to offer the small state security guarantees despite the country's vulnerability to Russia (Shirinyan, 2019, p. 13).

Nonetheless, since joining the EAEU, Armenia has sought to regain relations with the EU, having adopted a clear policy on furthering political and economic cooperation with the EU to ensure compatibility with the Eurasian direction of its foreign policy. This resulted in the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed on November 24, 2017.

Obviously, both economic integration models and processes entail legally binding commitments for Armenia, bearing potentially strong effects in terms of the need for legislative changes in domestic law (Van der Loo and Van Elsuwege, 2012; Delcour et al., 2015). Consequently, Armenia's membership in the EAEU may have implications for its relations with the EU in terms of compatibility with the CEPA and the new framework and provisions of the reviewed ENP.

The present paper examines whether a small landlocked state like Armenia, when faced with the quandary of European and Eurasian integration paths, has the maneuvering space to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, given its own geopolitical and hard security challenges.

The article investigates to what extent Armenia's membership in the EAEU affects its Eurointegration policy, providing possible explanations of Armenia's interests vis-à-vis the EU and the main motives for the subsequent change of its integration model by assessing the evolution of the interplay between Armenia and the EU as well as the EAEU and discussing the nature of commitments and depth of Armenia's participation in the respective bilateral agreements and neighborhood programs. With an accurate chronology of EU-Armenia relations, the study also shows the prospects of the EU-Armenia cooperation, taking into account Armenia's new international obligations per its membership in the EAEU.

The article argues that Russia's assertive policy vis-à-vis Armenia and the latter's overdependence on Russia in security matters left very few opportunities for the small landlocked country to achieve a Russian-European balance. Although Armenia has succeeded in sighing the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which will undoubtedly deepen and broaden the scope of bilateral relations between Armenia and the EU in political, economic, and social fields, Armenia's commitments vis-à-vis the EAEU indicate that there is little to no space for developing deep economic cooperation with the EU since abandoning the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) and given the limitations in sectoral areas of cooperation, particularly in the fields of energy, transport, and connectivity.

At the same time, Armenia's membership in the EAEU and its efforts to regain and strengthen its relations with the EU allowed the EU to explore new possibilities of an "AA-minus" framework, which subsequently can be offered to other non-associated members of the EaP, thereby creating new possibilities for the EU to expand relations with other EAEU members and to engage with the EAEU in the common neighborhood. The EU-Armenia CEPA serves as an important precedent for this approach.

The analysis will be based on methods and approaches of qualitative research design. To conduct the study I use a case study historical-comparative research method, qualitative content analysis, and discourse analysis techniques. Data was collected through the analysis and assessment of available official documents, books, scholarly journals, press releases, speeches, interviews and statements. I support the study with official data provided by the EU, articles, reports, and policy papers produced by various think tanks, NGOs and newspapers.

The paper consists of an introductory section, the main body that includes two sections delving into the evolution of Armenia's European

integration and the various implications of membership in the EAEU on Armenia's Eurointegration, and a conclusion where the outcomes of the study are summed up.

2. The Intricate Path of Armenia's European Integration: From Civilizational Choice to Abrupt U-turn

The abrupt dismantlement of the Soviet Union shattered the bipolar system, resulting in an emerging new geopolitical reality in the Eurasian continent, building new independent relations of the post-Soviet states with the rest of the world, and invocating new regional and global players in the South Caucasus region.

The collapse of the Soviet system brought drastic changes to all post-Soviet republics bringing on shattered economic and trade relations previously conducted within the Soviet Union, which was followed by severe socio-economic conditions within the post-Soviet space, and the South Caucasus in particular. In the early stages of independence, the three states of the South Caucasus region, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, were poorly prepared to deal with state building in the changed geopolitical reality. The situation was worsened by political, economic, and social instability, ethnic conflicts, and blockades.

Besides issues concerning the creation and consolidation of a sovereign state framework, a devastated economy, lack of institutional reforms, and massive corruption, Armenia's politico-economic situation was worsened by the 1988 earthquake, which ruined almost 30 percent of industrial infrastructure, and the confrontation with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, which was taking a vast amount of state resources (Hunter, p. 40). Moreover, the high dependence on external energy sources, the closed border and lack of diplomatic relations with Turkey, and the negative effects of Georgia's conflicts resulted in Armenia's near total isolation in the region and it being placed in an extremely difficult geopolitical situation.

At the earlier stages of its independence, these factors defined Armenia's Russia-oriented foreign and security policies. The strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia is evidenced by bilateral security and economic agreements between the two states, Armenia's membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and by the presence

of Russian military bases in Armenia. Besides, Russian companies have a significant share in Armenia's economy.

Nonetheless, due to its Indo-European origin, historical tradition, as well as obvious political, geopolitical, economic, and security reasons, Armenia has always been interested in integration into European structures. Being the only landlocked and the smallest country in the South Caucasus, Armenia's relationship with the EU is an important dimension of Armenian multi-vector foreign policy. The significance of the relations with the EU found its response in Armenia's National Security document stating that, "The development and consolidation of Armenia's relations with the European structures, and with the European Union above all, is a priority direction for the country's foreign policy… Establishment of close relations with the EU serves Armenia's long-term interests" (National Security Strategy, 2007, p. 12).

To understand the rationale behind Armenia's interest vis-à-vis the EU and the country's commitment to Europeanization of its legal and political systems, several core factors should be scrutinized.

The cornerstone of Armenia's policy of European integration is the perception of the European path of development as the country's historical and civilizational choice (Abrahamyan, 2013). Armenia's culture, heritage, values and identity make the Armenian nation an indivisible part of Europe. The "European element" has deep roots in Armenian culture and history thanks to the nation's Indo-European origin, strong genetic ties with Europe and the role of Christianity in European history (Haber et al., 2015). The traditional value system of the Armenians is based on the ideas and models of European modernity, Enlightenment, and European civilization (Zekiyan, 2005, p. 60-61). In addition, the historical orientation of Armenia to Europe, the long-established good relations with various European countries, and the presence of an active Armenian Diaspora in Europe all play significant roles in Armenia's firm commitment to the European path of development.

Secondly, it is the country's commitment to its complementary foreign policy, assuming multi-vector cooperation in all directions, to ensure a well-balanced, flexible, and maneuverable policy on the international level. The declared multi-vector focus of Armenia's foreign policy means that while maintaining a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and its active participation in integration processes in the framework of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and CSTO, the country is also expanding and deepening relations with the West by increasing

and deepening cooperation with European structures (NATO, the EU) and the United States in political, economic, military, and other fields (National Security Strategy, 2007). In this regard, the "complementarity" principle of Armenian foreign policy represents the combined reliance on Russia in terms of security provisions with reliance on the EU to promote the country's economic development and modernization (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015, p. 502). Similarly, the EU is seen in Armenia as soft security mechanism to complement Russia's hard security dimension and to balance Russia's dominant position in Armenia's political, economic, and security sectors, providing alternatives for national foreign policy implementation (Gevorgyan, 2015a, p. 32).

With that, integration with the EU, defined as normative and civilian power (Duchêne, 1972; Manners, 2002), whose international role implies, among other things, promotion of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promotion and development of the norms and principles of peace and liberty, is considered in Armenia as the best alternative that could guarantee a democratically stable future for the country. The further intensification of Armenia's broad cooperation with the EU will help to reform and maintain good governance, promote the consolidation of democracy, strengthen the rule of law, and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms (Abrahamyan, 2013). Hence, deep cooperation with the EU promotes Armenia's resolution to render a modern European state, characterized by advanced democracy and free market economy.

Regarding economic factors, the development of relations with the EU, one of the biggest global economic powers, broadens Armenia's trade and economic links and supports the country's economic development. The EU is one of Armenia's biggest trading partners, accounting for around 20 percent of the country's total trade. According to European Commission data, the EU is Armenia's second biggest export and import market with respectively a 21.9 percent and 19.5 percent share in total Armenian exports and imports (European Commission, 2020). Armenia is particularly interested in European investments in various segments of its economy, mainly agriculture, tourism, high-tech, and IT sectors. Moreover, funding assistance provided by the EU through diverse programs is of special importance for Armenia.

At the same time, further cooperation with the EU is perceived as the most desired and advantageous due to modernization and European lifestyle prospects. The European vector of development entails irreversible

de-Sovietization of the country, as integration with the European structures implies replacing archaic Soviet values and practices with modern European ones (Iskandaryan, 2013, p. 16). Aside from access to the European market, further integration into European structures that entails institutional reforms, harmonization, and standardization processes regarding goods and services will encourage the modernization and development of the Armenian economy and will significantly increase quality of life (Gevorgyan, 2015a, p. 33).

In terms of geopolitical gains Armenian interests chiefly lie in emerging from its isolation and taking a share of the energy transit in the region. Reversing isolationism, eliminating dividing lines, lifting blockades, and creating equal opportunities for regional states reside in the European dimension. In this context, Armenia is interested in enhancing the EU's impact in the South Caucasus, considering its multidimensional and cross-border regional cooperation programs as a possible impetus for improving Armenian-Turkish relations and opening borders (Sargsyan, 2014).

Enhancing the partnership with EU institutions is also important for Armenia in terms of the resolution of major security issues in the region. Unquestionably, the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a top priority for Armenia. Despite the fact that the Armenian government has some objective concerns (keeping in mind the EU's growing energy interests in Azerbaijan) regarding more direct involvement of the EU in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,[1] Armenia is deeply interested in creating soft security mechanisms by the EU in the formation of a regional security and stability environment through joint cooperation (Gevorgyan, 2015a, p. 33-34).

It is therefore unsurprising that after gaining independence on September 21, 1991, Armenia declared its strong willingness on close cooperation with the EU. However, until the 2000s the South Caucasus did not enjoy much attention from the EU.

The development of European policies in the South Caucasus started to evolve in the beginning of the 1990s, when the end of the Cold War and the collapse and fragmentation of the Soviet Union enabled the building of new independent relations of the South Caucasian states with the regional and extra-regional actors. Nonetheless, in the last decade of the 20th century the EU kept a low profile in the South Caucasus. The initial stage of the EU's policy towards the region can be characterized by an inert attitude, the absence of a well-coordinated strategy vis-à-vis

the South Caucasus, and the EU's uniform approach towards the region (based upon a similar contractual framework provided by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and a general approach of the EU to all post-Soviet states). The admittedly passive interest towards the region was limited and focused mainly on humanitarian areas and technical assistance within the frames of the European Commission's TACIS program (Lynch, 2003, p. 171-192; Gevorgyan, 2015b, p. 91-92).

Since gaining independence, by choosing the European model of development, Armenia has been actively engaged in the EU's bilateral, multilateral, and regional initiatives, projects, and platforms aimed at deepening its relationship with the EU. In the early 1990s Armenia was involved in TACIS, the EC Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and Food Aid Operations (FAO) programs, which provided EU technical assistance and humanitarian support to regional states' governments in the process of transition to market economies and democratic societies (European Commission, 1992).

The signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1996, which entered into force on July 1999, marked the deepening of relations between the EU and Armenia. Aside from providing a legal background of bilateral relationship and establishing political dialogue, the 10-year partnership agreement was meant to provide a wide scope for extensive cooperation (European Commission, 1999). However, given the lack of incentive, political will, and eagerness on both sides, the PCA was not successful. Aside from the EU's limited success in developing a political profile, the parties failed to achieve the aims of the agreement and develop the PCA beyond good partnership. Overall, the EU-Armenia relations remained passive.

The dawn of the 21st century marked a new stage in the EU's policy in the region, with profound acknowledgement of its strategic interests and emphasized willingness of a more active engagement and development of a comprehensive strategy towards the South Caucasus. During this period the EU's policy vis-à-vis the region significantly evolved from a uniform approach to clearly differentiated policies. The EU's relations towards the South Caucasus were institutionalized through the ENP, and later the Eastern Partnership, Association Agreements (AA), and DCFTAs — apparent attempts at bringing the partner countries closer to the EU's normative and regulatory framework (Gevorgyan, 2016, p. 117-118).

The ENP, inspired by the EU's enlargement in 2004 and aimed at creating a secure neighborhood and preventing the emergence of new

dividing lines (European Commission, 2004), was mainly designed as a strategy to cope with newly emerged issues: the new security challenges on the eastern borders, the need to stabilize the EU's new neighborhood, and the need to achieve cohesion between the internal and external agendas of the enlarged Union (Kahraman, 2005, p. 3). The subsequent inclusion of the South Caucasian states into the ENP in 2004, following the Rose revolution in Georgia, provided a new mechanism for further advancing EU-Armenia relations. The ENP became fully operational in 2006 after the bilateral Action Plan was adopted.

As a small, landlocked country subjected to blockades by its neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, Armenia has tended to place high expectations on the EU's intensifying engagement with the South Caucasus. The ENP's importance for Armenia can be explained by several factors. The ENP could provide a transition from Armenia's current geopolitical isolation to a better integration into the international community and market economy. The program could be a vital catalyst in the promotion of economic and social development, attraction of investments, and implementation of the reforms and harmonization of the domestic legislation to EU standards. The ENP could also promote better security for Armenia by creating the sphere of shared European values in the region, strengthening regional cooperation, and establishing an atmosphere of stability and mutual trust. Nonetheless, weakened by flaws in its structure, scope, and nature, the ENP failed to offer tangible incentives for Armenia to foster fundamental reforms. Overall, the ENP, with its vague and remote prospects, did not clearly define the character of the relations between the EU and its neighbors (Gevorgyan, 2016, p. 123-126). Due to the ENP's structural and operational limitations, lacking credibility, and leverage, the EU remained a distant actor, owing to the lack of EU delegation in Armenia until 2008.

On May 7, 2009 at the Prague Summit, the EU launched a new initiative — the Eastern Partnership — for six post-Soviet countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus. It had been envisaged not only to contribute to the overall strengthening of the EU's offer to partner countries through the perspective of the AAs and DCFTAs, but also to address the shortcomings of the ENP. The primary focus of the Eastern Partnership was "to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries" (European Commission, 2009) under the formula "more for more",[2] thereby establishing direct links between sectoral reforms and an enhanced relationship with partner countries. A

closer relationship with partner countries depended on their convergence with EU's technical rules and political norms. Even though the EU's eastern policy largely refrains from security issues, the initiative aimed to promote and encourage political and economic reforms that are essential to build peace, prosperity, and security in six post-Soviet states by offering "more concrete support than ever before" (Ferrero-Waldner, 2009). In contrast to the ENP, the Eastern Partnership proved itself as a particular attractive offer for partner countries, as it provided new and palpable prospects: an enhanced contractual framework through AAs and DCFTAs, the prospect of visa liberalization, increased sectoral cooperation, and membership in the Energy Community.

Since the very beginning of the program, Armenia has been actively engaged in the EaP's initiatives, making significant progress in the implementation of the reforms and the harmonization of domestic law in accordance with the EU standards (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015, p. 504-505). Cooperation within the EaP was considered by the political elites as a chance to improve democratic order and create new economic opportunities. Instead of being a distant external actor, the EU came to be perceived in Armenia as a major partner in the country's modernization, the one to provide guidance for the country's internal reform process, assist in the implementation of the reforms, and strengthen economic and overall stability of the country (Sargsyan, 2011).

Overall, the discourse of the EU held by Armenian officials has been highly positive in the given period, as, along with the EU's transformative power to bring security, prosperity, and stability into its neighborhood, it was perceived as a timely stimulus for upgrading the country. As President Serzh Sargsyan reflected in his speech at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership summit: "The Eastern Partnership enabled us to give new impetus to the modernization efforts to our state and society upon the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law. It stimulated the agenda of our wide-scale reforms" (Sargsyan, 2013b).

The EU's offer focused on long-term cooperation on technical issues was all the more attractive to Armenia because Armenia's political elite believed their political survival or the security alliance with Russia would not be threatened. Armenia's commitment to the European path of development and its compatibility with Russia's strategic security partnership were repeatedly reiterated by the Armenian administration. In the words of President Sargsyan:

Today, the issue of becoming a full member of the European Union is not yet on our foreign policy agenda. However, I would like to repeat that the European rules of the game and European standards must take root in our country because these are high and time-tested standards. We need these standards to make considerable progress, to change lives of our citizens and to build up the organizational strength of our society. There is no discrepancy between this reality and Armenia's being a CIS and CSTO member, and Russia's strategic partner. Our close and multifaceted, I would say in many instances exemplary, cooperation with the Russian Federation does not contradict these values, which are proclaimed by Russia itself. Furthermore, I am confident that our friends — Russia, the West, and all others, will be only happy for our success. (*Armenpress*, 2010)

Nevertheless, despite Armenia's progressive integration into EU models and standards and substantial achievements in terms of legal approximation resulting in the timely conclusion of negotiations for a DCFTA with the EU, on September 3, 2013, right after Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's visit to Moscow and negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Armenian administration announced that it intended to join the Russian-led Customs Union and subsequently engaged in the formation of the EAEU (*RIA Novosti,* 2013). Armenia's relatively successful process of its Europeanization was jeopardized.

Apparently, Serzh Sargsyan's U-turn statement came as a surprise both for the EU officials and for a significant part of Armenian society and political elites, since bilateral negotiations on the Association Agreement had just been finalized and the country had been planning to sign the agreement in November. Moreover, back in April 2012 there were numerous statements made by high-level Armenian officials on the impossibility of joining the Customs Union, given the absence of common land or maritime border with the Customs Union and lack of economic relations with other participating states, namely Belarus and Kazakhstan. In his interview with the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* the Armenian then Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan specifically stated that: "In global practice there is no example of a country joining a customs union without having a common border." In Sargsyan's words, by joining the Union, "We would only get into trouble with higher tariffs and taxes. It is not reasonable from the economic point of view… The Customs Union does not provide any functional instruments for our economic players. Therefore, it is of no use" (*Kommersant*, 2012). Furthermore, according to the Prime Minister the absence of common borders with the Customs Union was not the

only reason for Armenia's reluctance to join the Russian-led union. In his interview with the Russian newspaper *Moskovskie Novosti* on February 2, 2013, Sargsyan argued that, unlike other members of the Customs Union, Armenia had a more liberal trade regime and lacked vast natural resources. In his words,

> Another specificity of Armenia is that the structure of the Armenian economy is very different from that of the economies of the Customs Union's countries that have substantial deposits of energy resources and pursue a policy of supporting domestic manufacturers through quite high customs duties… On the whole, the level of such duties in the Customs Union is twice higher than those levied in Armenia. (*Moskovskie Novosti*, 2013)

He added that as Armenia was one of the first CIS countries to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), integration into the Customs Union would be complicated, therefore more effective instruments of interaction with the Customs Union should be found (*Moskovskie Novosti*, 2013).

It strikes the attention that, during the haphazard process of Armenia's integration into the EAEU, while the membership roadmap was being prepared, the likely economic impact of Armenia's EAEU membership was not properly studied. The EU-Armenia negotiations on the AA and the DCFTA went on for more than three years. A Dutch consulting company had done rigorous research on the anticipated impacts of the DCFTA for various sectors of the Armenian economy, providing a 200-page Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment in support of negotiations of a DCFTA between the EU and Armenia. The report estimated the significantly positive impact of the DCFTA on the Armenian economy, corresponding to increases of 2.3 percent of GDP and significant increases in total Armenian exports and imports (15.2 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively) in the long run. In addition, the DCFTA would open up greater opportunities for foreign investment as well as increase the competitiveness of the Armenian economy on the basis of regulatory convergence with EU technical standards (European Commission, 2013). In contrast, in a 40-page report published by Eurasian Development Bank's (EDB) Center for Integration Studies, a group of researchers provided analysis of Eurasian integration effects merely in energy and transport sectors of the Armenian economy. The study also included assessment of the likely impact of the integration initiatives on migration. The report estimated an additional 1.5-2 percent

increase in Armenia's GDP growth in the process of integration with the Customs Union (about $200 million increase was forecasted in 2015). In another two years, provided that mineral product prices would be adjusted to those in the Customs Union, an additional GDP growth might be 4 percent (increase of about $400 million) (Tavadyan, et al., 2013, p. 26). According to the report, Armenia's GDP growth rate would be steadily high, thanks to direct investments in its infrastructure and production, a decrease in energy prices, and a more favorable legal environment for Armenian labor migrants, which would provide additional 3 percent annual increase in remittances (about $36 millions).[3] The positive impact on the Armenian economy depended upon the construction of a new power plant with Customs Union support, construction of the railroad to Iran, the "North-South Corridor", and the opening of railway transport with Russia through Georgia (Tavadyan, et al., 2013, p. 6-7, 26). The roadmap on Customs Union membership was prepared in less than four months.

In fact, Armenia's decision to join the EAEU was made despite the apparent lack of clear economic benefits for the country. Clearly, joining the Customs Union even entails expenses for Armenia, as the initial common external tariff of the Customs Union was broadly aligned with the tariff plan in Russia and therefore is much higher than in Armenia. Hence, the country had to significantly increase its average tariff from 5.2 percent to 8.5 percent (World Trade Organization, 2013 and 2015) in order to comply with the Customs Union's single tariff, which would result in higher prices for imported goods in Armenia. In addition, Armenia was faced with possible tariff renegotiations with those WTO members who were affected by the tariff adjustments. The skepticism among field experts also grew because of the unclear perspectives for future cooperation with neighboring states as well as other non-Customs Union member states (Tarr, 2016, p. 1-8). Interestingly enough, during the talks on accession to the Customs Union, Armenia requested interim exemptions from customs duties on approximately 900 commodity groups, which reflected Armenia's concerns about the economic consequences of joining the EAEU regarding rising duties on imports and Armenia's WTO commitments (Delcour, 2014, p. 9). After signing the Accession Treaty to the EAEU in October 2014, Armenia joined the bloc in January 2015.

To understand why the country abruptly decided to join the EAEU at a time when it had met key EU demands under the DCFTA and successfully completed the negotiations on the Association Agreements several determinants should be explained.

The vast majority of experts attribute Armenia's U-turn to the country's heavy dependence on Russia in terms of security provision. Particularly, the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and unsettled Armenian-Turkish relations are the issues cited most frequently (Popescu, 2013; Delcour and Kostanyan, 2014; Delcour et al., 2015; Giragosian and Kostanyan, 2016). More specifically, Russia's pressure became apparent with military rapprochement with Armenia's foe Azerbaijan, evidenced by billions of dollars of sophisticated weaponry sales to Azerbaijan from 2010 to 2014 (*RIA Novosti*, 2018), which apparently resulted in the shattering of the military balance, provoking conflict escalation, and, subsequently, renewal of hostilities in April 2016.

Along with this, Russia made it clear that it would not be able to fulfill security guarantees for Armenia after the EU Association Agreement was signed. The Russian position was basically highlighted in the statements of one of the ideologists of the "Eurasianism" doctrine, the influential Russian public figure Alexander Dugin:

> … any anti-Russian sentiments in the post-Soviet area will sooner or later result in an outcome similar to Georgia's and Ukraine's… With regard to not joining the Customs Union, there is an option for Armenia: either Customs Union membership or disappearance from the world map plunged into bloodshed. That is the option and the country is free to choose. (Dugin, 2014)

When providing explanations on Armenia's abrupt U-turn, President Sargsyan placed a special emphasis on security-related determinates, stating "participating in one military security structure makes it unfeasible and inefficient to stay away from the relevant geo-economic area" (Sargsyan, 2013a). The President implicitly stressed the undesirability of applying the Ukrainian scenario to Armenia:

> The Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated that lack of understanding of the root causes of the current situation can call further proceeding of the Eastern Partnership into question. Armenia joined the Eastern Partnership with a deep conviction that it is not directed against any third country... It is necessary to find solutions by means of a dialogue that take into account interests of all regional beneficiaries. (Sargsyan, 2014)

Another factor explaining Armenia's Russian-led choice is the country's energy security concerns, particularly Armenia's heavy reliance on energy supplies from Russia, which made the country especially vulnerable to possible gas price hikes. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that through controversial "Equity for Debt" agreement negotiated in 2002-2003, which prompted Armenian authorities to hand over key sectors of the Armenian economy, including core energy facilities, to Russia, and the even more disputable gas deal between Armenia and Russia signed in 2013, which granted Gazprom monopoly rights for gas supply and distribution in Armenia until 2043, Russia has gained control of around 90 percent of Armenia's energy sector (*RFE/RL*, 2013a). Moreover, Russia tightened control over the Armenian energy sector by extending its control over the final power block of the Hrazdan power plant, thus enabling Gazprom to handle Armenia's access to Iranian gas supplied via the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline (Danielyan, 2006). Interestingly, shortly before Armenia's U-turn, in April 2013 Russia played its energy card by increasing gas prices by 50 percent for Armenia, thus indicating the devastating economic consequences of the country's European aspirations. Ironically, Moscow reduced the gas price once Armenia declared it was joining the Customs Union.

To justify the Eurasian choice, the Armenian political leadership admitted that it would secure Armenia from unwelcome fluctuations in gas prices and relevant economic hardships caused by energy supply cut offs, especially having witnessed the politicization of Russian energy supplies in both Ukraine and Moldova. As President Sargsyan put it: "Our choice is not civilizational. It corresponds to the economic interests of our nation. We cannot sign the Free Trade Agreement and increase the gas price and the electricity fee three-fold" (*Aravot Daily*, 2014).

Besides using Armenia's security and energy dependency as a political leverage, Moscow also employed the economic tools to make Armenia reconsider its dialog with the EU and to prevent the signing of the EU Association Agreement. Russia is Armenia's major external trade partner — in 2013 the country received 22.61 percent of Armenian exports while imports from Russia into Armenia amounted to 25.95 percent of total imports (World Bank, 2013). According to data, Russia is also a big source of migrant remittance, amounting to around $1.607 billion of non-commercial overseas wire transfers from Russia to Armenia in 2013 (Hergnyan, 2016). Russia has extended its economic leverage by gaining control over the Armenian railway network and acquiring a considerable

share in the mining sector. Moreover, Russia is a major foreign investor in the Armenian economy. There are about 1,400 enterprises in energy, mining, construction, banking, IT, and communication sectors operating with Russian capital, which is over one-forth of all economic entities with involvement of foreign capital (Armbanks, 2014).

In addition, Russia's large Armenian diasporic community, estimated at around 2.5 million people (*RIA Novosti*, 2002), and the high number of Armenian labor migrants located there still keep Armenia very dependent on Russia. Hence, keeping in mind the mistreatment of the Georgian population in Russia during the period of very tense Russian-Georgian relations before the 2008 war, the Armenian leadership chose to eschew the serious repercussions of antagonizing Russia. In light of Russia's potential threats to ban Armenian exports to Russia, deport Armenian labor migrants, and block private money transfers to Armenia via Russian banks, the decision to join the Customs Union was inevitable.

All the above-mentioned arguments lead to conclude that Armenia's decision to join the Customs Union was made under the political pressure of Russian, which was obviously interested in decreasing European influence in the sphere of its privileged interests and strengthening the shaky perspective of the EAEU's formation by any means. Faced with harsh realities of hard security challenges, the complementary policy of the small landlocked state had to yield to the power of Russian coercion. Unsurprisingly, security priorities became a vital aspect for Armenia to reconsider its integration model and to join the EAEU, given there were no security guaranties from the EU to mitigate the political and economic costs of antagonizing Russia.

Interestingly enough, even though the decision to join the EAEU was taken by the President without any domestic debate, it was not met by significant protests from civil society, government, business groups, or political parties. Aside from the intricate security concerns and the realization of the necessity to retain and expand its strategic partnership with its key security provider Russia, such reluctance can be explained by some domestic factors. Chiefly, Armenia's socio-political landscape lacked strong, institutionalized, real opposition and civil society forces to oppose the U-turn. Besides, the deep rooted foundations of strongly centralized and non-competitive political and economic establishments would probably not survive the reforms that Armenia would be required to introduce under the Association Agreement in the long term (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015, p. 493). Subsequently, the decision to join the EAEU

was hailed as rational and advantageous across Armenia's political elite, stressing its strategic importance for Armenia's security. Reflecting on Armenia's abrupt decision to enter the EAEU, the Deputy Speaker of the Republic of Armenia's (RA) National Assembly Eduard Sharmazanov said that, "Joining the Custom Union was very beneficial for us, and I think it has also solved the security problem… I can say that joining the Customs Union will help our political and economic dialogue, and why not, it will increase our level of security" (*Azatutyun Radiokayan, 2013*). In the words of the Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Nalbandyan, "Armenia's EEU membership was of strategic importance to the RA". In the Minister's opinion, the EAEU accession provided Armenia with better and simpler access to safe product markets, as well as the single Eurasian Union market, duty-free access to the funding base, EAEU travel corridors, and the simplification of migration regimes, thereby attracting investment and establishing industrial and agricultural cooperation (*Arminfo*, 2015).

3. The Implications of Membership in the Eurasian Economic Union on Armenia's European Integration Processes

Nonetheless, since joining the EAEU Armenia has persistently sought to regain relations with the EU. In hopes of preserving key objectives related to enhancing domestic reforms and multi-vector foreign policy, Armenian officials declared that Armenia's membership in the EAEU would not affect its growing relationship with the EU (*Armenpress*, 2013) and that they intended to combine these two directions of the country's foreign policy: remaining in the EAEU while complementing that membership with further cooperation with the EU (*RFE/RL*, 2013b) as well as highlighting the country's role as a "bridge" between the EAEU and the EU and other economic blocs (*Armenpress*, 2017).

After taking a period of strategic pause, despite the EU's initial declarations on incompatibility between the two Unions and a closed window of opportunity for further cooperation with Armenia (*Mediamax*, 2013), in October 2014, a so-called "scoping exercise" was launched aimed to set the legal grounds for a future bilateral agreement and to identify policy areas that could be included in the new agreement and those that required revisions or exclusion taking into account Armenia's new commitments to the EAEU. Following the successful conclusion of the joint "scoping exercise", in May 2015, prior to the Eastern Partnership

Riga Summit, the European Commission adopted a recommendation for the Council to authorize the opening of negotiations on a framework for a new legal agreement between the EU and Armenia.

It is noteworthy that, in Latvian capital, reflecting the shortcomings of the Eastern Partnership project, the EU announced a new, so-called "two-tier approach" in its relations between the two groups of associated and non-associated countries, which would provide more flexible, tailor-made relations between the EU and the Eastern partners. In addition, the EU overhauled the European Neighborhood Policy in 2015 to better respond to the challenges of the evolving neighborhood to the East and South with a greater focus on stabilization, resilience, and security. One of the outcomes of the renewed ENP was also the higher level of differentiation in EU policy vis-à-vis the partner states (EEAS, 2015a). Consequently, this modified policy of differentiation resulted in abandoning a "one-size-fits-all" approach and more flexible policy that offered a compromise between Armenia's membership in the EAEU and closer integration with the EU. During the Riga Summit a common understanding was reached "on the scope for a future agreement between the EU and Armenia aimed at further developing and strengthening their comprehensive cooperation in all areas of mutual interest" (European Commission, 2015, para 12). President Serzh Sargsyan, while speaking about the EU-Armenia partnership at the forth Eastern Partnership Summit on May 22, 2015, stressed that:

> Armenia is committed to take steps jointly with its EU partners to design a new legal foundations for our relations, which will reflect, on one hand, the content of the preceding negotiations Armenia conducted with the EU and, on the other, will be compatible with the other integration processes, in particular, with the commitments stemming from our accession to the Eurasian Economic Union. Armenia, meanwhile, highly values application of differentiated and tailor-made approaches to every individual country, which shall be designed around the progress made in the implementation of reforms, and reiteration of the principle 'more for more'. We strongly believe that all partners shall adhere to shared values and ensure peace and stability of the region. The Republic of Armenia will continue working exactly in this direction. (Sargsyan, 2015)

In December 2015, the EU and Armenia officially launched negotiations on a new overarching framework agreement aimed at deepening and enhancing their bilateral relations, covering cooperation

in all areas possible and compatible with Armenia's new international obligations related its membership in the EAEU (EEAS, 2015b). In this regard, it is noteworthy that at the commencement of the negotiations, the EU highlighted energy, trade, investments, and transport as the key areas to be included in the new agreement, whereas Armenia was engaged in intensive cooperation in a large number of areas from education, science, research, and innovation to air transportation and others (Kostanyan and Giragosian, 2017, p. 4-5).

Despite the political will from both sides to reach an agreement, the new negotiations were more complicated than the earlier talks on the AA and DCFTA, due to new impediments stemming from Armenia's membership in the EAEU and bilateral agreements between Armenia and Russia. For instance, Brussels rejected the Armenian side's proposal to include a so-called "carve-out" clause in the agreement, which would allow Armenia to opt out of various CEPA articles if there were new commitments made to the EAEU to ensure that the values underpinning CEPA and the implementation of the provisions remain firm (Kostanyan and Giragosian, 2017, p. 7).

Eventually, after nine rounds of negotiations lasting slightly over one year, on February 27, 2017 the EU and Armenia announced the conclusion of the negotiations, and one month later the CEPA was initialed in Yerevan. Undoubtedly, CEPA represents an important breakthrough for both Armenia and the EU by offering both sides a new platform to bring relations to a higher level within the larger framework of the revised ENP and EaP. As mentioned in the Joint Press Release by Armenia and the EU, "It will strengthen the political dialogue and set a solid basis for the continuation of economic and social reforms. Strong commitments to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, underpin the new agreement and Armenia-EU future cooperation. The CEPA will also create the framework for stronger cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport and the environment, for new opportunities in trade and investments, and for increased mobility for the benefit of the citizens" (EEAS, 2017a).

On November 24, 2017 the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, aimed at broadening the scope of bilateral relations between Armenia and the EU, was signed in the sidelines of the fifth Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels.

Although CEPA is less weighty than the prior EU Association Agreement and the DCFTA, as it does not contain the free-trade arrangements, it is strategically significant for both Armenia and the EU. First of all, the new

agreement lets Armenia regain and strengthen the European dimension of its "complementarity" policy. Secondly, CEPA provides an important basis for further deepening relations with the EU and Europeanization of Armenia's legal and political systems, by replacing the outdated Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1999 with a legally binding and politically significant commitment reinforced by a substantial degree of conditionality.

At the same time, for the EU, CEPA represents the first successful example of the EU's modified policy of differentiation that is based on a realistic consideration of the specific conditions, constraints, and needs of the EaP partner state. The EU-Armenia CEPA is also significant as a unique example of European engagement with an EAEU member state, which can subsequently help to avoid the creation of new dividing lines between EU-associated and EAEU-member neighbors. Apparently, Armenia's membership in the EAEU and its continuous efforts to strengthen relations with the EU have catalyzed more flexible, demand-driven relations of the EU with the non-associated countries and allowed the EU to explore new possibilities of an "AA-minus" (Association Agreement without a DCFTA) framework, which subsequently can be offered to other EAEU members.

Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether and to what extent the conditions and constrains determined by membership in the EAEU would enable Armenia to comply with the provisions of CEPA and the reviewed ENP and to enhance the partnership with the EU further.

Out of the political, economic, and sectoral components of CEPA, the political dialog section has been less affected by Armenia's EAEU membership and has kept the substance of the previously negotiated Association Agreement, as there is no issue of incompatibility with the EAEU's provisions. As an important element of political association, CEPA includes rather extensive commitments in the areas of foreign policy, rule of law, justice, freedom and security, addressing cooperation on combating corruption, money laundering, organized crime, terrorism, irregular migration, border management, asylum, and others (EEAS, 2017b).

Obviously, the economic component of CEPA proved the most affected. Despite the fact that Armenia has advantageous access to the EU market under the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+), which provides for a zero duty rate for about 6,400 tariff lines (European Commission, 2020), the commitments within the EAEU substantially limit Armenia's compliance with the EU market rules and hinder the reinforcement of economic cooperation. By becoming a member of the EAEU, Armenia not

only lost the DCFTA due to legal incompatibilities between the EU and the EAEU economic integration schemes but also forfeited its competence to negotiate a simple free trade agreement with other countries or groups of countries. To be more precise, Article 4 of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union provides the creation of a common market of goods, services, capital, and labor (Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, 2014, Art. 4). Article 5 implies a strict compliance by the Member States with the principles and objectives of the EAEU in their economic policy (Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, 2014, Art. 5). And with it, Article 25 of the Treaty provides a common external tariff of the EAEU and other common measures regulating foreign trade in goods with third parties, as well as a common regime of trade of goods with third parties (Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, 2014, Art. 25). Therefore, membership in the EAEU brings loss of sovereignty over the country's trade policy and sets common EAEU tariffs that are incompatible with the elimination of tariffs planned under the DCFTA (Delcour et al., 2015, p. 19). Accordingly, CEPA's provisions related to customs provisions, technical barriers of trade (TBT), and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), being areas of competence of the EAEU, are rather superficial (EEAS, 2017b).

Regarding the implications on EU-Armenia sectoral cooperation — ranging from energy, environment, transport, and employment to education and civil society — Armenia's obligations vis-à-vis the EAEU limit the prospect of cooperation mainly in the fields of energy, transport, and connectivity. The ENP-review highlights the importance of energy cooperation both as a security measure and as a means for stable economic development via strengthening its energy dialog with partner countries in energy security, energy market reforms, and the promotion of sustainable energy (EEAS, 2015a). In conformity with provisions of the reviewed ENP, the CEPA package implies energy cooperation and enhancement of Armenia's energy efficiency, chiefly targeting the areas of sustainable energy development, alternative energy sources, and resilience-related matters (EEAS, 2017b). However, when it comes to energy, the new commitments within the EAEU and the country's bilateral agreements with Russia leave practically no space for the EU to boost energy cooperation with Armenia. In particular, Article 79 of the EAEU Treaty provides that "Member States shall develop a long-term mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector, conduct a coordinated energy policy, implement the gradual formation of common markets of energy resources in accordance with international treaties provided for in Articles 81, 83 and 84 of this

Treaty" (Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, 2014, Art. 79, 81, 83, 84). In addition, the signed 2013 gas agreement between the Armenian government with Russia, which granted Gazprom a monopoly to operate pipelines until 2043, severely affects the provisions of EU law and limits the scope of EU-Armenia energy cooperation.

Same limitations apply to the partnership in the field of transport and connectivity. Article 86 of the Treaty on the EAEU stipulates that "the EAEU carries out coordinated (correlated) transport policy aimed at ensuring economic integration, consistent and gradual creation of a single transport space on the principles of competition, openness, security, reliability, availability and environmental compatibility" (Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, 2014, Art. 86). This article leaves virtually no space for the EU to foster cooperation on transport connectivity and telecommunications, which is crucial not only to the economic development of the partners but most importantly for regional dialog and cooperation (EEAS, 2015a). Thus, while Armenia's openness to the EU's rules and templates remains high, the outlook for cooperation in many fields is severely constrained by participation in the Eurasian integration project, which requires a high degree of harmonization and compliance with its own policy, law, and regulatory frameworks.

Meanwhile, the 2018 Velvet Revolution and the subsequent power transition in Armenia may create new opportunities for the country's foreign policy and advancement of EU-Armenia relations. While the leaders of the new administration do not seek to change Armenia's foreign policy priorities or alter Armenia's geopolitical alignments (Pashinyan, 2019), the emergence of Nikol Pashinyan's new style of governance will arguably result in additional sovereign, Armenia-centric foreign policy decisions and, in the long run, in building more symmetric relations with Russia. Apparently, this new government, with its more proactive policymaking and declared efforts towards good governance, fundamental democratic reforms, and fight against corruption and oligarchic monopolies, will be more receptive to the EU templates, will bring new opportunities for efficient implementation of CEPA, and will provide greater political will and determination to deepen EU-Armenia relations.

However, despite the abovementioned points, a major breakthrough in EU-Armenia relations cannot be expected anytime soon due to unchanged conditions and constraints that determined Armenia's geopolitical U-turn towards the Eurasian direction in the first place.

4. Conclusion

The intensification of the EU engagement with the South Caucasus region and the launch of the EaP initiative — which was entailing legal approximation with the EU's acquis — led to Russia's growing antagonism with the EU and a more assertive "near abroad" policy. The growing struggle between the West and Russia in Eurasia has significantly frustrated Armenia's delicate multi-vector foreign policy, making it difficult to maneuver between the country's Europeanization and security partnership with Russia.

Russia's coercive policy vis-à-vis Armenia and its overdependence on Russia in security matters left little room for the small landlocked country to achieve a Russian-European balance. Despite its quite successful integration into EU models and standards, Armenia, driven by security reasons, made a U-turn in the European integration dimension of its foreign policy in September 2013. Having succumbed to the Kremlin's political pressure due to the country's overreliance on Russia in traditional security, energy, and economic matters, Armenia quitted to pursue an Association Agreement with the EU and made a geopolitical choice in favor of the EAEU. Unsurprisingly, security priorities became a more vital aspect for Armenia to reconsider its integration model and to join the EAEU, given there were no security guaranties from the EU to mitigate the political and economic costs of antagonizing Russia.

Nonetheless, after the September 2013 events the country adopted a rather pragmatic approach with a clear focus on further political and economic cooperation with the EU in an attempt to ensure compatibility with the Eurasian direction, considering rapprochement with EU as an opportunity to regain a degree of balance in its foreign politics. The EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement signed on November 24, 2017 created a new framework for stronger cooperation between the EU and Armenia. Although CEPA is less weighty than the prior EU Association Agreement and the DCFTA, it is strategically important for both Armenia and the EU. From Armenia's perspective, the new framework agreement allowed the country to regain and strengthen the European dimension of its complementarity policy as well as provided an important legal basis for further Europeanization of Armenia's legal and political systems. With regard to the EU, CEPA represents the first successful example of the EU's policy of differentiation reflected in the reviewed ENP and the outcomes of the Riga EaP Summit, entailing

tailor-made offers adjusted to specific aspirations, constraints, and needs of the partner states. At the same time, Armenia's membership in the EAEU and its efforts to regain and strengthen its relations with the European Union allowed the EU to explore new possibilities of an "AA-minus" framework, which subsequently can be offered to other non-associated members of the EaP. That will create new possibilities for the EU to expand relations with other EAEU members and to engage with the EAEU in the common neighborhood, avoiding the creation of new dividing lines between EU-associated and EAEU-member neighbors. The EU-Armenia CEPA is an important test case for this approach.

Although the final assessment of CEPA's success has yet to be performed, the analysis of the interplay between Armenia, the EU, and the EAEU demonstrates that, while Armenia's openness to the EU's rules and templates remains high, the outlook for cooperation in many fields, is severely constrained by Armenia's participation in the Eurasian integration project. Despite the fact that Armenia has succeeded in signing the CEPA, which undoubtedly will further deepen and broaden the scope of bilateral relations between Armenia and the EU in political, economic, and social fields, Armenia's commitments vis-à-vis the EAEU indicate that there is little to no space for developing deep economic cooperation with the EU since abandoning the DCFTA with the EU and given the limitations in sectoral areas of cooperation, in particular, in the fields of energy, transport, and connectivity.

At the same time, the 2018 Velvet Revolution and the subsequent power transition in Armenia may, arguably, create new opportunities for the country's foreign policy and advancement of EU-Armenia relations, given the government's more sovereign, Armenia-centric approach and its determination to pursue a more calibrated and balanced foreign policy. In addition, the new Armenian government, with its declared democratic reforms and anti-corruption, anti-monopolies efforts, will apparently be more receptive to the EU reform-oriented initiatives and will provide greater political will and determination to deepen EU-Armenia relations. Nevertheless, a major breakthrough in EU-Armenia relations cannot be expected anytime soon, as the conditions that determined Armenia's geopolitical U-turn towards the EAEU have largely remained unchanged.

NOTES

[1]   In March 2012, the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a document on Armenia comprising a proposal to replace the mandate of France in the OSCE Minsk Group with EU mandate, which the Armenian side found inappropriate.

[2]   Meaning the countries with a better reform record would progress toward European integration, thus providing more differentiation between the countries involved.

[3]   However, the Armenian Government failed to harvest even the foreseen short-term economic benefits of the EAEU membership, as accession to the EAEU coincided with economic recession in Russia. To compare, Armenia's GDP growth in 2015 was 3.2 percent, in 2016 – 0.2 percent, in 2017 – 7.5 percent, in 2018 – 5.2 percent (World Bank, 2020).

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"A SECOND BREAD":
ON BELARUSIAN CHOICES

Abstract

This paper considers the potato as an agent in social history, its role within an underdeveloped civil society dominated by the state. It uses guidance from previous studies, extending its research edge and focus to Belarus. Using qualitative methods, it shows that authoritarianism encourages work on subsidiary allotments to make workers economically and socially inactive. The paper investigates manifestations of "potato-induced" weaknesses of civil society, workings of governmental policies, and prospects for public resistance. It finally hypothesizes on the re-feudalizing perils for people subsisting on the potato but calling it "second bread."

Keywords: Potato, bread, Belarus, re-feudalizing, methodological individualism

> *"if a community is to be enslaved by*
> *the simplicity of its own dietary"*
> *(Salaman 1949, 426)*

Introduction

Historically, there have been examples of the potato contributing to subordination and exploitation, but also cases where the potato enlivened the economy. There are also countries "the major part of whose long history is a record of suffering and tragedy" (Fay 1950, 401), where it led to a disaster. Belarus is one such country.

Potato is a cheap staple food that first appears as a blessing, but proves to be rather ominous upon a closer inspection of its societal role. Belarusian households consider potatoes as mainstay and they plant this tuber on subsistence allotments after doing low-paid jobs in the public sector. They cultivate potatoes instead of approaching the public arena. In general, specialized literature regards the potato as the main item of Belarusian

cuisine, preventing the mostly city-dwelling nation from forsaking village traditions. Singing eulogies to the potato as a tasty food or describing an emotional attachment to this tuber is common. This paper understands the potato as a tool for exploitation and self-exploitation, for domination, subjugation, and resistance. It is essential to see why Belarusians consider the potato as a primary food.

The paper brings to light those practices that make potatoes a staple food and a medium of domination by preventing labor division and horizontal communication, showing how Belarusians settle for potato and whether or how they resist it. The project determines the potato's societal role and ascertains its assumed instrumentality for the dominant power. It asks if political elites consciously employ this monoculture to put subalterns into inferior positions. The research subject of potato requires political economy and anthropological approaches. The paper combines various "why" and "how" questions into a specific potato discourse, considering such elements as "potato logic," "potato republic," "potato society," and "potato debate," to see what new, and specifically Belarusian, arguments it can add. The paper approaches issues of domination and subordination, wherein one should look for the potato's role.

"Why are we slaves?" Dialectics of Master and Slave

Slavery in Belarusian discourse can be expressed by the "Why are we slaves?" query (the title of a book by the Soviet dissident Zinoviev [1989]). It points to specific economic and social regularities. Dissident Timofeev (1985) writes that the life of Soviet villagers was synonymous with subsistence, pre-capitalist economy, while feudal land ownership was a trait of a society of mature socialism. Belarusian leadership, affectionately invoking the Stalinist era and *Tcheka*/NKVD (secret police) methods, continues to drive people into the workforce "like cattle to collective farm stalls," as an anonymous interviewee said. Modern-day *Tcheka*, the Belarusian Interior Ministry, uses the near-free labor of convicts in the post-*kolkhozy* it controls. Such cases bring us back to collectivization, where "resemblances to serfdom [a]re remarkable"; James C. Scott (Scott 1998, p.213) suggest that the process has been one of a *re-enserfing / re-feudalizing.*

Specifically, *food-induced subordination* and control involve "subalternity," a "perpetual existence of slavery" (Beilharz 2009, 25), and Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807).

Bauman (1985) reflects on the interdependence between Bolsheviks and peasants. To put it in more clear terms, Belarusian realities correspond to feudalism when people receive a meager payment; the land belongs to the feudal lord, presently the State; presidential decrees supersede the law. Hann (2013) also interprets informality and neglect of formal institutions as "feudal" relationships. In Belarus, then part of Soviet Russia, serfdom reappeared through collectivization. Contrary to Marxism, a socialist revolution took place in an agrarian country as a reversal to a patriarchal society, opposing the onset of capitalism. In 1994, the newly independent Belarus relapsed into serfdom, when people elected the "good landlord" Lukašenka, who promised to judge fairly. Nowadays, the "employer" concept has little meaning in a country where the State is the only landowner. Rural enterprises are managed by "agrarian barons," whose feudal character surfaces in privileges, loyalty-based selection, and public assets granted "for service." Lukašenka promises to gift each "baron" with 25 percent shares of their post-*kolkhoz*. "Barons" go to jail for theft, but then receive again hundred-dollars-per-month "serfs."

Belarusian society is *feudalizing.* The presidential decree, known as "decree on do-littles," is designed to to turn them into serfs: avoiding the "social parasite" status and acquiescing to any minimally-paid job, a person disregards common good. Such a person is easily controllable and goes with the flow. Control over food is key to political dominance. Pre-revolutionary Russia had a primitive society with predominantly subsistence farming. In the 1980s, Timofeev (1985) described villagers (and urban *dacha* enthusiasts) spending off-hours on subsistence plots (often as small as 0.02 ha), but feeding half of the Soviet people. The potato is still a major nutritional factor for Belarusian city dwellers, yet less so than in villages: this is because rural wages are lower than in the city, villagers having readier access to land and the skills needed to grow potatoes, and because villagers are conservative.

Whether or not the crop itself is at the root of inequality is this paper's central issue. Food impacts the society via production routine and consumer habits. Contrasting cooperation and labor division to produce bread by the English vs. self-contained potato production by Irish peasants, Salaman (1949) showed how elites force or persuade the poor into a cheap, nutritious staple. Engels (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, 1884) noted the impact of the potato on societies and likened its revolutionary role to that of iron. Contemporary authors argue that certain crops involve a particular political economy, inequality in production means, and social

stratification (Mintz 1986; Mihály Sárkány, pers. comm., January 2020), defining, among other things, the societal penchant for *re-feudalizing.*

> *"Potato above all."*
> We observed Belarusians harvesting potatoes. All along our way, half-broken human figures were poking into the ground like moles, burrowing for potatoes, friskily and methodically picking precious tubers. Faces were sweaty and dirty, tight and focused, but also peaceful. They were sagging under the weight of sacks, stepping among the furrows like ants, dragging them to Ladas and Volkswagens. They did not notice anything aside from their potatoes. Potatoes reigned above all. Only now I understood a stout girl selling potatoes near supermarket 'Tsentralny' in Minsk after the 1995 referendum results replaced *Pahonya* [the historical Belarusian national emblem, the equestrian figure of St. George] with the present 'potato-shaped' symbol [Soviet-style, an oval contour of Belarus above the sun and the globe, amidst two sheaths of wheat ears connecting above with a red star]. I asked her if she voted for the replacement. She repeated to me the words of the 'potato-grower-in-chief' [Lukašenka]: 'What use would we have for this mare [meaning St. George's horse]?' Now I looked at these folks in the fields and understood: the one who picked up the spade would never take the sword. No military intervention is needed to occupy what is already occupied by the potato, which sits in the heads, entrails, and, most deploringly, in the hearts of Belarusians" (Daškievič 2017 – my transl. – AI). *(to be continued, see below)*

The excerpt above follows a logic once originated in Malthus, that Lloyd (2007, 10) calls *"potato logic."* It alleges that the State imposed potatoes on people as their staple. Once established, the potato determines their life. Following this excerpt and addressing "potato logic," the paper applies social science methods to assess the impact of the potato on Belarusian society. The potato as a research subject resorts to political economy, while also drawing on anthropological approaches. After the review of ethnographic data-gathering in authoritarian settings, the discussion first addresses potato choices anthropologically and follows the four questions of Bernstein's (2017, 2) summary of the Marxist political economy approach: "Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it?" Repeating the classical questions posed by Salaman (20th-century potato scholar and proponent, in Connell [1951, 394]): "Who benefited; who suffered?" and Trevelyan (19th-century opponent of "the corrupting potato," in Lloyd [2007, 318]) "what hope

is there for a nation which lives on potatoes?", the *aim* is to uncover the societal impact of the potato staple on Belarus.

Methodology and Context: "A silent and fragmented field"

Despite pride in their potatoes, Belarusians are ignorant about the potato's social effects and should learn from other nations once in critical relations with potato and where it has long competed with grain, such as Ireland, Britain, and France. The paper intends to set an example in applying international potato-focused scholarship to Belarus. Critical researchers of authoritarian Belarus are a rare species. Belarusian collectivized rural contexts, a "silent and fragmented field" (Hervouet 2019, 99), are notably challenging to study ethnographically. Looking into what was still possible to study, the seemingly innocuous topic of potatoes enabled this research. Seemingly apolitical, potato cultivation and consumption give a clue to life in Belarus.

This text represents an independent research. Sociological surveys in Belarus are conducted by "competent bodies" and the results publicized in a "managed" form, if at all. An independent researcher has no right to ask questions. Instead of interviews, the author informally talked to people (N>100) in several villages, in a district town, in the regional city Gomel, and in the capital Minsk, in settings ranging from a festive table, a public bus, a train, and a household allotment while helping to plant and harvest potatoes. It takes continuous engagement in local life to overcome stereotypes and restraint, although the author is an insider in his research settings, and many people knew his ancestors – that is to say, they knew him "peeled," as the saying goes, invoking the same old potato. As a Belarusian native, the author can be subjected to repression, though this opportunity has been underutilized. A recent episode, probably a reminder for him "to behave," took place at Minsk airport, where he lost control over his laptop, taken by someone avowedly by mistake during the usual airport security check. This experience echoes Hervouet's (2019, 96) evidence on the regime using "speculations, giving free rein to the most paranoid interpretations." The author believes that his contacts were safe because they talked about the potato, the most innocent of subjects.

A significant problem was numerical data. Systematic distortion by the authorities of statistical information for the sake of a propagandistic "picture" precludes any reliable data for numerical analysis. Official statistics are suspect, and many of their claimed achievements exist

only "on paper." The non-existence of independent sociology in Belarus should not exonerate turning to official sources, because the throttling of independent expertise aims to achieve this effect. To avoid losing grasp on Belarusian reality, the author substantiates his inferences from international literature with his empirical material. A good part of this paper reflects on domination, subordination, and other abstract but potato-related issues. Given that the subject matter involving potato cultivation and consumption is often qualitative and non-measurable, the argument array needed a tool to ascertain its findings' causal regularities. It employs the so-called *Austrian methodology*, featuring a principle of methodological individualism, claims about an *a priori* human action, and issues involving preference vis-a-vis action, especially time-preference, whereby people prefer to achieve their goal sooner rather than later, if possible.

Methodological individualism is essential to this study on potato-subsisting and atomized households, making individual decisions under risk and uncertainty. Herewith, the action is only purposeful behavior, and preferences apply via descriptions. Crucial for this study on food, methodological individualism presupposes social action stemming from individual human action, but irreducible to biology. Despite this paper addresses the symbolism and the social implications of potatoes, they more commonly stand for the material properties and the physiological effects of the food (Nozick 1997). Following the Austrian methodology, the paper's argument abstracts from the biology and physiology of potato. A similar logic has probably led Harvard's Anthropology program to separate Biological Anthropology, which affected those who studied food and regarded it as intrinsically bio-cultural (Wiley and Madison 2006). This study thus bypasses *biological essentialism* but espouses anthropologist Thompson's *cultural materialism*, "a moral economy of explanation that assumes reasonableness of popular action and its conformity to an implied human norm" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 67), insisting on placing economic behavior back into a broader cultural context.

"Second bread": Dialectics of Potato

Why potato is chosen. Anthropological argument

Peasant outlooks explain potato's reception across Europe: conservatism and avoidance of risk first kept potato down in the 18th century and promoted it in the 19th century, when it proved a reliable standby

(Zuckerman 1999). The potato arrived in yet pre-modern 18th-century Belarus to join its traditional culture, cuisine, and conservative tastes. As with other traditional cultures that persist with whatever gods or ancestors have created, growing and eating potatoes is thus moral for Belarusians (Rakicki 2006). What further determines the choice of food is its taste. As if implementing the acceptable (human-to-social) reductionism, taste is not individual, but shared by collectivities and even nations. Scaling up from nations, sedentary civilizations are starch-based societies that tend to cultivate complex carbohydrates: maize, potatoes, rice, millet, or wheat. Other food appears as secondary. People "feel they have not... eaten unless they have had [starch foods] *ubwali*..., but they will also feel that *ubwali* is not enough [without flavor-fringe] *umunani*" (Mintz 1986, 11). After Mintz (1986, 9) asks "how a preferred starch can be the nutritive anchor of an entire culture," he later answers, "[w]hy this should be so is not entirely clear" (Mintz 1986, 11), endorsing this research's avoidance of biological explanations. The dietary "center" and "edge" meet the Austrian methodology, given its penchant for paired choices. Besides taste, the Austrian methodology reverberates (via its choice-preference-action pairing, and particularly time-preference) in the convenience food as dictated by time, energies, and lifestyles (Sheely 2008). In rural areas, the choice of crops relates to associated risks. While in France "the soil... [sustaining the potato] was... on the side of the Republic" (Spary 2014, 177), the Irish adopted potato as fitting for their humid climate, friable acid soil, boglands (Armattoe 1945), similar to Belarus.

"The destruction of war and revolution" (Connell 1951, 389) increased reliance on potatoes, as in 17th century Ireland, when one-third of its population died. The 1800 famine led to the spread of potatoes in Romania and other European countries (Chiru et al. 2008). In Belarus, the full-scale adoption of potatoes followed the loss of one-third of the population in WWII. Mihály Sárkány contributed this argument with a baseline from his study of the Kikuyu (Kenya). The Kikuyu produced starch-rich maize already in the 19th century without making it their staple food. It became so in the early 20th century via locals hired by Europeans, who paid with *posho* (a portion of maize), which Kikuyu cooked into *ugali* (in Swahili, a dish of cooked maize flour, a variation of *ubwali*). The conditions in Kenya's Central Highlands favored maize cultivation, with its flour highly valuable nutritionally and easy to cook. The former staple foods, millet or sorghum, gave humbler yields and notably failed during WWI. Collapsing anthropology and political economy, the latter concerns the recognition

that everything that is produced should be reproduced, including producers and their families. The potato's political economy is crucial for understanding its effect on Belarusian society. The paper continues this line by considering Bernstein's four questions (2017).

What difference potatoes make. The political economy argument

The tuber pervaded individual households and entire societies until it started to define them (Zuckerman 1999) in what concerned land allocation, production routines, and consumption habits.

Ownership: Enclosure

Food should be discussed apiece with the land. With land in British hands, the Irish were *re-feudalized* into landless peasants surviving on potato (Hotopf 2013). Although imperial Russia abolished serfdom in the Belarusian lands in 1861, peasants did not receive direct (rather than via *obshchina*) access to land until 1910. After 1917, Bolsheviks collectivized land and assets into *kolkhozy* and peasants into landless serfs. Nowadays, post-*kolkhozniki* are landless potato-subsisting wage-workers. Collectivization meant the enclosure of small farms into large units, leaving small subsistence allotments for villagers. Like in post-enclosure Ireland, Soviet land arrangements required the potato. In Soviet Belarus, 0.25 ha was the allotment ceiling, compared to 1 ha in the Soviet Baltic republics, closer to Irish cottagers "who farmed nothing as large as the hectare" (Zuckerman 1999, 78). Enclosure changed the ways people fed themselves: they now had to buy all other food except potatoes.

A Soviet household plot was the object neither of tenure nor of free rent, while its allowed use was family subsistence (Timofeev 1985). Present-day Belarus is one of few countries worldwide with no land market: like a top feudal senior, Lukašenka transfers land to "barons" and such international friends as Arab sheiks. Again, post-*kolkhozy* occupy the better land, while villagers wishing for an extra land parcel should register as "farmers," implying paperwork, accounting, and taxes. Belarusian nomenklatura opposes the private sector's expansion, but some large, well-connected farmers can access even post-*kolkhozy*'s lands, forcing them to lay off their workers. Whether laid-off or still employed, villagers settle for potato from subsistence plots, reminding us of the Irish cottager, who "was not a serf – he was much nearer akin to a slave" (Salaman 1949, 266). Again,

"slavery" is an oft-repeated word in Belarusian talks. It is possible to privatize a subsistence allotment (it would cost USD 2-3 thousand per ha). Even this parcel cannot be sold, an epitome of ownership failing to bring independence. Belarusian households either avoid registering their parcels or choose lifetime possession – neither to sell nor to divide into parts, which represents a difference from Irish cottagers.

Expanding on the similarity between old Ireland and present-day Belarus, there are incessant legislative initiatives to reduce the amount of land in smallholders' use by diverting "extra" acreages over to post-*kolkhozy* (Zhminda 2012). While an average American family farm occupies 300 ha and a European family possesses 49 ha, a Belarusian household uses a land parcel comparable to that of a Roman slave's (0.06-0.25 ha), and an average post-kolkhoz occupies 22,000 ha (Hurnievič 2018). Western visionaries addressing the worsening relationship between land and people hoped the potato would compensate for the loss of common rights, while others blamed the potato for exacerbating the poor's plight (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). Soviet collectivization implied a pervasive loss of rights, but native discussion on the potato's role is non-critical.

Production: "Lazy-bed"

By the 19th century, the potato was already dominating the Belarusian fields, and it became the focus of the new-born agrarian science in the 1860s (Rakicki 2006). Even the illiterate contributed observations – because, to use Spary's (2014, 183) expression, "[t]he science of potatoes was democratic" – in republican France and tsarist Russia almost alike. Belarusian potato cultivation rated high in the Russian Empire: in 1913, the cultivated area was 583.3 thousand ha, each giving 6.4 tons, which made for a total of 4 million tons, or 12.6 percent in the Empire (Rakicki 2006). The advantage was relative to Russian inner regions. In the 1920s, the per-hectare yield was 8.7 tons at best (Zadora 2019) or 2.5 times lower than the per-acre yield of 6.5-8.5 tons in 19th-century Ireland (Zuckerman 1999). Belarusian households report up to 500 kg per 0.01 ha (acreage referred to as *sotka*), or on average, 8-12 sacks, each sack weighing 30-40 kg. If recalculated for a hectare, this harvest is a stunning 50 tons – such achievements are not scaleable in practice and apply to small plots and family self-exploitation. Both in Soviet and modern Belarus, official statistics have appropriated 80 percent of the harvest (recently, 4.8 million tons) gathered by private households. Post-*kolkhozy* avoid the potato due

to the required sizable input of manual (rather than mechanized) work and care.

Manual work in isolation on small parcels invokes the *"lazy-bed,"* a method of cultivation and individual survival on potato involving raised strips of soil, fertilized with animal manure and enabling a family of six to feed on less than an acre (Salaman 1949). It needed meager resources: spades and their operators, and amounted to a parallel domestic economy supporting a capitalist market with excessive land and cheap labor. As noted, Belarus matches Ireland's less fertile soils (their large proportion falling on former peat bogs), and its cold climate, unsupportive of wheat cultivation, but very suitable for potatoes. Individual potato plots in Belarus do not require elevation in its drier climate but still need spudding. Over the last two decades, mechanical cultivators ("mini-tractors") have been in use. Without much involvement of modern agronomy, it is the same variety planted year after year for lack of money for seeds. Growers say this tuber "loves a care": spudding no less than three times per season, sprinkling, preventing Phytophthora by using chemicals, and considering that it's better to manually remove Colorado beetles. Otherwise people tend to avoid chemicals both for economic reasons and in a strive for "good ecology." No interviewee applied expensive mineral fertilizers. Organics were applied sparingly, once every three years. Some interviewees explained this frugality by reasonable sufficiency (more organics would not improve harvests); others referred to manure as less accessible due to few privately owned cows and the high prices demanded by post-kolkhoz milk farms. Though familiar with the radioactivity risks of local firewood, respondents used stove ashes as nitrogen fertilizers. Traditional paring and burning of land to give potash to potatoes were discontinued in Belarus due to vigilant local authorities: fires compromise accident statistics. Authorities neglect whatever risk citizens are exposed to by consuming radionuclides with self-grown food. Relating other peculiarities of potato growing, people reported

- in the past, they followed a simple "hundred-day potato growths" rule (planted in May, harvesting in September),
- potato blights never happened,
- harvest could be preserved almost without decay,
- the Colorado beetle was the only enemy, and
- Potato harvests differ year in and out: an excellent potato harvest was in 2017, but Phytophthora damaged it in 2018.

Belarusian post-*kolkhozy* combine socialist traits with market elements. Everything Timofeev wrote still applies today in Belarus: the making of agricultural land a massive enterprise for exploitation; workers having to work on subsistence plots in their free time and to engage family members; individual allotments essential not only for the reproduction of rural households, but also for *dacha*-owning urbanites (Timofeev 1985). *Dachniks* are not only Soviet or Belarusian, but a regional and current trend of the city dwellers driving the potato broader-scope, with urbanites cultivating potatoes to earn psychological and economic security. What Timofeev viewed as exploitation and self-exploitation, some Belarusian researchers uncritically consider as helping "citizens escape from economic and political pressure" (Zadora 2019, 183). Without labor division and extra-family co-operation, it is a form of self-isolation (Rev 1987), escaping society and political reality. Deciding between exploitation and self-exploitation, the factor of economic necessity is vital. Often, a potato bed is not necessary for people earning enough to buy food. As Timofeev (1985) noted (bringing to mind the "potato logic" [Lloyd 2007]), by cultivating potatoes over the years, generations form a custom and a moral imperative requiring a household to engage with it. Because every villager plants and harvests potatoes, because people see avoidance as arrogance, or otherwise one should give up the land parcel provided on condition of its use for subsistence.

Growers invest potato with superior time-saving and nutritive properties (Spary 2014). The potato also casts many shadows. Some accused potato subsistence of killing off sea-fishing in Ireland, but this profession declined over decreasing profitability (Zuckerman 1999). Others asperse potato as a "lazy-root" for allowing subsistence with minimal labor and land (Connell 1951). Potato cultivation reveals time-consciousness. The Irish smallholders spent "a fortnight planting, a fortnight digging and another fortnight cutting turf, and for the rest of the year followed their inclinations without the least ambition of any sort" (Armattoe 1945, 154). In the "Austrian" framework, such references to time signify a penchant for action ("Action shows time-preference" [Nozick 1997, 136]), abrupt and dramatic, such as revolutions. Based on evidence from revolutionary France, the paper also posits potato growers' immunity – up to a point – to redistribution-upon-requisition incentives and other collectivization initiatives: "Replies to th[ese] initiative[s] show that – as before the Revolution – potato cultivation remained a locali[z]ed affair" (Spary 2014, 182). Potato has proved to be an individualistic crop. Negatively,

its distinctive political economy makes households reproduce at fixed consumption. Such household reproduction scales up to corresponding societal reproduction, making for a potato-subsisting society lacking progress.

Consumption: "Second bread"

"Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth" (Berry 1990, 145). Before the advent of the potato, the Irish "consumed abundant milk, sour curds, butter, oatmeal, oaten bread, and pudding made from ox blood" (Armattoe 1945, 154). Though most Belarusians do not imagine life without potatoes, it is adjacent with such near-subsistence tillage and pastoral products as pork, milk, curds, and eggs. Belarusians were known for consuming *bocvinie* (beetroot, onions, dill, parsley, quinoa, nettles, sorrel), a laughingstock for the Polish nobility regarding their Belarusian peers, said not only to eat *bocvinie* but grow it as well (Rakicki 2006). Each subsequent war on the Belarusian territory, but particularly WWII, increased the role of the potato, and by the late Soviet period, Timofeev (1985) witnessed city dwellers, but especially villagers, consuming in excess only potatoes and bread. Elsewhere, the potato habit gradually weakened (Connell 1951). "That has changed... even with the Irish, who used to love their potatoes, despite the Great Famine. Now potatoes are a pretty subsidiary item in the diet and in popular discourse" (Cormac O'Grada, pers. comm., November 2019). If we are to believe statistics, Belarusians also tend to eat less bread and potatoes.

This research focuses on a popular reference to the potato as "second bread" (there is neither "third" nor "fourth bread"). Belarusian publicists and researchers reiterate that the potato has become a public mainstay and an alternative to bread (Zadora 2019), or a proverbial "second bread." There is historical evidence: for peasants it was often the "first bread" – when they sold their peas, barley, and oats, and ate potatoes throughout the year (Rakicki 2006) – but still counted as "second."

The potato is called "second bread" not only by Belarusians, but also by other Slavic peoples and even in Romania (Chiru et al. 2008). If potato is a mainstay, why then should it be a "second-best... bread"? It is a humbling assessment of this staple food grown by almost everyone: "we all eat bread, and next to none of us have grown it. We all eat potatoes, and most of us cultivate them, being aware at first hand of this season's shortage and last season's glut" (Fay 1950, 399). In Belarus,

despite being considered a national "second bread" while being the main domestic product, officialdom keeps the potato off focus, prioritizing grain. The paper hypothesizes: having switched to potatoes and a secluded, household-orbiting life, people affectionately remembered their previous, communal, grain/bread-based life. It can be suggested that for this reason Belarusians welcomed collectivization, perceived as a return of the *obshchina* communal life.

Uses of the potato

The argument ensues to define the potato's strategic applications and social effects (often perceived as "dangers"). The potato keeps resolving or alleviating problems of time and space, land and fuel, labor and income, promoting thriftiness and simplicity. The "corrupting potato," this section's priority focus, is a shorthand for the apprehensions of social change, accompanying the potato's success with suspicion (Zuckerman 1999). 19th-century authors considered the potato an "exploitative bondage" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 68). People have considered the potato as an economic, cultural, or social weapon. Malthus considered the potato dangerous as something grown in allotments out of the economy, thus preventing *homo appetitis* from becoming *homo economicus*. To others a mere subsistence and the end of culture, the potato blocked aspirations towards higher ends. The social body lost "radiating complexities," traditions such as home bread-baking, constituting the art of living (Zuckerman 1999; Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). The potato could serve for turning people noneconomic, ego-less, and antisocial. The question remains: Is this incidental or the result of conscious action?

In Belarus, the predominantly enthusiastic reception casts the potato as a life-supporting resource and cultural asset (Rakicki 2006; Zadora 2019), and few view it as a concern rather than an asset (Daškievič 2017). There is then a discussion regarding the potato's social effects by correlating the material circumstances of the potato and the societal characteristics it reproduces, fitting the potato into a cause and effect pattern. The resignation to the potato often happened *"in times of national danger,"* when it gave support, encouragement to be content with little, and a feeling of belonging (Armattoe 1945, 154-155). Revolutionary France saw potatoes contribute to good citizenship and even to exemplary Republican citizens, due to its adaptability, versatility, and modesty (Spary 2014). In Soviet republics, individual potato cultivation made for

the provision of cities and urban-rural connections, alongside familial connectivity. Even the families of the defiant cultural elite representatives were involved in potato cultivation: the Chukovskys, the Pasternaks, the Kataevs (Pomerantsev 2018). Potato cultivation contributed to political degradation by undermining the will and social ties (Armattoe 1945), which added further resignation to potatoes (Lloyd 2007).

The potato is a *nation knocking-together factor*, being the mainstay for peoples (the Irish, the French, the Belarusians) during their formative stages. China's central government promotes the potato to the status of national staple, aligning national, regional, and local culinary cultures and identities (Klein 2020). Belarusians constitute a loose-knitted nation because it entered the 20th century dominated by peasantry with their potato-related rituals (Zadora 2019). The potato is still a marker of Belarusian culture, inseparable from surrounding and adjacent cultures, *bul̇ba* ("potato" in Belarusian) being a Yiddish word. Researchers of Belarus portray the potato as imprinting the national character. What they posit as a unique linkage of potato's penchant to produce stable harvests and Belarusians' bent toward stability (Zadora 2019) is valid for peasant conservatism elsewhere. Calling potato-consumption a decisive element of Belarusian identity is an overstatement, similar to a time-unconscious viewpoint on the "Irish character," featuring a people stuck in feudalism (Lloyd 2007) and associated with laziness (Zuckerman 1999).

It is also unacceptable to re-invoke the pejorative nickname *bul̇bashy* as if constituting Belarusian identity. The word was in use in the Soviet Army (of which the author was part and witness), it was resisted there by Belarusians, and it has long gone. A Polish researcher understands *bul̇bashy* as a pejorative "potato-face" (Mamul 2009), whereas native specialists in Belarusian identity do not. Similar mocking phrases regarding potato-eating peoples were current elsewhere, such as *couch potato* (potato head) (Zuckerman 1999). Potato enables *the population to increase and enables cultural reproduction* (Lloyd 2007). Mihály Sárkány describes a connection between the consumption of maize and the Kikuyu's demographic and socio-cultural processes. After WWII, potato also helped Belarusian culture and language via the demographic reconstitution and enabled partial societal recovery after the Stalinist purges.

The potato contributes to the *reproduction of poverty* (Lloyd 2007). Repeatedly in Belarusian history and elsewhere (in Ireland – Salaman 1949; Lloyd 2007), it gave nutritional alleviation without improving material and social conditions. For centuries, it kept (via Belarusian lifestyles) the

Belarusian nation alive, but destitute and stateless. The role of the tuber in *capitalist and socialist development* is both well-studied and ambiguous. Like sugar, potato provided nutrition during industrialization, by permitting to increase the frequency of meals taken outside the home (Mintz 1986). As in Ireland (Armattoe 1945; Salaman 1949; Connell 1951), the potato enabled the post-war reconstruction and industrialization of Belarus, including by allowing the village youth to be city-bound. The potato could thrive untended, while the ex-villagers subsisted on home-grown potatoes. The potato could also hinder the transition to capitalism in contrast to the historical role of sugar (Mintz 1986). Capital-less (neither long-stored nor transportable long-distance), the potato was an obstacle in the transition to capitalism in historical Ireland (Hotopf 2013).

A pressing issue is represented by the prospective *de-collectivization reforms* in Belarus, and whether households' reliance on potato may delay them. Studies show varying amenability to reforms of economies specialized in cereals, sugar, or cotton (Visser 2008). In Belarus, the remaining crucial role of the potato in the private sector mirrors the persistence of large farms in the public sector. The intensification of agricultural production in the USSR took place in the public sector (*kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy*) and concerned, for instance, the wheat, leaving the potato for collective farmers' subsistence plots. Like rice, potato requires more care than, for instance, wheat. There is then a disjuncture between potato and rice relative to wheat. The intensive rice-growing in China and Vietnam was partially collectivized (with small producers retaining control). It later proved much more open to de-collectivization than wheat-growing, where collectivization had been complete (Visser 2008). Without a full-scale de-collectivization in Belarus, it is impossible to assess its system's permeability to reforms.

The tuber's main indictment is its *inducing docility*, its having been introduced with this intent. For Lloyd (2007), despotism makes subalterns resign to cheap sustenance and once they consent, they cannot change. The potato fits this scenario ("potato logic"), while the extent of dependence on it represents both the stage of oppression (Boswell 1950), and the level of appropriation of the production means by the oppressor (Hotopf 2013). Belarusians, formerly a forest-dwelling folk, are said to be dietary versatile, but their later switching to monocultures (first rye, then potato) changed their psychology and worldview. For instance, while eating *bocvinie* (a mix of plants), Belarusians could be more active, with initiative and dignity, and even "positively" aggressive in conducting some

offensive wars. Upon switching to the potato, the national character has changed, given that "biologists regard the potato as having some drug-like characteristics, certain chemical substances that calm down, make people docile and less aggressive" (Rakicki 2006, 173-174 – my transl. – AI). On the one hand, the erstwhile Belarusian *bocvinie* was hardly unique, but part of the 17th-century herbalism in Europe (Zuckerman 1999).

On the other hand, considering the soporific effects of the potato, belonging to nightshades, is unpromising in social research. That the physiological connects to the social cannot be verified within a social discipline or used comparatively. Such normative assertions represent the potato not as a crop, but as an object of contention over control of food being the locus of power in society. It is essential to view the mechanism at play and the *extent of intentionality and action.* Authors allege intentionality when they analyze government initiatives to encourage the working class into potato consumption. To Boswell (1950, 442) these initiatives "implied" that rulers and landlords "were emboldened to proceed with their succession of impoverishing *acts* [my emphasis – AI] because they knew that those whom they made poorer could stave off actual starvation [by using] the potato." Boswell (1950, 443) later admits that this has more likely been "[t]he effect of terrain, soil, climate."

Scott (2009) describes how the state encourages mono-cropping in place of biodiverse cultivation via *"internal colonialism"* and *"botanical colonization,"* to make households dependent on the state and isolated from each other. Whether these had been *conscious acts* is either unclear or not the case. It is also challenging to establish the potato's *causality.* In hindsight, the Famine emerged as the inevitable consequence of excessive population subsisting on a single crop (Lloyd 2007, 315). It is possible to retroactively blame the reliance on the potato in many instances. The adverse event sequence whereby Lukašenka has assumed power now appears as inevitable. The deeper into the history, the more certain such allegations sound. For the authorities, the most pressing political problem is *subsistence crises and food riots.* Pre-modern power holders formulated their food policies intuitively. Now they draw upon scientific advice (Spary 2014) in what Scott (2009) calls "*colonial governmentality,*" at times involving stringent measures. The potato may represent a milder remedy. Its introduction was met with resistance, since it had no biblical mention and conflicted with the attachment to wheat (Armattoe 1945). Despite some calling for the enforcement of potato cultivation in France (Spary 2014), the dietary about-face proved no easy task, unachievable by force.

Food habits could not be legislated either (Zuckerman 1999). Both empires and republics thus needed to propagate a favorable image of the potato, via moralizing and via *persuasive descriptions and examples*. In England, potato advocates presented it as a bread substitute. It was neither the King who declared his adherence to potatoes over bread, nor was it suggested by *The Times* (Zuckerman 1999). Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had their potato field guarded by soldiers to stoke interest among commoners (Toussaint-Samat 2008). The intendant of Limoges ate potatoes in public and made peasants sit with him (Zuckerman 1999). The Russian empire both enforced and encouraged the transition to potato. Just like British landowners represented the imperial civilization in Ireland, so did Russian *pomeschiki* in Belarus by participating in the civilizing process, changing the consciousness and ethnic culture via a war of tastes (Rakicki 2006).

First encounters
How did Belarusians first familiarize with potatoes? At first, it was a cold reception. Belarusians were wary of the 'damned earthen apple.' Pressured by the local nobility, peasants planted potatoes reluctantly. In the early 19th century, [retired] General [implying Russian imperial presence – Russian generals/landlords represent a stock character of Belarusian folklore] Gerngros lived in his Mogilev manor obsessed with potato cultivation and cultivating the same passion in his serfs. Strangely, potato seedlings seldom sprouted on peasant allotments. Gerngros soon realized that after planting their potatoes in the afternoon, peasants dug them out the following night and swapped them for vodka in a nearby Jewish *karčma*/pub. The next time, Gerngros gave his peasants cut tubers instead of whole potatoes as seeds [now devoid of "market exchange value"], which yielded a good harvest. Since then, convinced of the potato's benefits and taste, peasants began growing it without coercion (Rakicki 2006, 195-196 – my transl. – AI).

Accommodating descriptions followed, showing that potato was now seen as good food, "not as good as bread, but worthy" (Zuckerman 1999, 241). There are Irish "potatoes and point" (Mintz 1986, 11), "dip at the stool," "herring up the road" (Zuckerman 1999, 276-277) jokes. Belarusian folklore also includes similar jokes, proverbs and sayings, such as "Without potatoes, you go hungry all day" and "Eat potatoes with bread, and you are ready to go" (Zadora 2019, 181). Such Belarusian descriptions remain without a proper analysis of their rootedness in the colonial civilizing process and transition from irrational fears to rational acceptance. Besides implicit descriptions, authorities of all times got involved – and

kept involving their subjects – in explicit *rational planning* of potato cultivation, distribution, and consumption (Spary 2014). An early example of this planning was by Inca authorities, who were in control of the land distribution, terraces, canals, fields, roads, and statistically controlled storehouses to distribute food excesses among districts (Salaman 1949). An early Belarusian example was an agricultural school established by the 1836 imperial decree and its first public exhibition in 1853 dedicated to the potato (Zadora 2019).

Revolutionary France also resolved subsistence problems by using a *scientific, statistically informed approach.* Like their royal predecessors, republican authorities promoted the potato, going so far as to plant it in the Tuileries and Luxembourg Gardens. They made a scientific nutritional truth a fact of life and political claims about food. For this reason, says Spary (2014), France between 1794-1795 was a *true potato republic.* The Incas had had a potato statehood that Salaman (1949, 43) defined as a fascist-type autocracy akin to communist autocracies, such as Communist Russia, with its façade of "primitive peasant communism." Soviet Belarus began as another potato republic but degenerated into totalitarianism, a testing ground of Enlightenment utopias placing state order over universal rights. As in France, the Soviet elites promulgated the potato republic by subsisting on potatoes. Lenin and other revolutionary puritans performed their ostentatious political commitment to it. Soviet schoolchildren (including the author) read a moving story on *Tcheka* founder Dzerjinski (born in Belarus): Dzerjinski once received "out of the left field" some potatoes and *salo* (lard). He refused to eat them in these times of hunger, but first moved along *Tcheka* corridors, asking what his subordinates ate. The pre-agreed reply was "potato and *salo.*" Having put his mind at rest, Dzerjinski ate his either godsend or revolutionary gift.

In France, the potato idolatry ended up with the disappointing conclusion that potato cultivation remained a localized affair, and in year VIII of the Revolution ended with a call: "The revolution is over, Citizen" (Spary 2014, 198). Outside the early "potato republic" period and into the totalitarian statehood, the potato remains with the household. For the Irish, the potato was a blessing, because it was "their own and of no interest to the landlord" (Brown 1993, 366). Belarusian archival documents show an occasional inclusion of the potato in the Soviet planning: in the early 1950s, the state coerced villagers to deliver potatoes at state procurement prices (Zhminda 2012).

This research draws its idea of the "potato society" from Ries' paper on Russia, suggesting that "potato is a form of civil society in a neoliberal autocracy," where this mainstay "not only signifies but... solidifies the symbiosis between corrupt and careless governance and popular activity" (2009, 202). The symbiosis suggests the master-slave dialectic, way above either slavery or any other socio-economic system. As Beilharz (2009, 172) remarks, power is not bourgeois, but represents many dependencies. Lacking either self-motivation or external discipline, the Irish cottager was the antithesis of both the freeman and the slave (Lloyd 2007). The Incas had no slaves (but everyone had to work), no trade, but exchange under governmental control. These measures were to preclude famines, and the Incas reported none (Salaman 1949). No famines and no riots are not enough to guarantee the enduring goal of integration under the power-holders' will. Any authoritarianism faces a dilemma whereby subjugation falls short of integration into the economy and society (Ronnas 1989). The initiative by the French Republic to turn the potato into an integrative tool failed because, again, "potato cultivation remained a locali[z]ed affair" (Spary 2014, 182).

The master-slave dialectics reappears in the state vs. market, or equality vs. freedom tension. Planning relies on markets, making them interdependent (Beilharz 2009). Imposing the planned economy and large-scale farming in Belarus, the Soviets, and, later, the Lukašenka regime isolated villagers by displacing small-scale producers and absorbing them into *kolkhozy*. Present-day Belarusians find themselves in economic servitude and extra-economically enslaved. Like Soviet *kolkhozniki*, Belarusian post-*kolkhozniki* work overtime, looking for additional income or stealing, and spend their spare time on potato cultivation on their subsistence plots. A rural household thus detaches from the market, primarily when its members draw income from outside agriculture (Hann 2013). Timofeev (1985) termed these strategies "black market," and noted that the authorities covertly planned such relations. Invoking 19th-century English classics, Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000) warn that the danger of potatoes lies in such extra-economic activities.

A bird's eye social panorama of Belarus is a sackful of potatoes strewn on the ground, or small concentric circuits of separate households that produce, share within the family and subsist on potato. Marx ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon", 1852) also refers to French peasants as a collective class – "potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes" – as their mode of production isolates peasants from one

another rather than forms collective consciousness. The potato may create a false consciousness, numbing the people to their exploiters (Hotopf 2013). Orwell mentioned in his *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) that fish and chips dampened workers' revolutionary moods. Vindicating the fish and chips, vans selling them traveled around the country during WWII to maintain the Brits' morale, and even Churchill called fish and chips "the good companions" (Zuckerman 1999, 471). The argument moves to the *potato plot as a resistance ground.* Preventing riots by avoiding famines is insufficient for the power-holders' immunity. "The master f[inds] himself at the mercy of his slave" (Beilharz 2009, 170), while Bauman (1985) referred to the same as the horror of the peasant beast unleashed. Some see the potato as a tool of resistance to further marginalization via agrarian reform (Hotopf 2013). To Zadora (2019), a subsistence plot besides food makes for a private space, and even Hervouet (2019) perceives a leeway for freedom, despite his viewing potato-subsistence as quintessential subalternity.

Potatoes interchangeably stand *for and against invasion and subordination.* There was a belief in the potato's destructive power, reversing its other image of providing against invasion (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). Trevelyan depicted the tuber as inciting the poor to revolt, which appeared to others as passive resistance, by self-removal from the economy (Zuckerman 1999). The daily resistance via stealing, lying, or shirking might be pre-political or even apolitical (first invoking "avoidance" rather than "resistance"). As Rev (1987) notes, there are times when no other kinds of action are possible, but when such micro-level actions lead to macro-level changes. Hervouet (2018) remarks that Belarusians' resignation to the dominant state monitoring their life plans *unintentionally* leads to state policies springing to life.

The potato debate as applied to Belarus

It is time for a *potato debate* concerning how the potato competes with grain and bread in paired choices, as begun by the English proponents of the potato in the 19th-century (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). It is a stage explaining the mechanism of societal re-feudalizing. Most people live on one food costing most of their income, while societies often have two standard, but socially unequal foods, such as wheat bread for elites and potatoes for laborers. A subset of the Austrian methodology concerning paired choices (Nozick 1997) reflects the situation. The

argument constructs the potato's specific societal place by opposing its qualities to wheat.

Each agricultural commodity is a bundle of qualities, such as perishability and amenability for large-scale production (Visser 2008). Commodities can be compared on this basis, and literature often contrasts potato with wheat. The most direct of the potato/wheat approximations, a shortcut between the two, was a recurrent interest into whether potatoes could be used to make bread (Toussaint-Samat 2008; Spary 2014; Zuckerman 1999). Another theme was growing potatoes instead of wheat. It employed such findings as potato cropping in inverse proportion to wheat; conditions favorable to potato but adverse to wheat; the potato as less prone to weather vagaries and more productive, and less receptive to ills but more tolerant of poor soils (Spary 2014). Wheat is often preferable because in times of plenty it is processable into storable flour for times of dearth (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). Relative labor expenses and necessary discipline are also essential: which of the crops requires more scheduling and discipline, division of labor, and a possibility for a few people to control production means. The labor organization may cause the polarization of society, such as found in grain production (Visser 2008). Taking into account such issues, large Soviet farms chose grain specialization. The potato became the main cultivation object for Soviet *kolkhoz* employees in their spare time.

Concerning storage and perishability, potatoes are bulkier and lend themselves to *in-situ* consumption. Potato enthusiasts regarded these qualities as resolving the political and social problems of monopoly and speculation (Spary 2014). The potato's perishability also accounts for its marketing problems and social communication waning (Toussaint-Samat 2008). A necessity to consume perishable potatoes instead of postponing consumption in less perishable foods leads to a habit of immediate satisfaction defined above as "time preference." The possibilities of subsisting on potatoes made it comparable to bread rather than other roots. Potatoes became a substitute for bread (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). For fragile households, the potato helped save money on bread and was easy to prepare, eat, and even digest (Zuckerman 1999). In the spirit of methodological individualism, the argument omits comparisons as to which staple proposes a more balanced diet and calculations inferring, for instance, that eight million calories with potatoes require four acres, for which wheat takes nine to twelve acres (Mintz 1986). Instead, it compares the two crops based on social agendas, such as proximity to an

idealized alimentary past and suitability for imposing centralized control by associated large-scale manufacturers and the State.

Grain and potato are different in their spirituality. Bread is the spiritual center of most diets, while potatoes are most physical (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). The grain is an honest product with mythic power and a long tradition coming from the Bible; it is moral and moralizing, as in "not knowing how the bread comes to be" reproach (Zuckerman 1999, 143-144). Bread reigns, as evidenced by literature and folklore. The potato looks rather primitive, stemming from the ground. Its earliest name in English was "bread-root." Potatoes are neither shaped by human hands nor circulate in an economy. Even in Ireland, people never addressed God by asking Him to give them their daily potatoes (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000).

Comparing bread and potatoes involved the several features of bread and its stages of production. Bread partook of a culture of cooperation in society, with labor division and people sharing the same food. Potato culture bypassed much of the social and symbolic cycle in its production and represented pre-social isolation. Comparisons between England and Ireland are classical: while Englishmen formed a social body around bread, the Irish had no community because of the potato (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000). In Ireland, the potato caused a population boom alongside marginalization and destruction of society, whereas in England, wheat proved favorable for the social fabric (Salaman 1949).

Potato and wheat are also dissimilar in terms of the various dependencies involved. Due to stability and resilience, the potato was "configured as the democrat of staples against the aristocratic and unreliable wheat" (Spary 2014, 183). These qualities made potato much more suitable for a people "jealous to preserve its independence'" (Spary 2014, 180), implying wartime. More often, it leads to dependency on authoritarianism, as discussed and observable, including in Belarus. Relying on a shop for food besides self-grown potatoes is the death of independence, as Zuckerman (1999) puts it, even in Belarusian villages. Two crops enable diverse applications either for control and depoliticization, or as a subversive crop. Grain allows state monitoring, unlike such crops as potatoes. In Scott's (2009) narrative, peasants in Asia fled to the hills to grow root vegetables giving harvest throughout the year instead of regular grain crops forced on them for taxation. As shown by Rev (1987), via such opposition peasants isolate themselves. There is then an open question of whether "a political culture based in the opposition of individualism to political despotism" (Lloyd 2007, 320) enables opposition or connivance.

"There comes a time for potatoes to come into ear."

Attempting to explain when the re-feudalizing process may happen leads one to a portrayal of the last 150 years of Belarusian history and its imperial colonization. The quote below contains the folk saying "*Čas kalasicca buĺbie,*" implying either "There is no chance of that ever happening" or "When pigs fly." It means that potato may sometimes turn into wheat:

> *"Potato above all." (continued)*
> "Every time [the national symbol] *Pahonya* is overthrown corresponds to 'a time for potatoes to come into ear,' as the saying goes. In 1860, Kalinowski's uprising and defeat was also a time for a "potato boom." The year 1918 saw the uprising and defeat of the Belarusian People's Republic and further reliance on potatoes, for lack of grain. Potato consumption then increased throughout the peaceful 1920s. Finally, the 1995 referendum came, when symbols of independent and free Belarus got overturned, a time again synonymous with a potato boom. [Even in the public sector], [p]otato yield reached 223 quintals (87 quintals increase), despite unstable weather and lack of funds, spare parts, and fertilizers" (Daškievič 2017 – my transl. – AI).

As previously mentioned, 80 percent of the average potato harvest in Belarus is produced on subsistence allotments, by collective efforts of extended families, with much higher productivity than in post-*kolkhozy*. What may this increase signify? Paraphrasing Mintz' (1986) words on sugar, the rise in potato production and consumption in Belarus is not accidental, but a direct consequence of the exercise of power. Discussing the effects of crops on development, Hirschman (1981) argues – rather than defining – that crops imprint specific patterns of the socio-economic environment. Given the above discussion on the Belarusian context and geographies relative to several other settings, the research infers the following: the potato exacerbates tendencies of individuation and economic and political dependency. The potato is linked to Belarus' subordination to the Russian empire, its Soviet projection, and to its homegrown despotic populism.

Reliance on potatoes is detrimental to cooperation and rarely profitable, it contributes to social exclusion and loss of human capital for most Belarusians, especially in the countryside. Potato cultivation has brought aversion to social conflict, political inefficiency, insufficient assertiveness in claim-making, lack of control over the State, and a debilitated civil society.

In methodological individualism terms, we end up with a country-wide situation of household interacting like Crusoe with the outside world, by forgoing others, doing what they prefer, abiding by diminishing marginal utility, and exhibiting time-preference (Nozick 1997). By inducing poverty and degradation amongst natives, the potato ruined both the exploited and the exploiter (Salaman 1949). Potato subsistence resulted in both the Irish national catastrophe due to Phytophthora attacking potato, and in the Belarusian plight with Lukašenka coming to power. By wasting their lives and energy to support the power holders by staving off food shortages, yet subsisting on homegrown potatoes, not only do villagers and dachnicks make themselves destitute, but also disassociated from neighbors or politics. They then become an easy prey for populists proposing protection and quick solutions by constructing "the other."

The argument approaches the point where unprecedented individualization follows an "anti-individualistic, collectivist, centralized society" (Rev 1987, 337). Household individualization involves "maintenance of certain social bonds (kinship and other parochial connections)" (Mihály Sárkány), which prepares the ground for a re-feudalizing of society. Experience indicates that power-holders achieve further subordination of popular masses by requiring self-sufficiency in food products (often already existing by potato subsistence), compulsory deliveries to the State, and the necessity to take up jobs in large production units for a meager pay. These measures are grounded more in compulsion (such as administrative restrictions on migration) than in incentives (Ronnas 1989). The foundation of such a national economy has to be grain, whose production increases in the state-controlled sector. It had happened in the 1920s, and it also led Lukašenka to power in Belarus in 1994, "a time for potatoes to come into ear."

Conclusions

"Plowing around" the potato, the paper strived to uncover how the crop influenced many aspects of life in Belarus and elsewhere. It combined political economy with political anthropology for its subject matter, and of Marxism with methodological individualism, in terms of its approach. This paper demonstrates that ownership, production, and consumption of potatoes illustrate power dynamics. It invokes such concepts as "potato logic": once established as the people's diet, the potato becomes a

determining factor in their production and reproduction. In Marxist terms, the societal base structure influences the potato uptake and then gets under its influence by sustaining an authoritarian regime.

The potato is not to blame for the system, but it does exacerbate the original exploitation problem, reflected in land tenure. Suppressing the potato or dismantling potato subsistence would thus not help. Insulating themselves from civilization and adopting subsistence farming instead of wage labor is also not a solution to contemporary problems. Moreover, the negative qualities that the potato subsistence allegedly encourages, such as laziness, ignorance, hopelessness, and childlike dependence, are positively explainable as time-preference combined with risk avoidance.

The potato has never robbed people of independence – a mere vegetable can neither steal nor grant self-sufficiency. Way more complicated is whether it encourages or stifles self-sufficiency, and whether self-sufficiency is even desirable. Many hated the potato: for representing the loss of freedom of self-supporting, for the poor no longer working for themselves and surrendering hold on the land and its fruits, and for ceasing to supply bread by domestic labor. Conversely, others made a likewise plausible point that the potato gave laborers a chance to retain freedom, or at least to survive. Even today, the potato is seen as a culprit for many social ills and moral evils, such as those that beset Belarus. Quoting Zuckerman (1999), the potato is not a maker or an unmaker, but a sustainer of society, preserving existing customs. The potato contributes to the associational problems of the Belarusian people, who often exist and subsist outside a regular capitalist economy. It enables household plots intensification, whereby the authoritarian regime postpones necessary changes.

Tapping into the potato debate, tracing age-old oppositions between the potato and bread enables the argument to switch to a social diagnostics and prognostics mode. The paper has attempted to integrate different arguments into a single scheme of analysis to show how the potato might be connected to collectivization. It considered individualization via potatoes as a preparatory stage for the country's collectivization via grain. It also saw collectivization as a re-feudalizing, implying a mode of production where people are simultaneously in and out of the capitalist economy. Aside from offering a lengthy discussion, the paper proposes a shortcut: if a nation subsists on potatoes but calls them "second bread," it is prone to collectivization.

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DESERVINGNESS AS TRANSNATIONAL REFUGEE GOVERNANCE: QUEER ASYLUM SEEKERS IN TURKEY

Abstract

This working paper scrutinizes the role of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in constructing a transnational matrix of deservingness through which migration authorities differentially and selectively allocate refugee status, refugee rights and resettlement spots. This working paper will also reveal two interconnected effects of the transnational matrix of deservingness; while the matrix gives those deemed deserving incentive to remain immobile in Turkey and construct 'legal' subjectivities recognized by transnational refugee governance, the matrix gives those deemed undeserving incentive to be mobile, searching ways out of Turkey since they could not construct their legal subjectivities.

Keywords: deservingness, governance, queer migration, queer refugees, refugeeness, Turkey

Undergoing refugee status determination (RSD) procedure in Turkey proves to be a matter of transnational governance because of Turkey's geographical limitation on the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Convention). The geographical limitation means that only individuals escaping from events happening in Europe[1] are eligible for refugee status defined by the Convention. Asylum seekers escaping from other geographies can apply for a liminal legal status called conditional refugee under international protection (conditional refugee).[2] Since the opening of its branch office in Turkey in 1960, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has had the mandate to conduct RSD for conditional refugees in close cooperation with the Turkish officials.[3] With no chance to acquire permanent residency, conditional refugees can remain in Turkey until UNHCR resettles them to a third country.[4] The resettlement scheme can function only if third countries such as the

USA, Canada, Australia, or the Nordic countries, provide quotas. While UNHCR decides on whom to submit for resettlement, each third country conducts its own RSD procedure within the borders of Turkey.

With its mandate over RSD and resettlement in Turkey, UNHCR has been able to utilize its own conceptualizations of what counts as a well-founded fear of persecution and its criteria for resettlement. That is, while in countries with centralized and national refugee governance UNHCR possesses mediatory and advisory functions, in Turkey UNHCR has had the mandate over determining who is deserving of refugee status, resettlement and services, creating transnational refugee governance enacted within the borders of Turkey. The most striking example of this transnational refugee governance is the existence of queer asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey. Although Turkey has no national law and social policy that recognizes sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as a ground for seeking asylum, queer asylum seekers can register with the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDsMM) and remain in Turkey. This contradiction is made possible because UNHCR officials followed UNHCR's directives to recognize SOGI as a basis for well-founded fear of persecution[5] while registering asylum seekers and conducting RSD interviews. Upon getting their registration papers from UNHCR, they could also register with PDsMM. Hence, queer refugeeness in Turkey is a de facto construct of UNHCR's sphere of influence in Turkey, making queer asylum seekers deserving of refugee status, resettlement and services in a country where they have no legal ground for seeking asylum, thus, are 'legally' undeserving of refugee status.

In addition to the fact that SOGI of asylum seekers are legally unrecognized, but their existence within the borders of Turkey is bureaucratically tolerated, UNHCR also employs protection mechanisms which identify queer asylum seekers and refugees as vulnerable groups who need fast-tracked RSD and resettlement to a third safer country. That is to say, while national legal and policy documents and national authorities remain silent concerning SOGI in the context of asylum, UNHCR has constructed a bureaucratic 'reality' in Turkey where queer asylum seekers can obtain not only refugee status and rights but also protection mechanisms which, *in some 'deserving' cases*, expedite their RSD procedures and resettlement. During the 20-month fieldwork I conducted in Turkey, the concept of 'golden case' was repeatedly used by my interlocutors to refer to SOGI's expediting effect on RSD and resettlement. UNHCR acknowledged that queer asylum seekers

face further discrimination in Turkey because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Double discrimination of racism and homophobia/transphobia prevents queer asylum seekers from having a sustainable livelihood and makes them vulnerable to psychological and physical violence in Turkey.[6] They are discriminated in the formal as well as the informal job market. They cannot benefit from already existing refugee solidarity networks as they are discriminated within refugee communities. Hence, queer asylum seekers have a hard time finding accommodation and accessing vital information.[7]

In order to address such vulnerabilities, UNHCR expedites their RSD so that they will, at least, receive normative legal protections. UNHCR also expedites their resettlement so that they can be moved to a safer third country as soon as possible. My participant observations also revealed a similar trend; while those seeking asylum because of persecution based on SOGI were fast-tracked to receive their refugee status and to resettle to a third country within a few months of registering with UNHCR, those seeking asylum because of persecution based on other causes had to wait almost two years even to have their first RSD interview. Moreover, UNHCR has also been utilizing other protection mechanisms, such as financial help, for queer asylum seekers and refugees.

This working paper scrutinizes the role of SOGI in constructing a transnational matrix of deservingness through which three migration authorities differentially and selectively allocate refugee status, resettlement spots and services within the borders of Turkey. This working paper will also reveal two interconnected effects of the transnational matrix of deservingness; while the matrix gives those deemed deserving incentives to remain immobile in Turkey and construct legal subjectivities recognized by transnational refugee governance, the matrix gives those deemed undeserving incentives to be mobile, searching ways out of Turkey since they could not construct their legal subjectivities. After proving the details of the fieldwork that I conducted, I will explain, with references to a broader literature of queer migration, the reasons why I use the concept "deservingness" when referring to the differential allocation of refugee status, rights and services. Later, I will apply the concept of deservingness to the Turkish context, revealing how refugee governance functions by a transnational matrix of deservingness.

Researching Queer Refugeeness in Turkey

Between September 2017 and June 2020, I conducted a 20-month long multi-sited ethnography in four cities of Turkey: Ankara, Istanbul, Eskisehir and Yalova. I chose Eskisehir and Yalova because each has a large community of queer refugees coming from North African, Sub-Saharan and Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Pakistan. I chose Istanbul and Ankara because they host the headquarters of NGOs and INGOs. While I was able to observe how their branches interacted with queer refugees in Eskisehir and Yalova, I also wanted to interview and observe workers in the headquarters to understand how projects and social policies related to queer asylum seekers and refugees were envisioned in the first place.

The primary fieldwork took place between September 2017 and 2018. In order to scrutinize the relational construction of queer refugeeness in Turkey, I chose to interview and observe both queer refugees and employees of I/NGOs that work with queer refugees. That is, I focused on the interaction of both groups instead of merely interviewing the one or the other. I employed a mix-method of participant observation and life story interviews. The main reason behind employing a mix-method was to complement the life stories of my interlocutors with observations of their daily life social and bureaucratic interactions. I asked I/NGO workers to start their life stories with why they chose to work in the humanitarian aid sector. Later in the interview, I asked them questions about the relations they established with refugees as NGO workers and about envisioning, actualizing and conducting projects for refugees. I asked queer asylum seekers and refugees to start their life stories with why they escaped their home countries. Focusing on the narratives of persecution based on SOGI, I also asked questions concerning their journey to Turkey, their experience of registering with authorities, of having the RSD and resettlement interviews, and the problems they face during their stay in Turkey.

As for participant observations, I volunteered for two months for Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association (Red Umbrella) that conducts a project for queer refugees. I also volunteered for five months for Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) who is an implementing partner[8] of UNHCR in Turkey. Although both organizations have branches in Eskisehir and Yalova, I preferred to volunteer in their headquarters because I did not want to contact queer asylum seekers and refugees via an organizational title. Interviewing

my interlocutors as a volunteer of such well-known organizations that provide crucial assistance to refugees would result in biased expectations and negative first impressions. As these organizations are gatekeepers of the access to rights and services, associating with them in these cities could have marked me as also a gatekeeper. Queer asylum seekers and refugees could have felt obliged to participate in interviews, assuming that as a gatekeeper I could positively or negatively affect their access to rights and services if they choose or refuse to talk to me. By the same reasoning, they could have also censored their stories, for example, by omitting their negative experiences with these organizations. Due to similar concerns, I also did not interview refugees I met and interacted with via my involvement with the projects of Red Umbrella and ASAM. Finally, in order to observe how the two groups interact with each other within the flow of daily life, I participated to social events organized by I/NGOs and observed bureaucratic encounters among queer refugees, I/NGOs and local migration authorities. During my primary fieldwork, I interviewed 94 people in total; 45 of whom are queer refugees and 49 of whom are workers of I/NGOs.

I carried out the first follow-up fieldwork between May 2019 and September 2019. In addition to following general changes in the field, the main aim was to observe the aftermath of UNHCR's withdrawal from registering and conducting RSD interviews for conditional refugees on September 10, 2018. The Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDsMM) took over those functions. Although I was able to analyze the initial effects of the withdrawal during the primary fieldwork, I also wanted to capture the long-term effects. I conducted follow-up interviews with 13 interlocutors and interviews with 16 new interlocutors, six of whom were queer asylum seekers and ten of whom are I(NGO) workers. I carried out the second follow-up fieldwork between March 2020 and June 2020. I re-entered the field before the Covid-19 pandemic was declared on March 11. Upon the declaration, I shifted to digital fieldwork. Arranging interviews online proved to be challenging; I interviewed online one queer refugee and one NGO worker. Nevertheless, doing digital participant observation proved to be relatively more accessible as I/NGOs turned their websites and social media accounts into digital spaces for social gatherings for queer asylum seekers and refugees. The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on queer asylum seekers need rigorous research in their own rights.

All in all, I interviewed 112 interlocutors. Table I shows the distribution of queer asylum seekers and refugees according to their citizenship and their SOGI they declared during the interviews. It is crucial to note that the categorizations of SOGI in table I reflects the spatial and temporal limitations of the interviews, hence they cannot be taken as static and definitive expressions of my interlocutors' SOGI. As Lisa Diamond's oral history of SOGI reveals, the ways in which a person expresses their SOGI may change over the course of their lives.[9] My own experiences with my interlocutors have also supported this argument since they noted that they mentioned changes in their expressions of SOGI, especially after they leave their home countries and arrive in Turkey.[10] In order to reflect the changing expressions of my interlocutors' SOGI in my analysis, I choose "queer asylum seekers and refugees" over "LGBT". Table II shows the distribution of I/NGO workers according to their organizations. Since some of my interlocutors worked for more than one organization and provided information on all of them, table II has two totals; one reflecting the number of workers and the number of interlocutors. Finally, to protect the identity of my interlocutors, I use pseudonyms.

Table 1: Distribution of queer refugees according to their nationality, sexuality and gender identity (categorized as they declared)

	Trans Women	Gay Men	Lesbian Women	Trans Men	Bisexual Women	Gender Fluid	Total
Iran	13	15	2	2	1	1	34 Iran
Syria	6	9					15 Syria
Zimbabwe	1						1 Zimbabwe
Afghanistan	1						1 Afghanistan
Pakistan	1						1 Pakistan
Total	22 Trans Women	24 Gay Men	2 Lesbian Women	2 Trans Men	1 Bisexual Woman	1 Gender Fluid	52 **Interlocutors**

Table 2: Distribution of Organization Workers

Organizations	Number of interviews
Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants	11
Human Resource Development Foundation	7
Refugee Support Centre-Association	8
UNHCR Turkey	3
UN Turkey	1
International Medical Corps	1
Red Crescent of Turkey	3
Refugee Rights Turkey	1
Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association	6
Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation Studies Association	7
Association of İstanbul LGBTİ Solidarity	1
Trans Guesthouse	4
Tea and Talk	1
Association of Pembe Hayat LGBTI+Solidarity	1
Sabancı Foundation	1
Community Volunteers Foundation	3
Young Approaches to Health	3
Boysan's House	1
Migrant Solidarity Network Ankara	1
KAOS GL Association	3
HEVİ LGBTİ Association	1
Keçiören Municipality	2
Total number of interviews	**70**
Total number of interlocutors	**60**

Why Deservingness?

Deservingness, in this working paper, refers to the fact that bureaucratic procedures within refugee governance – RSD, resettlement, allocation of social and financial assistance – are inherently dependent upon the personal discretions of migration officials who utilize socially available discourses about SOGI in differentially distributing refugee status, rights and services. That is to say, migration officials are not mere conduits of formal laws and social policies, replicating their intended purposes within the flow of daily life.[11] Especially in the cases where the nature of the bureaucratic procedure uniquely takes shape according to each individual, such as credibility assessment of claims to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution or determining or testing someone's SOGI, the personal discretion of migration officials becomes a guiding principle in differentially allocating refugee status, rights and services. Hence, this working paper takes deserving and undeserving refugees as social categories born out of personal discretions of migration officials and their socially available discourses pertaining to SOGI. Finally, differential allocation means that those who are willing and able to perpetuate and perform the social expectations of a deserving refugee during bureaucratic encounters are more likely to obtain refugee status and enjoy refugee rights and services.

Within the limited space of this working paper, I will only be focusing on how actualization of formal laws and social policies via bureaucratic procedures are affected by social categories of a deserving and undeserving refugee. In other words, the social origins of normative restrictions put on who can be refugee will not be a part of the theoretical discussion of deservingness. This working paper will take for granted the two normative restrictions. The first normative restriction is the one put on the definition of refugeeness by international refugee law. Although Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes everyone's right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries, the Convention and its protocol signed in 1967 limit the enjoyment of the right of asylum to those who can prove persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Hence, only those who are willing and able to fit their stories of persecution into the five grounds are recognized as refugees. The second restriction is the one put on the definition of refugeeness by national refugee laws. As discussed in the

introduction, conditional refugee status dictates that asylum seekers coming from non-Europe geographies cannot obtain indefinite leave to stay in Turkey. Their existence within the border of Turkey is conditioned upon UNHCR's ability and willingness to resettle them to a third country. The social construction of 'deserving refugee' vs. 'undeserving migrant' and 'deserving European asylum seeker' vs. 'undeserving non-European asylum seeker' as a result of these two normative restrictions requires further analysis in queer migration studies.

Credibility assessment is considered to be "the single most important step in determining whether people seeking protection as refugees can be returned to countries where they say they are in danger of serious human rights violations."[12] As the Convention limits refugee status to those escaping their home countries owing to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, asylum seekers, during RSD interviews, must be able to tell their stories of persecution in a way that is compatible with five recognized grounds of seeking asylum and "coherent and plausible and not run counter to generally known facts."[13] However, although countries such as the USA and Canada as well as UNHCR have attempted to give credibility assessments a more concrete basis, there is still a lack of standard means of carrying out credibility assessments.[14] Credibility, thus, remains to be "a matter of impression that should be left to first instance decision-makers" while negative credibility assessments also make appealing to the rejection of asylum applications challenging.[15] Moreover, the first instance decision-makers' tendency to manufacture discrepancy "by frequently seizing upon apparent inconsistencies in peripheral elements of asylum seekers' claims"[16] has also been documented and discussed. In other words, credibility is a co-construct of asylum seekers and officials within the asymmetrical power relations of RSD interviews; while the burden of proof for persecution falls upon the asylum seekers, officials conducting the interviews mobilize their personal discretion to assess the credibility of the proof provided.[17]

Personal discretion of officials has freer reign over assessing the credibility of persecution based on SOGI because LGBT refugeeness is a relatively new legal category emerging in the late 1980s and there were (and still are) no established ways of proving one's SOGI. Among the five internationally recognized ground of seeking asylum, SOGI found a place for itself in "membership in a particular social group".[18] The late 1980s witnessed a crucial expansion of the scope of particular social groups.

A new trend of including non-conforming SOGI into the definition of a particular social group was observed in the Global North countries. With reference to the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazi regime during the World War II, in 1986 Germany declared that being homosexual could mean membership in a particular social group as a basis for a well-founded fear of persecution.[19] Canada, the USA and the UK also expanded the scope of a particular social group to cover individuals with non-conforming SOGI respectively in 1992, 1993 and 1999.[20] Born out of already existing international refugee law, queer refugeeness inherited the same requirements of proving membership in a particular social group and a well-founded fear of persecution. This two-tiered procedure to achieve refugee status embodied itself in a particular way when it was applied to queer asylum seekers; they have been asked to prove their SOGI and how their SOGI causes a well-founded fear of persecution.

The two-tiered procedure for queer asylum seekers brought about a bureaucratic mystery; how can asylum seekers demonstrate their SOGI to the migration officials? With no particular answer to this question, migration officials in the Global North countries utilized their personal discretion to decide what would count as "proof" of SOGI. Queer migration literature has documented, in detail, homonormative discourses that the migration authorities in the Global North countries have used to establish proofs of SOGI during RSD interviews. In the UK, migration officials reduced SOGI to mere sexuality. They asked questions that violate queer asylum seekers' right to privacy, such as asking them about their sex partners or sexual positions and submit photos and videos of themselves having sex.[21] Australian migration officials also directed similar questions.[22] Other homonormative discourses reduced SOGI to specific cultural performances. In the UK, queer asylum seekers were asked during RSD interviews if they had read Oscar Wilde.[23] In Canada, migration officials asked asylum seekers whether they have been to the Gay Pride and the gay bars in Toronto.[24] In the Netherlands, migration officials found it suspicious that a queer asylum seeker lacked information on the organizations for the protection of rights of homosexuals. In the USA, a queer asylum seeker's application was rejected on the basis that he was not feminine enough.[25] Based on a similar logic of reducing homosexuality to being 'effeminate' for gays or 'butch' for lesbians, sixteen countries were noted to apply "the discretion policy"[26] which dictates that a masculine-presenting gay or a feminine-presenting lesbian can go back to his or her home country and live discreetly, ignoring many complicated

layers of persecution based on SOGI. Such examples demonstrate that migration officials in the Global North countries utilized a wide variety of discriminatory signifiers in assessing the credibility of queer asylum seekers' claim to be members of a particular social group. The lack of any formal rule - as well as its impossibility - concerning how to assess the credibility of claims to queer refugeeness opened up space for migration officials to use their personal discretion as credibility criteria.

A Transnational Matrix of Deservingness in Turkey

Utilization of personal discretion as a credibility criterion becomes more complicated in the case of Turkey because of UNHCR's involvement in the RSD and resettlement procedures. One of the consequences of UNHCR's mandate in Turkey has been noted as the creation of a parallel tracks system[27] in which asylum seekers have to navigate bureaucratic procedures of national, UNHCR and third-country officials in order to receive conditional refugee status and to be resettled. Each group of officials have their own versions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' refugees and these versions are diffused into the flow of asylum seekers' life in Turkey, subjecting them to different bureaucratic expectations all at once. Hence, I call the combination of the versions of a deserving and undeserving refugee as a transnational matrix of deservingness (the matrix for short) which is enacted in the localities of Turkey. In order to better grasp the complicated and interwoven nature of the matrix, we first need to have a general map of the transnational bureaucracy involved in refugee governance in Turkey. Tracing the bureaucratic steps that asylum seekers had to take after they cross Turkey's borders reveals an abstracted version of 'successful' asylum-seeking applications in Turkey before the withdrawal of UNHCR from registration and RSD. A successful application in this context refers to obtaining conditional refugee status and being resettled to a third country.

Upon arriving in Turkey, asylum seekers had to go to Ankara where UNHCR and its implementing partner ASAM took first instance registration in which officials gathered biometric information of the asylum seekers and inquired about the reasons for seeking refuge. At the end of registration, asylum seekers were presented with, usually, three options of satellite cities.[28] Upon completion of the registration, asylum seekers had to go to the city they had chosen and wait for UNHCR to contact them with

a date for the first RSD interview. As mentioned in the introduction, in some cases, asylum seekers had to wait for around two years to have their first RSD interviews.

Within seven days of registering with UNHCR, asylum seekers had to arrive in their satellite city and start their registration procedure with PDsMM, or else they risked their chance of receiving refugee status. PDsMM also took an initial registration to satisfy the seven-day rule, which meant that asylum seekers only gained the right to stay in the satellite city. In order to be able to enjoy any rights, such as the right to work, healthcare, social services, and financial assistance, asylum seekers had to successfully complete the registration procedure and receive an identification number for foreigners. Asylum seekers and I/NGO workers noted that PDsMM too asked them to wait up to a year to finalize their registration, which meant that asylum seekers were deprived of their rights, just physically existing in the satellite cities. In the case of successful registrations with UNHCR and PDsMM, asylum seekers were invited for RSD interview(s) in which they were asked to provide further details and substantiate their reasons of seeking asylum with proof. If UNHCR officials find their stories of persecution credible, they receive their conditional refugee status.

The granting of conditional refugee status initiates the resettlement procedure which UNHCR mediates. UNHCR selects the most vulnerable refugee cases and submits them to the embassies or implementing partners[29] of third countries in Turkey. UNHCR utilizes the quotas provided by Global North countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Nordic countries.[30] After receiving the resettlement case from UNHCR, embassies or implementing partners conduct their own interviews in order to evaluate the compatibility of resettlement applicants' persecution stories with their own criteria of refugeeness. If the third country agrees to resettlement, UNHCR and its implementing partners mediate the move of resettlement applicants, finalizing his or her conditional refugee status within the borders of Turkey. However, PDsMM must give clearance for resettlement before the final move to a third country. Although none of my interlocutors had a problem with getting the clearance, it has been noted that Turkish officials refused to give 'exit permits' on the grounds of incomplete local bureaucratic procedures or without any official explanation.[31]

As the abstracted version of bureaucratic steps for conditional refugees demonstrated, queer asylum seekers in Turkey have to navigate three different bureaucratic structures which have their own credibility criteria

for persecution based on SOGI. PDsMM, UNHCR and embassies or implementing partners of third countries have their own conceptualizations of whether SOGI counts as a ground for seeking asylum and/or as a source of vulnerability that requires expedition of its bureaucratic procedures and access to social and financial services. That is to say, each bureaucratic structure carries itself with its own social and political agenda concerning refugees and SOGI and has a relatively autonomous space within the national borders of Turkey to enact them. It is imperative to have a closer look into each structure's framework of deservingness to understand how they come together to create a transnational matrix of deservingness in Turkey.

Staring with PDsMM, they are "street-level" branches of the umbrella state apparatus called Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). These relatively new bureaucratic bodies were established by the introduction of the new migration law of Turkey in 2013 called Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP). The law was a long time in the making since Turkey signed an Accession Partnership Document with the EU in 2001.[32] At the time, it was envisioned to be a vital step to harmonize with the EU migration policies, especially by removing the geographical limitation. Although LFIP adopted EU-inspired categories such as subsidiary protection[33] and created DGMM as a central national authority governing migration, the geographical limitation remained. Article 3 of LFIP also introduced the category of "people with special needs" who, according to Article 67, have "priority access to written rights and procedures". LFIP categorizes the following individuals as people with special needs: Unaccompanied child, a disabled person, an elderly person, a pregnant woman, a single mother or single father with child(ren), and a person who has been subjected to torture, rape or other serious psychological, physical or sexual violence. SOGI does not appear in the text at all.

Other legal documents derived from LFIP, such as the Temporary Protection Regulation, utilize the same conceptualization of vulnerability excluding SOGI. Thus, the social policies of DGMM also do not recognize SOGI in any form. None of the strategic plans of DGMM mention SOGI.[34] None of the 50 projects that DGMM conducted refers to SOGI.[35] None of DGMM's annual activity reports mentions SOGI.[36] None of the annual migration reports that DGMM published mentions SOGI.[37] Only one project out of 21 which DGMM is currently conducting has the acronym LGBTI.[38] Funded by the Swedish International Development

Cooperation Agency, the project aims to "to prevent gender-based violence by determining the needs of people with special needs, LGBTI and vulnerable foreigners during the procedures of processing and finalizing their application to international protection."[39] However, when the annual activity report of 2017 talks about the same project, it does not include LGBTI in its aims.[40]

I do not consider it a mistake that DGMM has forgotten either to put LGBTI in its annual activity report or to delete it in its list of current projects. I take it as a symptom of Turkey's insistency on legally erasing queer refugee and leaving them vulnerable to arbitrary treatment and harassment of state agencies, but at the same time, bureaucratically managing them as one of the actors in transnational refugee governance. That is to say, through its cooperation with transnational bodies such as UNHCR and Global North Countries such as Sweden, Turkey constructs a de-facto category of queer refugeeness that purposefully erases SOGI from the legal texts and social policies. Without legally recognizing SOGI and the existence of queer refugees, Turkey bureaucratically manages them while they are waiting in Turkey to be processed by UNHCR and third countries. During that waiting period, since no legal text bounds local authorities in their dealings with queer refugees, it is entirely up to their personal discretion to consider SOGI as a ground to grant, hinder, or expedite access to rights and social services.

In many cases, PDsMM refused to register queer asylum seekers either because there already was a long waiting list or because migration officials did not recognize SOGI as a ground for asylum-seeking. For example, although an Iranian gay couple was assigned to Yalova, they could not register with the PDMM who told them that Yalova is closed for registration except for people with special needs. Stating that they are both living with a chronic disease, they asked the PDMM to register them so that they can have access to healthcare. They were refused once again since they did not fit into the category of people with special needs. In such cases, UNHCR and its implementing partners negotiated with PDsMM on behalf of queer asylum seekers. My interlocutors from these implementing partners told me that the negotiation usually worked primarily when they pointed out to the fact that UNHCR will expedite queer asylum seekers' resettlement if they can register with PDsMM, which meant that they would be able to leave the satellite city as soon as possible. Through appealing to the fact that queer asylum seekers will be managed by the transnational refugee governance (resettlement scheme in this case), UNHCR is able

to negotiate with the local authorities who refuse to accept SOGI as a ground for seeking asylum. In yet another example, an Iranian lesbian woman was to register with the PDMM from Eskisehir. During the initial interview in which she declared that she had escaped Iran because of her sexual orientation, the PDMM worker stated that he would register her *not* because of her sexual orientation, but because she was a single woman living in Turkey and who had gone through physical and psychological violence. The PDMM worker used his personal discretion to find a way to include her into the PDsMM's framework of deservingness while erasing her sexual orientation from the process of registration.

As for UNHCR, it accepts SOGI not only as a ground for seeking asylum but as a source of vulnerability as mentioned in the introduction. UNHCR has long criticized the utilization of homonormative representations of SOGI as criteria of credibility. It has also been a long-time advocate of questioning how SOGI of asylum seekers result in persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution instead of questioning SOGI of asylum seekers. Arguing that SOGI cannot be substantiated with evidence, UNHCR suggests accepting asylum seekers' SOGI as they declare it and asking them to provide credible proof of persecution based on their SOGI. Since UNHCR had the mandate to conduct RSD interviews in Turkey, it was able to actualize its own suggestion. All of my interlocutors noted that they simply declared their SOGI without further proof being required. I also did not encounter any case where UNHCR refused an application because it did not believe the declared SOGI. However, there have been cases where UNHCR did not find persecution stories of queer asylum seekers credible enough.[41] While queer asylum seekers await the RSD interview(s) in the satellite city, they go through a vulnerability assessment test conducted by the implementing partners of UNHCR. This test aims to collect information about the asylum seekers that may count as a hindrance on their ability to adapt to the city, as a source of physical insecurity, and so on. After the first face-to-face vulnerability assessment, queer asylum seekers can contact UNHR directly or indirectly via its implementing partners about any new development that may have increased their vulnerability such as constant verbal and physical attacks (which frequently happened to my interlocutors). With the constant flow of information, UNHCR decides to expedite RSD interviews and resettlement procedures.

When it comes to the other services, UNHCR introduced financial help specially catered to transgender refugees. UNHCR pointed out to the fact that transgender refugees are having a tough time finding jobs, be it in the

formal or informal sector, since they are discriminated against because of their gender identity. As a result, they do survival sex work which makes them more vulnerable to harassment, physical violence and deportation. Transwoman refugees who are registered with their passports or identity cards that have their birth name and 'sex marker' (such as F/M letters on ID cards, or blue ID card/pink ID card) could not apply for any financial assistance that the Turkish authorities provide. Local and national actors such as the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, Red Crescent of Turkey and municipalities distribute financial help to refugees by prioritizing a similar category of "people with special needs" with the addition of single woman. Refugees who are transwomen applied to such financial help schemes multiple times. However, they were rejected every time because local and national authorities employ a strictly cisnormative conceptualization of *single woman* based on legal documents.

With the third and final framework of deservingness which is constructed by embassies or implementing partners of third countries, we can observe that each refugee's experience with them could differ. A Syrian trans refugee had one resettlement interview with France and was resettled to Nice in six months because she was living alone in Istanbul and doing sex work while escaping from her family who was also in Turkey. Darya, an Iranian lesbian refugee, had two interviews with the USA over two years, and she was taking final steps to be resettled. However, she is still waiting for resettlement because President Donald Trump's travel ban on different countries, including Iran, put a stop to the resettlement of conditional refugees from these countries.[42] An Iranian gay refugee whose case was assigned to the USA for three years was never invited for a resettlement interview. After Trump's travel ban, UNHCR resubmitted his case to Spain, and in six months, he was resettled. The USA rejected an Iranian gay refugee's claims for resettlement on the basis of his sexual orientation because he was considered too masculine to be gay and even if he was gay, he could blend in Turkey if he keeps up with his masculine behavior. Although such dispersed examples could not provide a clear pattern of bureaucratic expectations of each third country, they demonstrate that each third country operates with their own social category of deserving refugee, informed by their social and political discourses about refugees and SOGI.

All in all, since three bureaucratic structures interact with queer asylum seekers all at once during their time in Turkey, we observe that an asylum seeker can simultaneously be a deserving and undeserving refugee within

the transnational matrix of deservingness. Within PDsMM's framework of deservingness, queer asylum seekers are at the mercy of the personal discretions of the workers who are not bound by any national legal document that recognizes SOGI as a ground for seeking asylum and for social and financial services. Queer asylum seekers, with the mediation of UNHCR and its implementing partners, have to negotiate access to rights and services continually. Within UNHCR's framework of deservingness, SOGI is recognized as a ground for seeking asylum as well as expediting RSD, resettlement and access to rights and services. Within third countries' framework of deservingness, SOGI is recognized as a basis for being resettled. Yet each third county subjects queer refugees to RSD interviews in which they employ varying social and political expectations of what counts as a refugee who deserves to resettle within their national borders.

Nevertheless, UNHCR's consistent role in supporting queer asylum seekers has made sure that bureaucratic structures which usually deemed SOGI – or certain expression of SOGI such as a masculine presenting gay man– as an undeserving ground for seeing asylum cannot entirely reject and/or deport queer asylum seekers. Hence, the transnational matrix of deservingness, although extremely complicated and unpredictable, opens the space for queer asylum seekers to construct legal subjectivities within the borders of Turkey through which they can negotiate for their refugee status, rights and services.

Refugee Governance via the Transnational Matrix of Deservingness

Scholars laid bare the negative effects of living in the in-between space of Turkey awaiting resettlement on queer refugees.[43] I also demonstrated that the waiting period could foster adversity amongst the members of queer refugee communities who are put in competition against each other for resettlement by UNHCR and third countries.[44] Hence being able to negotiate one's way into the transnational matrix of deservingness does not guarantee any sustainable access to rights and services in the long term. It only means that queer refugees can create legal subjectivities that are recognized by the three actors of the matrix and utilize their subjectivities in negotiating access to rights and services at each bureaucratic step. The possibility that such negotiations can take place and result in favor of queer refugees, I argue, gives an incentive for queer refugees to remain immobile

in Turkey for an extended period, hoping to finalize their resettlement process and leave Turkey in a documented way. On the other hand, if asylum seekers could not negotiate their way into the matrix – that is to say, marked as underserving by all three authorities – they are unable to construct a legal subjectivity within Turkey through which they may access rights, financial help and resettlement. In such cases, the matrix forces them to be more mobile, seeking ways out of Turkey via undocumented means.

During my fieldwork, the sentence "if I had not been assigned for resettlement, I would have left" has been repeated in various forms by queer refugees who had been waiting in Turkey for more than two years at the time of our meeting. Going back to Darya, who has been waiting in Turkey for six years as of 2020, she mentioned in our follow-up interviews that she was seriously considering migrating to a third country via undocumented means after Trump's ban. The only reason why she was not taking that risk, she noted, was her resettlement possibility. She said she wanted to push UNHCR to re-assign her case to another third country. Until that option fails, she is planning to remain in Turkey. The fact that she was able to situate herself into the matrix and secure means of negotiations incentivized Darya to remain immobile in Turkey, at least until she decides that the in-between life in Turkey is no longer acceptable.

In direct juxtaposition to queer refugees who were able to negotiate their ways into the matrix via – or in the case of national authorities, in spite of – their SOGI, Muhammad's story will demonstrate how being excluded from the matrix incentivizes refugees to rapidly re-displace. I met Muhammed, a heterosexual man, on the day he registered with UNHCR Turkey as an asylum seeker in early September 2018. In Iran, he was detained and tortured because of his involvement with an anti-government movement. After his family had bribed the police for his release, he was able to blend in a group of Afghan asylum seekers and crossed the Turkey-Iran border on foot, entering a border city. The smuggler who helped them cross the border gave them bus tickets to Ankara telling them to find UNHCR's office. After a long journey, they managed to find the office in Ankara, but since it was late at night, they had to sleep rough in the park across the office. Early in the morning, he stated his reasons for seeking asylum as persecution based on his political opinions and registered with UNHCR. During the registration, he was told to choose a satellite city out of the three options presented to him. He randomly chose Bolu, not knowing any details about the options offered. Before registration officers let him go, they told him to go to Bolu and register with

local authorities within a week or else he would lose the right to register with them. Finally, he was only given a list of addresses and phones of non-governmental organizations that could help him.

He was referred to me as I had been acting as a volunteer translator for asylum seekers and refugees. When he tried to get a bus ticket to Bolu, travel agencies refused to sell him one because he did not have his passport or his identification number for foreigners. Hostels in Ankara refused to give him a room for the same reason. I went to the park across UNHCR's office to meet with him. He explained to me what had happened. I was perplexed by the fact that UNHCR did not help him with the bus ticket and the accommodation. I had observed that UNHCR and its implementing partners in Turkey helped queer asylum seekers in their travels to the satellite cities and in finding accommodation. We called the helpline of ASAM to see if they could buy him a ticket, but they just said that he should be able to buy a ticket with the registration papers given to him by UNHCR. After a series of heated debates with many travel agencies, I managed to convince one agency to sell him a bus ticket by stating that they are violating his right to seek asylum by preventing him from going to Bolu. On the day he arrived in Bolu, he went through the initial registration with Bolu's PDMM who told him that he might have to wait until mid-2019 for his first interview with them. Then we learnt that his interview for RSD with UNHCR could only be booked in early 2020.

After observing the hardships Muhammed went through in getting any form of help from UNHCR and its implementing partners, I had a better understanding of why queer asylum seekers' applications for refugee status are called "golden cases". Muhammed could not place himself anywhere in the transnational matrix of deservingness as a heterosexual man. During the first month of his stay in Bolu, we stayed connected, and he told me how his every request for assistance from UNHCR and I(NGO)s was left unanswered. For a while, I could not hear from Muhammed, which made me worry about him, until one day when I received a message from him, saying that he was in one of the Greek Islands. He explained that he could not sign a flat lease which is mandatory to complete his registration process with the PDMM since he could not speak Turkish and UNHCR or local NGOs did not provide translation assistance. On top of the fact that he was barred from the formal job market because of his impending conditional refugee application, he did not even know how to look for jobs in the informal sector since he did not know anyone in Bolu, a city with no Iranian refugee community. As a single heterosexual man, he

was not eligible for any form of financial help coming from either local or international organizations. He told me that he was afraid that the money he had would run out and he would be stranded in Turkey; his family was not able to send more money because no bank allowed him to open an account without his registration with the PDMM. Hence, he decided to take a boat to one of the Greek Islands.

As no one mediated his access to refugee status, rights and services, Muhammed had to be yet again displaced and use undocumented methods of border crossing. Since he could not partake in the transnational matrix of deservingness, he could not access the rights and services that may have provided him with an incentive to remain in Turkey. All in all, the transnational matrix of deservingness in Turkey helps 'deserving' refugees to construct legal subjectivity, keeping them immobile in Turkey, waiting for resettlement, thus, preventing undocumented border crossing and sustain refugee governance.

Conclusion

Turkey's long-standing geographical limitation on the Convention has created a transnational space for UNHCR and third countries to enact their own social and political agendas concerning refugees and SOGI within the borders of Turkey. From the perspective of queer asylum seekers, we observed that being subjected to three different bureaucratic structures meant that they had to navigate three interconnected social categories of deserving and underserving refugee. In order to mark the interconnectedness of these social categories arising from three bureaucratic structures, I have coined the concept of transnational matrix of deservingness. I have also demonstrated that refugees who situate themselves in the matrix, and thus deemed deserving, can negotiate their access to rights, resettlement and services. The possibility of successful negotiation gives an incentive to 'deserving' refugees to remain immobile in Turkey, at least until their hope for resettlement fades away. Those who cannot find themselves a place in the matrix cannot negotiate their access to rights, resettlement and services. Thus, they search for undocumented ways out of Turkey.

NOTES

1   Article 3 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection states that Europe consists of the member states of the Council of Europe. Also, the same article states that the President of Turkey can decide on which country to accept as "European" in relation to giving refugee status.

2   The arrival of Syrian asylum seekers in 2011 further fractured the legal category of refugeeness in Turkey, creating yet another liminal one called conditional refugee under temporary protection.

3   Kemal Kirişçi, "UNHCR and Turkey: Cooperating for Improved Implementation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 13, no. 1/2 (2001): 71.

4   Kemal Kirişçi, "The Legal Status of Asylum Seekers in Turkey: Problems and Prospects," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 3, no.3 (1991): 512; Kemal Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (2000):7.

5   UNHCR, "UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity," 2008; UNHCR, "UNHCR Resettlement Handbook" (UNHCR, 2011).

6   Hayriye Kara and Damla Çalık, *Tekin Olmayı Beklerken: LGBTİ Mültecilerin Ara Durağı Turkey (Waiting to Be Safe: Turkey as the Transit Station of LGBTI Refugees)* (Ankara: KAOS GL, 2016); Nurcan Ö. Baklacıoğlu and Zeynep Kıvılcım, *Sürgünde Toplumsal Cinsiyet: İstanbul'da Suriyeli Kadın ve LGBTİ Mülteciler (Gender at Exile: Syrian Women and LGBTİ Refugees in Istanbul)* (İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2015); Zeynep Kıvılcım, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Syrian Refugees in Turkey," in *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, ed. Jane Freedman, Zeynep Kıvılcım, and Nurcan Ö. Baklacıoğlu (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

7   Kara and Çalık, "Tekin Olmayı Beklerken: LGBTİ Mültecilerin Ara Durağı Turkey (Waiting to Be Safe: Turkey as the Transit Station of LGBTI Refugees)"; Baklacıoğlu and Kıvılcım, *Sürgünde Toplumsal Cinsiyet: İstanbul'da Suriyeli Kadın ve LGBTİ Mülteciler (Gender at Exile: Syrian Women and LGBTİ Refugees in Istanbul)*; Kıvılcım, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Syrian Refugees in Turkey."

8   UNHCR chooses certain I/NGOs as its partners to conduct projects together. ASAM has been a long-term implementing partner of UNHCR, helping with first instance registration of conditional refugees as well as providing protection mechanisms.

9   Lisa M. Diamond, "Careful What You Ask For: Reconsidering Feminist Epistemology and Autobiographical Narrative in Research on Sexual Identity Development," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31, no. 2 (2006): 471–91.

10   Mert Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey," *Middle East Critique* 29, no. 1 (2020): 29–46; Mert Koçak, "Türkiye'ye Göç Eden Kimlikler: Yerel ve Ulusaşırı Dinamiklerin Kesişiminde LGBT Mülteciliğin İnşası (Identities That Migrate to Turkey: Construction of LGBT Refugeeness at the Intersection of Local and Transnational Dynamics)," in *Toplumsal Cinsiyet Perspektifinden Türkiye'de Göç Araştırmaları (Migration Studies in Turkey from the Perspective of Gender)*, ed. Kristen Sarah Biehl and Didem Danış (Istanbul: SU Gender and GAR, 2020), 164–91.

11   Cris Shore and Susan Wright, "Conceptualizing Policy: Technologies of Governance and the Politics of Visibility," in *Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power*, ed. Cris Shore, Susan Wright, and Davide Però (Berghahn Books, 2011), 3.

12   Michael Kagan, "Is Truth in the Eye of the Beholder? Objective Credibility Assessment in Refugee Status Determination," *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* 17, no. 3 (2003): 367.

13   Anthony Good, "Tales of Suffering: Asylum Narratives in the Refugee Status Determination Process," *West Coast Line* 44, no. 4 (2011): 79.

14   Kagan, "Is Truth in the Eye of the Beholder? Objective Credibility Assessment in Refugee Status Determination," 367; Good, "Tales of Suffering: Asylum Narratives in the Refugee Status Determination Process," 79.

15   Kagan, "Is Truth in the Eye of the Beholder? Objective Credibility Assessment in Refugee Status Determination," 367–68.

16   James Souter, "A Culture of Disbelief or Denial? Critiquing Refugee Status Determination in the United Kingdom," *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 1, no. 1 (n.d.): 49.

17   Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey," 36.

18   James C. Hathaway and Michelle Foster, *The Law of Refugee Status*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 442.

19   Hathaway and Foster, 442.

20   Hathaway and Foster, 442–43.

21   Rachel Lewis, "'Gay? Prove It': The Politics of Queer Anti-Deportation Activism," *Sexualities* 17, no. 8 (December 2014): 959–64.

22   Sabine Jansen and Thomas Spijkerboer, *Fleeing Homophobia: Asylum Claims Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Europe* (COC Nederland and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2011), 55.

23   Elizabeth Connely, "Queer, beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Refugee Experiences of 'Passing' into 'Membership of a Particular Social Group,'" *UCL Migration Research Unit Workin Papers* 3 (2014): 9.

24   Rachel Lewis, "Deportable Subjects: Lesbians and Political Asylum," *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 2 (2013): 179.

25 Steven Epstein and Héctor Carrillo, "Immigrant Sexual Citizenship: Intersectional Templates among Mexican Gay Immigrants to the USA," *Citizenship Studies* 18, no. 3–4 (April 3, 2014): 226.

26 Johannes Lukas Gartner, "(In)Credibly Queer: Sexuality-Based Asylum in the European Union," in *Transatlantic Perspectives on Diplomacy and Diversity*, ed. Anthony Chase (Humanity in Action Press, 2015); Jenni Millbank, "Sexual Orientation and Refugee Determination over the Past 20 Years; Unsteady Progress through Standard Sequences?," in *Fleeing Homophobia: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Asylum*, ed. Thomas Spijkerboer (New York: Routledge, 2013).

27 Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey."

28 According to Article 71 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, conditional refugees are obliged to live in the designated provinces, which are smaller cities. This aims to prevent refugees from only going to metropolises where job opportunities are better than in the smaller cities. The same article also obliges refugees to go to the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management and give their signature (daily or biweekly).

29 For example, in Turkey, the International Catholic Migration Commission conducts resettlement interviews on behalf of the USA.

30 UNHCR, "Resettlement," 2020, https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html.

31 Elif Sarı and Cemile Gizem Dinçer, "Towards a New Asylum Regime in Turkey?," *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* 3, no. 2 (2017): 67; Amnesty International, *Stranded: Refugees in Turkey Denied Protection*, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2009), 29.

32 Deniz Sert and Ugur Yildiz, "Governing without Control: Turkey's "Struggle" with International Migration," in *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey*, ed. Cenk Ozbay, Maral Erol, Aysecan Terzioglu, and Z. Umut Turem (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2016), 64.

33 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/subsidiary-protection_en

34 https://www.goc.gov.tr/stratejik-planlar

35 https://www.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/goc.gov.tr/evraklar/Goc-Projeleri/GOC-PROJELERI2/GI%CC%87GM-_-PROJELER-TABLOSU-biten.pdf

36 https://www.goc.gov.tr/faaliyet-raporlari

37 https://www.goc.gov.tr/yillik-goc-raporlari

38 https://www.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/goc.gov.tr/evraklar/Goc-Projeleri/GOC-PROJELERI2/GIGM-Devam-Eden-Projeler.pdf

39 Ibid.

40 https://www.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/goc.gov.tr/evraklar/Stratejik-Yonetim/Faaliyet-Raporlari/2017-Yili-Faaliyet-Raporu.pdf

41   For a more extended discussion of how UNHCR based its RSD interviews in Turkey on – what I call - a gendered performance of persecution, please have a look at: Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey,",

42   Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey," 41.

43   Sima Shakhsari, "The Queer Time of Death: Temporality, Geopolitics, and Refugee Rights," *Sexualities* 17, no. 8 (2014): 998–1015; Sima Shakhsari, "Killing me Softly with Your Rights: Queer Death and the Politics of Rightful Killing" in *Queer Necropolitics,* ed. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco (New York: Routledge, 2014), 93-110; Elif Sarı, "Lesbian Refugees in Transit: The Making of Authenticity and Legitimacy in Turkey," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 24, no. 2, (2020): 140-158.

44   Koçak, "Who Is 'Queerer' and Deserves Resettlement?: Queer Asylum Seekers and Their Deservingness of Refugee Status in Turkey," 43-44.

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ARTICULATION, DISTRIBUTION AND TRANSFERENCE OF EROTIC POWER IN THE SOVIET HISTORICAL-REVOLUTIONARY FILMS AND "ARTISTIC DOCUMENTARIES"

Abstract

My study aims to analyze the anatomy and the mechanisms of constructing and showcasing the erotic power in so called "Artistic documentaries" produced in the 1930s and 1940s. In my research I will focus on the cinematic representations of the Party leaders (and the Party power in general) and their erotic dimension. I shall argue that that from 1930s to 1940s Stalin not only steps out from Lenin's shadow as a genuine leader of working class and, subsequently, of the Soviet Union, as it has been noted by Slavic Studies, but he also outshines the eroticism of Lenin's character in these films. My argument is that if Stalin appears as a locus of heterosexual desire, Lenin first of all evokes a homosexual one. I shall try to contextualize this rechanneling of desire in the light of 1930s homophobic stands and policies of the Party.

Keywords: erotic power, Soviet films, "Artistic documentaries", Lenin, Stalin

Evgeny Dobrenko famously notes that Stalinist art has to be understood not so much as a style, but as a grand political-aesthetic project, which becomes a museum in itself; a museum showcasing not only the Stalinist era, but also the post-Soviet one. A museum to be lived both within it and with it. Dobrenko argues that the post-Soviet culture (culture understood in its widest meaning) cannot escape the system of images of the past, since history comes together with ready-made images "just as thought comes with speech. This is why a contemporary analysis of the origins of these images is so important. Their realm is to be found in the Soviet past."[1] He sees cinema, "the most constitutive and advanced artistic practice in Stalinist culture", as a device for the production of history.[2] The history

produced through the cinematic device embodies not only History, as a revised and distorted version of past events, but, as it has recently been argued, the very formation of the Soviet citizens' subjectivities. The means for this is the constant promotion of the New Soviet Man and the New Soviet Woman on screen, dictating and shaping not only their political and ideological desires, but also their erotic and sexual ones.[3] Even if, compared to other artefacts and sources, film documents are relatively recent resources for the study of the past, especially feature films, today the importance of studying them as cultural artefacts which testify for the "spirit of the time" and provide evidence on the period in question is undeniable. As Maya Turovskaya remarks, through the study of newsreels we gain additional knowledge about past events, and we "embrace not only the rational but also the emotional".[4] Marc Ferro argues that fiction films also constitute a part of history, thus representing a legitimate topic for study, in so much as they affect the imaginary of people and even if one considers them as "dreams", they are not cut away from reality, just like dreams themselves are a part of reality.[5] Even if every kind of film reflects the dominant ideology (with rare exceptions), films gain additional weight in this sense when they are funded and produced by the State, with the State's direct intervention, with the sole and clear aim of ideological propaganda.

Cinema has played an enormous role in the building of Stalinist mythology. Its propaganda potential was quite evident for Bolsheviks starting even from the October Revolution. From the very early years they put huge emphasis on its importance for building the new society, legitimizing the revolution, in particular for influencing the vast illiterate masses, and it was declared to be the most important weapon of propaganda. It does not come as a surprise that Stalin was more than aware of it. Lenin's alleged remark that "for us cinema is the most important of all arts"[6] was one of the most frequently cited slogans in the press of the 1920s. Stalin himself said in 1924, at the thirteenth Party Congress, that "cinema is the greatest means for mass agitation."[7] Nikita Khrushov in his speech at the Twentieth Party Congress of 1956 said that the dictator came to depend on Soviet Cinema for his own distorted perception of the realities of Soviet life.[8] Recently, Maria Belodubrovskaya has suggested in her research that for Stalin, the cinema did not occupy the primary place and his cinema policy was not necessarily different from the art policy in general.[9] However, even if he paid less attention to the censorship of cinema than to that of the printed media, this claim does not invalidate

another one made by Peter Kenez, mainly that Stalin was ironically the first "victim" of his own propaganda. Withdrawn from the real world in the 1930s and spending the rest of his life either in Kremlin or on his personal dachas, he never really interacted with ordinary people in villages, collective farms, not even on the streets of Moscow and his view was more and more determined by what he witnessed on the screen.[10] At the same time, as previous Soviet research has demonstrated, in the period from the signature of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939 until the unleashing of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, while the rest of Europe was at war, Stalin devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to closely monitor the activities of Soviet film-makers.[11]

Regardless of the exact amount of attention Stalin was paying to the cinema, the way in which feminist psychoanalytic film critics revisit the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage as screen proves to be most useful for the analysis of Socialist Realist cinema under Stalin. In Christina Vatulescu's words, "This socialist realist art [cinema] is a mirror stage for adults. [...] Unlike in Lacan's mirror stage, the subject does not admire her own, however distorted vision of herself, but the regime's."[12] Although here, in this specific context, she talks about gulag prisoners and documentaries made about them, this statement can be applied to practically everything and everyone: starting with how impoverished, empty collective farms and unhappy peasants were regardless portrayed as wealthy and happy, ending with representation of historical events and of Stalin himself, who in artistic documentaries was portrayed larger than life. To summarize in one sentence: Socialist Realism was the past that had never occurred, and the present that never took place.

Richard Taylor brings forward, however tentatively, a categorisation of the films which had a more precise role in the preparation and/or promotion of the personality cult.[13] However, as he remarks, this is a very preliminary ordering and films in these categories do overlap. Still, he distinguishes proto-cultic, quasi-cultic and cultic proper films. In proto-cultic films a linear narrative revolves around a hero(ine) figure who is in one way or another transformed by the depicted situations. These films are usually set in the present day and take place either in a factory, or in a collective farm. As Taylor notes, the message of the film and the transformation of the main character have political significance, but that significance is neither as explicit, nor as foregrounded as in other categories.

Quasi-cultic films build upon the model provided by the proto-cultic category. In this group the hero(ine)'s tale unfolds against an overtly political background: it might be the events of 1905 or even earlier, the October Revolution, the Civil War, the Communist International, or it might be a contemporary Party or government setting. The leading figure will begin from a standpoint of political commitment, whereas the hero of a proto-cultic film acquires political commitment over the course of the development of the plot. The Civil War film, which predates the Stalinist period with its heroic myth legitimizing the Bolshevik regime, plays an important part in this category.

Cultic films are placed later than the first two categories, because both the proto-cultic and quasi-cultic films were in a sense a preparation of them. In the early cultic films the hero is Lenin, although Stalin is there too as Lenin's closest confidant. In late cultic films (Staliniana), Stalin's figure becomes larger than life, whereas Lenin moves to the background (Mikheil Chiaureli, *The Unforgettable Year 1919*), and in the WWII-themed films, the so called artistic documentaries,[14] he is totally absent.

Socialist Realist cinema has been the subject of numerous studies from various perspectives and the domain of gender and sexuality constitutes a relatively recent contribution to the existing research. John Haynes and Lilya Kaganovsky in their respective works have demonstrated that regardless of the powerful representation of the New Soviet Man as the Bolshevik/blacksmith/Stakhanovite, associated with Stalinist masculinity, the very same Stalinist masculinity is frequently compromised. John Haynes has argued that the New Soviet Man of the Socialist Realist cinema always remains in the "coming of age" process. He is always a model "son", but never surpasses the "father" who is always personified in the films by a wise Party member and sometimes by the Father of the Soviet Union nations-Stalin himself.[15] Lilya Kaganovsky has gone further and has effectively shown the layers of the compromised masculinity of the New Soviet Man. She has argued that simultaneously with the "fantasy of extravagant virility", embodied by the "iconic"/"ideal" New Soviet Man, there existed a different kind of New Soviet Man, with a castrated and dismembered subjectivity and body, always portrayed as "«less than» and «not quite»" Stalin.[16] Even if the two authors take different approaches to the question, they both share the view that it was only Stalin who embodied that very real masculinity and power, and this was always shown in various cultural texts. Kaganovsky has drawn attention to a plot pattern that repeatedly shapes Stalinist socialist

realist films – this is a triangular desire, which emerges between two male friends and a female representing "an object of affection" for them.[17] However, what makes this scenario unique is its typical development: "the conflict is resolved not in favour of heterosexual marriage but in favour of homosociality: the men remain men together, while the woman is left on the side."[18] Consequently, revisiting Eve Sedgwick's paradigm, she developed the concept of "heterosexual panic", based on recurring plot patterns where the narrative line avoids heterosexual union and "inadvertently produces desire at the site of male bonding."[19] Ann Eakin Moss, in her paper entitled "Stalin's harem: The spectator's dilemma in late 1930s Soviet film" has argued that in Stalinist films, there was no place for the male gaze in the classical understanding of this concept, as applied to Hollywood cinema, although it does not necessarily mean that this had a liberating effect. Rather, the viewer, regardless of gender, was always placed in a female role by the film, in a twisted manner: both men and women were simultaneously asked "to identify with and desire the heroine."[20] Whereas the only powerful masculinity belonged to Stalin alone, the viewer was left in a female position, as hand in hand with the only powerful masculinity, the possessive male gaze obviously also belonged to him exclusively. Thereby it was Stalin who was "the implicit object of the heroine's erotic gaze, and the sole possessor of the controlling male gaze."[21] However, the above-mentioned authors in their respective works do not focus on representations of the Party leaders and Party power, neither in historical-revolutionary nor in artistic documentary films, even though these often happened to play a crucial role in the development/creation of the romantic union. Moreover, what is most striking is that the sole focus is on Stalin alone, whereas Lenin's representation/implications of his presence/absence have been totally ignored. This research shall focus specifically on this scope. My particular interest lies in the following: firstly, how Lenin's and Stalin's figures are portrayed in films comparatively: what are the similarities and differences between their depictions? And secondly, how and through which channels Party leaders manage to embody erotic power, how it is channelled and for what purpose(s). Consequently, the films selected for the analysis include only those films from the above-mentioned genre, where the theme of love affair is present. However, it must be mentioned that love affairs never occupied a major place. It was never an interesting topic for the Socialist Realist aesthetics, which was the only artistic style in the Stalinist period. As Ann Eakin Moss notes, considering that socialist realism composed

the Soviet reality, framing Stalin's erotic power by Soviet films must have had profound and enduring effects. Therefore, exploring this aspect is also important for a further consideration of the full picture of the period.

Turovskaya claims that in Stalinist films we are confronted with the emergence of a kind of "social Freudianism."[22] This phenomenon, she states, is characteristic of totalitarian art as a whole:

> However impeccable the Utopian consciousness might be thought to be, within it there are powerful mechanisms of displacement and substitution at work. Nowadays it is hardly necessary to prove that the declared abolition of religion was compensated for by the sanctification of reality itself and the creation of cult forms which were much more universal and all-pervasive than the religious ones had ever been. This sanctification touched all forms of social life and found its apotheosis in cinema [...].[23]

In this context it is particularly interesting to investigate the erotic dimension of Party leaders' representations.

Socialist Realism

The term Socialist Realism was coined only in 1932, and defined and imposed on all artists during the First All-Union Congress of Soviet writers of 1934. Jeffrey Brooks notes that once it was approved, the term was attributed to Stalin.[24] The classical definition of the socialist realist aesthetics stated by the congress was the following:

> Socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.[25]

As Peter Kenez remarks, Socialist Realism

> is best understood in negative terms. By replacing genuine realism with an appearance of realism it prevents the contemplation of the human condition and the investigation of social issues. In order to accomplish its task, Socialist Realist art must have an absolute monopoly, for it must

convince the audience that it alone depicts the world as it really is. This art form can exist, therefore, only within a definite political context. No country has ever had Socialist Realist art without at the same time having concentration camps.[26]

Katerina Clark has established a master plot that is to be found in Socialist Realist novels and, as Peter Kenez remarks, they can be found in Socialist Realist films as well. A Socialist Realist novel is always about the acquisition of consciousness. In the process of fulfilling a task, the hero or heroine under the tutelage of a Party worker, acquires an increased understanding of self, the surrounding world, the task of building Communism, the class struggle, the need for vigilance, etc.

However, when it comes to how this kind of art was created, especially after the avant-garde art of the 1920s, it is worth quoting Turovskaya:

The phenomenon of Soviet cinema in the 1930s as "the most democratic of all the arts" was not born in a vacuum and was not self-generated. It was preceded by more general processes. First, the global change in cultural paradigms: leadership everywhere passed from the avant-garde of the "roaring twenties" to a stabilised type of consciousness; that is to narrative, "generally accessible" structures in art as a whole. Second, the technical revolution associated with the arrival and mastering of sound made this process in the cinema particularly inevitable and obvious.[27]

The introduction of sound in cinema also had its share: it facilitated the development of individual characters on screen, fastened the diegesis through the use of dialogue and helped to bring back the hegemony of conservative linear forms, and "confined films more rigidly within linguistic, national and ideological boundaries, and reinforced the ideological hegemony of the Party and ultimately of Stalin himself." [28]

As stated by Freud in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,* the pattern with charismatic leaders is that while they generally are sexually attractive to their followers, they are themselves sexually aloof. However, in my opinion, the most interesting thing is that even if Party leaders (be they Lenin, Stalin, or any other remarkable Bolshevik, whose biography was captured on film) are never involved in love affairs, they are still highly erotically charged, because they direct, manage and channel the erotic desires of the other protagonists. That is to say that even if love affairs do not occupy the main place in the socialist realist narrative,

functioning only as a subplot of the main story, their realisation, making the supporting characters' sexual union possible, is only attainable through the Party leader's direct involvement. It is a kind of variation of the major plotline in Nikolai Ostrovsky's classic Socialist Realist novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*, that only the loyalty to the Party makes life possible, as demonstrated by Kaganovsky: here the embodiment of the Party (*vozhd*) makes the sexual union possible.

In this research I only focus on the portrayal of Lenin and Stalin, but a good example is Fridrick Erlmler's two part biopic *The Great Citizen*, which represents a fictionalized biography of Sergei Kirov (the character in the film is named Shakov), who was murdered in 1934, four years before the release of the film. Shakov's character is without any romantic interest, he is admired by everyone, hence remaining sexually aloof, but I nevertheless argue that he is the sole source and carrier of the erotic power (as much as he is the embodiment of the Party): in the first part of the film, a marriage of the two Party members becomes possible only because there is a need for Shakov to secretly meet with workers. Hence the wedding is used as a cover for such a meeting to take place, to make sure that the enemies of the people remain unaware of it. And in the second part, it is Shakhov's direct involvement, advice and instructions that push two factory workers, who are constantly fighting with each other, to create a union. Shakov is the only one capable to identify the real reason behind their quarrels which is sexual tension. This issue will be addressed later in the paper.

Emergence of the Personality Cult: Leniniana and Staliniana

As it is widely accepted, the personality cult was built under Stalin: it first started by building a personality cult around Lenin – which was called Leniniana after his death (the term originally referred to a collection of post stamps depicting Lenin's life, and places/people connected with him, and in the widest sense it is used nowadays to describe all visual tributes to his life, including posters and films). It is also a well-established fact that Lenin was against his personality cult and would not give permission to print his face on postal stamps. Rashit Yangirov has researched Lenin's reaction to the suggestion of having an agitation propaganda film about him made by Pyotr Ivanovich Voyevodin, an old Bolshevik who was the head of All-Russian Photographic and Cinematographic Department, one of the founding organisational structures of the nationalised Russian

cinema industry from May 1921 to June 1922.[29] As Yangirov shows, the basis for Voyevodin's motivation was a complex combination of political potential and personal benefits. If a film about Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks who had just come to power, were to be successfully completed, it would become "a spectacular statement of the triumph of ideology in cinema and a convincing confirmation of the serious potential of Party art."[30] However, Voeyevodin's personal ambition also had its share in this project: if the film were as successful as he anticipated, it would anoint him as one of the first biographers and interpreters of Lenin's life and works, with all the deriving advantages.[31]

However, the proposal was met with rejection, first by Lenin and later by his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya. Neither of them wanted the leader's biography to be exposed to the masses. Yangirov explains that this was due to Lenin's character, as well as to what he calls the conspirational reflexes of a revolutionary. He states that his biography was a taboo subject even to his closest circle. "The biography of the leader had to be, from the very beginning, completely identified with the history of the political organisation that he created and led. Nokalay Valentikov's proposal had been met with a similar response from Lenin even in 1904."[32]

However, considering this episode, it is a bit paradoxical that it was Lenin who led the way in creating a heroic legacy for the new regime. As Victoria Bonnell remarks in *Iconography of Power*, Lenin was highly attuned to the popular mood and realized very well that ordinary people needed substitutes for the political and cultural heroes of the old regime, "whose splendid images adorned buildings and squares in the capital cities and throughout the country."[33] So in a way, for the newly-installed regime it was a question of reclaiming the public spaces as well and creating its own legitimacy. Consequently, on August 14, 1918 a decree was issued, entitled "On the dismantling of monuments erected in honour of the tsars and their servants, on the formulation of projects for monuments of the Russian Socialist Revolution", which aimed to provide guidelines and instructions for the political appropriation of public spaces, in particular urban spaces.[34] Lenin's plan was the following: in some cases, the pre-revolutionary moments of tsarist heroes were to be replaced by new statues that celebrated the Bolshevik revolution, and in other cases, a change in inscription or emblem was considered sufficient to transmit the new meaning. In 1918, artists who were sympathetic to the Bolshevik regime created images of the "worker" and the "peasant", symbolizing entire social classes. These figures were transformed into archetypal

figures, and as Bonnell remarks, they became the icons of Soviet Russia and bore semblance to the representation of religious icons as they were standardized with remarkable consistency. In 1919, these iconographic images were widely circulated in political posters, holiday displays and monumental sculptures. However, Lenin's plan paradoxically intended to celebrate individuals rather than social classes. As it mentioned in the decree, it called for the erection of "busts of full-length figures, perhaps bas-reliefs" dedicated to "predecessors of socialism or its theoreticians and fighters, as well as to those luminaries of philosophical thought, science, art and so forth, who, while not having direct relevance to socialism, were genuine heroes of culture". And this, as Bonnell concludes, was the first endeavour of the Bolsheviks to identify and monumentalize individuals.[35]

Most interesting is the fact that the figures chosen to be monumentalized did not include a single leader of the new Bolshevik Russia, unless this person had already been dead. This was an established practice of this monumentalization machine which would in theory not interfere and avoid the glorification of either Lenin or his fellow Bolshevik leaders. Still, again according to Bonnell's observation, the very fact that such a project was under way at Lenin's initiative, it meant that the door was opened for the practice of singling out individuals for glorification and that it had legitimacy. Lenin was often contradictory on this issue. Even if he stated in 1918 that "All our lives we have waged an ideological struggle against the glorification of personality of the individual; long ago we settled the problem of heroes", this plan for monumental propaganda carried the opposite message, leading to the conclusion that his attitude towards this matter was in fact ambiguous. And as Bonnell remarks, it did not take long for this practice of monumentalization to extend to contemporary Bolshevik leaders and to Lenin himself. It was in February 1919 when Lenin's first official bust was made by sculptor Grigory Alekseev at the order of the Moscow Soviet. It was the first public statue depicting a living Bolshevik leader. Even if Lenin was unenthusiastic about the public idolization of himself and other leading Bolsheviks, in 1920 he agreed to organize a contest among artists who were attempting to gain access to him in order to create sketches, sculptures and paintings. The image of Lenin began to take shape and acquire a form that would last throughout the Soviet era from 1920 onwards. In the development of Leniniana it was his fiftieth birthday celebration, on April 22, when the key elements of this aesthetic were established: the superhuman qualities of the vozhd-leader, his simplicity and humanness, the *narodnost* – that is his allure and ability

to connect to ordinary people –, and his power. These qualities were later transmitted to Stalin, where they gained extraordinary magnitudes. Lenin's cult became more and more grandiose after his death, when he dominantly began to have saint-like qualities attributed to him, allegedly acquired in the 1920s, after Fania Kaplan attempted to assassinate him. After Lenin's death the Party tightly controlled his visual representations by establishing a special commission that was supposed to review all works of art depicting Lenin. His cult was progressing without any constraint. For several years after his death new rituals, images and symbols were created and produced, which, as Bonnell observes, were incorporating both Russian Orthodox and traditional Russian folk rhetoric and practice. Lenin was invoked as a "dear father", and at the funeral some mourners carried Lenin's portrait on tall sticks, like the religious banners in a Russian Orthodox procession, which became an everlasting attribute of the Soviet rituals of all kinds, such as May Day parades or other similar occasions and events. Bonnell calls it the beginning of the "aestheticization of power" in Soviet Russia. The creation of Lenin's corners was another sovietized religious ritual, where instead of icons of saints, there would be Lenin's pictures to worship and inspire. Posters, stamps and holiday displays with his image or with references to him were now available in larger quantities and variety than ever before or immediately after his death, many of them emphasizing his immortality. I will not elaborate on the significance of the decision to create a mausoleum to keep Lenin's embalmed body on display for Soviet pilgrims, a practice which has its roots in Christianity.[36]

Just as the iconography of Lenin was becoming more established in the first half of the 1930s, another major change was taking place: the pairing, for the first time, of Lenin's image / name with that of Stalin: "Political art performed a vital function in promoting the new cult of Stalin. Posters graphically depicted the relationship between the two men, creating a visual subtext that implied a connection between Stalin's sacred aura and his association with Lenin."[37]

After Lenin's death there was a question of succession. The charismatic energy that was embodied in Lenin cult, which started being shaped as a result of the illness forcing him to stay away from the current political life, first got transferred to the Party itself. Only that there was a need for a leader to take over that position. As the rivalry between Trotsky and Stalin ended in Stalin's favour, the latter, as the new leader, started building his own cult, which was directly linked to that of Lenin's by demonstrating their close ties. The process employed propaganda emphasizing a certain

kind of heredity, a seemingly natural succession. Initially however, this development started in a rather implicit way. Victoria Bonnell recounts a very interesting example: in April 1925 Tsaritsyn was renamed as Stalingrad and on May 1 Lenin's statue was erected. (However it should be mentioned that after Lenin's death, Trotsky and Zinoviev were also honoured by having a city to be named after them.) The statue represented a bareheaded Lenin standing with his right hand raised on a giant screw and bolt, as depicted in a poster which was circulating at the same time. Bonnel offers an interesting analysis both of the poster and of the meaning of erecting the statue modelled on this poster in Stalingrad. The poster's brief caption was stating that Lenin equals Steel and Granite, which was alluding to the fact that "Lenin's legacy called above all for the construction of a great and powerful state".[38] Moreover, by verbal means the poster implied that there was a genuine connection between Lenin, the man of steel, and Stalin, whose pseudonym literally means "made of steel". As Bonnell observes, this suggestion must have been evident for contemporaries, even if Stalin's name was not mentioned explicitly, due to the very fact that earlier posters and the statue modelled on this poster appeared in the city which had just been renamed in Stalin's honour.[39]

Only that, in early 1929, Stalin's cult started to increase. Before, there were very few images of Stalin to be seen in public spaces, but once he seized power in the internal Party struggle, the process was extremely accelerated. From 1930 onwards, all forms of mass propaganda were mobilized by the regime to praise Stalin and declare him the only true and genuine disciple of Lenin. These concepts were most vividly expressed in political posters, newspaper articles, public speeches, etc. Shaping the narrative that would produce a dominant discourse about Stalin's persona was a huge stake, and as Natalia Skradol notes, the Stalinist purges were

> to a great extent a macabre exercise in solving what Evgeny Dobrenko in a different context calls "the problem of the past"; with the increasingly powerful dictator becoming gradually more suspicious and fearful of those "awkward witnesses" who may have remembered some facts from his biography as they had been – and not as they should have been.[40]

For example, the cultivation of the aforementioned myth, stating the self-evident, genuine ties between Lenin and Stalin, as his only true disciple and follower, could be disputed by those who remembered that Stalin was actually never as close associate of Lenin as he was portrayed by the

dominant discourse, and that he might not have played such a crucial role during October Revolution or the Civil War. However, as Robert Service suggests, the perception of Stalin as a totally grey man who practically found himself accidentally on top of the power and had not been involved in the Party's work, could only be attributed to those who were not part of or aware of the Party's clandestine life in those times.[41] Defining and determining historical accuracy or exploring to what extent depicting Stalin's political life in historical-revolutionary films was exaggerated is not the purpose of this paper. My only interest lies in the symbolic meanings of these exaggerations were, so to say.

It is remarkable that even though Stalin's cult was actively promoted through printed media (including newspapers and posters, discourses, memories, speeches, etc.), his cult in cinema was developed a bit later. Stalin as a character appears on screen at the beginning of the 1930s, in historical-revolutionary films, but it took some time for his character to embrace the same grandiosity on screen as he was embodying in the above-mentioned posters, for example. As Peter Kenez observes, it is in Mikheil Chiaureli's ("the major architect of Stalin cult") 1938 film *The Great Dawn* that Stalin's character steps out of Lenin's shadow for the first time. The plot takes place at the end of WWI, on the eve of the October Revolution, and it is to Stalin, not Lenin, that the revolutionaries look for leadership. Consequently, Lenin is given a lesser role. The Soviet Party historians' collective work on the *Short Course of History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, edited and revised several times by Stalin himself, opens an interesting perspective on the plots of historical revolutionary films. In one of the revisions, Stalin diminished Lenin's practical work in labour organisations and presented him instead as more of a theoretician.[42] However, in yet another revision on the October Revolution, he interestingly diminished his own role in the narrative, and in general placed more emphasis on Lenin and the Party, leading to an interpretation by which he deliberately weakened his personality cult (although as authors of *Stalin's Master Narrative* state, the personality cult was never totally absent during the Stalin period[43]). However, it seems more likely that this reduction and the increased emphasis on the Party, as an abstract entity, was a way of reliving himself from the purges of the Bolshevik leaders during the Great Terror, which many regarded as an undermining of the faith in the legitimacy of the political system itself, by eradicating its role models.[44] When it was a question of purging the kulaks and nepmen, Stalin did not hesitate to express his direct involvement in

this process: in 1930 *Pravda* published Viktor Deni's illustration on its front page, "puffing a wrecker, a nempan and a kulak from his pipe in a swirl of cleansing smoke", which, according to Jeffrey Brooks would not have happened, "had he not wished to take personal responsibility for the persecutions in progress".[45] Moreover, in the mass culture (in print or in celluloid) he was always portrayed as a paternal figure of the Soviet Union and the embodiment of the Party, to which Stalin never objected in practice.[46]

Leniniana and Staliniana: Shifts in Cinematic Representations

The representation of Stalin in a fictional context started in 1937, with Igor Goldstab portraying him in Mikhail Romm's *Lenin in October*, a "masterwork of political correctness" of the Purges period.[47] After 1939, when Mikheil Gelovani took over the role in Kozintsev and Trauberg's *The Vyborg Side* and Romm's sequel *Lenin in 1918,* it became a common practice to include scenes involving Stalin whenever possible, with the role increasing with every film. After WWII, Stalin became a larger than life figure of the Soviet cinema.

Andre Bazin, who wrote an exemplary essay on these films, hypothesized that Stalin used his fictional representation to transcend the "contradictions of subjectivity" and the contingency of his relations with Soviet politics by presenting an image of himself as "History incarnate."[48] Bazin drew a telling contrast between the mummified figure of Lenin, at the centre of the Lenin cult, and the "living mummification" of Stalin in cinema – which effectively gave him the magical attributes and powers of the film star: all-knowing, all-powerful, paternal sexual, immortal. Inevitably, most critical attention has focused on Stalin's rewriting of history through the later films of his cult, but what concerns us here is the effect this trend in Soviet cinema had on its makers.

The films included in my analysis are the following: *Lenin in October* (Mikhail Romm, 1937), *Lenin in 1918* (Mikhail Romm, 1938), *The Great Dawn* (Mikheil Chiaureli, 1938), *The Vow* (Mikheil Chiureli 1946), *The Fall of Berlin* (Mikheil Chiaureli 1950). The selection of the films was based on the following criteria: I wanted to focus on films which deliver fictional representations of Lenin and Stalin, and on films in which they function as match-makers. These films are part of Leniniana and Staliniana. The first instance of Lenin and Stalin acting in between lovers appears in Mikheil

Chiaureli's *The Great Dawn* (1938). Although this aspect is not as present in Mikhail Romm's Leniniana, I consider these films especially important, because, contrary to Staliniana films, these films are strongly charged by homoerotism. It was already mentioned above that Bolsheviks applied the same devices present in Christianity to the Leader's representations. In Lenininana, Lenin's character is literally represented as a walking saint, where everyone factually adores him, nurtures him, protects him, dreams to meet him, wonders what he actually looks like in reality. It is worth mentioning that these features of public adulation do not appear in Staliniana films, as contrary to Staliniana, Romm's films are situated in a conspiracy-driven period, and in Chiaureli's films everyone has Stalin's portrait on the wall, watching them in a "Big Brotherish" manner. In fact, as the scholars have argued, the total admiration enveloping Christ by itself is not free of eroticism and homoeroticism, to mention only the "mystical marriages with Christ" of Saint Catherine and other female saints.[49]

Lenin in October has a very interesting history. In March 1936, the Central Committee decided to invite nine playwrights and ten scriptwriters to take part in a competition to "create a major public performance" to celebrate the 1917 Revolution as "the turning point in the history of humanity."[50] The winner was A. Ya. Kapler's screenplay, and the resulting film was directed by Mikhail Romm. It portrays Lenin as a locus of energy and movement, and even a locus of sexual energy. This is very explicit in a scene where Vasily, the main character, hides Lenin in his apartment and does not initially reveal his identity to his pregnant wife. Nevertheless, the wife still guesses who the guest is and the husband confirms it, but happens without speaking a word explicitly, it is shared like a great religious mystery. And the most intimate moment that the long separated couple shares is when they watch Lenin sleeping. The scene lasts for a total of 60 seconds (including a shot on a ticking clock) and represents one of the most intense sequences of the film.

Stalin does not take much part in the development of the plot, but he appears in the crucial moments, especially in the end, when Lenin gives a public speech after the Revolution is accomplished and the Bolsheviks have assumed power, Stalin moves close to Lenin and appears as his heir.

The sequel, *Lenin in 1918*, is even more charged with erotic husband-wife couple metaphors. The film's opening scene represents a sequence when Vasily returns home to his wife, who has already given birth. A long speech follows about how their baby's life will be far better

and how he will survive the hunger. Then Vasily departs to accomplish his mission of delivering bread to the city.

This parallels with the closing scene, when Stalin comes to visit wounded Lenin (previously shot by Fania Kaplan in a murder attempt) and talks to him in the presence of an orphan girl who, having been lost in the governmental building (!), was in a way adopted by Lenin, portrayed as the only one capable of getting through to her. It is remarkable that Lenin is far more "feminine" in terms of approaching the crying child, calming her down and taking her under his wing in a motherly and nurturing manner, than the woman who has found her and clearly does not know how to deal with children. He is more gifted with motherly instincts than a "natural born" woman. Lenin and Stalin also discuss the future of the child and those of the same generation, while the kid plays on their lap.

Of course, their conversation is an optimistic one, because the obstacles have been overcome and it is the end of the film. We, the viewers, are reassured that from now on everything will be fine, the Civil War will be won and the glorious Soviet Union will be created with Bolsheviks at its helm.

This scene creates a kind of "holy family" and Vasily, who comes to say goodbye to Lenin, does not dare to disturb the holy union. He distantly watches the duo while nervously playing with the buttons on his coat.

Here too, the sequel repeats the act of announcing Lenin's heir, just like in the prequel: when he (Stalin) arrives, Lenin makes him sit in the armchair he was just napping on, as if giving him the "throne". Natalia Skradol, in her analysis of remembrance speeches published in *Pravda* in 1929, makes a similar point. She shows that there were two co-existing metaphors in Christian tropes tradition: one, Lenin as an invisible father-God living in emigration and Stalin as his representative among human beings, guiding the proletariat of the Russian capital; and the second was Stalin, as a loving father who was nurturing the new born Bolshevik state, after death of Lenin – the mother who died giving birth to the miraculous baby. So the metaphor present in a verbal discourse found its representation on screen as well.

We can find an instance of match-making in *The Great Dawn.* There is a love story between a Russian nurse and a Georgian soldier, Svetlana and Giorgi, who meet each other on the battlefield and end up in Petrograd, because "that's where the worker's heart is", according to the intertitle. Even if Lenin and Stalin are busy organizing the October Revolution, they are still ready to fix relationship problems: the nurse's mother does

not fancy the Georgian soldier. It is interesting to observe the roles Stalin and Lenin assume in this affair: Lenin always notices everything and asks Svetlana what is wrong, whereas Stalin always knows the answers and responds to him in Svetlana's place that she has "serious heart matters". Lenin volunteers to talk to Svetlana's mother and miraculously manages to change her attitude towards Giorgi in seconds, without disclosing his identity. It is the Party, with Lenin and Stalin as its incarnations, that makes it possible for a Russian nurse and a Georgian soldier to unite. As soon as Lenin leaves, Giorgi is integrated in the Russian family, serving as a metaphor of the Russia-Georgia union and of Georgia's integration in the Soviet Union family. If someone is to question such interpretation on the basis that, most often, the small countries, or "Oriental others", are represented and gendered as female, contrary to the conqueror-male, I shall respond that even if this is most often the case, here the reverse gendering works very well: first of all, Svetlana is not someone who needs to be saved: yes, Giorgi helps her when she fights with a tsarist Russian officer on the front, but his intervention is more a symbolic one, and, furthermore, she is more "advanced" than Giorgi. She personally knows Stalin and Lenin, it is her who arranges Giorgi's and other soldiers' meeting with them, and in opposition to a Georgian peasant, she has medical knowledge and education and saves him when he is wounded during a demonstration in Petrograd. So if Giorgi's act of saving Svetlana is more symbolic in nature, Svetlana's saving Giorgi is very literal and crucial. There is an interesting episode at the beginning: when Giorgi meets Svetlana on the battlefield and learns her name, he is enchanted and starts singing a classical Georgian romance "Tsitsinatela", the title of which translates to "firefly." The song is an association with the meaning of Svetlana's name, which is deliberately mistranslated in order to justify the song's inclusion in the film, as it was Stalin's favourite song. The correct equivalent of Svetlana's name in Georgian would have been Natela. A very interesting thing happens afterwards: as Giorgi sings, his brother, who is also on the battlefield, hears his voice singing and they are able to reunite for a while, before the brother gets killed. So this erotic impulse triggered by a Russian nurse that makes Giorgi sing also serves as a mediating link for the reunion of two lost brothers.

The Vow is probably the most strange and absurd film in Chiaureli's Staliniana. Here Stalin's rise to power parallels with a family story from Tsaritsin, and it is no coincidence that this is the town which was later renamed as Stalingrad. The events start in 1924, with a "purloined letter"

type of plot: a veteran Bolshevik, Petrov, embarks on a journey to deliver a letter to Lenin to inform him about the misbehaviour of kulaks, but he is murdered on the way by them. His wife, Varvara, continues his mission, joining a group that travels to Moscow. They arrive exactly when Lenin dies. While suggesting that Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev and Kamenev are busy with fighting for power and attacking the Party, Stalin is the only one who truly mourns Lenin's death. He goes for a walk in the snow to stand in front of the bench where their last conversation took place. He stares at the bench, where, as if Lenin's shadow were present on the snow, happens what Andre Bazin describes as a mythic anointment of the new Moses: Lenin's holy spirit literally descends to him. He then delivers his vow to maintain Lenin's legacy at the funeral. When Varvara sees Stalin at the funeral, she directly goes to him and hands him over the letter marked "To Lenin", stained by the blood of her husband. Thus Stalin is elected as Lenin's disciple not only by Lenin (who miraculously appears to him) but by the people as well.

The stories of the Soviet Union and Varvara's family develop in parallel: her son becomes an inventor and designs the first tractor with Stalin's encouragement. Her other son becomes the manager of Stalingrad Tractor Factory. During the five-year plan an American saboteur burns the tractor factory and Varvara's daughter dies in the fire. During WWII, Varvara's both sons go to war and one of them dies in battle. So this family symbolizes an archetypal Russian family who at every stage of the Soviet Union's progress had to sacrifice a part of themselves: a husband, a daughter, a son. It is no coincidence as well that Varvara bears a strong resemblance to the "Motherland is calling" poster by Irakli Toidze, making her an archetypal mother.

In the end, Varvara meets Stalin in Kremlin, and Stalin kisses her hand in recognition of this Soviet mother's contribution to victory, telling her that soon everything Lenin has foreseen will be fulfilled. If Varvara stands as an archetypal mother, symbolizing mother Russia – Rodina Mats, Stalin stands as an archetypal husband, father, and brother – a replacement of the lost male family members, starting after the murder of Varvara's husband. This attunes with Kaganovsky's observation on Dziga Vertov's *Lullaby*:

> … [it is] a dream of a country without men: in Vertov's fantasy, Stalin appears not just as the metaphorical but also as the literal father of the people, the only man among all those women and children. This fantasy of

the total elimination of men is an extension of the motif of heroism present in socialist realist novels and films and promoted in the pages of *Pravda*.[51]

Chiaureli's other monumental two-part film *The Fall of Berlin* of Mosfilm, a present for Stalin's 70th birthday, takes the depiction of Stalin to a totally new level. If *The Vow* represents Stalin as an apostle of Lenin, a Moses-like figure who receives messages from heaven, *The Fall of Berlin,* as Denise Youngblood remarks, deifies him.[52] He had never been portrayed to such monumental dimensions before, not even by Chiaureli himself. It might sound paradoxical at first, but WWII actually brought some freedom to the Soviet Union after the great terror of the 1930s. In Leonid Kozlov's words

the first year and half of the war, with all its catastrophes and countless sacrifices, did in fact lead the Soviet people (millions of them) into a new existential consciousness of freedom of choice, freedom of action and freedom of decision... From that moment of desperation at the end of June 1941, when it became obvious to everyone that this earthly god was not omnipotent, there emerged a tangible and recognisable realisation of human independence, of human sovereignty. The Stalin cult was not overthrown, but its hypnotic effect weakened and the influence of ideological dogmas lessened. The intelligentsia felt significantly freer than they had been before the war.[53]

In this context, the primary mission of *The Fall of Berlin* – "the most famous cinematic artefact of the Stalin cult" in Denise Youngblood's words,[54] restores Stalin's hypnotic power and his authority, portraying him as the sole architect of the victory, whereas the reality was totally opposite. The plot tells the story of Alexei Ivanov, a shy steel factory worker, who due to his working record is chosen to receive the Order of Lenin and to meet Stalin in person. Kaganovsky describes him as "the very picture of inadequate masculinity" – and the role model son is exactly like that. He is "a true man of the people" and of the Revolution – he was born the same day the October Revolution begun[55] and in a way, as suggested by his occupation, he is "related" to Stalin – the man of steel. Alexei is in love with a teacher, Natasha, but he is too clumsy to approach her. When he meets Stalin, he opens up to him and Stalin, as he has time to advise everyone on love affairs (since the preparation of the October Revolution in *The Great Down*), advices him to "love her and she will love you". This gives Alesha courage, but their new born union (which is about to be

consumed as, after declaring his love, Alesha carries Natasha in his arms in the field) is disrupted by German bombs. While Alesha is unconscious, Natasha is taken away by Germans in a labour camp near Berlin, and Alesha is going to war to find her. They both meet at the fall of Berlin, where Stalin descends from the plane dressed in white, like a god-like figure, and they both receive his blessing in person. Most interesting in this story is the comparison between two sequences: first, when Natasha delivers a speech about Alexei in front of Stalin's huge portrait, and second, when the reunited couple receives blessings from Stalin.

During the speech, it is evident (in an extreme way) that she is totally enchanted and hypnotized by Stalin. As Kaganovsky observes on this sequence, "it is quite obvious from Natasha's speech and from her subsequent actions that Stalin stands directly in the way of her appreciation of Alesha. Despite his exemplary masculinity (steelworker, handsome, tall, record-setter), she cannot see him because her eyes are turned to Stalin."[56] So there seems to be a contradiction: it is true that Stalin's direct involvement makes it possible for Alesha to declare his love to the teacher, but at the same time, it is also Stalin that makes Alesha invisible for her.

It seems to me that Alesha's love only becomes acceptable for Natasha when she learns that Stalin has "ordered" her to love him back. And as Kaganovsky rightly remarks, when Natasha dreamingly confesses her love, it is not quite clear or rather it is ambiguous whether she addresses it to Alesha or whether she talks to Stalin in her imagination. When Natasha delivers her speech to talk about Alexei's achievements, she bizarrely shifts to saying what happy times she (and all the others in the audience) are living owing to Stalin and to expressing what she would say to him, if she ever met him. At this moment she modestly hides her face and continues her speech by saying: "but it is never going to happen..."

However, in Socialist Realist Soviet Union all precious dreams come true (just like in Hollywood) and Natasha meets Stalin in Berlin (even though Stalin has never been there in real life), and what she says to him (which assumingly is what she was too ashamed to confess in public, in front of a huge audience) is the following: "Comrade Stalin, may I kiss you?"

Slavoj Zizek claims that "World War II serves as the obstacle to be overcome so that the hero can reach his beloved, like the dragon the knight has to kill to win the princess imprisoned in the castle. The role of Stalin is that of a magician and matchmaker who wisely leads the couple to their reunion."[57] However, in my opinion WWII serves as a

means to fulfil Natasha's dream that was announced in the beginning as something totally unrealistic and unimaginable: to meet Stalin and to ask permission for a kiss. After a half paternal, half erotic embrace (we never see Mikheil Gelovani's face in this scene, even if before the meeting the camera monumentalizes him with intense close ups from every angle), she retires back to Alesha, who functions as a poor substitute for Stalin.

Conclusion

In guise of a conclusion, I would like to return to the concept of public sexuality or Social Freudianism, as Turovskaya puts it. I have already mentioned above that love/sexuality never occupied an important position in Socialist realist novels and/or films, if it hardly had any. But sexuality, whether and to what extent is present in Socialist realist films, serves only one function: to be channelled from the private to the public realm and to serve public purposes. Michael Tratner, in his book *Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics*, argues that Hollywood uses crowd scenes or great mass movements, wars, catastrophes, etc. (The October Revolution in Doctor Zhivago, for example) in order to channel the mass energy into a private and individual one.[58] In *Gone with the Wind*, for example, the Civil War is needed for Scarlett to get rid of her husband and reunite with Rhett, the same way as the October Revolution is needed for Zhivago and Laura to find themselves together. I would argue that contrary to the pattern elaborated by Tratner on the example of Hollywood movies, in the films that have been discussed, the private romance, the private sexual desire is needed in order to be used or benefit mass movements. The purpose of Giorgi and Svetlana's romance is to symbolize the conjoint participation of two nations in the October Revolution and the purpose of Alesha and Natasha's romance is to win WWII, so they could have a real chance to meet Stalin in person. And of course, any of these reunions would have been impossible without the Party leader's erotic impulses, underlying that sexual fulfilment of any kind is possible only under ideological guidance. Katerina Clark observes that meeting with Stalin in the films may, as in tribal initiation, simultaneously serve as a kind of sexual initiation, but he (or other Party figure) sends the initiate out into the world, thus directing the erotic energy out.[59] Even if the films suggest that there is a sexual arousal from the hero's part, this is never mutual, as Stalin belongs to the other, unearthly dimension, as we have seen in Natasha's case. At the

same time, there is a remarkable difference between the representations of political leaders in the films of the 1930s and the 1940s: in the films produced in the 1930s there is a noticeable homoerotic tension between the leader Lenin and others. Whereas in the 1940s the erotic tension becomes strictly heterosexual: Stalin does not inspire dedicated admiration in his "sons", but rather a fearful anxiety. Dan Healey, a historian who researches homosexuality and LGBT issues in Soviet Russia, remarks in his most recent publication that male friendship and bonding in early twentieth century Russia were several degrees warmer than anything we are familiar with in the Anglo-American world, stating that it was probably the increased visibility of the LGBT community from the 1990s onwards that triggered concerns about what had previously been regarded as "innocent" (quotation marks in the original) tenderness and affection between men.[60] In this context, when talking about the Stalinist films of the 1930s and 1940s, I am inclined to think that this twist might have to do with the changed policy towards homosexual men, as homosexuality was recriminated in 1936, after an initial decriminalization in 1917. And it might sound speculative, but I intend to argue that this criminalisation also made the directors more sensitive to the manner in which they should depict the range of emotions towards the *vozhd*. However, as Kaganovsky has shown, this did not impact films of other genres, in which the portrayal of these tensions remained unchanged throughout the 1940s.

NOTES

[1]   Evgeny Dobrenko, Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History: Museum of the Revolution (trans. Sarah Young), Edinburgh University Press, 2008, p. 2.

[2]   Ibid. p. 2.

[3]   See Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin,* University of Piittsburgh Press, 2008, and Ann Eakin Moss (2009) "Stalin's Harem: The spectator's Dilemma in late 1930s Soviet film", *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema,* 3:2, 157-172.

[4]   Turovskaya Maya, "Soviet films of the Cold War", in Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.) *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge, 1993, 131-141.

[5]   Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, translated by Naomi Green, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.

[6]   Lunacharsky, "Conversation with Lenin I. Of all the Arts…". In Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (eds.) *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939* (pp. 56-57). Rutledge, London and New York.

[7]   Cited in Richard Taylor, "Red Stars, positive heroes and personality cults." In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.), *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge,1993, p. 70.

[8]   Cited in Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin,* I.B. TAURIS, 2009

[9]   Maria Belodubrovksaya, *Not According to plan: Filmmaking under Stalin*, Itaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017, p. 216.

[10]   Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society,* p. 134.

[11]   Cited in Richard Taylor, "Red Stars, positive heroes and personality cults." In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.), *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge,1993, pp. 69-89.

[12]   Christina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film and the Secret Police in Soviet Times.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 158.

[13]   Ibid.

[14]   Peter Kenez defines artistic documentaries as those films in which the subject matter were "the most significant moments of contemporary history", i.e. different episodes of WWII. Their significance is huge, as besides Stalin's intervention in the scripts, the leaders of the regime wanted every Soviet person to see them and they were officially considered to have "documentary value". (*Cinema and Soviet Society*, p. 207).

[15]   John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema,* Machester University Press, 2003.

[16]   Kaganovsky, 2008, p. 10.

[17]   Ibid, p. 68.

[18]   Ibid, p. 68.

[19]   Ibid, p. 72.

20   Moss, 2009, p. 154.
21   Ibid, p. 164.
22   Maya Turovskaya,1993, p. 134.
23   Ibid, p. 134.
24   Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank you Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture form Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton University Press, 2000, p.108.
25   Cited in Kenez, 2009, p. 143.
26   Ibid, p. 55.
27   Maya Turkovskaya, "The 1930s and 1940s: Cinema in Context." In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.) *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge, 1993, p. 42.
28   Richard Taylor, "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults". In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.) *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge, 1993, p. 77.
29   Rashit Yangirov, "Onwards and Upwards!: The Origins of the Lenin Cult in Soviet Cinema". In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.), *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema,* Routledge, 1993, pp. 15-33.
30   Ibid, p. 18.
31   Ibid. p.18.
32   Ibid. p. 24.
33   Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin.* University of California Press, 1997, p.137.
34   Ibid. p. 137.
35   Ibid. p. 138.
36   In this regard see Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, Harvard University Press, 1983
37   Ibid. pp. 155-156.
38   Ibid. p. 150.
39   Ibid. p. 150.
40   Natalia Skradol, "Remembering Stalin: Mythopoetic Elements in Memories of the Soviet Dictator." In *Totalitarian Movements and Poliitcal Religions*, 10:1, 19-41, DOI 10.1080/14690760903105307.
41   Robert Service, *Stalin: A biography,* Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard Press, 2004.
42   David Brandenberger and Mikhail Zelevon, *Stalin's Master Narrative: A Critical Edition of The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Short Course*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019. p. 44.
43   Ibid. pp. 16-17.
44   David Brandenberger, *The Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941*.New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. p. 161, p. 197.
45   Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, p. 128.

46   David Brandenberger, *The Propaganda State in Crisis,* p. 160.

47   Ibid. p. 167.

48   Andre Bazin, "The Stalin Myth in Soviet Cinema", translated by Georgia Gurrieri.Film Criticism (ARCHIVE); Fall 1987, 11,1/2; *FIAF International Index to Film Peridicals Database*, p.161.

49   In this regard see for instance John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay people in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, University of Chicago, 1980 and Margaret D. Kamitsuka (ed). *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires and Sexuality in Christianity.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

50   Brandenberger, 2011, p. 156.

51   Kaganovsky, p. 205.

52   Denise Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005.* University Press of Kansas, 2007.

53   Leonid Kozlov, "The Artist and the Shadow of Ivan". In Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.) *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema* (pp. 109-130), London and New York: Routledge. 1993, p. 120.

54   Denise Youngblood, *Russian Warm Films On the Front,* p. 97.

55   Ibid. p. 98.

56   Kaganovsky, p. 206.

57   Slavoj Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes.* London: Vers*o,* 2008. p. 59.

58   Michael Tratner, *Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics.* Fordham University Press, 2008.

59   Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space." In Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (eds.) *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (pp. 3-18). Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003. p. 18.

60   Dan Healey, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi.* Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2017. p. 86.

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New Europe College (NEC) is an independent Romanian institute for advanced study in the humanities and social sciences founded in 1994 by Professor Andrei Pleșu (philosopher, art historian, writer, Romanian Minister of Culture, 1990–1991, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1997-1999) within the framework of the *New Europe Foundation*, established in 1994 as a private foundation subject to Romanian law.

Its impetus was the *New Europe Prize for Higher Education and Research*, awarded in 1993 to Professor Pleșu by a group of six institutes for advanced study (the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar, the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, Uppsala, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin).

Since 1994, the NEC community of fellows and *alumni* has enlarged to over 600 members. In 1998 New Europe College was awarded the prestigious *Hannah Arendt Prize* for its achievements in setting new standards in research and higher education. New Europe College is officially recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research as an institutional structure for postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences, at the level of advanced studies.

Focused primarily on individual research at an advanced level, NEC offers to young Romanian scholars and academics in the fields of humanities and social sciences, and to the foreign scholars invited as fellows appropriate working conditions, and provides an institutional framework with strong

international links, acting as a stimulating environment for interdisciplinary dialogue and critical debates. The academic programs NEC coordinates, and the events it organizes aim at strengthening research in the humanities and social sciences and at promoting contacts between Romanian scholars and their peers worldwide.

Academic programs organized and coordinated by NEC in the academic year 2019-2020:

- *NEC Fellowships (since 1994)*
  Each year, the NEC Fellowships, open both to Romanian and international outstanding young scholars in the humanities and social sciences, are publicly announced. The Fellows are chosen by the NEC international Academic Advisory Board for the duration of one academic year, or one term. They gather for weekly seminars to discuss the progress of their research, and participate in all the scientific events organized by NEC. The Fellows receive a monthly stipend, and are given the opportunity of a research trip abroad, at a university or research institute of their choice. At the end of their stay, the Fellows submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the New Europe College Yearbooks.

- *Ştefan Odobleja Fellowships (since October 2008)*
  The Fellowships given in this program are supported by the National Council of Scientific Research and are part of the core fellowship program. The definition of these fellowships, targeting young Romanian researchers, is identical with those in the NEC Program, in which the *Odobleja* Fellowships are integrated.

- *UEFISCDI Award Program (since October 2016)*
  The outstanding scientific activity of the NEC was formally recognized in Romania in 2016, when the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* organized a competition for institutions coordinating ERC projects. New Europe College applied and won two institutional prizes for coordinating, at that time, two ERC grants. A part of this prize was used to create the *UEFISCDI Award Program*, consisting of fellowships targeting young

international researchers, also meant to complement and enlarge the core fellowship program.

- **The Pontica Magna Fellowship Program (since October 2015)**
  This Fellowship Program, supported by the VolkswagenStiftung (Germany), invites young researchers, media professionals, writers and artists from the countries around the Black Sea, but also beyond this area (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine), for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice. The program welcomes a wide variety of disciplines in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Besides hosting a number of Fellows, the College organizes within this program workshops and symposia on topics relevant to the history, present, and prospects of this region. This program is therefore strongly linked to the former *Black Sea Link* Fellowships.

- **The Pontica Magna Returning Fellows Program (since March 2016)**
  In the framework of its *Pontica Magna* Program, New Europe College offers alumni of a previous *Black Sea Link* and *Pontica Magna* Fellowship Program the opportunity to apply for a research stay of one or two months in Bucharest. The stay should enable successful applicants to refresh their research experience at NEC, to reconnect with former contacts, and to establish new connections with current Fellows.

- **The Gerda Henkel Fellowship Program (since March 2017)**
  This Fellowship Program, developed with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany), invites young researchers and academics working in the fields of humanities and social sciences (in particular archaeology, art history, historical Islamic studies, history, history of law, history of science, prehistory and early history) from Afghanistan, Belarus, China (only Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they will have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice.

- **The Spiru Haret Fellowship Program (since October 2017)**
  The *Spiru Haret* Fellowship Program targets young Romanian researchers/academics in the humanities and social sciences whose projects address questions relating to migration, displacement, diaspora. Candidates are expected to focus on Romanian cases seen in a larger historical, geographical and political context, in thus broadening our understanding of contemporary developments. Such aspects as transnational mobility, the development of communication technologies and of digitization, public policies on migration, the formation of transnational communities, migrant routes, the migrants' remittances and entrepreneurial capital could be taken into account. NEC also welcomes projects which look at cultural phenomena (in literature, visual arts, music etc.) related to migration and diaspora. The Program is financed through a grant from UEFISCDI (The Romanian Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding).

- **How to Teach Europe Fellowship Program (since April 2017)**
  This Program, supported by Porticus and Robert Bosch Foundation, introduces a new and innovative Fellowship module at the Centre for Advanced Study (CAS), Sofia, and the New Europe College (NEC), Bucharest. Beyond the promotion of outstanding individual researchers, the Program focuses on the intersection of fundamental research and higher education. The joint initiative seeks to identify and bring together bright and motivated young and established university professors from South-Eastern Europe to dedicate themselves for a certain amount of time to research work oriented toward a specific goal: to lend the state-of-the-art theories and methodologies in the humanities and social sciences a pan-European and/or global dimension and to apply these findings in higher education and the transmission of knowledge to wider audiences.

- **Lapedatu Fellowships (since June 2018)**
  Thanks to a generous financial contribution from the *Lapedatu* Foundation, NEC invites to Bucharest a foreign researcher specialized in the field of Romanian Studies, who is currently conducting research in one of the world's top universities. On this occasion, he spends a

month in Romania and works with a young Romanian researcher to organize an academic event hosted by the NEC. At this colloquy, the *Lapedatu* fellows and their guests present scientific papers and initiate debates on a theme that covers important topics of the Romanian and Southeastern European history in both modern and contemporary epochs. The contribution of the *Lapedatu* family members to the development of Romania is particularly taken into consideration.

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New Europe College has been hosting over the years an ongoing series of lectures given by prominent foreign and Romanian scholars, for the benefit of academics, researchers and students, as well as a wider public. The College also organizes international and national events (seminars, workshops, colloquia, symposia, book launches, etc.).

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Dr. Ulrich SCHMID, Professor for the Culture and Society of Russia, University of St. Gallen; Head of the Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen

Dr. Victor I. STOICHIȚĂ, Professor of Art History, University of Fribourg