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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

The current volume brings together ten studies by former fellows of the New Europe College, which have not been published until now. These contributions offer a diversity of perspectives and insights from research areas that are unlikely to be seen together in a volume, excepting perhaps the yearbook of an institute for advanced study.

Galina Babak opens the collection with her study on notion of the "Asian Renaissance". Alexandra Bardan follows with an exploration of bureaucratic gaps in 1980s Romania, while in a thought-provoking analysis, Georgios Chatzelis delves into the relationship between military tactics and literary strategies, focusing on the writings of the Byzantine historian John Skylitzes. Ettore Costa's essay addresses the intersection of science and democracy in the 21st century. Idrit Idrizi provides a compelling overview of Albania's global relations with communist actors and revolutionary movements during the 1960s. Adina Marincea's exploration of how the AUR party utilizes social media to revive interwar legionary thinking offers a critical perspective on the revival of historical ideologies in contemporary politics in Romania. Victoria Myronyuk's "The Memorial Dinner" is a poignant personal essay. Alexander Panayotov sheds light on the daily lives of Jews in the early Byzantine Balkans and the Aegean. Nadav Solomonovich provides a chronological examination of Turkey's failed national holiday May 27, from 1963 to 1980. Lastly, Giuseppe Tateo's contribution is an original investigation into the church-building industry in contemporary Romania.

Together, these ten studies offer a rich material, inviting readers to engage with complex narratives that continue to shape Eastern Europe today. The volume not only serves as a valuable academic resource but also as a platform for dialogue and understanding across different cultures and histories.

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Biographical note

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MYKOLA KHVYLOVYI'S "ASIAN RENAISSANCE": CULTURAL TRANSFER IN THE TIMES OF SOVIET NATION-BUILDING IN UKRAINE (1920S)[1]

Galina Babak

Abstract

This article is dedicated to an analysis of the historiosophic concept of "Asian Renaissance," as elaborated by the writer and polemist Mykola Khvylovyi, who was an ideologist of Ukrainian national communism. It will focus on his ideas expressed during the *Literary Discussion* of the 1925–1928 period in Soviet Ukraine. The objective of this article is to examine Khvylovyi's ideas within the broader context of the most significant ideological constructs that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These include Nikolai Danilevsky's "Bible of Pan-Slavism," "Europe and Russia," Oswald Spengler's concept of "The Decline of the West," the circle of ideas known as "Yellow Peril," Russian "Scythianism," and the Marxist-Leninist approach to history and politics. All of these concepts found their further development within Russian Symbolism and Futurists. It has been largely overlooked by scholars that Khvylovyi's call for "psychological Europe" and his concept of "Asian Renaissance" can be situated within the broader ideological context of the evolution of Pan-Mongolism. The article also contextualizes Khvylovyi's concept of "Europe" and its further political and ideological applications in the contemporary Ukrainian media. Finally, Khvylovyi's writings are discussed in the context of Ukrainian nation building of the 1920s within a broader frame of Soviet modernization.

Keywords: Mykola Khvylovyi, Literary Discussion, Asian Renaissance, national cultural revival, Soviet Ukraine, Marxism

1. Introduction

Mykola Khvylovyi (1893–1933)[2] can be considered one of the most renowned Ukrainian writers of the 1920s. He was identified as "the founder of a truly new Ukrainian prose"[3] already during his lifetime.

His ideas of "psychological Europe" and "Asian Renaissance" not only shaped the cultural, political, and ideological development of Ukrainian culture in the 1920s, but also established a strong national narrative and influenced further perceptions of Ukrainian political history in the early Soviet period. This is supported by numerous publications on his work and aesthetic ideas during his lifetime and in contemporary Ukrainian studies.[4]

The Ukrainian media today are flooded with quotations from Mykola Khvylovyi's writings of the 1920s. "Psychological Europe!" and "Away from Moscow!"[5] were coined by the writer almost a century ago. These slogans are widely used in discussions about the cultural and geopolitical orientation of contemporary Ukraine. They appeal not only to Ukrainian journalists and politicians, but also to international historians. For example, in July 2014, *Radio Free Europe* Ukrainian Service published on its website an article titled "Away from Moscow! – Khvylovyi on the orientation of the intelligentsia of the 1920s".[6] Even the renowned historian Timothy Snyder, in an essay published in *The New York Review of Books* in July 2015 entitled "Edge of Europe, End of Europe," discusses the problem of the political and cultural choice of Ukrainian society by referring to Khvylovyi in his retrospective view of Ukrainian history:

> Ukrainians in 2013 demonstrated, in their revolution, a strong commitment to the idea of European integration […]. Khvylovyi's main idea as a critic and sponsor of new literature was that Ukraine could leap forward to what he called a "psychological Europe" by way of a new Ukrainian high culture that offered fearless meditations on the predicaments of modern life.[7]

All these examples raise the question of what Khvylovyi meant when he spoke of an orientation towards "psychological Europe." In the Ukrainian literary tradition, Khvylovyi's appeal to European culture and the future of Asia is discussed within the framework of anti-imperial and/or postcolonial discourses, as an attempt to consider Soviet Ukraine outside the sphere of Russian domination.[8] However, in order to understand Khvylovyi's ideas properly, it is necessary to see how the logical interaction of these concepts was perceived and to identify the historical, cultural, and (not least) political roots of his set of ideas.

The analysis of Khvylovy's idea uses the strategy of close reading. The main theoretical framework of my research refers to the theory of "cultural transfer" developed by the French historian Michel Espagne, which is based on the idea of an active rather than passive role of an

importer-recipient who consciously chooses certain elements of a foreign culture.[9]

2. The historical context

The territory of modern Ukraine has often been considered a kind of borderland, a place where two cultural and political traditions intersect. These are usually defined as "Western" and "Eastern". According to historian Serhii Plokhy, the territory of today's Ukraine has been a bridge between Europe and Asia for many centuries.[10] Such a symbolic positioning has determined the country's history and ideological landmarks for centuries. The development of Ukrainian culture in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries was based on relations between the "great imperial cultures" (Austrian, then Austro-Hungarian, and Russian), based on the universal principles of multinational empires, on the one hand, and national culture, on the other.[11] The latter was based on particularistic principles, typical of any "national cultural revival".[12] In other words, the imperial culture in its attitude to national cultures could be described as one that has "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging," as Edward Said notes.[13] The latter statement could be easily illustrated by the attempts of the Russian Empire to prevent the Ukrainian cultural revival of the 19th century, through the policies of Russification and censorship:[14] "Throughout the 19th century, Ukrainians in the Russian Empire were not perceived as a distinct nation, but as part of the pan-Russian world; cultural and ethnographic differences were considered as a regional variation of pan-Russian development."[15] Thus, Ukrainian culture existed for a long time under the control and pressure of metropolitan culture and was relegated to the status of "second class" and "backward".[16]

The 19th century in Ukrainian history could be characterized as the beginning of the "grand narrative" (Lyotard)[17] of national emancipation, in which culture was seen as the source of identity, something that should distinguish "us" from "them." This grand narrative began as early as in the end of the 18th century, with the first attempt to mythologize national history (i.e. *Istoriia Rusov*)[18] and continued with the efforts of the *Kharkiv Romantic School*[19] and the Galician literary group *Ruska Triitsia* (*Ruthenian Triad*)[20] to invent the national tradition[21] by collecting, imitating and publishing folk songs, legends, poems and stories. These efforts were legitimized by the figure of the first Ukrainian national poet, Taras

Sevchenko, who became an icon of the Ukrainian liberation movement already during his lifetime.[22]

The struggle for cultural recognition in the first half of the 19th century culminated in a national movement for cultural and political autonomy that began to gain strength in the mid-1840s.[23] The model of the Ukrainian liberation movement is that described by Ernest Gellner in his *Nation and Nationalism*:

> Nationalism usually conquers in the name of putative folk culture. Its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the Volk, the narod. If the nationalism prospers it eliminates the alien high culture, but it does not then replace by the old local low culture; it revives, or invents a local high culture (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own, though admittedly one which will have some links with the local earlier local folk styles and dialects.[24]

The urgent need for a national "high culture" had already manifested itself strongly in the 1880s. Modernism as an aesthetic process "pointed to the crisis of an educational-rationalist model of progress […]. On the other hand, it functioned and spread-out precisely because of the internationalist (European-centred) concept of literary development that was formed in the time of Enlightenment."[25]

The literary and critical works of the authors of the late 19th century (e.g. Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Olha Kobylians'ka, etc.) outlined a new paradigm for the development of national literature that would serve the idea of the consolidation and emancipation of their people. As the literary historian Myroslav Shkandrij puts it, "in the estimation of modernists, their politically fragmented nation required a tradition of high art (a coherent, normative culture) precisely in order to forge a unified consciousness".[26] Modernism in Ukraine was not only an artistic movement that sought to establish a new aesthetic (the case of Western European culture), but it also manifested an intellectual program aimed at freeing art from the 19th-century Ukrainian populist canons *(prosvitianstvo)*. This idea can be supported if we look at the ideological and aesthetic position of the modernist journal *Ukrainska khata*, published in Kyiv from 1909 to 1914. The main point of the journal's agenda was the modernization of Ukrainian culture, and most of its pages were devoted to a critique of the populist canon and Ukrainophilia. But at the same time, the magazine's idea of cultural and social modernization was based on a clear national position:

new art needs a new personality and a new identity.[27] As Oleh Ilnytzkyj points out, "if one examines the parameters and context of *Ukrainska khata*'s discourse on art, one finds that 'art' is always conceptually joined to an array of other, tightly knit issues – namely, the 'intelligentsia,' 'culture,' and 'nation'."[28] The magazine led the constant polemic against the adherents of Marxism and the apologists of "social art".[29] Thus, from the beginning of the 20th century, national culture and art became a landmark, an ideological space accumulator for the process of national integration.

The modernist attempts to create a national "high culture" set the direction for the further self-identification of the Ukrainian people as a political nation with its own traditions, language, and history of struggle for liberation. The national cultural revival of the 19th century and later the modernists' attempts to create a national literary canon ended with the idea of creating an independent state after the Revolution of 1917. In that year the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) was proclaimed. In 1918, the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), located on the territory of the recently collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire, declared its independence and then united with the Ukrainian People's Republic on 22 January 1919. Finally, on 10 March, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic was proclaimed on the territory controlled by the Bolsheviks. The 1917 Revolution and subsequent Civil War on the territory of the former Russian Empire led to the establishment of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.[30]

The complex intersection of national and European history, the fact that after 1922 most of today's Ukrainian territory became part of the USSR – these factors were preconditions for the development of several types of discourses in Ukrainian culture: the national oriented, the European, the imperial Russian, and the new proletarian Soviet. All this led to polarized views on the content and ideological landmarks of national culture, which was considered the main instrument in the struggle for national consolidation.

The debates of the 1920s over Ukrainian proletarian culture took place against the backdrop of the New Economic Policy (NEP), adopted by the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1921. The NEP represented a return to the very limited but more market-oriented economic policies aimed at reviving the Soviet economy, which had nearly collapsed during the years of "military communism" and the Civil War. The NEP caused much disappointment among the left-wing of the Bolsheviks. The initiator of the NEP, Lenin, and his supporters in the Party claimed that the new economic course was only a temporary, limited measure and not

the "come back of capitalism". The split directly affected the ideological climate of literary life. Some of the literary groups tried to maintain the "leftist" approach to literature and show their "usefulness," while others adopted an increasingly loyal attitude to the general line of the Party.[31]

In April 1923, at the 12th Congress of the Communist Party, the policy of Ukrainization was adopted, which in turn was part of the *Korenizatsiia* policy. Its aim was to strengthen the Soviet regime in the national republics by increasing the participation of the indigenous peoples in the governmental system and institutionalizing their languages.[32] However, the active institutionalization of the Ukrainian language in government, education, and publishing began only in 1925, when Lazar Kaganovich, the new First Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, was sent to Ukraine to speed up the process.

The policy of Ukrainization strengthened the national movement. The 1920s saw the emergence of a large number of Ukrainian literary movements and groups, each trying to offer its own vision of the future of national culture. An increasingly fierce debate ensued among these groups, much of it focused on the national content of literature, and from the mid-1920s it took on an increasingly politicized tone. All of this historical and political context contributed to the atmosphere in which the search for a sense of Ukrainian national identity took place in the 1920s.

3. The *Literary Discussion* of 1925–1928

One of the most important – even decisive – polemics was initiated by the writer and leader of the literary group *VAPLITE*,[33] Mykola Khvylovyi. In the course of the *Literary Discussion*, the question of the content of Ukrainian literature, its aesthetics and ideological landmarks, as well as the question of national consolidation and statehood became the focus. The fact that more than a hundred writers and critics participated in the polemic is an indication of its relevance and importance. Moreover, the discussion itself was, in a sense, the culmination of all the intellectual reflections on Soviet Ukrainian culture in the 1920s: its high point (1928) marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of the Soviet state: the first Five-Year Plan and, later, the Stalinist version of the Cultural Revolution (which finally placed the ideological function of art and literature in the forefront) and the onset of sweeping political repressions.

The discussion was about some of Khvylovyi's statements made in a series of his pamphlets in 1925–1926. He called for a cultural revolution that would free the Ukrainian people from Russian cultural hegemony. Khvylovyi also proclaimed that Soviet Ukraine should play a messianic role in building socialism and showing the enslaved Asian peoples the way from national renaissance to the new, bright future of communism.

One of the main participants in the discussion was the literary "peasant" group *Pluh*, represented by its leader, the writer Serhii Pylypenko. *Pluh* stood for the position of massism *(massovizm)* and populism in literature: their idea was that almost every Soviet worker and peasant could create literature.[34] On the contrary, Khvylovyi's criticism was directed against "prosvita"[35] and "massism[36] in literature: "The new art is being created by workers and peasants. On condition, however, that they be intellectually developed, talented, people of genius."[37]

Pluh's ideological position could be compared to that of the *napostovtsy* (from the title of their main publication, "Na postu") in Soviet Russia. They rejected the very possibility of politically neutral literature, insisting on unconditional support for the Communist Party (including the NEP); they also rejected the role of "fellow travelers" *(poputchiki*[38]) in socialist construction.

In the first series of pamphlets, "*Quo Vadis*," published in 1925, Khvylovyi formulated his main concepts, such as "Europe," "proletarian art," "vital romanticism," and "Asian Renaissance." He provides the reader with several definitions of each term, adding new metaphors that form the common vision of the future of socialist Ukraine.

Khvylovyi examines "Europe" not as a geographical or political category, but as a historically "psychological" phenomenon, in which the figure of Goethe's Dr. Faust (one of Oswald Spengler's main characters) symbolizes the spirit of adventure, the thirst – even the passion – for knowledge, and the precise cultural tradition: "Europe is the experience of many ages. This is not the Europe that Spengler announced was 'in decline,' not the one that is rotting and which we despise. It is the Europe of a grandiose civilization, the Europe of Goethe, Darwin, Byron, Newton, Marx and so on and so forth."[39]

It should also be emphasized that the author makes the following claim: the personification of this "Faustian type" were not only Voltaire and Marx, Luther and Isaak Babel, but also Saint Augustine, Lenin and Peter I. Thus, "Europe" is seen as a cultural totality, a very special and powerful intellectual tradition – not just a geographical term. At the same

time, Khvylovyi's turn to "Europe" is not naive. He predicted the possible reaction that his concept of "Europe" might provoke among Marxists, which is why he defined the terminology from the very beginning: "However, we never confused Europe with 'Europe'. And we now sense that we are strong enough to mock all discussions about the influence of alien ideologies."[40] Thus, "Europe" should be considered as a double construct. On the one hand, it is seen as a symbol of the highest development of humanity; on the other hand, it is shown as an exploitative force.

To some extent, these ideas correlate with the communist idea of appropriating the best achievements of "bourgeois culture and civilization" – in science, technology, art, etc. – which was very common at the time. As Vladimir Lenin put it in his speech at the 8th Party Congress in 1919: "Without the heritage of capitalist culture we would not build socialism. There is nothing from what we could build communism, but from what is left from capitalism."[41] Khvylovyi also appeals to Lenin in his 1926 pamphlet series "Ukraine or Little Russia": "Lenin carried the light from Asia, but he always advised of the need to learn from Europe. He evidently thought that the psychological Europe could be fused with the East."[42]

It is also important to note that the call to focus on European culture in Khvylovyi's concept is even more ambitious: first, European heritage is needed for the construction of proletarian culture using the best European examples; second, European experience is needed for the upcoming "Asian Renaissance". The author defines the latter as follows:

> Speaking of the Asiatic Renaissance, we mean the future of unheard-of flowering of art among such nations as China, India, and so forth. We see it like as a great spiritual reawakening of the backward Asian countries. It has to appear, this Asiatic Renaissance, because the idea of Communism stalks like a spectre not so much over Europe as over Asia; because Asia, realising that only Communism only will liberate it from economic slavery, will utilize art as a factor in the battle.[43]

The first period of this great renaissance is described by Khvylovyi as "Romantic Vitaism" (or "Active Romanticism") – the art of the transitional period.

And now for the most interesting implication. Ukraine, located on the border between "East" and "West," was supposed to play a messianic role

in this process. According to Khvylovyi, the "Asian Renaissance" would begin in Ukraine and then spread to all Asian countries:

> The powerful Asiatic Renaissance in art is approaching, and its forerunners are we, the 'Olympians.' Just as Petrarch, Michaelangelo, Raphael etc., in their time from a corner of Italy set fire to Europe with the flame of the Renaissance, thus the new artists of the once oppressed Asian countries, the new artists-communards who are following us, will climb Mount Helicon, and will place the lantern of Renaissance there, and, accompanied be the distant roar of barricade battles, the purple-azure five-cornered star will flare over the dark European night.[44]

Thus, "the dark European night" appeals to both Spengler's idea of European decline and the Marxist concept of class struggle. In this sense, the coming "Asian Renaissance" should have been the new stage of human development.

4. The roots of the idea

Several possible roots of Khvylovyi's idea of the "Asian Renaissance" can be traced. As usual, researchers speak of a fusion of Spengler's idea of the "decline of the West"[45] with the Marxist idea of the exploitative nature of Europe (mainly colonial exploitation), class struggle and the future triumph of the proletariat.[46] But here I would like to emphasize the importance of the work "Russia and Europe: A Look at the Cultural and Political Relations of the Slavic World to the Romano-Germanic World" (1869), written by Nikolai Danilevsky, a Russian sociologist, culturologist, one of the founders of the civilizational approach to history, the ideologist of pan-Slavism.

Comparing cultures and nations to biological species, Danilevsky argued that each "cultural-historical type" (of which he distinguished ten) is united by its unique language and culture.[47] He criticized the reforms of Peter I in the Russian Empire as an attempt to impose foreign values on the Slavic world. Danilevsky applied his theory of evolution by stating that each type passes through various predetermined stages of youth, adulthood, and old age, the latter being the end of that type. He characterized the Slavic type as being in the youth stage, and he developed a socio-political plan for its development, which included the unification of the Slavic world, with its future capital at Constantinople. While other

cultures would degenerate in their blind struggle for existence, the Slavic world, with Russia first and foremost, should be regarded as a Messiah among them.[48]

Mykola Khvylovyi in his series of pamphlets "Ukraine or Little Russia" mentions Danilevsky's work only once:

> We have already said that for us the theory of cycles is not an empty sound, but at a time when N. Danilevsky and O. Spengler (the first in "Europe and Russia" and the second in "The Decline of Europe") are proceeding in their argumentation through the philosophy of idealistic intuitionism, we think of it in terms of materialist causality. Every nation experience childhood, cultural stage and civilization. We do not argue it. The stage of civilization in our opinion also is the last chord of any culture and the beginning of its end. But at a time when for idealistic intuitionism historical types of cultures are confined to arbitrary frameworks, such as 'Faustian' […] we lock them in patriarchal, feudal, bourgeois and proletarian types, basing on the principle of causality and dividing historical types of cultures. Each of these types is not similar to the other, but it is not absolute, because the moment of natural inheritance is everywhere.[49]

Thus, Khvylovyi develops the concept of the "Asian Renaissance" as a response to both Danilevsky's and Spengler's vision of Europe within the civilization approach, but unlike both of them, he proceeds from causality and historical materialism. Danilevsky's work had a great influence on the further development of Russian culture in general, as well as on further philosophical, ideological, and political reflection on Russia's messianic role. Beginning with Russian Symbolism, a so-called Russian religious philosophy, and continuing with the emigre Eurasianism movement of the interwar period. In his appeal to the messianic role of Soviet Ukraine in the coming "Asian Renaissance," Khvylovyi, like Danilevsky, and later – as one of the founders of Eurasianism – Petr Savitsky, appeals to the civilizational criterion of cultural development.[50] In Khvylovy's concept, Ukraine is located between two great continents, thus uniting them into Eurasia: "Moreover, inasmuch as Eurasia stands on the border of two great territories, of two energies, the avant-garde of the forth cultural-historical type is continued by us [Ukrainians. – G.B.]."[51]

The second root is a reference to the "Asianism" or "Scythianism", as understood by the circle of Russian "Symbolists".[52] In his pamphlet "Ukraine or Little Russia," Khvylovyi refers to the idea of the "yellow peril" or "Chinese danger: "The 'yellow peril' of which the bourgeoisie

was so afraid, in fact always symbolized the real force which will solve the problem of a Communist society by beginning actively to produce a new cultural-national type."[53]

The concept of the "yellow peril" emerged in Western Europe in the second half of the 19th century, reflecting European fears of an "Asian Other," an invasion of countless "Asian hordes," new Mongols who would flood the Western world. This idea was part of a broader colonialist Orientalist discourse of the time. In Russia, the concept of the "yellow peril" was transformed into the infamous construct of "Pan-Mongolism" by the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. In his poem "Pan-Mongolism" of 1894 and in his "Story of the Antichrist" of 1899, the phenomenon is described as "a threat to European civilization from the East."[54]

Solovyov's ideas greatly influenced Alexander Blok, Andrei Belyi, and later the group of writers and philosophers who were members of the association "Volfila".[55] The latter was initiated by Andrei Belyi and Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik. Among its members were Russian writers, poets, publicists and academics who, being close to Russian symbolist and Russian populist socialist circles, supported the revolution in various ways. They saw Russia's messianic role in the struggle against the world bourgeoisie – and at the same time they believed in a utopian common, united future of Western and Eastern cultures. In 1917–1918 they published two almanacs *Scythians.* "Volfila also organized open lectures and discussions on various topics, including philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies. The literary historian Maria Carlson notes that the topics of discussion included questions of proletarian culture, Oswald Spengler's theory of culture, the philosophy of symbolism, Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, neo-Platonism, Russian literature, and anthroposophy as an instrument of self-knowledge.[56]

At the same time, "Scythianism" became one of the central ideas of the Russian futurists – *budetlyane* (from the Russian word "budet" that means "will be", "should happen"), in particular Velimir Khlebnikov.[57] The poet Benedict Livshyts in his book *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, telling the story of Tommaso Marinetti's visit to Russia in 1914, speaks of the peculiarity of the national character of Russian Futurism, which, according to him, consists of "Asianism" and the coming "Scythianism":

> If not all of budetlyane, then most of them were confused in difficult accounts with the West, anticipating the forthcoming 'scythianism' with their 'orientalism.' But this 'orientalism' had a quite metaphysical nature.

Like Khlebnikov, I operated with distorted concepts of the East and West, giving to conditional categories unconditional qualities, and saw the way out of that collision in the absorption of the West by East. These two poles of culture did not have any territorial features: in their mistiness there was no core of certain state formations, they were devoid of spatial boundaries and consisted of some cosmological elements.[58]

Thus, in the historiosophy of the futurists, the "West" and the "East" are not endowed with special characteristics, they are "ample convenient categories." What is important here, however, is the idea that the East should absorb the West.

It should also be mentioned that the very idea of "liberating" and "awakening" the enslaved peoples of Asia was one of the programmatic points of the Third International (Comintern): "The victories of the Soviet revolution in China, the partisan war in Manchuria, the growth of the revolutionary forces in Japan and of the liberation movement of the colonial peoples, create a new front in the rear of the imperialists. The Soviet revolution in China has become a big factor in the world revolution."[59]

As Khvylovyi put it: "Of course, the 'world proletariat' should become the leader of liberation movements among the nationalities of the East."[60]

From all this we can conclude that Khvylovyi's construct of the "Asian Renaissance" was part of the ideological and cultural mainstream of the early 20th century. Thus, it becomes clear that Khvylovyi's understanding of "Europe" (in the sense of its intellectual and cultural heritage, its "best" – in Lenin's terms) is not just a separate construct, but only one of the sets of categories crucial for his vision of the "Asian Renaissance" – which means the flowering, revival, awakening of the peoples of the East. In this case, the "East" is not a real space or region, but a phantom, rather a "conventional idea."

5. The political aspect of the "Asian Renaissance": the competition of two nations

Khvylovyi's ideas provoked a great discussion among Ukrainian critics and writers. In May 1925, the Cultural Committee of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences organized a large event entitled "The Ways of Development of Contemporary Literature", where Khvylovyi's main points were discussed. The event was attended by almost 800 people. The positions

of the participants could be divided into three camps: first, those who supported the appeal to "learn from Europe", second, those who doubted the correctness of such a choice, and third, those who accused Khvylovyi of "bourgeois nationalism" and accused him of being a "pseudo-Marxist."

As an example of how the idea of orientation to European culture was perceived differently, it is worth quoting a part of the speech of Ukrainian writer Borys Antonenko-Davydovych: "So, our motto is not 'Europe or Prosvita', but – the literature of the Ukrainian SSR, purged of hackwork, education and *"chachl'ats'kyi"* (insulting name of Ukrainians – *G.B.*) bumf! We want at least half of the opportunities opened for Soviet literature in Russia were introduced here."[61]

In response, Khvylovyi wrote another series of pamphlets. "Thoughts Against the Current", which appeared in 1925, and "Apologists of Scribbling" in 1926, in which he clarified his definition of "Europe": from the psychological, abstract category, it becomes a more materialized image. Khvylovyi concludes in his pamphlet "Moscow's Zadrypanky," published in March 1926:

> "Ukrainian realities are more complex than the Russian, because we are faced with different tasks, because we are the young class of a young nation, because we are a young literature, which still has not had its Lev Tolstoys and which must have them, which is not in 'decline', but in the ascendant."[62]

In this way it becomes clear why Soviet Ukraine is given a key role in the coming "Asian Renaissance": because Ukrainian culture, unlike Russian and European culture (both of which are in "decline"), has not yet passed the stage of its revival. Starting from this point, the next question could be: which of the world literatures should Ukrainian society set its course? The answer is unequivocal – "by no means the Russian":

> The point is that Russian literature has weighed down upon us for centuries as master of the situation, as one that has conditioned our psyche to play the slavish imitator. And so, to nourish our young art in it would be impede its development […]. Our orientation is to Western European art, its style, its techniques.[63]

Thus, Khvylovyi rejects Russian culture because of its "dominating status," which does not provide an opportunity to form a national, original,

non-imitating literature (to imitate a "big culture" would be a great threat to Ukrainian literature because of its former inferior, colonial status), and because of the "decline" of Russian culture, whose Tolstoys are in the past already.

Khvylovyi expands on these ideas in a new series of pamphlets in 1926, "Ukraine or Little Russia," in which he presents the idea of a "competition of two nations."[64] Khvylovyi stated the problem quite categorically: is Ukraine a "colony" or not? From his point of view, Ukrainian and Russian literature compete with each other, but in order to free Ukrainian literature from Russian hegemony, it is necessary to escape its influence:

> Why is the Ukrainian intelligentsia unwilling to orientate itself toward Russian art? Because it comes up against Russian wares on the book market. If it orientates itself toward Russian art it will be unable to defeat its competitor, because its own wares will always be seen as second, third or even fourth rate, even though they may be of the first quality.[65]

Moreover, according to Khvylovyi, the triumph of world proletarian culture (starting with the "Asian Renaissance") should begin in Soviet Ukraine and embrace Russian culture, which "has reached the limits and has stopped at the roadside": "Russian literature can only find the magical balm for its revival beneath the luxuriant, vital tree of the renaissance of young national republics, in the atmosphere of the springtime of once oppressed nations".[66] Then the author explains: "We conceive of the new slogan directed against Russian literature as a call for healthy rivalry ('competition') between two nations – not, however, as nations, but as revolutionary factors".[67]

Thus, Khvylovyi's position indicates a very complex relationship with "imperial" culture. One side of this relationship – the attempt to escape the patronizing influence of Russian culture – is expressed here.

Such openly expressed views attracted the attention of the party authorities. In April 1926, Iosif Stalin sent a special letter to Lazar Kaganovich, who was then the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR. In his letter, Stalin pointed out that "a wide movement for Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian public has begun and is growing in Ukraine" and "this movement, led by the non-communist intelligentsia, at the local level can manifest itself as the attempt to alienate Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian society from the all-Soviet culture, to reveal in

a manner of a struggle against Moscow as a whole, against the Russians, against Russian culture and its highest achievement – Leninism."[68]

Eventually, Khvylovyi was accused of Ukrainian nationalism, *VAPLITE* was dissolved in 1928, and the Pan-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers was founded. In 1932, this union became an umbrella organization for the unification of all writers' groups into the Soviet Writers' Union of Ukraine (part of the Soviet Writers' Union of the USSR), and "socialist realism" was proclaimed as the only official style and creative method.

6. Conclusions

The ideas and the tone of Khvylovyi's arguments and polemics cannot be understood outside the very precise historical, political, ideological and cultural context. The more we question Khvylovyi's inseparable relationship to his revolutionary period, the more we understand the internal logic of his views – which at first glance seem contradictory and even chaotic. Here, in my conclusion, I will try to outline some points of this historical and cultural logic hidden behind his cunning rhetoric.

First of all, I should say that the most interesting thing for anyone trying to analyze Khvylovyi's case is his deep dialectical dependence on Russian culture and literature. On the one hand, he calls for getting rid of any influence of Russian culture, Russian thought, and especially Russian literature. In Khvylovyi's opinion, its deadly sin is that it is weak, tired, mostly decadent, full of "Christian dualism" and – this is his strongest point – Russian culture (and especially literature) is outdated because of its feudal roots and nature.

If so, then the brave new socialist Ukrainian culture should be oriented in the Western, European direction, because European culture is not only older and richer, but this culture represents the ultimate development of bourgeois, capitalist, modern society. In other words, it is more modern than Russian culture, and therefore the young national Soviet Ukrainian republic must borrow the best European achievements. The Ukrainian socialist nation must be fertilized with the "crème de la crème" of all European cultures, but not Russian.

On the other hand, Khvylovyi borrows the main line of his argument from none other than the Russian cultural and historiosophic discussions that began in the last third of the 19th century. His own historiosophy owes much to the concept of Danilevsky, to the mystical vision of Vladimir

Solovyov, to the circle of ideas of the Russian Symbolists, especially to *Volfila*. Less obvious is his dependence on the courageous rhetoric of the Russian futurists, who used almost the same words as Khvylovyi to denounce the "tired," "feudal," "slave-owning" literature and culture.

Thus, Khvylovyi's call to "run away from Moscow!" is at the same time a call to "borrow from Moscow!" Of course, this is not a case of hypocrisy or some kind of trick. Khvylovyi is very sincere and honest. What he does is one of the curious cases of the strategy of cultural transfer (or, in situationist terminology, a case of radical "detouring"), when the borrowed cultural ideas and even techniques are profoundly transformed by a recipient who pursues his own goals. Very often, all these borrowed cultural things end up having absolutely the opposite meaning than they had in the beginning. This is precisely the fate of all "Russian cultural influences" in Khvylovyi's pamphlet war against Russian cultural influence.

Second, we should focus here on the ideological and political environment of the first decade of the USSR's existence, especially the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of industrialization, which marks the beginning of Stalin's Cultural Revolution. The heated discussion within the Communist Party that preceded the creation of the new state in 1922 revealed three main visions of future Bolshevik national policy. They were: confederalization, federalization and autonomization.[69] The difference between them lay in the approach to the rights and extend of independence of the nations that made up the USSR.

Khvylovyi initiated the Ukrainian cultural and literary discussion after the creation of the USSR and the adoption of the constitution of the new state. It seems that his main intention was to find the best way to build the new Ukrainian socialist culture and nation within the federalist state, to expand the borders of the Soviet federation. This is one of the reasons why he extensively quoted Lenin's works on "national determination". It is well known that it was Lenin himself who, in 1921–1922, finally put forward the "federal option" against the "autonomists" and "confederalists". From a historical perspective, this was Khvylovyi's main political mistake and even existential drama – he mistook the Soviet Union for the real federation and took Stalin's rhetorical praise of Lenin's ideas at face value.

The third and last point: we should question the problem of anti-colonial Orientalism in Khvylovyi's pamphlets. The "Asianism" he proclaimed cannot be interpreted in the context of the later "Orientalism" of Edward Said. As is well known, Said developed a Foucauldian approach to knowledge as a definite power. In his concept, European knowledge

about the "Orient" is a deliberately artificial construct aimed at colonizing the Middle East, India, etc. Khvylovyi argues that "European knowledge", which must be borrowed by a young socialist Ukrainian nation, is a mere tool to be used at the new stage of non-European world awakening and further revolution of oppressed nations – led, of course, by Soviet Ukraine. Knowledge is still power in this concept, but the nature of this power is different: it is no longer colonial, it is anti-colonial, anti-imperial and communist at the same time.

In a nutshell, Khvylovyi's pamphlets are a unique example of the very strange mixture of Marxism-Leninism, quasi-mystical Symbolism, and late romantic/early modernist nationalist rhetoric of the period between Franco-Prussian and World War II.

At the same time, however, Khvylovyi's ideas were crucial to the formation of Ukrainian cultural identity in the 20th century. In his pamphlets, he employed a tactic of anti-imperial writing, rejecting Russian colonial myths and proposing alternatives for the further development of Ukrainian culture. The very fact that his slogans are being referred to a century later serves as a marker of their relevance and value for contemporary Ukraine. Thus, if we look at Khvylovyi's slogans from a contemporary perspective (more precisely, from the perspective of the war in Ukraine and the prospects of European integration), the modern approach serves as an important tool in the process of nation-building, especially in the process of writing and rewriting national history.

Endnotes

[1] This article was written during the *Pontica Magna Fellowship* at New Europe College (Bucharest, Romania), where I worked on the project "Politics of Cultural Transfer in Soviet Ukrainian Literature and Literary Theory in the 1920s – the Beginning of the 1930s: National Identity and Cultural Modernization." The author thanks Myroslav Shkandrij and Andrii Portnov for their valuable insights in the preparation of this paper.

[2] Mykola Khvylovyi (Fitilev) (1893–1933) was born in 1893 in the village of Trostianets in the Kharkiv region of the Russian Empire (now the Sumy region of Ukraine) to a family of teachers. He completed only four grades of the Bogodukhiv Gymnasium due to his connection with "revolutionary circles". In 1915 (1916?) he volunteered for the army in Chuhuiv. In the autumn of 1917, he was demobilized. During the revolutionary years he joined the insurgent detachment led by the Ukrainian eser T. Pushkar. Later Khvylovyi organized his own detachment, the "Free Cossacks," which fought against the Hetmanate and German units. In April 1919, Khvylovyi joined the CP(B)U. In 1921 he settled in Kharkiv. In 1922 he initiated the All-Ukrainian Federation of Proletarian Writers and Artists, which was established with three centers in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Moscow. In 1923–1925 he was a member of the literary organization "Hart". In 1926 he founded the literary organization *VAPLITE* (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature). In January 1928, he published a letter of self-criticism in the *Communist* newspaper. In the late 1920s, he founded two journals, "Literaturnyi iarmarok" (1928–1930) and "Prolitfront" (1930–1931). After both journals were closed, he tried to write according to the "party line". On 13 May 1933, as a sign of protest against the beginning of mass repressions against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, he committed suicide. See more in Alexander Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi: Eine Studie zu Leben und Werk*, Verlag Otto Sagner, München, 1999, pp. 14–51.

[3] Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, "V shukanniah novoi povistiarskoi formy," *Shliahy mystectva* 5 (1923): pp. 59–63.

[4] Here is a list of the most relevant studies on the subject: Ivan Dziuba, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: "Aziiats'kyi renesans" i "Psykholohichna Evropa"*, Kyievo-Mohylians'ka akademiia, Kyiv, 2005; Yurii Kochubei, "'Evraziistvo' i 'aziats'kyi renesans': evolutsiia i dolia dvoch koncepcij," *Slovo i Chas* 9 (2003): pp. 25–34; Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi* cit.; George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 1990; James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation. National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1983; Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Edmonton, 1992, pp. 51–125; Olena Palko, *Making Ukraine Soviet: Literature and Cultural Politics under Lenin and*

Stalin, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2020, pp. 115–185; Leonid Plushch, *Ioho tajemnyts'a abo "Prekrasna lozha" Khvylovoho*, Komora, Kyiv, 2018; Iaroslav Polishchuk, *Literatura iak heokulturnyi proekt*, Akademvydav, Kyiv, 2008, pp. 151–234; Iurii Shevel'ov, "Pro pamflety Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho," in Hryhorii Kost'uk (ed.), *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. Vybrani tvory*, v. 5, t. 4, Smoloskyp, Toronto, 1982, pp. 7–67; M. Pavlyshyn, G. Brogi Bercoff, S. Plokhy, *Ukraine and Europe: Cultural Encounters and Negotiations*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2017.

5   The phrase most often attributed to Khvylovyi, "Away from Moscow!", was never used by him. It first appeared in Stalin's letter of 26 April 1926 and was the latter's brief paraphrase of the essence of Khvylovyi's views. See: Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine. Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 2001, p. 226.

6   "Away from Moscow! – Khvylovy about the orientation of the intelligentsia of the 1920s," *Radio Free Europe*¸ 27 July 2014, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25471835.html.

7   Timothy Snyder, "Edge of Europe, End of Europe," *The New York Review of Books*, 21 July 2015, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/07/21/ukraine-kharkiv-edge-of-europe/.

8   See Dziuba, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*.

9   Michel Espagne, *Istorija civilizacij kak kul'turnyj transfer*, per. s franc.; pod red. E. Dmitrievoj, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, Moskva, 2018.

10   Serhii Plokhii, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, Basic Books, New York, 2015. pp. 20–27.

11   Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, pp. 3–15.

12   The National Cultural Revival was a cultural movement of many peoples in Europe (Ukrainian, Belarusian, Czech, Irish, etc.) that began in the second half of the 18th century and continued throughout the entire 19th century. The "great aim" of this movement was to (re)build the national language, culture and identity. The Ukrainian National Revival took place on the territory of modern Ukraine which was divided between the Austrian (from 1867 Austro-Hungarian) and the Russian Empires. See Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Narysy istorii Ukrainy: formuvann'a modernoi ukrains'koi nacii XIX–XX st.*, Geneza, Kyiv, 1996.

13   Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 13.

14   The Valuev Circular of 18 July 1863 was a secret decree (*ukaz*) that banned all the publications in the Ukrainian language (except the *belles lettres*). Further restrictions on the Ukrainian language were made by the Ems Ukaz in 1876, which completely prohibited the use of the language in print.

15   Alexander Dmitriev, "Ukrainskaia nauka i eë 'imperskie' konteksty (XIX – nachala XX veka)," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2007): p. 123.

[16]   Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, pp. 153–197.

[17]   See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1979, pp. 31–41.

[18]   *Istoriia Rusov* ("History of the Ruthenians" or "History of the Rus' People") is an important document of Ukrainian political thought from the late eighteenth or early 19th century, of unknown authorship. It describes the development of Ukraine from the distant past to 1769. The basic principle of *Istoriia Rusov* is that every nation has a natural, moral and historical right to independent political development. See: Oleksander Ohloblyn, "Istoriia Rusov," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*: http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CI%5CS%5CIstoriiaRusovIT.htm.

[19]   The *Kharkiv Romantic School* was a group of young poets who were professors or students at Kharkiv University in the 1830s and 1840s. The term "school" was proposed by Ahapii Shamrai, who was the first to collect and publish their poetry. The main representatives of the school were Izmail Sreznevs'kyi, Amvrosii Metlyns'kyi, Mykola Kostomarov, Mykhailo Petrenko, etc.

[20]   The *Ruthenian Triad* was a Galician literary group, named after the number of its predominant members – Markiian Shashkevych, Iakiv Holovats'kyi, and Ivan Vahylevych – that existed in the late 1830s. The group was interested in folklore, national history, and the quest for Pan-Slavic unity. Their third collection, *Rusalka Dnistrovaia* (The Dniester Nymph, 1836), initiated the use of vernacular Ukrainian for literature in the Ukrainian lands of the Habsburg Empire.

[21]   "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by an overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Renger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1–15.

[22]   See George G. Grabowicz, *Taras Shevchenko: A Portrait in Four Sittings*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge MA, 2016.

[23]   The ideas of the *Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood* in Kyiv (1845–1846) played an important role in the Ukrainian cultural and political revival. Based on the ideas of Enlightenment, Slavophilism and Christianity, the Brotherhood proposed a series of reforms in political, educational and social life in the Russian Empire. The main emphasis was placed on equal opportunities for all Slavic nations to develop their national language and culture. The basic document in which the ideas and program of the Society were formulated was *Knyhy butt'a ukrains'koho narodu* ("Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People"), written by the historian Mykola

Kostomarov. Among its members were also Taras Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish, Iurii Andruz'kyi, Vasyl' Bilozers'kyi, etc.

[24] Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 57.

[25] Tamara Hundorova and Natalia Shumylo, "Tendencii rozvytku khudozhn'oho myslenn'a (pochatok XX st)," *Slovo i chas* 1 (1993): p. 50.

[26] Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, p. 204.

[27] Solomiia Pavlychko, *Teoriia literatury*, Osnovy, Kyiv, 2009, p. 136.

[28] Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, „Ukrainska khata and the Paradoxes of Ukrainian Modernism," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1994): p. 10.

[29] Its main opponents were the "Literary and Scientific Herald" (whose editor was I. Franko) and the newspaper "Rada" (1909–1914), presented by the critic and writer Serhii Efremov.

[30] Stephen Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine 1918–1925*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2015, pp. 37–42.

[31] As an example, let's look at the widening gap between the positions of the Pan-Futurist group and the organization of "peasant writers" Pluh. While "Pluh" expressed unconditional support for the Communist Party line, the Pan-Futurists, trying to maintain the leading positions in literary life, were critical of the NEP and proclaimed the bold goal of "introducing art to the masses." By 1924, the Pan-Futurists saw themselves as "a political body of the Third Front and a State Planning Committee (GOSPLAN) for cultural production": Mykhail' Semenko, "Centr, iacheiki komunkulta," *Gong komunkulta* 1 (1924): pp. 4–5. Read more in Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism 1914–1930*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1997, pp. 111–133.

[32] Providing the politics of Ukrainization, Russian Bolsheviks believed "that the planned modernization of the Ukrainian republic, led by local 'national Bolsheviks' under Moscow's tutelage, would create a state socialist in spirit, one that was national only 'in form'". See Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, p. 204.

[33] VAPLITE – an acronym of the Ukrainian "Вільна академія пролетарської літератури" (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature), which was a writers' organization that existed in Kharkiv from 1926 to 1928. While accepting the official requirements of the Communist Party, it took an independent position on questions of literary policy.

[34] "Platforma ideolohichna i khudozhnia spilky selians'kych pys'mennykiv 'Pluh'," *Chervonyi shliach* 2 (1923): pp. 211–216.

[35] "Prosvityanstvo" refers to the word "prosvita". Prosvita was a society that brought literacy and political education to the Ukrainian village in the pre-revolutionary years. It formed the specific paradigm of Ukrainian culture*(narodnytstvo)*. In other words, Khvylovyi spoke out against tendencies of national pulism, which he saw as a threat to proletarian

culture. See Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernist, Marxists and the Nation. The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1992, p. 57.

[36] By "massism" Khvylovyi means the writer's orientation toward the mass, "not very educated" reader, who prefers works written in simple language without formal experiments, etc. He also refers to a new type of literary organization – mass organizations (such as "Pluh" and "Hart"), which appeared in Ukrainian literature in the early 1920s. In the pamphlet "On 'Satan in a Barrel'", Khvylovyi criticized, first of all, the rules of admission to the all-Ukrainian peasant writers' union "Pluh": according to the organization's statute, anyone could become a writer, all he had to do was become a member of "Pluh".

[37] Mykola Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine. Polemical Pamphlets 1925–1926*. Translated, edited and introduced by Myroslav Shkandrij, CIUS, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1986, p. 54.

[38] The term "fellow traveler" (also *poputchik* or "one who travels the same path") was invented by Lev Trotsky to identify the undecided intellectuals, who were sympathetic to the Communist regime, but were not the formal members of any organization.

[39] Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 75.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoie sobranie sochinenii*, t. 38, Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, Moskva, 1969, p. 142, https://leninism.su/works/77-tom-38/1305-viii-sezd-rkpb.html.

[42] Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 230.

[43] Ibid., p. 67.

[44] Ibid., pp. 65–66.

[45] The first volume was published in 1918.

[46] See, for example, Palko, *Making Ukraine Soviet*, pp. 115–147.

[47] Danilevsky's work served as a pre-text for O. Spengler's later concept of the "Decline of Europe." Read more about their intersection in Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi*. pp. 89–113.

[48] Nikolai Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe: The Slavic World's Political and Cultural Relations with the Germanic-Roman West*, transl. by Stephen M. Woodburn, Slavica Publishers, Bloomington, 2013.

[49] Mykola Kvylovyi, *Ukraiina chy Malorosiia. Pamflety*, Smoloskyp, Kyiv, 1993, p. 254. The translation is mine.

[50] The intersections between Khvylovyi's ideas and the Eurasianism movement require a deeper study. For now, I will rely on Kochubei's conclusion that Khvylovyi's concept of "Asian Renaissance" refers to the anti-imperial discourse as opposed to the imperialist framework of interwar Eurasianism. See Yurii Kochubei, "'Evraziistvo' i 'aziats'kyi renesans': evolutsiia i dolia dvoch koncepcij," *Slovo i Chas* 9 (2003): p. 31.

51 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 232.

52 In 1918 Alexander Blok wrote his famous poem "Scythians". This poem is an essential poetic expression of the Scythian ideology, in which Russia is depicted as a symbol of the Eastern Slavic world, which, in Blok's opinion, served as a borderland and a shield between "enlightened cultural Europe" and "barbaric Asia": "Ages for you, for us the briefest space, / We raised the shield up as your humble lieges / To shelter you, the European race / From the Mongolians' savage raid and sieges." See Alexander Blok, "Scythians." Translated by Kurt Dowson, *International Socialism* 6 (1961): pp. 24–25.

53 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 231.

54 Read more about it in Susanna Lim Soojung, "Between Spiritual Self and Other: Vladimir Solov'ev and the Question of East Asia," *Slavic Review* 67.2 (2008): 321–341.

55 *Volfila* (an acronym of the Russian Вольная философская ассоциация, the Free Philosophical Association) was based in Petrograd in 1919–1924. *Volfila* had its counterpart in Moscow – the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture (1918–1922). Among its members were critics and philosophers such as Gustav Shpet, Mikhail Gershenzon, as well as the main figures of the Russian religious renaissance – Nikolai Berdiaev, Boris Viasheslavtsev and Fedor Stepun.

56 Maria Carlson, *No Religion Higher Than Truth. A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia in 1875–1922*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.

57 Khlebnikov's early work is characterized by an appeal to the "Asian" stratum of Russian culture and a rejection of Eurocentrism. At the same time, "Scythianism" became one of the central motifs of his work, for example, in such poems as "Skifskoie", "Skuf'ia Skifa."

58 Benedikt Livshyts, *Polutoraglazyi strelec*, Sovetskii pisatel, Moskva, 1989, pp. 480–481.

59 *The Communist International 1919–1943 Documents*, vol. 3, edited by Jane Degras, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, p. 300.

60 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 232.

61 *Sliachy rozvytku suchasnoi literatury. Dysput*, Knyhospilka, Kyiv, 1925, p. 69.

62 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 222.

63 Ibid.

64 All printed copies of this pamphlet were confiscated. Until 1990, the text existed only in fragments reconstructed from the text of the pamphlet "From the Slope to the Abyss" (1928) by the head of the press department of the CP(B) U Andrii Khvylia, which quotes this pamphlet. For the full version of this pamphlet, please refer to Kvylovyi, *Ukraiina chy Malorosiia*, pp. 219–267.

65 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 230.

66   Ibid., p. 229.
67   Ibid., p. 230.
68   Iosif Stalin, *Sochineniia*, t. 8, OGIZ, Moskva, 1948, p. 152. Biblioteka Mikhaila Gracheva: http://grachev62.narod.ru/stalin/t8/t8_11.htm.
69   Eric Blanc, *Revolutionary Social Democracy: Working-Class Politics Across the Russian Empire (1882–1917)*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2022; Stephen Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine 1918–1925*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2015.

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BUREAUCRATIC GAPS IN ROMANIA DURING THE 1980S: DIASPORAS, TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY NETWORKS, AND THE SECOND ECONOMY

Alexandra Bardan

Abstract

This article explores the dynamics of transnational solidarity networks that fostered long-term relief strategies that compensated for shortages of consumer goods in socialist Romania during the 1980s. The first part of the paper provides an overview of several significant factors that influenced the way diasporic communities supported their non-migrant relatives and considers the concept of "social remittances" to focus on the work of mediators linking diasporic "donors" and "beneficiaries" in the homeland. The case study examines the formal commercial operations of trading companies, whether local or foreign, in the process of both creating and reinforcing existing transnational family ties and uncovers the socialist state's involvement in what can be seen as a "parcel industry" that alleviated shortages and facilitated access to scarce goods. The content analysis of the parcels revealed a wide variety of goods produced in Romania, pointing to double standards embedded in socialist consumer culture and opening up new questions about processes of privilege and social (in) equality that emerged long before 1989.

Keywords: transnational networks, late socialism, cross-border flows, shortage economy, second economy, foreign trade companies

1. Introduction

In April 1988, a business delegation from "Quelle," one of the largest West German mail-order companies, arrived in socialist Romania. The media coverage of the visit was minimal, consisting solely of a dispatch from the local news agency,[1] which gave a brief account of discussions on cooperation in export and tourism. A more detailed account was given in a secret file of the Romanian *Securitate* (ACNSAS 8853/21:

209), which noted that the German businessmen came to negotiate the delivery of parcels containing consumer goods to Romanian citizens, since the company "dealt with the sending of parcels to various countries at the request of West German citizens, who paid both the price and the required commission." This was still "yesterday's news", considering that some 18 years earlier, in May 1970, the German company was cited among the many foreign companies that contributed to the humanitarian campaigns for Romania in the aftermath of a catastrophic flood that changed the lives of people and damaged settlements in many regions of the country.[2] In addition to commercial actors offering aid, traditional humanitarian and relief organizations such as the Red Cross, religious and social service organizations such as Caritas, as well as governments, diaspora communities, and individual volunteers were also involved. Once the flood crisis was over, the sending of parcels and money did not stop; on the contrary, it increased significantly, to the point that it became a constant subject of *Securitate* surveillance.

The forms of assistance gained momentum in the 1980s, changing from short-term disaster relief, as in the case of the 1970 floods, to long-term strategies to compensate for the regular shortages of consumer goods in socialist Romania. Solidarity networks established new links, while the number and variety of actors increased significantly, beyond the traditionally structured groups of donors and their local counterparts (religious organizations and charities belonging to ethnic or religious minorities). The wider sphere of interaction included new individual and institutional actors, ranging from ordinary citizens and diasporic communities committed to regular donations and gift-giving, to mediators such as foreign trade companies and courier services, but also agents of the communist regime, the government, and the secret police. A glimpse into these de-territorialized networks reveals an intricate and entangled system of cooperation and exchange and provides a new insight into the mediation of solidarity aid and its mediatization, which acted as a salutary infusion within Romanian society at a time of extreme scarcity and deprivation, and the source of endemic poverty. The paper asks how the emergence of a "pluri-functional and polycentric system of interconnected actors" (Constantin 1996) engaged the latter in ambivalent, even contradictory strategies based on the bureaucratic gaps of outdated or incomplete regulations and legislation, committing them to improbable but lucrative alliances, with subsequent various effects on the dynamics of the second economy.

The above topics provide several levels of reading relevant to current research on communist regimes in a global context, transnational and transregional history, and migration and diaspora during the Cold War. A first level of reading concerns the challenge of surviving multiple threats, where migration showcases individual stories, but also, and more often, collective ones. Whether in times of upheaval or considering *la longue durée*, where the cumulative effect of social and political pressures force people to migrate (Kunz 1973), family and community connections accommodate stories of trust and solidarity. A second level of analysis considers a larger framework that unveils a complex system of assistance and exchange fueled by "social remittances" (Levitt 1998), understood here as circular and continuous flows of communication that include ideas, norms, values, and practices that spread from the migrants' country of residence to the country of origin and vice versa. The transnational ties that connected diasporic communities to family, religious, and ethnic groups in the homeland played an important role in shaping social change during late socialism in subtle but profound ways. A third level of reading refers to the paradoxical aspects generated by the continuous flow of "social remittances": during the last two decades of communist regimes, the new actors involved in the mediation of aid developed complex commercial and political relationships, leading in the process to the configuration of a particular type of socialist consumer identity. Marked by a severe economic crisis, a political dictatorial regime, a growing autarky and cultural isolation, as well as the omnipresence of the personality cult of Ceaușescu, the strenuous decade of the 1980s of socialist Romania also unfolded in the context of an emerging contemporary globalization. A historical investigation of transnational solidarity networks sheds new light on local economic, social, and cultural change, thus joining scholarship that challenges narratives embedded in Cold War binary frameworks (Yurchak 2006; Bren and Neuburger 2012; Reid 2016).

This paper will begin by exploring the interplay between the national framework and the emerging globalized economic, technological, and cultural flows shaped by the specific geopolitical context of the 1970s and 1980s. It then discusses the topic of the present research within a series of conceptual disciplinary shifts that embed a new way of looking at the past, while also pointing the study towards an interdisciplinary approach that links cultural and material research. The case study will focus the discussion by asking how transnational solidarity networks functioned, how diasporic communities supported their non-migrant relatives, and

more specifically, how mediators of aid contributed to less visible patterns of economic and social change during late socialism.

2. Layers of historical background

The following lines will provide an overview of some significant factors that influenced the economic, social and cultural developments during the 1970s and especially the decade of the 1980s, based on a systemic approach that takes into account: 1) the disruptions caused by the foreign debt crisis at the beginning of the 1980s; 2) the rationalizations, austerity measures and economic crisis that unfolded during the 1980s in Romania, with effects on the second economy; 3) a series of double standards that emerged from a contradictory normative context; and 4) the advances in (computer) information technology, telecommunications and transportation that anticipated the interconnected globalized world of the 1990s.

The first layer is more generally related to what Cornel Ban (2014: 60–70) identified as Romania's efforts to overcome its peripheral status in an increasingly bridged global economic system, while at the same time pursuing an independent economic and foreign policy within the communist bloc. Industrialization strategies, reduced energy needs, and prudent foreign borrowing made the country less vulnerable to the first global oil crisis of 1973–1974. In 1978, Romania's foreign debt amounted to about $5 billion. The economic weakness was aggravated by the planning of oversized projects in heavy industry,[3] the low performance of politically directed management, and increasing energy requirements. This had to be met in a less predictable and unfavorable international context, under the cumulative effects of the second global oil crisis of 1978–1980 and the recession that spread to highly industrialized countries in the early 1980s. This time, due to the rising interest rates of external creditors, Romania's foreign debt reached almost $12 billion by 1982. Following the National Conference of the Communist Party in December 1982, as Georgescu (2018: 12) notes, the Romanian leadership decided to pay the entire foreign debt in advance,[4] bringing to a harsh end a series of complex rescheduling negotiations conducted since 1981 with international financial actors and banks.[5] In addition to radical cuts in imports, the export of virtually all types of commodities led to a massive reduction in

the domestic supply of consumer goods, with serious consequences for the population's standard of living.

A significant trend emerged from the foreign debt crisis, which manifested itself in a shift from a regular policy of obtaining much-needed hard currency to a strategy of obtaining hard currency at (almost) any cost, such as the operations of some Romanian foreign trade companies, which "were carried outside the international trade regulations, sometimes violating the embargo regime or international sanctions"[6] (Georgescu 2018: 13). The archival records of such foreign trade companies show that they had to fulfill certain planning requirements, but at the same time they lacked the economic means to do so. Throughout the 1980s, Romanian foreign trade companies had to meet exaggerated revenue plans in foreign currency and had to be inventive. The case study discussed later in this article illustrates one of the many tensions between economic actors and the state as foreign currency was collected by any means necessary.

Related to the above processes is the second layer that explores how the austerity measures affected everyday life. Along with historical accounts (Georgescu 1991; Deletant 2019), a consistent body of literature comes from the letters and correspondence exchanged during this period, which provide a measure of how the quality of life gradually deteriorated. Some of the sources are public critical letters, such as those sent to Radio Free Europe (Andreescu and Berindei 2010, Andreescu and Berindei 2015), or the petitions sent to Nicolae Ceaușescu by various citizens complaining about domestic issues (Anton 2016). By far the most dramatic writings are the private letters exchanged by families and friends and intercepted by the *Securitate* (Țăranu 2016). The letters collected from 1980 onwards contain harrowing stories of hardship and rationing of food, electricity and heating, raising the question of how people were able to carry on throughout the decade. The year 1982 witnessed several harsh measures that affected everyday life, such as a 20% increase in prices and tariffs for electricity, heating, gas, and other fuels, as well as an unprecedented 17.8% increase in the inflation rate (Georgescu 2018: 11). But the worst was yet to come: chronic food shortages and power cuts prompted comparisons with wartime consumer habits, while references to the expansion of the second economy became widespread (RFE/RL Research Institute 1984).

Scholarship before and after 1989 approached the second economy of late socialism mainly in terms of social relations and processes specific to conditions of scarcity and shortage, characterized by survival strategies, corruption practices, smuggling, and (in)formal networks (Grossman and

Treml 1985; Sampson 1987; Brezinski and Petersen 1990; Ledeneva 1998; Irek 2018).[7] Recent studies have addressed the issue by questioning the scarcity of consumer goods under a semiotic approach to consumption (Chelcea 2002; Fehérvary 2009; Wasiak 2015; Gille, Mincyte, and Scarboro 2020). The analysis of objects, materials and practices revealed the symbolic value acquired by Western goods, instrumental in the construction of what Alexei Yurchak (2006) called "the Imaginary West," fueled by everyday consumption practices. Less attention has been paid to the fact that scarcity and lack are not limited to Western goods, but rather to how a particular type of socialist consumer emerged in relation to a binary framing of commodities. For example, local products, many of which were of inferior quality, lacked modern product presentation, and frequently broke (Muzeul Țăranului Român 2003), symptoms of an "oppressive and negligent state" (Fehérvary 2009, 429), were perceived in opposition to overvalued Western goods, mediated by glittering gadgets, attractive packaging, and images of the affluent consumer society presented in movies and TV shows (Mattelart 1997). The case study will show that, perhaps more often than not, the products available in the hard currency shops or shipped through humanitarian or diaspora connections were in fact locally produced goods that were unavailable or in short supply. These are understudied features of the second economy that may emerge from an exploration of transnational solidarity networks.

A third layer of the historical context is related to a contradictory normative context that left room for the emergence of a series of double standards in Romanian society. Strong restrictions confined the population to the geographical and cultural borders of socialism, preventing undesirable contacts with the Western world: these included strict controls on international mobility and migration,[8] strict monitoring of all contacts with foreigners[9] and the ban on holding foreign currency.[10] However, the specific regulations of the early 1970s responded to the social changes and new professional mobilities brought about by the reduction of geopolitical tensions, the controlled internal liberalization of the previous decade, and the expansion of international cooperation developing in a world no longer divided by the bipolar configuration of the early Cold War years. Moreover, the political leadership began to devote more attention to the Romanian diaspora in an attempt to attract and develop favorable opinions towards the communist program as a sound political regime (Dobre and Talos 2006). Three directives from the early 1970s revolved around hard currency and allowed certain people to purchase durable goods (produced

in the country or imported),[11] hold personal accounts in foreign currency when earning income in/from other countries,[12] and to build, buy and repair houses and vacation homes with payment in foreign currency.[13] As such, these types of regulations favored the population that could legally access hard currency either by working or by having relatives abroad.[14]

Last but not least, the fourth layer of historical background is related to technological and telecommunication developments. A study carried out by the Central Institute for Economic Research in Romania in 1984, based on data and projections, painted a rather precarious picture of the endowment of households with durable goods; compared to other socialist countries, the level of endowment in Romania was significantly lower.[15] Internationally, a 1978 US technical paper (Baer: 2–3) devoted to business and economic projections for the following decade noted that technologies were based on incremental changes in existing communications services rather than on the creation of new ones. The projections pointed to improvements in the availability, cost, and performance of services and products already offered. Long-distance telephone calls, data transmission, color television, satellite TV broadcasts and channels, and technological gadgets such as home audio and video systems defined the decade of the 1980s both in terms of more individualized consumer practices and in the articulation of a globalized popular culture (Flichy 2004). The 1980s also saw the growing popularity of fax machines using land-based telephone lines, responding to a more dynamic than ever global business environment, while the rise of international (long-distance) business travel and the democratization of leisure and tourist travel provided additional links between diasporic communities and kinship groups in Romania.

3. The field, the sources, and the method

Along with the sudden demise of Central and Eastern European communist regimes in 1989, several processes of contemporary globalization remained uncharted, leaving many questions about diaspora and migration from the region unanswered.

To allow for an interdisciplinary perspective, several conceptual shifts that embed a new way of looking at the past provide a rich literature relevant to this research. A first gateway comes from the "global turn" in historical studies, which combines comparative, transnational, and postcolonial views on the region of Eastern Europe, paying attention to

continuities and ruptures and challenging the theological view of 1989 as ground zero for the end of "societies of shortage" and the emergence of consumerist cultures (Reid 2016). A critical view should also delineate the metanarratives of the Cold War that unfolded in the 1990s, which reinforced a binary framing of analytical and interpretive processes applied to the recent past.

Second, the "cultural turn" provides a bottom-up approach in which meaning is explored through language, semiotics, and systems of representation. This view opens up an interrogation of how political and economic ideas were understood in everyday life and how they were transformed in routines, be they professional or domestic. For this study, the social construction of consumer durables as luxury items, but also the cultural role of hard currency and hard currency shops that reflect an image of multiple "Western Oases" in the country, inform the double standards of consumption and how these double standards of "hard currency discrimination" further shaped consumer identities.[16] This article considers a fluid definition of domestic consumption as appropriate to trace subtle changes, despite the rationalizations, austerity measures, and economic crisis of the 1980s in Romania, by exploring networks embedded in the second economy that operated within the span of multiple foci of alternative globalizations.

Third, the "material turn" entails inquiries that move from a passive view of the consumer to an active figure endowed with agency, resisting and negotiating a consumer identity, sometimes in opposition to dominant norms. The construction of the consumer as a category within the larger framework of socialist policies of collective consumption and equal distribution of goods is thus linked to an observation by Frank Trentmann (2005: 12), who considers that "consumers emerged not only as the result of a bottom-up process of frustrated individuals but also as a top-down process through state-sponsored consumption programmes." As mentioned earlier, the analysis should examine both types of missing or scarce goods, imported and locally produced, when focusing on how transnational transfers of specific products contributed to the emergence of the socialist consumer.

At the intersection of the above approaches, the concept of "social remittances" provides a comprehensive analytical framework. According to Levitt, social remittances are a particularly powerful form of cultural diffusion driven by migration at the grassroots level and can be traced through the exchange of letters, parcels, telephone calls, and other forms of

communication, such as stories shared during short-term visits. Moreover, since mediators influence the impact of remittances (Levitt 1998: 939), a first goal of the case study will be to map the mediators. Their accounts represent the manifold implications of their work, not only on the delivery of aid, but also on the groups and individuals with whom they served as liaisons. Disentangling remittances also puts into perspective the pervasive nature of "blat" practices (Ledeneva 1998), which are a key feature of the Soviet second economies. The next objective of the case study is to examine the mediation of aid as a process that shapes the form, content, and distribution of care packages, since the polycentric networks of transnational solidarity provide numerous accounts that can enlighten features of the second economy that remain largely unexplored, beyond survival strategies, smuggling, and corruption practices. There is also a consensus in the literature that activities within the second economy are tolerated "safety valves" (Sampson 1987; Verdery 1996; Pasti 2006). Less attention has been paid to the content of foreign support in terms of modeling the local economic and social landscape. This is where the third objective of the case study comes in, which is to explore how the mediation of aid was represented and framed by various actors within the polycentric network of remittances. By "unpacking" the parcels, the analysis of the material culture of remittances offers a valuable insight into the role of diasporas beyond sending goods to fulfill the most basic needs of families left at home.

The research method used is the case study (Yin 2014), supported by the triangulation of information from the content analysis of a wide range of archival sources. The main body of documents are reports of the former *Securitate* on specific issues related to foreign trade and transnational aid flows. Files from the Romanian Communist Party shed light on changes in legislation related to bureaucratic gaps. Archives from the Radio Free Europe Research Institute offer a different perspective on the second economy, hard currency, and humanitarian aid strategies. Digital repositories of press articles[17] and local legislation[18] provide specific framings of events, while the testimonies[19] from respondents involved in transnational networks provide valuable insights into context and meaning.

4. Diaspora, migration, and the solidarity aid during the Cold War

A first aspect to consider is the dynamics of the geopolitical context. Growing out of initiatives that emerged mainly during the Second World War, the development of solidarity aid followed not only the Cold War cycles of geopolitical détente and renewed tensions, but also the geographies of material aid along East-West and North-South coordinates.

By 1953, American citizens could no longer use the CARE[20] services to send gift packages to relatives and friends in the Soviet bloc, where officials presumably included any direct means of "imperialist influence." When the dispatches resumed, a series of articles published in 1954 by a US newspaper, the *Daily News*, described the Eastern Bloc's methods in harsh terms, calling the process no less than "the Communists' Propaganda and dollar-making gift package racket."[21] But the journalists highlighted another problematic side of the story, asking donors whether they would deprive friends or relatives of occasional holiday treats. The same concern was raised in a 1959 report by a committee investigating un-American propaganda activities in the United States. Entitled "The Communist parcel operation," the committee found that it was in fact a blackmail operation designed to acquire hard currency based on the good deeds of American citizens and "out of love for their relatives who, living under communism, are unable to acquire sufficient food and clothing which residents of the free world have in abundance."[22] This time, the focus was on the high tariffs on food and clothing parcels sent behind the Iron Curtain, which allowed the Soviet Union alone to collect more than $100 million a year. During the 1960s, Eastern European communist regimes began to use unofficial means[23] to renew ties and foster loyal positions among the scattered emigres. Romania was no exception, with a 1967 decision by the party leadership aimed at developing a comprehensive long-term strategy.[24] In 1972, Romanian customs regulations were amended to allow citizens to receive parcels from abroad containing "various clothing and household goods, including refrigerators, radios, televisions, tape recorders, sewing, knitting and washing machines, as well as cars," provided that payment of customs duties and international transportation was made in foreign currency (Dobre and Talos 2006: 320).[25]

The history of international migration provides several important trends for the emergence of patterns that shaped solidarity aid and social remittances in the 1980s. Successive waves of migration have

been dominated mainly by ethnic migration[26] (Scutaru 2019; Anghel et al. 2016). In terms of destination, the pioneers in the early 20th century headed to the US and Canada, establishing solid communities in major cities. In the post-war and state socialist period, ethnic migration increased, supplemented in the early period by refugees and asylum seekers, and from the mid-1960s by irregular labor migration (Fassmann and Miinz 1994; Dobre and Talos 2006). Beginning in the mid-1970s, external factors such as the Helsinki Final Act, which emphasized freedom of mobility as a fundamental human right, and requirements to secure the US most-favored-nation status boosted the migration of ethnic German and Jewish minorities on the basis of undisclosed bilateral agreements. These covert operations added to previous diaspora strategies, making the instrumental dimension of hard currency flows from abroad even more salient at a time when foreign debt was escalating. Despite the restrictions on freedom of movement, legal migration of ethnic Romanians increased steadily in the late 1970s and 1980s,[27] based on various mechanisms, such as family reunification and asylum applications, albeit with difficult and time-consuming procedures (Anghel et al. 2016; Scutaru 2019). In addition, illegal migration flows to destinations in Western Europe and North America also increased, through tourist and family visits, professional and cultural exchanges, study trips, and sports events, which were transformed into asylum applications (Scutaru 2019: 259–260). Last but not least, illegal border crossings added to the growing number of migrants manifold stories of successful escapes or tragic endings.[28]

In retrospect, humanitarian aid has so far been understood as a crucial gateway for Romanian society in the face of unprecedentedly rising costs affecting living standards due to the regime's decision to repay in advance the foreign debt. Scholars Bodeanu (2018) and Capotescu (2018; 2021) pointed to the flood crisis of the 1970s as the starting point of a broad collective effort for humanitarian aid, involving a variety of actors. Cases inspired by religious communities, private and state aid agencies, or "private humanitarians" shed light on a commitment guided by moral duty and challenge the stereotypical image of the second economy as dominated by profit-driven covert traffic and smuggling. Complementing the above contributions, this article expands the approach of humanitarian aid and moves the focus to transnational solidarity networks, to the continuous (re)balancing of power within the polycentric system of exchange, and to its ability to respond to multiple individual and collective needs (Constantin, 1996: 9). Trading companies, whether local

or foreign, acted as significant mediators in the process of both creating and reinforcing existing transnational family ties.

5. Mapping the mediators

A US press article[29] published in 1972 reported on the growing economic exchange that was making it easier to send gifts to families in Eastern Europe. Local companies[30] developed a thriving business that boomed during the Christmas season, working with US companies that became agents for the Eastern European firms. American customers could choose from "gift brochures with thousands of items of all kinds," ranging from food, clothing, housewares, and cars to propane stoves, firewood, and even sheet metal or other building materials. While US agents could earn a 5–10% commission on each sale, one estimate of the annual profit for Eastern European companies was more than $30 million, a strong incentive for Eastern Bloc governments to make sure US customers were satisfied. The latter sent money orders or even blank gift certificates, which were used by locals to buy goods that were generally in short supply, mainly because they were exported. On this specific point, the press article enlightens two mechanisms that in the long run shaped the double standards embedded in the second economy: 1) scarce and/ or better quality products were made available to specific categories of recipients, configuring a "first class" market for consumers who had access to foreign currency, and 2) the financial instruments used benefited from the unofficial exchange rate of high currency on the black market, and since gift certificates and money orders allowed people to purchase almost 75% more goods, they urged their US relatives to use the services of Eastern European companies. Overall, senders, recipients, and mediators were all satisfied with this *modus operandi*.

On the Romanian side, several commercial actors acted as intermediaries between senders and recipients. The companies ICE Comturist, ICE Terra and ICE Mercur[31] began operations in the early 1970s and were later joined by ICE Romtrans[32] and Sulina Freeport, established in 1978.

In 1972, regulations were relaxed to encourage foreign currency transfers from the country's diaspora, and ICE Terra[33] and ICE Mercur[34] were given additional responsibilities. Based on archival sources, one of the key players in the transnational solidarity networks linking the

diaspora with families in the country appears to be by far Comturist. The company was founded in Bucharest in 1970 as a sales agency within the General Directorate of Hotels and Restaurants to organize the activity of selling various articles and durable goods in freely convertible currency to foreigners.[35] During the first years, Comturist Agency had shops in hotels, airports, border points, etc. and sold goods through 123 units: 14 in Bucharest, 75 on the Black Sea coast and 34 in other cities located on the main tourist routes. The central office in Bucharest also managed various gifts that could be sent to any address in the country and abroad. In 1974 it appeared as a unit subordinated to the Ministry of Tourism, and in 1977 it changed its status and became a foreign trade company, gaining the ability to negotiate and conclude agreements directly with foreign partners.[36] At the end of 1988, probably due to an internal crisis, Comturist became a commercial agency again.[37]

For the foreign mediators, the cross-reading of several archival sources[38] reveals a fairly accurate geographical distribution of Romanian emigrants across all continents. However, there are qualitative and quantitative differences in the flow of social remittances, correlated with the size of diasporic communities. An unexpected feature is the number of mediators in the United States involved in the process of sending food, money and goods, with more than 25 companies, mainly tourist agencies.[39] In second place were West Germany[40] and Canada[41] with five companies, followed by Australia with three firms.[42] Two companies were identified for Israel[43] and Switzerland,[44] while only one company could be identified for Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom.[45] Another peculiarity of the above-mentioned companies is that the vast majority of them began to cooperate with Romanian trading companies in the early 1970s, thus fostering a long series of commercial exchanges. According to a series of *Securitate* reports (ACNSAS 8853/21), certain mediators, among which the Swiss company Palatinus[46] appears as one of the oldest partners and with a considerable volume of transfers, operated mainly in favor of ethnic recipients and representatives of religious organizations. Last but not least, there were direct and rather small but constant flows of money between families and friends in various places. In 1985, for example, an intelligence operation initiated by the *Securitate* to trace transfers of hard currency and parcels to citizens living in Prahova County pointed to senders from Italy, Spain, Canada, Portugal, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Ecuador, Chile, and Venezuela.[47]

6. Transnational networks of social remittances

Over time, several channels were used to deliver packages to recipients in Romania. One of the most common ways was through the regular postal services, although most reports (Andreescu and Berindei 2010) and personal testimonies lamented the long waiting times and the constant tampering with packages, as if an informal fee was added to the formal customs tax, consisting of the theft of some goods from the actual contents of the box.

The personal testimonies collected for this article corroborate specific mediation processes with the aid strategies and humanitarian approaches described by Capotescu (2021). Individuals organized the collection of donations from parishioners within a religious community linked to a similar community in Romania, whose priest was usually in charge of distributing goods (food and clothing) to the needy. The collection and distribution of goods improved over time, strengthened by the personal ties that developed between the sending and receiving communities, increasing the impact of remittances (Levitt 1998: 938). On the other hand, the weak link in this type of network was the actual transportation of the aid from one place to another, since each time it required renting a truck and hiring a professional driver who did not belong to the community.

Comturist statistics (ACNSAS 8853/21: 118) on parcels sent from abroad to Romanian citizens show an increase from 702,255 units in 1986 to 834,421 in 1987, as well as an increase in the proportion of units sent through companies and order houses instead of individuals, from 35% in 1986 to 44.5% in 1987. On the other hand, a 1982 report by the Securitate revealed that several means were used to transfer various amounts of foreign currency: 1) money in the form of orders, based on contracts between Comturist and partner companies. Within the limits of the amount provided, the beneficiary of the order could choose the desired goods from an offer that included cars, motorcycles, freezers, refrigerators, electronic equipment and food packages; 2) money in cash was sent through deposits to the Romanian Bank for Foreign Trade in the Comturist account; by direct deposits at the Comturist cashier in Bucharest; by cashed checks within 10–12 days of receipt, credit cards and telegraphic payment orders through the Romanian Bank for Foreign Trade to the Comturist account. Another means by which Romanians could receive hard currency was through gift vouchers, which had been used since 1973, when Comturist collaborated with the Israeli company Romis;

Romis sent vouchers of various values, while "Romanian beneficiaries received in exchange indigenous and imported goods within the limits of the dollars registered on the vouchers" (ACNSAS 8853/44: 14). In all of the above cases, Romanian citizens could benefit from hard currency without actually touching it or physically holding any amount of it, based on the exceptions introduced in the early 1970s to the regulations prohibiting its possession.

It seems that Comturist, Romtrans and Sulina Freeport were the main actors who, since 1980, carried out commercial operations based on the authorization signed by Cornel Burtică, the then Minister of Foreign Trade and International Economic Cooperation. The operations consisted in sending parcels of food and clothes to Romanian citizens in order to obtain foreign currency according to plan requirements. Foreign companies such as Quelle, Palatinus and MT international sent foreign goods to warehouses located at Sulina Freeport and Romtrans Oradea, where the products (domestic and/or imported) were organized in standardized packages and sent to the recipients by regular internal postal services. In this type of network, the Romanian companies benefited mainly from customs commissions, warehousing and transport, while the links between the foreign senders and the recipients in the country operated outside the formal commercial relations.

The most complex network identified in the archival sources seems to have been developed by Comturist. Two examples of contracts drawn up in early 1988 provide a complete picture of the actors formally involved and the *modus operandi* that functioned up to that point (see Figure 1). A direct link connected the Client (a foreign company) and the Supplier (Comturist), which acted as mediators between the Donors (people from diaspora communities, aid agencies and organizations) and the Beneficiaries (people in Romania). Clients gathered orders from the Donors and transmitted them to the Supplier, who distributed the goods to the Beneficiaries through Comturist shops or through internal postal delivery (with an additional amount in hard currency). The Supplier (Comturist) paid the Client a 10% commission on the order. The Client had a bank deposit (called "Revolving") for Comturist, which was periodically replenished to ensure a consistent fulfillment of orders.
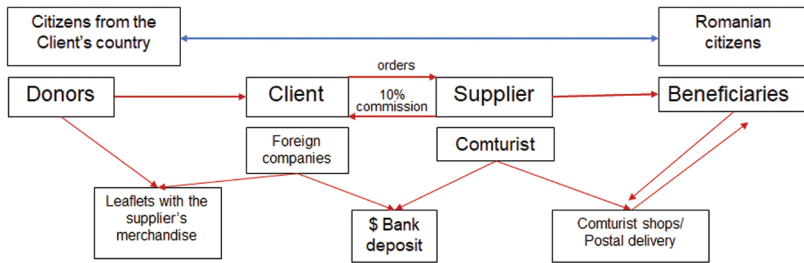
Fig. 1. The Comturist model of transnational network of remittances
(the author's archive, model based on draft contracts retrieved from
ACNSAS 8853/21)

Payments were made by the Client through wire transfers, payment orders, certified checks and International Money Orders issued by Barclay's Bank, and the Client was also responsible for printing advertising leaflets with the Supplier's goods to be consulted by the Donors. In this model, senders from abroad and recipients in the country were linked both by the formal links of the contract and by the constant flow of social remittances informed by letters, telephone calls, or other means of communication. These channels were used to communicate what was needed and/or wanted by the recipient, but also to report on the impact of the goods received, deciphered mainly through letters of thanks for packages sent on special occasions (holidays, birthdays, or other personal events).

However, commercial exchanges did not always proceed as planned, since on at least three occasions the flow of foreign aid was interrupted by interference from the *Securitate*.[48]

7. The mediation of aid: unpacking the parcels

The mediation of aid provides several instances that can illuminate specific features of consumer identity in late socialism. Considering the hardships of the era, a telling example comes from a letter exchanged in 1954 that reflects the postwar poverty (RFE/RL Research Institute 1954). The sender's request depicts a fragile female figure through items such as "un fichu, des agraffes, une plase en nylon, des epingles, une houpette, un peu de poudre, une petite bouteille d'oja,"[49] which shows that, even in times of

scarcity and need, consumption is not limited to basic goods, and that additional social and gender dimensions should be included.

A second example comes from advertisements placed by foreign mediators in diaspora publications. A 1980 advertisement promoted Comturist gift parcels "with no customs fees and special prices,"[50] and various tourist services for US residents, while a 1986 insert from Italy promoted "the opportunity to send [parcels] immediately" and "choose from a wide range of products from the Comturist company catalog or from stores/warehouses in the country."[51] In addition to the wide range of products on offer, from food, household appliances, clothing, cosmetics and cigarettes to building materials, furniture and cars, the presence of both Romanian and Italian brands, as well as premium denim, such as Rifle and Spitfire, is a special feature.

The third type of packages is found in internal company documents. In this case, a handwritten note from 1988 (ACNSAS 8853/21) recorded a series of standardized Comturist food parcels, titled "Carpați" ($49), "Extra" ($45), "Sibiu" ($52), and twelve "Family parcels" with prices ranging from $22.5 to $85. The contents varied, including assortments of the following: Sibiu salami, canned pork, canned beef, white flour, sugar, cocoa, coffee, chocolate, liver pâté, ham, rice, melted cheese, powdered milk. A "VIP" box of $83 contained a carton of imported cigarettes. On the other hand, since parcels could no longer be sent through Sulina Freeport in 1988, the US companies Abaco and MT International diverted parcels through Tarom Airlines. MT International took advantage of the speed of transportation to advertise this benefit to donors from the US and Canada, using the slogan "New! Fast, by plane. American goods. Immediate delivery" (ACNSAS 8853/21: 229). The company had standardized parcels, "MT-1" to "MT-5," with prices ranging from $139 to $89, as well as a "MT-Top" for $159 and a "MT-Big" for $239, which also contained food. A distinctive feature of these parcels is the constant presence of coffee beans (3 to 5 kg),[52] Kent 100S cigarettes[53] (2 to 10 cartons) and, in two instances, a pack of ten 3-hour VHS video tapes, a seemingly odd item given that VCRs were not sold in state stores, nor were state video rental services provided.[54]

The final example comes from archived commercial catalogs. A joint 1988 brochure produced by MT International (USA) and Romanian Holidays Tours and Travels (UK) gives a measure of the material culture channeled through social remittances towards the end of the communist regime. The 16-page catalog, apparently distributed to remitters by direct mail, advertised 19 types of duty-free standardized parcels.[55] It also

offered gift certificates with a minimum value of $50, which could be used to purchase goods at any hard currency store. Donors could also order Romanian durable goods, from cars (Dacia, Oltcit, ARO), building materials, household appliances (Automatic, Arctic, Select), home electronics (TV Cromatic, Telecolor, Diamant, Electronica radio-cassette players) to heating and car fuel, as well as one- to four-room apartments.[56] This particular category in fact illustrates the range of scarce household products that could be officially acquired only through long waiting lists, or more quickly through blat and favors exchanges and/or on the black market. A special group of services provides a useful insight into the symbolic value of the transnational solidarity network: vacations, geriatric and spa treatments at the Black Sea and in holiday resorts in the country were offered to relatives. These vacations, paid for in hard currency, meant that family members at home had access to better accommodation and food conditions, priority services, and higher standards compared to domestic tourist facilities for Romanians.

Overall, the mediation of aid can be seen as a double-edged sword, alleviating shortages while reinforcing the double standards of consumption embedded in the second economy.

8. Conclusions

This article advanced a bottom-up, exploratory analysis that opened a new perspective on how transnational solidarity networks operated in the region long before the fall of the Soviet bloc. It approached the expanded sphere of formal commercial operations that unfolded between sending and receiving communities, and it clarified some of the ways in which a package exchange economy developed, shaping not only the circulation of social remittances, but also specific channels and contents.

The cumulative effects of social remittances can be correlated with short-, medium-, and long-term impacts. In the short term, transnational and humanitarian aid supported survival stories by assisting communities, families, and individuals in need. Some of the intermediaries (mainly religious) provided basic goods to people who had no connection to the Western world other than the faith community to which they belonged. In the medium term, social remittances emerge as a quite significant channel through which Western goods and symbols entered the country. The mapping of mediators provided a more accurate picture of transnational

networks, while the increasing flow and regularity of parcels and money transfers delineated a mass phenomenon of greater magnitude, juxtaposed with the anecdotal figure of the family member living abroad who occasionally sent gifts. The models of transnational solidarity networks also put into perspective the informal blat and smuggling networks of the second economies. In addition to the economy of favors, there was the money, gifts, and aid packages sent by diasporic communities, but first and foremost there was the involvement of the socialist state in what can be seen as a "parcel industry." Romanian foreign trade and transport companies were instrumental in formally promoting social remittances as long as they served as a means to fulfill hard currency plans. There is also a certain paradox in the mediation process: high-quality local goods destined for export were diverted through Comturist to be sold as components of standardized packages for foreign money. Since the result was hard currency and the clients were foreign partners, the company understood it as an "export operation," even though the actual products never left Romanian soil, which explains how Comturist capitalized on a bureaucratic gap.

A closer look at the contents of the parcels reveals other paradoxes concerning consumption and consumer identity. The presence of a wide variety of Romanian-made goods in the mediators' catalogs challenges the prevailing binary framing of local vs. foreign goods in two ways: 1) the overvalued pre-1989 reading of Western goods was transferred to local products, based on the presumed origin of the parcels sent from abroad. 2) Second, the post-1989 undervalued perception of virtually all Romanian consumer goods stemmed in the early post-communist years from an abundance of imported brands and the population's flourishing appetite for consumption of foreign goods (Pasti 2006: 216). Moreover, family abroad became synonymous with a consumer's privileged access to higher quality and scarce products. Ironically, this was denied to the usual recipients of privileges, the high ranks of the Party, since having relatives abroad would hinder their political careers.

Although social remittances alleviated shortages and facilitated access to scarce goods, they contributed to "hard currency discrimination" and in the long run reinforced the double standards embedded in socialist consumer culture, thus informing processes of privilege and social (in)equality that emerged long before 1989. This trend opens up new questions: How did social remittances, supported by information, material culture, and symbolic values, operate in contradiction to socialist

egalitarian rhetoric? How did they contribute to social stratification? How did they configure a specific kind of "second-class" consumer identity? Finally, this article also considers new questions about the normalizing effect of social remittances on consumption practices within a scarcity economy. A further objective would be to explore the function of mediators in filtering needs, configuring solutions to scarcity, and designing an actual normal consumer experience for people in the country, canceling the aberrations of the regime and the economic system, circumventing the long waiting lists for durable goods, opening access to local quality products (but intended for export), and to decent and normal services (tourist packages configured for foreigners). This would add a missing link to the transnational chain of aid that has promoted not only systems of provision based on solidarity and cooperation throughout the country, as remittance recipients continue to share goods with local relatives and friends, but also unaccounted effects in the second economy and on the back market.

Endnotes

1   "Cronica zilei," *Scînteia* 14206, 22 April 1988.
2   "Sprijin acordat României pentru înlăturarea urmărilor inundațiilor," *Scînteia* 8439, 29 May 1970.
3   Mainly oil refining capacities.
4   The plan was to "reduce the foreign debt by half until the end of 1985, followed by its complete liquidation in the next 2–3 years" (Georgescu 2018).
5   The International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), private commercial banks.
6   For a case study on Hungarian foreign trade companies, see Zsuzsanna Borvendég, *The Ages of the Impexes*, Magyarságkutató Intézet, Budapest, 2021.
7   A consistent pre-1989 Western literature on secondary economies pointed to the systemic flaws of communist regimes and painted a rather bleak picture of the phenomenon, which was seen as "deviance," "institutionalized pathology," and the source of endemic corruption. This framing was further tempered by the accounts of scholars from the former Soviet space who entered Western academia in the 1990s and approached the topic through sociological and anthropological lenses.
8   The State Council, "Decree no. 973 of October 23/1968 regarding the passport regime," *Buletinul Oficial* 135, 28 October 1968.
9   The Great National Assembly, "Law no. 23 of December 17/1971 concerning the defense of the state secret in the Socialist Republic of Romania," *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 157, 17 December 1971. Law no. 23/1971 was amended in the mid-1980s by "Decree no. 408 of December 26, 1985, concerning some measures related to the defense of state secrets and the manner of establishing relations with foreigners," which was not published. Decree no. 408/1985 generalized the monitoring of all contacts with foreigners, as all employees were required to sign a commitment that they were aware of the existence of the Decree on State Secrecy, with the specific requirement to note the content of interactions with foreigners, by whatever means they occurred: meetings, (in)formal discussions, telephone conversations, etc. See ACNSAS, *Documentary Fund*, Folder D0013376, vol 12.
10   An early regulation concerning hard currency was instituted by the "Law No. 284 of August 14, 1947 for the transfer to the National Bank of Romania of gold, effective currencies and other foreign means of payment." In 1960, the Great National Assembly adopted the "Decree no. 210 on the regime of foreign means of payment, precious metals and precious stones," published in the *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 8, 17 June 1960. It was decided that the possession in any capacity of foreign currency and precious metals, as well as operations of any kind with them and with precious stones, constitute a

state monetary monopoly and are prohibited, except as expressly provided by law.

[11] The Council of Ministers, "Decision no. 202 of February 23/1973 for bringing or receiving from abroad durable goods to be used by the Romanian citizens, as well as the purchase of some products that are sold in the country with payment in foreign currency," published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 21, 1 March 1973.

[12] The State Council, "Decree no. 233 of December 23/1974 concerning certain rights and obligations of Romanian citizens who earn income in foreign currency," published in *Buletinul Oficial* no. 165, 26 December 1974. Minor changes were brought by the "Decree no. 159 of May 14/1984", published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 165, 16 May 1984.

[13] The State Council, "Decree no. 175/1974 on the construction, sale, and repair of houses, with payments in foreign currency, for persons who do not have Romanian citizenship, but who reside or want to establish their residence in the Socialist Republic of Romania," published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 108, 1 August 1974.

[14] Double standards also emerged in Romanian tourism, stemming from the initial strategy of the authorities, which aimed to differentiate between "commercial tourism" for foreigners, especially those arriving from Western countries, and "social tourism," a service provided for the benefit of the country's working population. This strategy reflected a dualistic structure of tourism, where "domestic tourists often use non-international standard facilities" (Bardan 2020). The double standard made "commercial tourism" a paradoxical representation of "Western oases" in Romanian resorts, accessible to local tourists by proximity, but unaffordable and prohibited by specific tourism policies.

[15] The Central Institute for Economic Research, "Radio Household Market in R.S. Romania; complex prospecting study on the horizon of 1985–1990 and 2000", at The National Historical Archives of Romania, *The Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund*, file no. 57/1977.

[16] There were several features that significantly differentiated the tourist packages for foreigners: better hotels and food, vacations during the high season in special destinations and hotel units, exclusivity for shopping in hard currency outlets, and leisure spaces such as private beaches, hard currency discotheques and clubs. Notes collected by the *Securitate* in 1977 recorded a strong dissatisfaction expressed by Romanians: the differences between the two types of tourist products were seen as "hard currency discrimination." (Bardan 2020).

[17] Digiteca Arcanum (https://adt.arcanum.com) for collections of Romanian journals and magazines, newspapers.com for foreign (mainly US) journals, as well as Google Books (https://books.google.com) for institutional reports published before 1989 by foreign bodies.

18 *Portal legislativ*, at https://legislatie.just.ro.

19 Several strategies were used to access personal testimonies, from taped interviews to electronic correspondence and the use of social media. Eleven testimonies were collected by the time this article was written.

20 The Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) was established in 1945, gathering US and Canadian associations to help rebuild war-torn countries from western Europe.

21 Vladimir Mandl and James McGlincy, "Sky-High Duties for Poland Gifts Build Red Racket," *Daily News*, New York, Friday, 9 April 1954, p. 40. According to another column, a total of 470.115 CARE packages were delivered in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania from May 1946 to July 1950, "Iron Curtain Nations Turn Down American CARE Gifts," *The Fremont News-Messenger*, Fremont, Ohio, 13 November 1953, p. 9.

22 The Committee on Un-American Activities, "The Communist Parcel Operation", Report, United States Government Printing Offices, Washington, 25 September 1959, p. 3.

23 The creation of cultural and scientific committees and organizations, the publication of newspapers and magazines for emigrants, tourist actions, the facilitation of commercial contacts with businessmen, as well as the opening of restaurants with national cuisine.

24 Commercial, scientific, cultural and educational cooperation, as well as the strengthening of ties with Orthodox parishes and religious communities of the emigrants (Dobre and Talos 2006, pp. 272–286).

25 On the other hand, several norms concerning the content of gift parcels remained particularly strict, with items such as "worn-out clothes, shoes, underwear," which were still prohibited by the Customs Code introduced in 1978. See The Great National Assembly, "Law no. 30 of December 22, 1978, the Customs Code of the Socialist Republic of Romania," published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 115, 28 December 1978.

26 Mainly with German, Jewish population, and to a lesser extent, Hungarian ethnic minority for the last decade of the communist regime.

27 With an estimate cumulating over 250,000 people in the 1980s (Scutaru 2019, p. 254)

28 One of the most mediatized successful stories is the escape of gymnast Nadia Comăneci in November 1989 (Olaru 2021). Tragic stories have been documented by several projects dedicated to the mass phenomenon of illegal border crossings. See Marina Constantinoiu: https://frontieristii.ro and Brândușa Armanca (2021).

29 "Corporations make it easy to send gifts to countries in Eastern Europe," *The Daily Item*, Sunbury, 22 December 1972, p. 17.

30 Comturist for Romania, Tuzex for Czechoslovakia, Pekao Trading Corp. for Poland, Genex for East Germany, Ikka for Hungary, and Vneshpositorg for the Soviet Union.

31 ICE stands for "Întreprinderea de Comerț Exterior," meaning Enterprise for Foreign Trade.

32 State enterprise for international transports and expeditions.

33 ICE Terra was created in 1971 by the "Decision No. 28" of the Council of Ministers and responded to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. It was in charge of export-import operations, the provision of various services with payment in foreign currency and the sale of customs tickets. From 1972 it managed the construction of houses bought with foreign currency.

34 ICE Mercur was established in December 1967 by the "Decision No. 3236" of the Council of Ministers and responded to the Ministry of Internal Trade. It was mainly in charge of the import of foreign goods to be sold in shops with hard currency payment. From 1972, it managed the restaurants with Romanian cuisine opened abroad and the supply of the emigrant communities with Romanian goods.

35 "Comturist," *Munca* 6896, 16 January 1970.

36 The State Council "Decree no. 508 of December 30/1977", published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 108, 1 August 1974.

37 By the "Decree no. 381 of 17 December 1988". The foreign trade activity was taken over by the Company for International Tourism and Tourist Advertising ONT Carpați Bucharest.

38 The Comturist files were corroborated with the 1970–1989 Reports of the Attorney General to the Congress of the United States on the Administration of the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, and with Romanian diaspora journals and magazines.

39 Abaco Travel, American Aviation, Arta Travel Service, Chima Travel Bureau, Cosmos Parcels Express, Duna Travel Bureau, Euroimpex, Glo-Travel Serv, Gregory Import-Export, Health and Pleasures, Holmes Lumber/ David Troyer, Hungaria Travel Bureau, Illona Travel, International Remittances, Ioniță Tours, Janosi Travel, Litoral Travel, LT Entreprises, MT International, Ro-American, Ro-American Trading, Rona Travel Bureau, Space Travel Agency, Stephen Geroe, Terra Travel, Transylvania Travel, Victory Travel Agency.

40 Alimex, Belimpex, Papp, Halmen, Quelle.

41 Apollo Travel, Columbus Travel, Hungaria Ikka, Budapest Travel, International Travel.

42 VIP International, Bucharest-Melbourne, Romanian Travel Agency.

43 Romis and All Meridian.

44 Palatinus and Cladef.

45 For Austria, Radu Gheorghe, for France, SARL Costel, for Italy, Romexital, for Sweden, Continent Resor Mariner and for UK Romanian Holidays.

46 Palatinus, based in Switzerland, was founded in 1957 as a trading company that facilitated the sending of gift and care packages to Eastern European countries.

[47] The money was sent through the Romanian Foreign Trade Bank as provisions for travel and for the purchase of goods with payment in foreign currency.

[48] This topic will be covered elsewhere due to space limitations in this article.

[49] "a scarf, staples, nylon hair net, pins, a powder puff, a little powder, a small bottle of nail polish." (author's translation).

[50] Ad by Litoral Travel Bureau on the 3rd cover of the calendar *The Ancient Candle*, 1980, published by "St. Simion" Parish of Detroit, Michigan. Item belonging to the private collection of Florian Ciobanu, facebook.com/ReclameVechiRomanestiOldRomanianAds

[51] Insert by Romexital on page 25 of the magazine *Columna*, edited by the "Dacia" Association in Rome.

[52] Coffee was an alternative currency; it was exchanged for other products or services.

[53] The "long Kent" was labeled as Romania's "unofficial currency," a valuable substitute for US dollars (Lee 1987).

[54] For the VCR phenomenon, see Bardan (2021).

[55] Annual and quarterly subscriptions were offered as options to increase the flow.

[56] VCRs were presented on a separate page.

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MILITARY TACTICS AND LITERARY STRATEGIES: STRATAGEMS, WAR WRITING, AND THE DATING OF JOHN SKYLITZES' *SYNOPSIS HISTORION*

Georgios Chatzelis

Abstract

This paper focuses on the study of three stratagems recorded in the *Synopsis Historion* of John Skylitzes, which are otherwise absent from any other independent Byzantine and foreign source. The discussion sheds light on war writing in the *Synopsis:* it examines its sources for military events, its reception of military trickery, and discusses how the latter two can result into a synthesis of the conflicting views on the dating, purpose, and methodology of the work. The paper argues that John Skylitzes drew on stratagems of antiquity to enhance the image and the legacy of aristocratic families which were central to the ruling regime at the time of the composition of the work, and envisages the *Synopsis* as an earlier history, dating to c. 1059–1067.

Keywords: Synopsis Historion, John Skylitzes, John Scylitzes, Byzantium, Byzantine history, Byzantine historiography, war writing, stratagems, Polyaenus, Sylloge Tacticorum, Corpus Perditum, military history, military manuals

John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historion* is one of our major sources for the period between c. 811–1057. Despite its significance, the *Synopsis* has not been the centre of many detailed and extensive studies.[1] Recent decades have witnessed a renewed interest in the *Synopsis* with the works of Jonathan Shepard, Catherine Holmes and Eirini-Sophia Kiapidou being the most influential.[2] Although these contributions have shed significant light on the *Synopsis* and its author, there is still no clear scholarly consensus on various aspects of the work, including the date of its composition, its sources for military events, and its author's methods and agendas.[3]

The most widely accepted thesis on the *Synopsis* is that it was compiled during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). It was partly based on lost promotional sources, probably biased historical narratives or biographies of prominent generals (e.g., of Bardas Skleros and Katakalon Kekaumenos), and their material was partly tampered by John Skylitzes, who, influenced by the political and military milieu at the time of Alexios I, aimed at demonstrating that the well-being of the military aristocracy and their loyalty to the imperial authority were central to the prosperity of the state.[4] The alternative view sees the *Synopsis* as an earlier work, dating c. 1059–1070. It casts doubt on whether its sources are indeed promotional accounts, perceiving them as possible oral sources and well-informed but more or less neutral historical narratives. The objective record of events without particular political sympathies is envisaged as the main goal of the author, coupled with the underlining of virtues of certain generals and emperors (e.g. benevolence, justice, bravery, prudence, loyalty, martial and tactical prowess), irrespective of political affiliation, which John Skylitzes considered beneficial for the troubled times in which he wrote.[5]

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the problem of the sources of the *Synopsis*, and to discuss how this issue can result into a synthesis of the conflicting views about the dating, purpose and methodology of the work. I will focus primarily on three stratagems recorded by Skylitzes, which are otherwise absent from any other independent Byzantine and foreign source. The first two ruses were reported to have taken place during the first rebellion of Bardas Skleros against Basil II (976–1025), between 976–979, and the third during the reign of Michael IV (1034–1041).

Before we investigate Skylitzes' account of these events, it is worth looking at our earliest source for the same operations, the 10th-century history of Leo the Deacon. For the battle at Lapara, we read that Bardas Skleros

> laid waste Asia for four years, ravaging the countryside with fire and destroying cities, cruelly defeating and slaughtering in a pitched battle the Roman forces that were deployed against him. [One army] was led by the *patrikios* and *stratopedarches* Peter, when battle broke out on the plain of Lapara [...] at which time even the *patrikios* Peter himself was hit by a spear and knocked from his horse, and breathed his last right in the line of battle [...].[6]

Leo the Deacon's description of the siege of Nikaia is similarly vague and brief. We are informed that "Skleros was puffed up and elated at these victories and considered himself irresistible and invincible. Thereupon, he forced Nicaea and Abydos and Attaleia to surrender, and subdued all Roman territory in Asia".[7]

Skylitzes' version of the above engagements, though later than that of Leo the Deacon, is far more detailed. For the battle at Lapara, John Skylitzes recorded that Peter the *stratopedarches* and Bardas Skleros had camped opposite one another, when the rebel "outmanoeuvred his enemy by preparing a great amount of food as though he were going to give a banquet for his army". Peter ordered his army to feast too, "thinking that he [Skleros] would not instigate a battle that day". Skylitzes then reports that "when Skleros became aware of this (he had his troops already prepared for battle), the trumpet suddenly sounded the attack and he fell on the enemy soldiers as they feasted." The imperial forces initially withstood Skleros' assault, but were soon dispersed or killed.[8]

Similarly, the siege of Nikaia is narrated in much more detail, mainly from the perspective of the besieged. We are informed of the defender's name, Manuel Erotikos, and we are given an account which suggests that the siege was by far a more daunting task for Skleros than Leo the Deacon presented it to be. We read that Manuel repelled Skleros' attempts to take the city by storm, bravely withstanding the rebel's "assault, repelling the ladders from the walls and burning the siege-engines with Greek fire." Skleros was compelled to settle for a long siege in the hopes that he would starve the garrison out. When the city's supplies were almost over, Skylitzes has it that, out of desperation, Manuel attempted to deceive Skleros with a trick. "He had the granaries of Nicaea filled with sand in secret and then a little grain was spread over the sand […]. Then he summoned some of the enemy they had taken prisoner, showed them the granaries and sent them back with orders to report to Skleros that there was enough food for two years." The prisoners were also to disclose that Manuel was only reluctantly siding with the emperor, and that he was willing to surrender the city if the garrison and the population were allowed to leave with their weapons and moveable property. Skleros agreed and only after he had occupied Nikaia, he realized he was outwitted.[9]

The third stratagem occurred during the reign of emperor Michael IV, and more specifically in 1038 when the Arabs attempted to capture the city of Edessa by trickery. John Skylitzes is the only source to mention both the following stratagem and the siege of Edessa that year altogether. We are

informed that "twelve Arab chieftains with five hundred horses and five hundred camels carrying a thousand chests containing a thousand heavy-armed troops" arrived at Edessa. The Arabs reported to its commander, *protospatharios* Barasbatzes the Iberian, that

> they were on their way to the emperor, bearing gifts, but their aim was to bring the chests into the city, let the soldiers out by night and take Edessa. The commander received the chieftains graciously and feasted them, but he ordered the horsemen and baggage to remain outside [the city]. […] A poor Armenian […] heard one of the men in a chest […]. The beggar, who understood the Saracen language, ran off and reported this to the commander.

Barasbatzes excused himself from dinner, broke open the chests and defeated the concealed soldiers with the help of his garrison. He then returned to slay the chieftains, except for one, whom he mutilated and ordered to return to his country to report what took place.[10]

My thesis is that all three stratagems constitute an invention of Skylitzes which served both literary and political purposes. All three ruses share some common characteristics. Firstly, they constitute quite unique and extraordinary cases of military trickery and are otherwise unrecorded in Byzantine and foreign historical narratives. For example, it is difficult to explain why Leo the Deacon, a probable protégé of Basil II, failed to mention the heroic resistance of the loyalist Manuel Erotikos, since relevant military bulletins and oral accounts would have surely reached the capital, where Leo most probably resided at that time.[11] Secondly, they come up as independent interpolated detailed war stories within Skylitzes' otherwise telescopic and brief coverage of military operations. Thirdly, they seem to have been copied from identical stratagems featured in histories, military manuals and compilation literature, and finally, they are recorded to have been undertaken by individuals whose families were on good grounds with the Komnenoi.[12]

In light of the above, it will be worth exploring which sources inspired Skylitzes' stratagems. Five potential extant sources feature stories of military trickery similar to those in the *Synopsis*: the *Histories* of Herodotus (c. 430 BC), the *Stratagems* of Polyaenus (c. 160/1), the 3rd-century *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius, the Byzantine versions of Polyaenus, such as the *Hypotheseis* (c. 850), the *Strategemata Ambrosiana* (c. 946–959) and the *Parecbolae* (late 10th–early 11th century), as well as

the *Sylloge Tacticorum*, a military manual which included a section on stratagems (c. 930–944).

The ruse of Bardas Skleros features in Herodotus, Polyaenus, its Byzantine versions (*Hypotheseis, Strategemata Ambrosiana*, *Parecbolae)* and in the *Sylloge Tactocorum* as a stratagem of the Spartan king Cleomenes I (c. 520–490 BC), employed against the Argives at the Battle of Sepeia (c. 494 BC).[13] None of the wording of the above texts resembles that of Skylitzes so closely in order to be proposed as a direct source. This seems to denote that Skylitzes either reworked extensively the vocabulary of an extant source or drew the stratagem from a non-extant one. A possible source might have been the pro-Skleros account identified by Holmes.[14] The closest extant version seems to be that of the *Strategemata* and the *Hypotheseis* which reads:

> In a war between the Lacedaemonians and the Argives, the two armies were encamped facing each other. Cleomenes, the king of the Lacedaemonians, noticed that every command in his army was betrayed to the enemy, who acted accordingly. When he ordered his men to arms, the enemy armed also […] when he ordered his men to rest, they did likewise. Therefore, he gave out secret instructions that, whenever he next gave public orders to take a meal, his troops should arm for battle. His public orders were as usual transmitted to the unsuspecting Argives; and when Cleomenes advanced in arms to attack them, they were easily overwhelmed, being unarmed and unprepared to oppose him.[15]

The stratagem of Manuel Erotikos features as a ruse of Mygdonius (an obscure figure of antiquity), Bias of Priene (fl. 6th century BC), one the seven sages of Ancient Greece, and of an anonymous, in Polyaenus, Diogenes Laertius, and in the Byzantine versions of Polyaenus respectively (*Hypotheseis* and *Strategemata Ambrosiana)*. Nonetheless, in all of the above accounts the protagonist not only sprinkled a layer of wheat on top of the sand, but also fattened some mules as further proof of his city's abundance of supplies.[16] John Skylitzes' version is closer to that of the *Sylloge Tacticorum* which omitted the part about the fattened animal, but attributed the whole stratagem to Merops, an obscure and unknown individual, either a figure of Greek mythology or the Sassanian king Shapur I (240–270).[17] According to the version of the *Sylloge*:

> Since Merops was besieged in the city of Antigonea and was short of supplies, he filled two of the largest silos with sand at night, and sprinkled

grain on top. When the enemy envoys arrived, he received them and placing them next to the mouth of the silo, he said 'Do not be deceived into thinking that we have a shortage of supplies, because as you see, we have food which can last for a very long time. In any case, if it seems good [to you], make a truce and withdraw peacefully'. When the envoys saw that, they immediately proceeded with the truce and most readily lifted the siege.[18]

Barasbatzes' ruse with the chests also finds an identical parallel in the *Sylloge*. It is attributed to the same obscure figure of Merops and reads:

> While the same man was investing a Syrian city for a long time with no results, he lifted the siege, pretending that he made a truce with the emperor in Rome and announcing that he would send envoys with gifts shortly. Therefore, he concealed two hundred heavily armed men in an equal number of wooden baskets, loading them onto one hundred camels. He commanded the aforementioned envoys to camp in front of the walls of the city, which had been under siege shortly before, and to cajole its commander with every kind of reasoning and luxurious gifts to receive into the city the presents that were being sent to the emperor, in order to keep them safe. Afterwards Merops himself approached with his army and, at any rate, when this happened he became the master of the city because the heavily armed soldiers in the baskets emerged at around midnight and joyfully let Merops in together with all his army by lighting huge signal-fires on the towers and smashing the gates without any trouble.[19]

While the stratagem of the *Sylloge* is very similar in content to that of the *Synopsis*, the wording is not so identical to warrant Skylitzes' direct copying from it. The historian may have had the passages of the *Sylloge* reworked before he interpolated them into the *Synopsis*, but it is more probable that he relied on a common non-extant source.

Although there are good grounds to suggest that a pro-Skleros source was indeed employed by John Skylitzes, I do not think that this constituted the source of any of these stratagems. Bardas Skleros' ruse may seem in line with the agenda of a promotional biography, but it is hard to imagine that such an account would have mentioned Manuel's outwitting of Bardas Skleros, let alone the stratagem at Edessa, whose chronological scope exceeded Bardas Skleros' life. Similarly, I do not believe that these stratagems were part of the now lost histories possibly available to Skylitzes either (by Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrios of Cyzicus and John the Monk).

Although the content of lost sources can only be assumed, Skylitzes' ruses were attributed to individuals who were active both before and after c.1025/8 which entails that they would have appeared in more than one of these non-extant histories.[20] This seems unlikely though, given the uniqueness of such stratagems in Byzantine historiography. Alternatively, the evidence seems to suggest that Skylitzes copied the three ruses from a lost source which was common both to him and to the author of the *Sylloge*. This explains why all three stratagems in the *Synopsis* feature in the *Sylloge* as well, but with different wording. Most probably, Skylitzes drew on the *Corpus Perditum*, a lost 9th- or early 10th-century military manual which included an extensive section on various types of stratagems.[21]

We have stablished so far that Skylitzes' stratagems were most probably inspired by ruses of antiquity found in the *Corpus Pertidum* and were interpolated in the *Synopsis* as independent war anecdotes. Consequently, these anecdotes must have had a message to convey, they must have served some kind of purpose or purposes in Skylitzes' historical narrative.[22] Previous scholarship has demonstrated Skylitzes' significant interest in several military men, mostly from second-rate families, and his promotional representation of them, largely through entertaining anecdotes which showcased their leadership, daring, military and tactical skill. The most obvious examples are Anemas, Anthes Alyates, Nikephoros Xiphias, Eustathios Daphnomeles, George Maniakes, Basil Theodorokanos and Katakalon Kekaumenos. The current consensus is that several of these anecdotes originated from promotional sources which Skylitzes included because they promoted his agenda and/or concerned families which were prominent in the reign of Alexios I, some of them in cooperation with the regime.[23]

From my point of view, Skylitzes intended to grant a more special place to Skleros, Erotikos and Barasbatzes, because, instead of attributing to them some conventional anecdote of military trickery to highlight their skills, he chose quite unique and distinguishable ruses from the authoritative classical tradition. Primarily, we can perceive this classical *mimesis* as a conscious choice on Skylitzes' part to convey political and military ideals to his fellow educated readers in a subtle way. The audience of Byzantine historical narratives was trained to recognize allusions to Greek literature and simultaneously to draw parallels between the past and present.[24] In this line of reasoning, Bardas Skleros featured as a second Cleomenes I on account of his military skill. The latter was among the most famous and successful Spartan generals and, interestingly enough, when he had

his co-king Demaratus (515–491 BC) overthrown, he was pardoned by the Spartans. This allusion may have built upon the pro-Skleros source which probably deemed Bardas Skleros as worthy of reconciliation with the regime of Basil II.[25] Likewise, the failed defender of Nikaia, Manuel Erotikos, emerged as a wise and shrewd commander equal in wisdom to Bias of Priene or to the legendary figure of Merops, both well known to imperial and aristocratic circles.[26] Finally, Barasbatzes' prudency to only admit the Arab chieftains inside the walls of Edessa placed him to a better place than the anonymous commander in Syria who fell for the ruse of Merops/Sapur I (as per the *Sylloge*), and featured him so good a commander who could potentially resist even the ancient Merops/Sapur I himself, and by extension the easterners, Arabs and Turks.

On a second level, these unusual stories of military trickery coupled with allusions to the classical tradition and political innuendos, probably produced a significant entertaining effect for Skylitzes' readership/audience some of whom might have been members of the aforementioned families. It could be that Skylitzes took advantage of a lack of detailed information pertaining to these operations, perhaps due to their insignificant scale or anticlimactic engagements, so as to embellish them with fascinating accounts of military trickery. This entertainment, however, does not seem to have come at the cost of the kernel of truth behind the events. After all, Bardas Skleros had indeed prevailed at Lapara and Nikaia, and while a siege of Edessa is not otherwise recorded in 1038, there were a series of them, including one in 1036. The Arab attack of Edessa in 1038 might have originally been a skirmish of a short or an easily repelled attempt.[27]

The image of Skylitzes which emerges from our discussion is incompatible with the viewpoint that envisaged him as a detached compiler whose aim was the production of a balanced, unbiased account.[28] Instead, Skylitzes treated Skleros, Erotikos and Barasbatzes in a promotional way and actively enhanced their reputation and skills. Somehow, these individuals were relevant to Skylitzes' agenda. Perhaps Skylitzes perceived his historical material with the political lenses of the period in which he was writing, and his aim might have been to introduce these stratagems so as to rewrite and reclaim the past of three aristocratic families which were central to the imperial regime of his time.

The context of the reign of Alexios I fits well with our observations. Skylitzes might have preserved the promotional anecdotes of Anemas, Alyates, Xiphias, Maniakes, Theodorokanos and Kekaumenos because they were in partial cooperation with Alexios I's regime. For instance, from

the time of Alexios I we know of: a Nicholas Anemas (possibly *doux* of Skopje); an anonymous Alyates (commander of Glabinitza), and depending on the dating of the seals, perhaps an Alyates *patrikios* and a Pothos Alyates *protoproedros* and *katepano*; perhaps an Eustathios (*primikerios* and *koitonites*), Constantine (*protoproedros*) and Anonymous (*proedros*) Xiphias; a Constantine (*sebastos*), George (*protospatharios*), and Joseph (*tourmarches ton Moglenon*) Maniakes; perhaps a Tzotzikios (*kouropalates* and *doux*), Taronites (*nobellisimos*), and George (*protokouropalates*) Theodorokanos; and, finally, a Michael Kekaumenos, a military man who was entrusted with the defence of Sardis, Philadelphia, Avlona, Hierikho and Kanina, and the command of the Byzantine rear-guard in one of Alexios I's expeditions.[29]

If our line of reasoning holds true though, we expect to find Erotikos, Skleros and Barasbatzes holding far more esteemed positions in Alexios I's regime. Indeed, Manuel Erotikos was actually a Komnenos, and a forefather of Alexios I, which very much explains Skylitzes' promotional treatment of him. In the *Synopsis*, Manuel was called *a man distinguished by birth, virtue and courage*, and, from the obscure and failed defender of Nikaia, he was reinvented to a stout guardian who, with his cleverness and skill, successfully repelled Skleros' assaults and then outwitted him with his stratagem, managing to save all of the city's garrison and citizens, and to minimize Skleros' victory. It is indicative how the image of Manuel Erotikos was progressively boosted by historians who wrote in the Komnenian period. The husband of Alexios I's daughter, Nikephoros Bryennios, referred to Manuel as the "scion of the family of the Komnenoi, who was appointed as an envoy to conclude conventions and agreements between Basil (II) […] and the famous Bardas Skleros […] and endeavored to reconnect the dislocated parts of the Roman Empire." No other surviving source, however, corroborates Nikephoros Bryennios' account that Manuel Erotikos assumed such extensive responsibilities. Skylitzes is equally sympathetic of Nikephoros Komnenos. His plotting with Giorgi I of Iberia (1014–1027) against Constantine VIII (1025–1028) is passed in silence, and the episode is presented as a misunderstanding greatly aggravated by the emperor's childish and irrational character.[30]

Similarly, the Skleroi held prominent dignities and offices in the regime of Alexios I. Michael and John Skleros were probably appointed *strategos* of Peloponnesus and *doux* of Bodena and Sthlanitza, while Nikolas, Michael and Andronikos Skleros held judicial posts (*krites*, *megas droungarios*), participated in synods, were placed as chief ministers

(*logothetes tou dromou*) and were awarded the dignities of *kouropalates* and *protoproedros*. In fact, Andronikos Skleros, received by Alexios I, the greatest dignity ever bestowed to a member of the Skleros family, that of *sebastos* which was usually reserved only for members of the imperial family. Instead of featuring Bardas Skleros as a lesser figure to Bardas Phokas, betrayed by his closest associates (including his son), Skylitzes glorified the family's legacy. He underlined Bardas Skleros' disposition and tactics against the Rus (971), paid heed to the bravery of his brother, Constantine Skleros, and attributed to Bardas the stratagem at Lapara, promoting him as a shrewd general equal to the ancients and deserving of his reconciliation with the imperial family.[31]

The Barasbatzai, though less prominent a family, were most probably awarded imperial dignities by Alexios I, a known example being the *protobestes* Tornikios Barasbatzes. The Georgian families of the Barasbatzai, Tchordvaneli and the Bagratids were all related by kinship and were on good grounds with the Komnenoi. Irene of Alania, the cousin of empress Maria of Alania, was married to Isaakios Komnenos, the brother of Alexios I. What is more, David IV (1089–1125), of the same dynasty, was awarded by Alexios I the prestigious rank of *panypersebastos*, which was just below that of *kaisar* and closely reserved for members of the imperial family.[32]

With the prosopographical pieces matching, one could rest the case here. Skylitzes recorded the deeds of bravery and tactical prudence of Anemas, Alyates, Xiphias, Maniakes, Theodorokanos and Kekaumenos because they were in a way favoured by the regime of Alexios I, awarded with dignities and offices, while for Erotikos, Skleros and Barasbatzes, whose families were the same as Alexios I's or part of his innermost circle, he reserved anecdotes which alluded to the authoritative classical tradition. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistences with this line of thought. The *Synopsis* is quite sympathetic to the qualities, deeds and services of the military aristocracy, and Skylitzes' stratagems are essentially interpolated examples of idealized military conduct. Yet, the promotion of the military skills of the Skleroi, Komnenoi and Barasbatzai in the political context of Alexios I made better sense only for the ruling family which held the most significant and high-ranking military posts. The same cannot be said for the Skleroi and the Barasbatzai whose most prominent members were not employed in the army anymore.[33]

Instead, envisaging Skylitzes as a protégé of both Katakalon Kekaumenos and Isaac Komnenos, and his *Synopsis* as a work written in

a time of military crisis, dynastic fluidity and uncertainty, between 1057–1067, can resolve most inconsistencies and better highlight Skylitzes' agenda. The promotion of the military skills of Komnenos, Skleros and Barasbatzes made more sense in the 1050s and 1060s, when spending for the army was reduced and military offices declined in importance, but the most prominent members of these families still pursued military careers.[34] Skylitzes, who backed the claims of the military aristocracy affected by these reforms, seems to have employed Constantine IX (1042–1055), Theodora (1055–1056) and Michael VI (1056–1057) as scapegoats. The historian openly blamed Constantine IX for instigating the empire's military downfall, and criticized him for extravagant spending and for the disbanding of the Iberian army. Theodora and Michael VI were scolded for being vengeful, prodigal, and for dismissing the most prominent Byzantine generals from their offices, arrogantly and unfairly, thus compelling them to rebellion.[35]

Skylitzes' point behind his anecdotes of military trickery and valor might have been that, in the light of Turkish threat, the empire needed to employ and support emperors and commanders who were exemplary military figures and had the legacy, reputation and means to guarantee imperial prosperity (military and financial). The leading figures of Isaac's coup seem to have made the cut.[36] To make our case, we can begin by examining how Skylitzes' authoritative stratagems of antiquity got the message across. The forefather of Isaac Komnenos was reinvented to a stout and shrewd defender, attributed with the employment of the same ruses as distinguished figures of antiquity. Then came Nikephoros and Isaac Komnenos, and we read a story of a family of great military commanders mostly side-lined due to envy. Nikephoros prevailed against the enemy but was unfairly punished by the emperor, and the story is repeated with Isaac's illicit dismissal, followed by his rebellion.[37]

Likewise, Skylitzes' stratagems promoted the military legacy of yet another leading family of the coup, the Skleroi. This seems in line with Romanos Skleros' career which needed political and military justification. Though Romanos was a senior commander bearing the dignity of *proedros,* much like Isaac Komnenos, he had been unwillingly dismissed by Theodora. Then he rebelled along with Isaac and was appointed commander of the right wing during the battle of Hades, only to fail at his task and to endanger the divisions of Isaac and Katakalon.[38] After the rebellion, Romanos Skleros was probably promoted to *stratopedarches* of the East and *doux* of Antioch, and it seems that Constantine X appointed

him *domestikos ton scholon* of the West and *doux ton Anatolikon*.[39] To enhance the prestige of the family, Skylitzes recorded most of the Skleroi in good light, he mentioned the brave deeds of Constantine Skleros, and featured Bardas Skleros as a second Cleomenes, a successful and shrewd general who was rightfully reconciled with public authorities. One wonders whether the Skleros-Cleomenes association, aimed by extension to justify Romanos Skleros' participation in Isaac's coup too.

Skylitzes' glorification of the military skills of Barasbatzes sits better with the extensive employment of the family and that of their close relatives, the Tzourbanelai (Tchordvaneli), as military officers in c. 1000–1069. From the latter period we know of Tornikios Barasbatzes as well as John, Simbatios and Apocharpes Tzourbaneles, all *protospatharioi* and *strategoi*. Another individual, Constantine Tzourbaneles probably held the dignity of *protoanthypatos* and was either *strategos* of Belegradon and/or (*doux*) of Bulgaria, possibly in the reign of Constantine X.[40] While Byzantine historians do not mention the Barasbatzai and the Tzourbanelai in the context of Isaac Komnenos' rebellion, it is probable that they backed it on two grounds. Firstly, they traditionally sided with families allied to the Komnenoi. George Barasbatzes was accused of supporting Constantine Diogenes' conspiracy (1029) against Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034), together with Samuel, Theognostos and Michael Bourtzes. Both the Diogenai and the Bourtzai remained close associates of the Komnenoi for decades. It is also worth noting that Michael Bourtzes was the same person who rebelled with Isaac Komnenos against Michael VI and was thus promoted to *strategos ton Anatolikon*.[41] Secondly, Isaac Komnenos served as *katepano* of Iberia so this appointment could have facilitated his strengthening of ties with some Georgian aristocratic families.[42] In addition, both Isaac Komnenos and Constantine X worked closely with the other relatives of the Barasbatzai and the Tchordvaneli, the Bagratids. Between 1057–1067 Byzantine-Georgian relations were once again amicable and both polities were fighting against the common enemy, the Turks. In 1057 Bagrat IV (1027–1072) called himself "king of the Apchazians and *nobelissimos* of the entire East", which can denote that Isaac Komnenos had ratified his predecessors' decision to award the dignity of *nobelissimos*, second highest after that of the emperor, to a Georgian king. Constantine X went a step further, awarding Bagrat IV the title of *sebastos* which, up to that point, had been reserved for the emperor, the empress and the patriarch. In addition, Bagrat IV's daughter, Maria of Alania, was betrothed to Constantine X's co-emperor, Michael Doukas, the future Michael VII

(1071–1078), further establishing Byzantium's alliance with the Georgian kingdom.[43] Finally, both Byzantine and Georgian sources reveal imperial benevolence towards the Ibiron monastery, mostly ran by the Barasbatzai and the Tchordvaneli. A Georgian manuscript which contained the canons of the sixth and seventh ecumenical councils was updated to include prayers for various emperors among which was Isaac Komnenos. God was requested to grant him "many days and years of reign" and to "make him victorious over his Turkish enemies". What is more, the *Vita* of George the Hagiorite and the documents of the Ibiron corroborate Constantine X's sponsorship and protection of the Ibiron.[44]

Evidence from Byzantine prosopography dating from c. 1057–1067 suggests that the promotional anecdotes of Alyates, Daphnomeles, Maniakes, Theodorokanos and Kekaumenos were relevant to Skylitzes milieu because these families were part of the extended network of Isaac I and Constantine X, and in co-operation with their regimes. In fact, the aforementioned families mostly held military offices in this period. For instance, there was a *patrikios* Leo Alyates serving as *strategos of Cherson and Sougdeia* under Isaac Komnenos (1059). We also know of Theodore/ Leo Alyates *hetairiarches of the third* who was in service around that time, while a Theodore Alyates was a senior military commander and a friend of Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–1071), whose family was intermarried with the Komnenoi.[45] Along with the Barasbatzai and the Bourtzai, an Eusthathios Daphnomeles participated in Constantine Diogenes' conspiracy (1029), and was probably on good grounds with the Komnenoi too. We can also note that Alexander (*vestarches* and *strategos)* and George Maniakes, (*patrikios* and *katepano* of Vaspurakan), probably held their military offices in the period under consideration.[46] Last but not least, we know that Nikephoros (*patrikios* and *strategos*), George (*protospatharios of the Chrysotriklinos* and *strategos)*, Ashot, Chatatourios (*patrikios* and *katepano* of Edessa), and Constantine Theodorokanos were also active around this period, serving in the imperial armies.[47] Similarly, in contrast to Leo the Deacon, Skylitzes might have chosen to follow a favorable account of John Kourkouas' deeds at the siege of Dorostolon (971) because some members of the family held the dignities of *hypatos*, *patrikios* and *magistros* around c. 1040–1070. While we can perhaps envisage a military career for them, their seals do not mention an office, and clear evidence of Kourkouai holding military offices only reappears after 1080.[48]

To avoid being criticized as a biased slanderer or panegyrist, Skylitzes seems to have adopted a balanced approach when he wrote about modern

figures. It was probably a deliberate literary strategy of the historian to cast his contemporaries in more modest light than their forefathers. Compared to Bardas and Constantine Skleros, Romanos Skleros' representation is more down to earth. Similarly, the portraits of Manuel and Nikephoros Komnenos were quite embellished, while Isaac's role in the rebellion was toned down in favor of Kekaumenos'. The pattern repeats itself with the Doukai. On the one hand, Skylitzes mentioned the Doukai among Isaac's prominent supporters, but without further elaboration on their role in the rebellion. Yet, he either distorted his sources or chose to follow a non-extant (pro-Doukas?) source to present the battle of Katasyrtae (917) as a Byzantine victory, and in fact one indebted to Nikolas Doukas' bravery.[49]

The fact that Skylitzes employed the same strategy with regard to all the major actors of the revolt, but the exploits of the Doukai were highlighted the least, implies that though Skylitzes was originally pro-Komnenos, and pro-Keukaumenos, he settled to a write a history which kept most of the leading figures of the coup happy, namely a history which ended with the year 1057, with Kekaumenos, the Doukai and the Komnenoi still in cooperation. Thus Skylitzes probably begun to compile his *Synopsis* in the reign of Isaac Komnenos, but completed it in the reign of Constantine X, taking care to convey his pro-Komnenos stance in a more subtle way.

Nonetheless, Skylitzes real sympathies are better represented in his later work, the *Epitome (Συνέχεια),* written in the reign of Alexios I, where the historian featured Constantine X negatively, and Isaac Komnenos in positive light, struggling to re-empower the empire.[50] One could even argue that Skylitzes' extensive use of the pro-Kekaumenos source(s), and his focus on Kekaumenos, rather than on Isaac, allowed the historian to criticize Constantine X for the side-lining of his ex-collaborators more safely and indirectly, without implicating the Komnenoi and featuring as their fervent supporter.[51]

The political milieu of the period justifies this approach. Political balances remained fluid in the reign of Constantine X. Isaac Komnenos and Michael VI were still alive for some time, and even though some of the Komnenoi were allegedly honored by Constantine X for the sake of their older cooperation in the coup against Michael VI, none of them seems to have held any office. Even if we dismiss Constantine X's benevolence toward the Komnenoi as pro-Doukas propaganda though, the later reconciliation of the Doukai with the Komnenoi, during the reign of Michael VII, cannot have occurred out of the blue. Skylitzes thus wrote in a political environment where the Komnenoi were mostly cut off

from important offices, but were still a threat to the Doukai as they never stopped enjoying the esteem and support of other aristocratic families, to the point that Michael VII thought it proficient to marry his wife's cousin to Isaakios Komnenos (Isaac Komnenos I's nephew) and to appoint him *domestikos ton scholon* of the East and *doux* of Antioch. It is indicative that well into the reign of Constantine X and Michael VII the rebellion of Isaac Komnenos was remembered as a cause almost collectively embraced, and as a partly justified act which aimed to remedy the improper side-lining of the military aristocracy in political matters and in the distribution of high dignities and honors. Michael Psellos, in his funeral oration for the patriarchs Michael Keroullarios and Constantine Leichoudes, described Isaac Komnenos as a competent military leader and emperor. Isaac was steadfast, famous and marvelous. His military commands (even before he became emperor) "brought honour to both his fatherland and his village". He was held in high regard by "Higher Powers" and was easily comparable "to the most important emperors of the past".[52] The fluid political balance of the 1060s and the peculiar relationship between the Komnenoi and the Doukai, sheds light on Skylitzes' decision to stop his history in 1057, when Kekaumenos, Isaac Komnenos and the Doukai were still in cooperation. Instead, the milieu of Alexios I does not convincingly resolve Skylitzes' decision to include the reign of Isaac Komnenos in his *Epitome* but not in his *Synopsis.*

Last but not least, as already noted by other scholars, dating the completion of the *Synopsis* in the reign of Constantine X solves other discrepancies too. Firstly, by placing the work before Psellos' *Chronographia* and Attaleiates' *Historia,* one envisages the *Synopsis* as an earlier history than the latter two. This can convincingly explain why Skylitzes neither mentioned Michael Attaleiates in his preface, nor employed his *Historia* and Psellos' *Chronographia* as a source in the *Synopsis,* but did so in the *Epitome.* Accordingly, Skylitzes' citing of Psellos' historical narrative in the preface of the *Synopsis* can be perceived as a reference to *Historia Syntomos*, which better fits its characterization as a very brief account of succession of emperors. Finally, since the earliest extant manuscript of the *Synopsis* dates from the 12th century, the dignities and offices of Skylitzes (*kouropalates* and *megas drougarios* of the *Vigla*) as they appear in the title of his history may well reflect the stage of Skylitzes' career in the reign of Alexios I, rather than in the 1060s, when the *Synopsis* seems to have been completed.[53]

Endnotes

[1]   Notable exceptions include: G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica I: Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker* (Berlin 1958), pp. 335–41; H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. I (Munich 1978) 389–93; S. Antoljak, "Wer könnte eigentlich Joannes Scylitzes sein?", in M. Berza and E. Stănescu (eds.), *Actes du XIVe Congrès international des études byzantines*, vol. III (Bucharest 1976), pp. 677–82; W. Seibt, "Ioannes Skylitzes: Zur Person des Chronisten", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 25 (1976), pp. 81–5; A. E. Laiou, "Imperial Marriages and their Critics in the Eleventh Century: The Case of Skylitzes", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), pp. 165–76; N. M. Panagiotakes, "Fragments of a Lost Eleventh Century Byzantine Historical Work?", in C. N. Constantinides, N. M. Panagiotakes, E. Jeffreys and A. D. Angelou, *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (Venice 1996), pp. 321–58.

[2]   J. Shepard, "Scylitzes on Armenia in the 1040s, and the Role of Catacalon Cecaumenos", *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 11 (1975–1976), pp. 269–311; "Byzantium's Last Sicilian Expedition: Skylitzes' Testimony", *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 14–16 (1977–1979), pp. 145–59; "A Suspected Source of Scylitzes' Synopsis Historiarum: The Great Catacalon Cecaumenus", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 16 (1992), pp. 171–81; "Memoirs as Manifesto: The Rhetoric of Katakalon Kekaumenos", in T. Shawcross and I. Toth (eds.), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond* (Cambridge 2018), pp. 185–214. See also C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire, 976–1025* (Oxford 2005) and E.-S. Kiapidou, *Η Σύνοψη Ιστοριών του Ιωάννη Σκυλίτζη και οι πηγές της, 811–1057* (Athens 2010).

[3]   For the various problems see also A. G. K. Savvides, *Βυζαντινό ιστοριογραφικό ενδεκάπτυχο: Συμβολή για τους ιστοριογράφους και την εποχή τους* (Athens 2019³), pp. 85–116.

[4]   Holmes, *Basil II,* pp. 66–119, 216–37, 240-98; Shepard, "Memoirs", pp. 187–90, 207–9. See also W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke 2013), pp. 329–33; E. McGeer, *Byzantium in the Time of Troubles: The Continuation of the Chronicle of John Skylitzes (1057–1079)* (Leiden 2020), pp. 5–28; the introduction of J.-C. Cheynet and B. Flusin in the English translation of the *Synopsis,* J. Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811–1057* (Cambridge 2010) ix–xxxiii; and L. Neville, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing* (Cambridge 2018), pp. 155–7.

[5]   Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών,* pp. 112–21, 126–49. See also A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι,* vol. III (Athens 2009), pp. 249–55 and Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, pp. 334–7.

[6] Leo the Deacon, *Historiae,* ed. K. B. Hase (Bonn 1828) 169, trans. A.-M. Talbot and D. F. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon* (Washington DC 2005), p. 212.

[7] Leo the Deacon, *Historiae,* p. 170 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan, p. 213).

[8] John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn (Berlin 1973), p. 319 (trans. Wortley, 303). The stratagem is not mentioned by John Zonaras, *Epitomae Historiarum,* ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, vol. III (Bonn 1897), pp. 541–2 who instead records that Peter the *stratopedarches* was not slain at the battle of Lapara but later. See also Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 450–3.

[9] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 323 (trans. Wortley, 307). Also recorded by Zonaras, *Epitomae,* p. 543. For a different view on when the siege of Nikaia occurred c.f. Leo the Deacon, *Historiae*, pp. 212–3.

[10] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, pp. 403–4 (trans. Wortley, 380). Also recorded by Zonaras, *Epitomae,* pp. 591–2. Arab sources record no siege of Edessa in 1038, they do record one in 1036 but their account is nowhere near that of John Skylitzes, see W. Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrundert: Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen von 1001 bis 1055* (Vienna 1981), pp. 148–52 with G. Leveniotis, *Η πολιτική κατάρρευση του Βυζαντιού στην Ανατολή: Το ανατολικό σύνορο και η Κεντρική Μικρά Ασία κατά το β΄ ήμισυ του 11ου αι.*, vol. I (Thessaloniki 2007), pp. 278–9, 585–6; A. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A. D. to the First Crusade* (New York 2017), pp. 68–9; E. Honingmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071* (Brussels 1935), pp. 135–9.

[11] For an overview of scholarly views on Leo the Deacon's biography and sources see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, pp. 236–46; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί,* pp. 475–501; Talbot and Sullivan, *Leo the Deacon*, pp. 9–50 and K. J. Sinclair, *War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography: Sources, Influences and Trends*, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (Birmingham 2012), pp. 47–60, 150–70.

[12] Holmes, *Basil II,* pp. 162–70 and C. Holmes, "The Rhetorical Structures of Skylitzes' Synopsis Historion", in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), pp. 187–200.

[13] Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. N. G. Wilson, vols. I-II (Oxford 2015) 6.77–6; Polyaenus, *Strategemata,* ed. J. Melber and E. Woelfflin (Leipzig 1887) 1.14.1; *Hypotheseis,* ed. J. Melber (Leipzig 1887) 20.1, for an English translation of both see P. Krentz and E. L. Wheeler, *Polyaenus, Stratagems of War*, vols. I–II (Chicago 1994); *Strategemata Ambrosiana*, ed. J.-A. de Foucault (Paris 1949) 20.1; *Parecbolae,* ed. J.-A. de Foucault (Paris 1949), 18.1, see also 18.3; Pseudo Leo VI, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, ed. A. Dain (Paris 1938) 95.12, trans. G. Chatzelis and J. Harris, *A Tenth-Century Byzantine Military Manual: The Sylloge Tacticorum* (New York 2017), p. 113. For Byzantine adaptations of Polyaenus see F. Schindler, *Die Überlieferung der*

Strategemata des Polyainos (Vienna 1973) with earlier bibliography cited by him, and E. L. Wheeler, "Polyaenus: Scriptor Militaris", in K. Brodersen (ed.), *Polyainos: Neue Studien* (Berlin 2010), pp. 3–42; C. M. Mazzucchi, "Dagli anni di Basilio Parakimomenos (cod. Ambr. B 119 Sup.)", *Aevum* 52 (1978), pp. 267–316.

[14]   Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 240–98.

[15]   Both the *Strategemata* and the *Hypotheseis* include the same uncommon verbs as John Skylitzes, ἀντιστρατοπεδεύω and ἀριστοποιέω. See Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 319: ἀντιστρατοπεδεύει τοῖς ἐναντίοις, ἐμπίπτει τοῖς πολεμίοις ἀριστοποιουμένοις; Polyaenus, *Strategemata*, 1.14: ἐπολέμει καὶ ἀντεστρατοπέδευεν, ὅταν ἀριστοποιεῖσθαι κηρύξῃ; *Hypotheseis,* 20.1: ἐπολέμει καὶ ἀντεστρατοπέδευεν, ὅταν ἀριστοποιεῖσθαι κηρύξω. The translation used here is an adaptation of an older one by R. Sheperd, *Polyaenus' Stratagems of War* (London 1793), pp. 14–5 which was revised online by Andrew Smith at: http://www.attalus.org/translate/polyaenus1A.html

[16]   Polyaenus, *Strategemata, 7.36*; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. T. Dorandi (Cambridge 2013) 1.83; *Hypotheseis*, 56.11; *Strategemata Ambrosiana*, 53.7. An abridged version is also preserved in the *Suda*, ed. A. Adler, vols. I-IV (Leipzig 1928–1935) ϖ1569.

[17]   M. Meulder, "Qui est le roi Mérops cité dans la *Συλλογη Τακτικων*", *Byzantion* 73 (2003), pp. 445–66.

[18]   Pseudo Leo VI, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 95.4 (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 111–2).

[19]   Pseudo Leo VI, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 77.2 (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 100).

[20]   Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, pp. 247–70.

[21]   A. Dain, *Le Corpus Perditum* (Paris 1939); A. Dain and J. A. de Foucault, "Les stratégistes byzantins", *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967), pp. 359–91, here 353. C.f. J.-R. Vieillefond, *Les Cestes de Julius Africanus: Étude sur l'ensemble des fragments avec édition, traduction et commentaires* (Florence 1970), pp. 194–8 and L. Mecella, "Die Überlieferung der Kestoi des Julius Africanus in den byzantinischen Textsammlungen zur Militärtechnik", in M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (eds.), *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung* (Berlin, 2009), pp. 85–116, here pp. 107–113.

[22]   For war writing in the *Synopsis* of John Skylitzes and the use of military manuals see S. McGrath, "The Battles of Dorostolon (971): Rhetoric and Reality", in T. S. Miller and J. Nesbitt (eds.), *Peace and War in Byzantium* (Washington DC 1995), pp. 152–63; Holmes, "Rhetorical Structures", pp. 187–200. See also G. Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals as Literary Works and Practical Handbooks: The Case of the Tenth-Century Sylloge Tacticorum* (New York 2019), pp. 88–142. For observations on anecdotes in the *Synopsis* which conveyed a moral message see Th. Sklavos, "Moralizing History: The Synopsis Historiarum of John Skylitzes", in J. Burke (ed.), *Byzantine Narrative* (Leiden 2006), pp. 110–9. For more general observations on war writing in Middle Byzantine historiography see indicatively Sinclair,

War Writing; A. Kazhdan and Ch. Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (800–1000)* (Athens 2006), pp. 273–94; L. Hoffmann, "Geschichtsschreibung oder Rhetorik? Zum logos parakletikos bei Leon Diakonos", in M. Grünbart (ed.), *Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin 2007), pp. 105–39; A. Markopoulos, "From Narrative Historiography to Historical Biography: New Trends in Byzantine Historical Writing in the 10th–11th Centuries". *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 102 (2009): pp. 697–715; M. L. D. Riedel, "Historical Writing and Warfare", in S. Foot and Ch. F. Robinson (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, 400–1400* (Oxford 2012), pp. 576–604, here pp. 576–83; R.-J. Lilie, "Reality and Invention: Reflections on Byzantine Historiography". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), pp. 157–210; A. Kaldellis, "The Manufacture of History in the Later Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Rhetorical Templates and Narrative ontologies", in S. Marjanović-Dušanić (ed.), *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (Belgrade 2016), pp. 293–306, and in the same volume W. Treadgold, "The Unwritten Rules for Writing Byzantine History", pp. 276–92. See also S. McGrath, "Warfare as Literary Narrative", in Y. Stouraitis (ed.), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300–1204* (Leiden 2018), pp. 160–95; L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material History of Nikephoros Bryennios* (Cambridge 2012); P. Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene: Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth* (Cambridge 2014); L. O. Vilimonović, *Structure and Features of Anna Komnene's Alexiad: Emergence of a Personal History* (Amsterdam 2019).

[23] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, pp. 304–5, 308, 315, 318, 348–9, 355, 361–4, 381–2, 387, 431, 403, 406–7, 425–8. See also Shepard, "Scylitzes on Armenia"; "Last Sicilian Expedition"; "Suspected source"; "Memoirs as manifesto", with Holmes, *Basil II*, 203–39 and L. Andriollo, "Le charme du rebelle malheureux: Georges Maniakès dans les sources grecques du XIe siècle", *Travaux et Mémoires* 21/1 (2017), pp. 1–12. See also McGeer, *Continuation*, pp. 11–2 and c.f. J.-C. Cheynet, "Jean Skylitzès, lecteur des chroniqueurs du Xe siècle", in S. Marjanović-Dušanić and B. Flusin (eds.), *Remanier, métaphraser: Fonctions et techniques de la réécriture dans le monde byzantin* (Belgrade 2011), pp. 111–29.

[24] See A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (eds.), *Imitatio – Aemulatio – Variatio* (Vienna 2010) with earlier literature cited in the volume. See also A. Kaldellis, *Byzantine Readings of Ancient Historians* (New York 2015), pp. 1–46 with L. Neville, "Singing with David and Contemplating Agesilaus: Ethical Training in Byzantium," in S. Xenophontos and A. Marmodoro (eds.), *The Reception of Greek Ethics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium* (Cambridge 2021) 140–58. While variations of stratagems, involving food and containers are more common in Classical and Byzantine literature, the discussed ruses of Skylitzes were deliberately identical to their models in order to establish a clear connection between Byzantine and Classical figures. See S. Germanidou,

"Μια μορφή περιβαλλοντικού πολέμου στο Βυζάντιο: Γεωργικές δολιοφθορές και αγροτικά εργαλεία ως φονικά όπλα", *Byzantina Symmeikta* 27 (2017), pp. 145–72.

[25] Herodotus, *Historiae*, 5.39–42, 6.61–75; Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 278–89.

[26] For the legacy and tradition of the seven sages and Bias of Priene in antiquity as a tricksters and wise counsellors see indicatively R. P. Martin, "The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom", in C. Dougherty and L. Kurke (eds.), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1998), pp. 108–28 and I. Konstantakos, "Amasis, Bias and the Seven Sages as Riddlers", *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft neue Folge* 29 (2005), pp. 11–46. For Merops see Meulder, "Merops", pp. 458–9. We do not know to whom this stratagem was attributed to in the *Corpus Perditum*.

[27] For the audience/readership of Byzantine historical narratives and entertaining elements in such texts see B. Croke, "Uncovering Byzantium's Historiographical Audience", in R. Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Abingdon OX 2010), pp. 25–53; Ch. Roueché, "Byzantine Writers and Readers: Storytelling in the Eleventh Century", in R. Beaton (ed.), *The Greek Novel AD 1–1985* (London 1988), pp. 123–33, with Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 228–36; McGrath, "Warfare", pp. 166–78 and Lilie, "Reality and Invention", pp. 208–9. See also I. Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance: La litérature au XIIe siècle* (Paris 2014), pp. 87–111, pp. 196–8 and "To Narrate the Events of the Past: On Byzantine Historians, and Historians on Byzantium" in J. Burke (ed.), *Byzantine Narrative* (Leiden 2006), pp. 47–58. For the sieges of Edessa see n.10 above. For the preservation of archival documents and military reports in Byzantium see Sinclair, *War Writing*, pp. 190–208.

[28] C.f. Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών,* pp. 134–5; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί,* pp. 250–5.

[29] For the Anemas family see Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 207–8 and Ch. Stavrakos, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athen* (Wiesbaden 2000). For Alyates, Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 204–6; McGeer, *Continuation*, p. 11; I. Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria: Byzantine Seals with Family Names*, vol. II (Sofia 2006), pp. 49–50. For Xiphias, Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen,* pp. 288–9. For Maniakes, Ch. Stavrakos, "Unpublizierte Bleisiegel der Familie Maniakes: Der Fall Georgios Maniakes", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 8 (2003), pp. 101–11 and c.f. Jordanov, *Seals*, pp. 272–6. For Theodorokanos, W. Seibt, "The Theodorokanoi: Members of the Byzantine Military Aristocracy with an Armeno-Iberian Origin", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 13 (2019), pp. 81–91. For Kekaumenos, Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. D. R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis (Berlin 2001) XIII.5.1, XIII.5.7, XV.4.8.

[30] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, pp. 323, 355, 371–2 (trans. Wortley, pp. 306, 336, 350–1); c.f. Aristakes Lastivertc'i, *History*, trans. R. Bedrosian (New York

1985), pp. 29–30. Nikephoros Bryennios, *Histoire,* ed. and trans P. Gautier (Brussels 1975) 1.1.1–7. For the Armenian historian see N. S. M. Matheou, *Situating the "History" Attributed to Aristakēs Lastiverc'i, 1000-1072: The Empire of New Rome & Caucasia in the Eleventh Century*, PhD thesis, University of Oxford (Oxford 2018). See also K. Barzos, *Η γενεαλογία των Κομνηνών* (Thessaloniki 1984), pp. 38–40; J.-C. Cheynet, "L'iconographie des sceaux des Comnènes", in C. Ludwig (ed.), *Siegel und Siegler* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), pp. 53–67, here pp. 53–5. Perhaps Skylitzes chose to refer to Manuel with the surname of his wife to downplay his sympathy for the Komnenoi. For an alternative theory see Cheynet, "Jean Skylitzès", pp. 121–2.

31 Skylitzes, *Synopsis,* pp. 288–92; W. Seibt, *Die Skleroi*: *Eine prosopographisch-sigillographisclie Studie* (Vienna 1976), pp. 87–106; Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 272–6, 456–61.

32 J.-C. Cheynet, C. Morrisson and W. Seibt, *Les sceaux byzantins inédits de la collection Henri Seyrig* (Paris 1991), p. 57; J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou and H. Métrévéli, *Actes d'Iviron,* vol. I (Paris 1985), pp. 2–59. For Byzantine-Georgian relations in the eleventh and twelfth century see S. Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian World c. 900–1210: Ideology of Kinship and Rhetoric in the Byzantine Periphery*, PhD thesis, Central European University (Budapest 2019), pp. 95–100 with Barzos, *Γενεαλογία,* pp. 67–8. For the rank of *panypersebastos* see J. Shea, *Politics and Government in Byzantium: The Rise and Fall of the Bureaucrats* (London 2020), pp. 16–7.

33 Some of these families, like the Anemas and the Skleroi, rebelled against Alexios I, but, depending on the exact date of composition the *Synopsis*, it is unclear whether this influenced Skylitzes' representation of them.

34 For the gradual increase of civil functionaries, spending for their salaries, and the declining importance of military administration and aristocracy see more recently L. Andriollo, *Constantinople et les provinces d'Asie Mineure IXe–XIe siècles: Administration impériale, sociétés locales et rôle de l'aristocratie* (Leuven 2016), pp. 341–54 and Shea, *Bureaucrats.*

35 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, pp. 476, 479, 482–4 with Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών,* pp. 464–70; McGeer, *Continuation,* p. 10 and n.36. Similar sentiments are also expressed by Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. E. Tsolakis (Athens 2011) 36.7–13 and Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. D. R. Reinsch (Berlin 2014) VI.7–8, but the fact that John Skylitzes was probably the first historian to make such claims is significant. Nevertheless, recent scholarship mostly sees the rebellion of 1057 and the regime of Constantine X as the starting points of Byzantine military collapse, see indicatively, S. D. Hondridou, *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Θ´ Μονομάχος και η εποχή του (ενδέκατος αιώνας μ.Χ.)* (Athens 2002), pp. 307–10; S. Vryonis. "The Eleventh Century: Was There a Crisis in the Empire? The Decline of Quality and Quantity in the Byzantine Armed

Forces", and J. Haldon, "Approaches to an Alternative Military History of the Period ca. 1025–1071", in V. N. Vlyssidou (ed.), *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;): Το Βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025–1081)* (Athens 2003), pp. 17–43, 45–74; Leveniotis, *Πολιτική κατάρρευση,* pp. 668–9; G. Leveniotis, "Such Carnage in One Place Had Not Occurred before in Byzantium: The Battle of Hades (20 August 1057 CE) and Its Repercussions", in G. Theotokis and M. Meško (eds.), *War in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (New York 2021), pp. 37–65, here pp. 55–6; A. Kaldellis, *Streams,* pp. 202–38; A. D. Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim Turkish Anatolia, ca. 1040–1130* (New York 2017), pp. 53–4, 102–24; M. Whittow, "The Second Fall: The Place of the Eleventh Century in Roman History", in M. D. Lauxtermann and M. Whittow (eds.), *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century: Being in Between* (New York 2017), pp. 109–26. For different views on the rebellion of Isaac Komnenos see K. Inoue, "The Rebellion of Isaakios Komnenos and the Provincial Aristocratic Oikoi", *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993), pp. 268–78; J. D. Howard-Johnston, "Crown Lands and the Defence of Imperial Authority in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995), pp. 75–100, here pp. 97–99; J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris 1996), pp. 339–58; B. Krsmanović, "Αλλαγές στη δομή της κοινωνικής κορυφής μετά την εποχή του Βασιλείου Β΄", in Vlyssidou, *Κρίση,* pp. 87–106; Y. Nezu, "The Revolt of Isaakios Komnenos: Reconsideration", *Orient* 41 (2006), pp. 41–60; K. Mpourdara, *Καθοσίωσις και τυραννίς: Το πολιτικό αδίκημα στο Βυζάντιο (8ος-13ος αιώνας)* (Athens 2015), pp. 368–75 and A. J. Davidson, *The Glory of Ruling Makes all Things Permissible: Power and Usurpation in Byzantium, Some Aspects of Communication, Legitimacy, and Moral Authority*, PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham (Birmingham 2017), pp. 28–33.

36   For Isaac Komnenos, his military career and his reforms see Barzos, *Γενεαλογία,* pp. 41–7; A. S. Mokhov, "Voyennaya politika Isaaka I Komnina", *Nauchnyye vedomosti Belgorodskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Ser., Istoriya. Ekonomika. Politologiya. Informatika* 120 (2012), pp. 52–60; Kaldellis, *Streams,* pp. 219–23; M. Böhm, "Izaak I Komnen (1007–1060). Wódz, buntownik, cesarz – w poszukiwaniu jego doktryny wojennej?", *Vox Patrum* 77 (2021), pp. 81–96.

37   Stories of incompetence and corruption regarding Katakalon Kekaumenos and Isaac Komnenos were silenced in the *Synopsis*, see Psellos, *Chronographia*, VII.3 and c.f. Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 479.

38   For the battle of Hades see Leveniotis, "Battle of Hades" and c.f. M. Böhm, "The Military Policy of Isaac Komnenos at the Time of Battle of Petroe (1057)", *Open Political Science* 1 (2018), pp. 136–42.

39   Seibt, *Skleroi,* pp. 76–85.

40   For Tornikios see I. Koltsida-Makre, "New Acquisitions of Byzantine Lead Seals in the Athens Numismatic Museum Collection", *Studies in Byzantine*

Sigillography 9 (2006), pp. 11–22, here 19, with earlier bibliography. For John, Simbatios and Apocharpes see Jordanov, *Seals*, 59; Panagiotakes, "Fragments", 335, n.57; and the online catalogue of the Collection of Dumbarton Oaks at https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1951.31.5.2247. For Constantine Tzourbaneles see J.-C. Cheynet, "Du stratège de theme au duc: Chronologie de l'évolution au cours du XIe siècle", *Travaux et Mémoires* 9 (1985), pp. 181–94, here p. 184; R. Mihajlovski, "A Collection of Medieval Seals from the Fortress Kale in Skopje, Excavated Between 2007 and 2012", *Byzantion* 86 (2016), pp. 261–316, here p. 266. C.f. V. Laurent, "Un nouveau gouverneur de la Bulgarie byzantine: Le Géorgien Tzourbanélés", *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române* 92–95 (1944–1947), pp. 7–15; N. Bănescu, *Les duchès byzantins de Paristrion (Paradounavon) et de Bulgarie* (Bucharest 1946), pp. 137–9 and H.-J. Kühn, *Die byzantinische Armee im 10. und 11. Jahrundert: Studien zur Organisation der Tagmata* (Vienna 1991), p. 232. The dignities with the prefix "proto" appeared in the reign of Constantine X, see N. Oikonomidès, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire Byzantin aux XIe siècle (1025–1118)", *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 125–52, here pp. 125–6.

[41] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, pp. 376–7 (trans. Wortley, 356). For the Komnenoi and the family of Diogenes and Bourtzes see J.-C. Cheynet, "La famille Bourtzèz" in *La société byzantine: l'apport des sceaux*, vol. II (Paris 2008), pp. 353–73; Barzos, *Γενεαλογία,* pp. 61–4, 80–1, 85.

[42] V. S. Šandrovskaja, "Die Bedeutung der Bleisiegel für das Studium einiger Aspekte der byzantinischen Geschichte", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32/2 (1982), pp. 165–73, here pp. 169–70; Cheynet, "Du stratège au duc", p. 185 and Cheynet, "Comnènes", p. 55.

[43] Nikolaishvili, *Georgian World,* pp. 70–86. For the title of *sebastos* in this period see Shea, *Government,* p. 190 n. 49,

[44] George the Minor, *The Life and Citizenship of Our Holy and Blessed Father George the Hagiorite,* trans. T. Grdzelidze (London 2009), pp. 142–6; J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou and H. Métrévéli, *Actes d'Iviron,* vol. II (Paris 1990), pp. 17–26; Nikolaishvili, *Georgian World,* pp. 20–30, 45–6.

[45] For Alyates see Bryennios, *Histoire*, 1.16; Attaleiates, *Historia*, 131.20–5; John Skylitzes, *Συνέχεια*, ed. E. Th. Tsolakes (Thessaloniki 1968) 153.5–9; B. Latishev, "Этюды по византийской эпиграфике", *Византийский временник* 2 (1895), pp. 184–8; Jordanov, *Seals*, pp. 49–50. The wife of John Komnenos, Anna Dalassene, was accused as a supporter of Romanos IV Diogenes and was exiled by the Doukai probably along with her sons. For this, and for the intermarriage of the two families see Barzos, *Γενεαλογία,* pp. 51–3, 61–4, 85 with D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London 1968), pp. 34–7.

[46] Stavrakos, "Bleisiegel der Maniakes", pp. 102–9 with Jordanov, *Seals*, pp. 272–6.

[47] Ashot's seal mentions neither his dignity nor his office, but it features St. Demetrios. A military career can thus be assumed for this individual. Constantine Theodorokanos' seal could have belonged to the same man who later attempted to counter Nikephoros Bryennios' soldiers. For the seals of this family see Seibt, "The Theodorokanoi", pp. 83–9 and c.f. earlier bibliography cited by him.

[48] See the seals of Constantine Kourkouas (hypatos), Constantine Kourkouas (patrikios) and Constantine Kourkouas (magistros) which feature the military saint St. Theodore in L. Andriollo, "Les Kourkouas (IXe–XIe siècle)", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 11 (2012), pp. 57–87 and Jordanov, *Seals*, pp. 239–42. C.f. McGrath, "Dorostolon", pp. 157–9 and Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 223–4.

[49] Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 205 c.f. Constantine VII, *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1838), 390.16–21; Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren (Berlin 2006) 135.23. M. Grigoriou-Ioannidou, "Η βυζαντινοβουλγαρική σύγκρουση στους Κατασύρτες (917)". *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής ΑΠΘ* 21 (1983): pp. 123–48, argues that Skylitzes' account is more credible than that of tenth-century historians, a perspective which is not shared by studies on Byzantine-Bulgarian wars though, see indicatively D. P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarian-Byzantine Wars for Early Medieval Balkan Hegemony: Silver-Lined Skulls and Blinded Armies* (Cham 2017), pp. 184–9. See also *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών*, 271–7. For a different explanation of Skylitzes' inconsistencies in the treatment of some aristocratic families see D. I. Polemis, "Some Cases of Erroneous Identification in the Chronicle of Skylitzes". *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965), pp. 74-81 and Cheynet, "Jean Skylitzès", pp. 111–29.

[50] Most scholars agree that the *Epitome* was also written by John Skylitzes, see indicatively E. Th. Tsolakes, *Η Συνέχεια της Χρονογραφίας του Ιωάννου Σκυλίτζη* (Thessaloniki 1968) 77–99 with earlier bibliography; "Συνέχειας Συνέχεια", *Byzantina Symmeikta* 25 (2015), pp. 115–42; Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, p. 338; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί*, pp. 307–12; McGeer, *Continuation*, pp. 5–28. C.f. E. Kiapidou, "Η πατρότητα της Συνέχειας του Σκυλίτζη και τα προβλήματά της: Συγκλίσεις και αποκλίσεις από τη Σύνοψη Ιστοριών", *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 52 (2004–2006), pp. 329–62 and Savvides, *Ενδεκάπτυχο*, pp. 87–99 with the earlier bibliography cited by him. For the reception of Isaac I Komnenos and Constantine X Doukas in the *Epitome* see A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge 1984), pp. 33–5; McGeer, *Continuation*, pp. 14–6; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί*, pp. 314–8.

[51] J. Shepard, "Scylitzes on Armenia", pp. 269–83, "Suspected source", pp. 173–5 and "Memoirs as manifesto" with Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών*,

pp. 132–4 and M. Jeffreys, "Summaries of the Letters of Michael Psellos", in M. Jeffreys and M. D. Lauxtermann (eds.), *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities* (Oxford 2017), pp. 197–8.

[52] Michael Psellos, *Orationes funebres,* ed. J. Polemis, vol. I (Berlin 2014) 1.49–52, 2.11–12 with the translation and introduction of A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, *Psellos and the Patriarchs: Letters and Funeral Orations for Keroullarios, Leichoudes and Xiphilinos* (Notre Dame IN 2015), pp. 49–162. For example, while Constantine X Doukas demanded that Catherine of Bulgaria, Isaac I's wife, continued to be mentioned in acclamations as empress, Catherine had become a nun and she did not reside with the Doukai in the main palace. Similarly, even though Psellos and Bryennios claim that Constantine X honoured Isaac Komnenos and all his relatives, none seem to have hold an important office during Constantine X's reign. See Barzos, *Γενεαλογία,* pp. 46–7, 49–53, 67–9; Polemis, *The Doukai,* pp. 28–34 and Cheynet, *Pouvoir,* p. 345, n.43. Another example is Manuel Komnenos, the nephew of Isaac I, we know from his seal that he was a *proderos* under Constantine X, but the seal does not mention an office. Nikephoros Bryennios argues that Manuel was following a military career under Constantine X, but other sources suggest that he came to the foreground only after Romanos IV Diogenes became emperor and promoted him. See Bryennios, *Histoire,* p. 87 and c.f. Cheynet, "Comnènes", pp. 58–62 for Manuel Komnenos and other more obscure figure such as Constantine Komnenos.

[53] Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών,* pp. 126–49. C.f. Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians,* pp. 331–2. It has been argued that a version of Psellos' *Chronographia* had already been produced c. 1062, but the *Chronographia* seems to have been published and disseminated only after Psellos death. See Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians,* 278 and Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί,* pp. 75–84. The *Epitome* drew on both Psellos' *Chronographia* and Attaleiates' *Historia,* see Tsolakes, *Συνέχεια,* pp. 61–74; McGeer, *Continuation,* pp. 13–28.

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SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY (AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY): SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS (PES) IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Ettore Costa

Abstract

This paper argues that science and technology have been closely linked to the crisis of social democracy, as this political culture drew strength from the optimism about scientific progress. The paper reviews the literature on the decline of social democracy to assess how its role has been perceived. Then, it describes the evolving impact of scientific issues on the programs of PES in the 21st century, as it was central to new policies of economic intervention to build human capital. Finally, it shows elements of continuity with the rhetoric and policies of the Cold War era, despite attempts by supporters of the Third Way to present it as completely new.

Keywords: Party of European Socialists (PES), science and democracy, social democracy, Tony Blair, Third Way/Neue Mitte

1. Introduction

The decline of social democracy at the end of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century has been a common topic in history and political science literature. As Hindmoor says, "a series [of articles] on the future of the left is never a great sign for the left".[1] However, it is equally true that the argument that the left is in decline or that left and right have lost their meaning is a cliché that has regularly reappeared throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, more recently in the form of "End of Ideology" by Daniel Bell (1962) and the "End of History" by Francis Fukuyama (1992).[2] While a left-right cleavage continues to exist as a feature of politics, the main discontinuity in the 21st century is rather how the left space of the political arena is organized. In the second half of the 20th century, the

ideal model was a monolithic organization, where one party organizing the working-class was able to dominate the political space and became the sole expression of left-wing politics. The left was the working-class, the working-class was the labor movement, the labor movement was its organizations (party, trade unions and co-ops). This model assumed a perfect correspondence between class, subculture, political and economic self-organization. In truth, even then few nations such as Sweden had such a monolithic structure. In many nations, other cultural and ideological divisions produced working-class parties alternative to social democracy, such as Christian Democrats or communists. The 21st century saw a retreat everywhere from this model in favor of fragmentation: as working-class parties lose their ability to attract all shades of progressive opinion, alternative parties came to occupy the left-wing of the political spectrum, from New Left, to Green Parties, to New Radicals, to New Liberals, to Civil Rights, to Anti-Corruption.

How did social democracy lose its cohesive power and attraction? Many explanations have been presented, from the atomizing effect of consumerism, to the role of the welfare state in eroding class identity, to the scarcity of vote-winning policies available to parties in government. In many ways, this political fragmentation is simply a return to the politics of the 19th century, when parties were much weaker and competing political identities co-existed in the same side of the political divide. My contribution to this debate is arguing that social democratic parties have lost part of their amalgamating capacity because they can no longer rely on the attractiveness of pro-science positions in Western societies. A strong faith in scientific progress was a defining feature of socialism and one of the reasons for its success during the 20th century.[3]

According to Konrad Jarausch, the project of modernization was a driving force of the twentieth century and successful political families appropriated it and reinterpreted it according to their values.[4] By stressing the scientific-technological component of modernity – with its liberating, rationalizing and dynamic character – socialists could legitimize their project of social transformation. Science propped up faith in progress and provided technological tools that while neutral and open to misuse, could be put at service of the community. The 1970s saw a crisis of modernization, as progressive narrative of scientific progress and technological solutions were being challenged by skepticism about rationality and greater awareness of technological risks.[5] Technology became involved in more and more issues, while faith in technology

crumbled. This affected socialists and was one of the reasons for their decline.

Finally, what I intend to show is that one of the distinctive features of 21st-century social democracy is the contradiction between having to deal with enormous challenges from science and enormous challenges that can only be solved by science, but no longer being able to rely on a simplistic view of scientific neutrality and progress that has been integral to socialism since its origins.

This paper will explore the role of science in the political culture and fortunes of European social democracy in the 21st century and provide a historical perspective by tracing continuity and discontinuity with social democracy in the second half of the 20th century, during the Cold War era.

First, I will explore the literature on the decline of social democracy, focusing on books produced from the start of the decline of the social democracy in the late 1970s to the financial crisis of 2008. As mentioned, this is a rich field of research, where historians and political scientists have built multiple explanatory models involving a wide range of factors. My goal is to assess whether previous literature has accounted science and technology as one of the factors in the decline of social democratic parties and how it has conceptualized their effect.

Secondly, I will investigate the policy documents of the Party of European Socialists (PES) to reconstruct how social democrats approached scientific questions and the social role of science during the 21st century. The analysis will track the evolution of social democratic values and policies from the Third Way/Neue Mitte as promoted by Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder in late 1990s to a greater radicalism after the 2008 financial crisis. The goal is to describe what role science and technology played in social democratic policies, culture and visions and how this changed over twenty years.

Thirdly, I will provide historical perspective by confronting the discourse on science and technology produced by social democrats in the 21st century with the discourse they produced in the Cold War era. The goal is to assess whether there has been continuity or disruption in social democratic culture.

Finally, I will connect the evolution within social democratic political culture to wider developments in Western societies in order to draw conclusions on how a change in attitude towards science and technology has contributed to the decline of social democratic parties.

2. Literature review

The historical investigation of European social democracy is usually focused on national parties and often relies on national exceptionalism to explain national peculiarities or the success or failure of such party. Histories of European social democracy or more generally of the European left are not uncommon and they contain precious insights. However, they are often limited to anthologies of national cases with a small attempt to synthetize shared developments.[6] On the other hand, comparative analysis is a favorite tool of political science.

Recently, Frank Bandau provided a survey of the explanations for the decline of social democracy, classifying causal factors.[7] Bandau has emphasized the role of social transformation, the limitation to economic policies, the penetration of neo-liberal ideas making social democratic offering less distinctive and the domination of middle-class activists who make the parties less attractive for the working-class. Bandau does not explicitly single out science and technological development as factors in these macro-explanations, though they occasionally account for contributing factors.

No book or article on the decline of social democracy has centered science and technology as a major factor. To salvage the most important contributions from the existing literature, it is necessary to conceptualize how these factors are integrated into general explanations. In the following paragraphs I propose ideal types to describe their role, focusing specifically on a distinction between external factors and substantial factors.

The most common strategy for integrating science and technology into explanations for the decline of social democracy is treating them as a factor that modified the context in which historical actors operated. I define this as "external" factor because these explanations assume a passive role of historical actors towards technological change, which put them into favorable or unfavorable situations with limited agency. While historical explanations must center material factors, often these explanatory models degenerate into technological determinism, underplaying the role of agency in adapting to these developments or even steering them.

In broad terms, the literature assumes technology to have external effects in three fields: electoral-social, economic, and communication. The electoral-social effect describes how technology modified the structure of society, transforming both the electors that social democratic parties needed to win and the class structure that shaped its class-based character.

The economic effect describes how technological change transformed production, distribution of income and trade, which changed the economic policies that were available to social democratic governments. Finally, the communication effect describes how technological change in the media transformed the way politics played out and politicians could reach electors.

The less common strategy the literature adopts is to treat science and technology as a substantial element of politics and political culture, which directly involved the agency of historical actors. Among the many ways science became a political issue, three are recurring in the literature. First, there is the way in which scientific and technological advancements propped up the myth of progress, which was an integral part of socialist culture. Here the literature recognizes the mutual dependency of the myth of scientific and social progress. Secondly, science was essential to the development of "scientification of politics" (*Verwissenschaftlichung von Politik*), a phenomenon attributed to the early postwar period and the Golden Age of social democracy.[8] The term describes the belief that society could be governed according to objective apolitical laws and that scientific research could provide resources to distribute and make more rational political decisions. While this argument is controversial, many historians include science as one of the factors in the period of the end of ideology.[9] Finally, in some specific science-related questions – such as nuclear power or environmentalism – historians see a key factor in the fortunes of social democracy.

This section is going to analyze a series of monographs that explore the fortunes and decline of social democracy. I am going to use the ideal types sketched above to classify the role they attributed to science and technology. I have selected the more exhaustive books with a well-established fame, so the selection is not fully representative. Finally, I have focused on books published after the 1970s and before 2008. This period saw the beginning of the decline of social democracy, which produced the revisionism of the Third Way/Neue Mitte. Social democratic reformers saw the need to recast the program of social democracy by making a break with traditions and adapt to the new conditions of globalization and neo-liberalism. Thus, I am interested in the period where historical research served not just scientific purposes, but also the ideological purpose of justify or oppose the internal transformation of social democracy.

The first book is *Paper Stones,* one of the older narratives on the rise and decline of social democracy.[10] The book is concerned with the slow decline of traditional social democracy, so Adam Przeworski and John Sprague give some weight to the idea that technological change might have changed the privileged relationship between socialist parties and the working-class. In addition to deindustrialization, they focus on the effect of technology on the way politics was run. Traditional social democratic parties expressed the closed milieu of the working-class and organized their militants through a comprehensive network of organization that regulated most aspects of daily life. Over time, social democrats shifted to electoralism, relying on new media such as television to reach a wider range of social groups. Thus, Przeworski and Sprague consider technological change just one of the many factors in the transformation of social democratic parties and explicitly as just an external factor, not a substantial one.

Sheri Berman's *The Primacy of Politics* is another text that gives little attention to technological factors and scientific questions. Berman sees the early orthodox Marxism of the turn of the 20th century as dominated by scientific and economic determinism under the influence of Engels and Kautsky.[11] She sees the close relationship between science and socialism as simply a feature of an early and immature version of socialism. She does not systematically conceptualize the role of technological progress except as a tool for multiple, not specifically socialist goals.[12] This book offers little insight into the role of science and technology.

More open to recognize the role of science and technology in socialism is the work of Gøsta Esping-Andersen. Esping-Andersen deals with the theories of post-industrialism since the 1960s to explain the evolution of the welfare systems. He criticizes both Marxist and liberal economists for their excessive reliance on technological determinism due to a binary division between market and state. Ignoring different national outcomes, they built theories of post-industrialism that did not account enough for the role of political decisions.[13] In line with the political nature of technological decisions, Esping-Andersen also recognizes a specific reformist socialist tradition of promoting social reforms, education and welfare provisions as necessary for the full deployment of technological progress.[14]

Donald Sassoon's classic history of the European left, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, devotes considerable space to the role of science and technology. Sassoon identifies 19th-century positivism and the celebration

of science as essential elements at the foundations of socialism.[15] This celebration of progress would inform the socialist movement throughout the 20th century. Progress and technological modernization were integral part of the appeal of socialism:

> In the post-war period the SPD had acquired legitimacy by accepting fundamental assumptions of liberal capitalism – namely, that the gradual deployment of technical progress would bring about a continuous increase in the welfare of society – that modern societies faced an infinite trend towards growth and technological progress. It further assumed that this would go hand in hand with the gradual development of socialism. This was not a peculiarity of German socialists. The entire socialist movement, including communists, accepted this teleological view, present, in one form or another, throughout Marx's own writings and shared by all liberals since the days of the Enlightenment.[16]

The existential problem for socialism was that technological progress was taking place under capitalism. This opened a contradiction, which for Sassoon is best embodied by the French Communist Party. As an anti-system party inimical to every social change, it had to reject technological progress while also promising a brilliant future under communism.[17] This problem became even more pressing in the 1960s, as Western societies entered a crisis of rationality and science. The promise of technological abundance and technically-assisted gender equality by social democratic governments failed to materialize, while the Vietnam war presented a struggle between the technologically advanced and inhuman civilization and the archaic, but revolutionary peasants.[18] The 1968 movement embodied the revolt against rationalism and industrial technology.[19]

In addition to the role of science in the ideal universe of socialism, Sassoon also stresses that technological change changed the economic and social context. The success of socialism had been based on the Fordist mode of production, but the new model based on electronics created harmful developments. Older craft unionism was based on high skill and differentials of qualification, while the effects of new technologies was deskilling and levelling out differences in qualification.[20] Trade unions were forced to accept this or see their firms go bankrupt:

> What happened, instead, was that the 1970s was the decade in which key sectors of capitalism – those able to reorganize production by the

intensive use of new technologies and information systems backed by adequate finance – advanced at the expense of the traditional sectors, i.e. those dominated by the traditional working class, and classical 'fordist' production and trade unionism.[21]

Technological change thus fostered the demise of traditional industries in which the workforce was male, unionized and well-paid in favor of new jobs with a different set of skills, often associated with women. This change allowed employers to impose lower salaries, piece rates, part-time and no job security.[22]

The end of rapid growth and environmental concerns eroded the myth of technological progress and unlimited growth, in favor of a concept of qualitative growth. While the idea considered environmental externalities and social impact, it was inevitably vaguer.[23] Moreover, by the end of the 1980s, social democratic parties like the British Labour Party had lost faith in the ability of the state to promote economic modernization and higher productivity.[24] Other parties, such as the German SPD, had been more successful in cushioning the problems of technological unemployment and disruption than in producing state-led growth.[25]

Geoff Eley's *Forging Democracy* also attempts a synthetic history of the European left. Eley also stresses how technological change in the productive system eroded the traditional working-class:

Thus the shift from skilled industrial work to white-collar labor in services entailed other changes – preferences for women over men, part-time working, rising joblessness, extreme gaps between regions, new computer based high-technology industries, and the collapse of the industrial economy's old manufacturing core. Deindustrialization remapped the capitalist economy.[26]

For Eley, however, the question is why a new trade unionism did not develop under the new circumstances. The transformation to a service and knowledge economy could mean the creation of a new proletariat of workers to be organized into unions, allowing a return to corporatism and Keynenianism. However, Eley argues that the new working-class was too divided along regional, ethnic and age differences to build a proper solidarity and class consciousness. He counts among these factors technological innovations such as the decline of coal or the introduction of containers in docks, which eliminated the traditional professions of

miners and longshoremen, where solidarity had been strongest. Thus, for Eley technological change was a major factor in social transformations, although science and technology are still external factors.

John Callaghan has produced a good narrative of the decline of social democracy integrating the role of science and technology.[27] He gives attention to technological change as a factor while rejecting technological determinism. Callaghan argues that the promotion of technology was an integral part of the economic policies of the British Labour Party and the SPD in the 1960s and 1970s. This tradition can be traced in the 1964 Wilson government, but also the early period of the Mitterrand presidency and the Labour Party's manifesto in 1983:

> In short, the thrust of the manifesto was redolent of Labour rhetoric of old: it was a case of science, industry and technology aided by the state against the forces of finance, short-termism and capital export.[28]

Against this statist and technocratic tradition and out of the 1968 contestation, a different tradition embodied by the New Left emerged. In France, supporters of *Autogestion* "denounced traditional social democracy for its naive faith in progress via state-guided economic growth and technological change."[29] Callaghan identifies a similar trend in the SPD in the 1980s and the Swedish social democrats in the 1990s, as they recognized the destructive environmental consequences of technology and the need for democratic control. After its fourth defeat in 1992, the British Labour Party shifted towards supply-side socialism, retrenching state intervention to allow the market to make private industry competitive. At the same time, state intervention shifted to building human capital: "Education and training had now been elevated to 'the commanding heights' of a modern economy."[30] Callaghan is thus able to identify a key component of the transition from old social democracy to Third Way/ Neue Mitte.

Callaghan also focuses on the role of technological change in transforming the context of social democracy. He supports the idea that new communication technologies were a major factor in globalization and weakening of national government, but he is skeptical that structural changes in the economy were the reason for the decline of social democracy. Academics and left-wing activists blame the flexible manufacturing system and the application of information technology to the monitoring of performance for the transition for a post-Fordist production

system.[31] However, Callaghan finds that the new flexible structures were less disruptive than claimed and outcomes such a labor market deregulation was not an automatic result of technology, but a product of political decisions. In this, Callaghan agrees with Esping-Andersen. A more serious question is whether technological change meant a decline of industrial workers, eroding the traditional constituency of social democracy. However, Callaghan warns that the working-class was never a solid bloc and its quantitative changes were not tied to the fortunes of social democratic parties. Callaghan's research is particularly useful in taking scientific questions as a substantial part of politics while warning against easy technological determinism.

The most successful attempt to integrate science and technology into a narrative of the rise and decline of social democracy is research by Francis Sejersted, although it is limited to Norwegian and Swedish cases.[32] Sejersted identifies these two social democratic parties as the most successful because of their adoption of a program of nation-building and social integration based on economic modernization and technological change. Like Jarausch notes, claiming the mantle of modernity was essential for social democratic projects. Sejersted sees the role of science not only in promoting economic growth and technological progress, but also advancing a model for a well-run society. This model based on rationalism and redistribution had a tendency to degenerate into optimism about technical mastery over life and an overreliance on expertise.[33] Sejersted thus associates a decline of social democratic fortunes in the 1970s to a greater skepticism towards technology in its many manifestations, including nuclear power.[34] Sejersted identifies the decline of the scientification of politics as a return to politics, where alternative worldviews and system of values could struggle over where to steer society:

> In the period after 1970, however, and running parallel with the weakening of faith in rational common sense and in technical progress, rationalist arguments were being replaced by moral arguments. Political rhetoric was changing its character. Beneath this turnover we are also able to glimpse a weakening of technological determinism and a new faith in the significance of political decisions.[35]

Finally, it must be noted that almost all narratives deal with technological change. Science is covered only to the degree that scientific

research produces new technology. Science as self-defined activity for the production of new knowledge or as a model of rationality and humanism is usually not covered. Only Sassoon and Sejersted recognize that the myth of progress of socialists depended on an expansive view of science.

3. Science and social democracy in the 21st century

This section analyzes the role of science and technology in the policies of European social democracy from the late 1990s to the late 2010s, a transition period into a world no longer defined by the Cold War. Since the expansion of the European Union towards North, South and East and the deepening of integration, the Party of European Socialists has played major role in synthetizing the disparate demands of individual socialist parties, so that we can take it as representative of European social democracy.

I will analyze the electoral manifestos the PES produced for each European election since 1999. The late 1990s saw the spread of a revision of social democratic ideology in Europe, with the electoral success of Tony Blair's New Labour in 1997 and Gerhard Scröder's SPD in 1998. The two leaders produced a joint ideological document synthetizing the principles of their ideological revision, which they called Third Way/ Neue Mitte. This ideological manifesto enshrined at international level the changes they were enacting in their national parties – a common process in the redefinition of social democratic ideology.[36] The influence of this ideological revision could already be seen in the manifesto of the PES for the European elections the following year.

The global financial crisis of 2008 opened a new chapter for European social democracy, as many of the policies and values associated with the Third Way were being challenged as excessively neo-liberal, requiring the PES to make a turn towards greater radicalism in economic matters. At the same time, any push for expansive fiscal policies and economic intervention met the opposition of supporters of fiscal austerity at European and national level, so this radicalism had to be reconciled with the need to eventually compromise with coalition partners. This would change radically with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Science and technology play a central role in *Europe: The Third Way - die neue Mitte*, the manifesto in which Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder defined the new ideological identity of social democracy.[37] The topos of technological change is central in their argument for the revision of social

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democratic ideology: as technological change radically transform the economic and social context in which socialists operate, their ideology must not be a straitjacket, but must adapt flexibly to the new circumstances.

However, technological change was not only the problem, it was also the solution. "The most important task of modernisation is to invest in human capital: to make the individual and businesses fit for the knowledge-based economy of the future."[38] Technological change and flexibility opened up opportunities to take up new jobs or start new businesses. Technology was also the solution to environmental problems, as new technologies consumed fewer resources.

The manifesto called for a new type of interventionist policy, rejecting both *laissez faire* and old state intervention. Society was transitioning from the Fordist model based on industrial mass production to services and information economy based on knowledge. The task of new state intervention was building human and social capital, which created the conditions for more investments and jobs. Unemployment was also caused by the lack of skilled workers (for example in information technology) for the new jobs. "Therefore, governments have a responsibility to put in place a framework that enables individuals to enhance their qualifications and to fulfil their potential. This must now be a top social democratic priority."[39] Education was not to be limited to childhood, but be life-long. Unemployment could become an opportunity to attain qualifications and develop skills. The state also had the key responsibility of promoting scientific research and innovation, fostering the growth of tech giants from below. At the same time, the liberalization of capital markets would allow investments to flow where needed. Deregulation was also necessary to support the growth of new firms.

Thus, while Blair-Schröder envisioned the retrenchment of state tasks in some fields, it also expanded state responsibilities in other fields. As Jenny Andersson notes, the turn of social democracy in the 1990s was not simply neo-liberal, but it involved new and sometimes deeper forms of interventionism.[40] According to Andersson, this was possible because it suited well the traditions of European social democracy.

The influence of the Third Way/Neue Mitte is evident in the 1999 and 2004 PES manifestos, which give a strong emphasis to human capital. They advanced education and training as complementing strategies of social inclusion and economic growth. The 1999 manifesto presents investments in human capital as an alternative to neo-liberal policies towards globalization and a form of economic intervention more suited

for the new knowledge society: "Our biggest investment must be in our greatest asset, our people and their skills. Europe can compete successfully by investing in education, modern skills and technology, not by lower wages and poorer working conditions."[41] The 2004 manifesto ties the socialist policies to the Lisbon strategy of creating a knowledge-based society:

> Our work programme, *Momentum for recovery in Europe: Promoting public and private investments*, proposes a detailed strategy to create more new high-quality jobs by promoting greater investment in research and technology, supporting new growth sectors and reinforcing modern education, training and lifelong learning.[42]

Environmental policies were already prominent, although they come late in the documents. The 1999 manifesto is committed to sustainable development, biodiversity and the fight against greenhouse gasses. The 2004 connects protection of the environment with justice for the younger generations.

With the 2008 economic crisis, the rhetorical register of the manifestos becomes more aggressive, particularly blaming conservatives for having let market forces go unchecked. The 2009 manifesto proposes that the choice in the elections is between a progressive Europe making politics responsible to the people or a conservative Europe leaving everything to the market. This is in line with a rhetorical revival of Keynesianism and other forms of state intervention, but also the fact that European governments and institutions were more reluctant than the Obama administration. In addition to fairness and defense of workers' rights, environmentalism becomes another justification for state intervention: transforming the economy into green economy to prevent climate change and avoid energy dependency. Indeed, the manifesto accuses conservatives of ignoring the science of climate change to dismiss its political implications.

A significant shift is an open commitment to increase investments: "Substantially raising investment in research, development and innovation will be essential for new smart green growth and our long-term prosperity."[43] This must be realized by empowering the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to grant financing. However, the direction of investments still show continuity. The manifesto promotes education, life-long learning, retraining and apprenticeship as

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necessary to help workers adapt to the new jobs created by technological progress and the green transition:

> People must be helped through this transformation of our economies. It is imperative that our citizens – of all ages – have the opportunity to develop their skills, find new and better jobs as well as being able to work and study abroad. We believe that action at local, regional, national and European levels should be geared towards supporting people through transition and opening up new and better opportunities.[44]
>
> We propose to support businesses to anticipate changes caused by climate change and technological shifts – thereby safeguarding existing and creating new jobs – while also helping workers retrain if they lose their jobs because of these changes.[45]

The 2014 manifesto responds to the austerity policies promoted at national and European level by conservative governments. It is even more open in demanding direct economic intervention to reflate the economy and increase production: "we will prioritize innovation, research, training and a smart reindustrialization policy, so that amazing breakthroughs discovered in European laboratories and universities can be translated into more jobs for workers in Europe."[46]

As usual, the destination of investments is in the form of scientific research and training, with an explicit commitment to adapt to the wave of technological progress to create greater growth and more jobs. The term "smart reindustrialization" is significantly ambiguous, as it seems to distance itself from traditional industrial policies. However, the manifesto also includes a commitment to direct European investments to promote green growth and sustainability, in order to avoid the externalities of uncontrolled markets. The 2019 manifesto is even bolder on the need to control the flow of investments to promote socially beneficial growth: "We need a long-term Investment Plan to prepare our industries and workers so they benefit from the green transition, the digital revolution and the growth of artificial intelligence."[47]

The manifesto commits to sustainability, so that economic interests would not trump the environment. Fight against inequality was also a principle economic intervention had to integrate. The manifesto identifies education, training and scientific research as major targets of public investment: "Europe's industrial strategy must channel investment into

research and innovation, support training and life-long learning, and ensure that jobs are created and protected in the EU."[48]

This survey of the PES's manifestos shows an element of continuity in its policies in matter of science. While the financial crisis of 2008 prompted a bolder rhetoric, economic intervention had never ceased to be part of the armory of social democracy. The Third Way/Neue Mitte still envisioned radical intervention to build human capital. At the same time, despite a greater radicalism, the post-2008 manifestos are still reluctant to find new levers of economic intervention other than education, training and research. This could be blamed to a continuing influence of neo-liberalism, but it could also be explained by the unavailability of other economic policies such as physical planning or nationalization, which had proved of limited success. On the one hand, this could indicate a clear break between Cold War social democracy and post-1989 social democracy. On the other hand, the elements of continuity are strong even in the matter of human capital.

4. Continuity and change: Waldemar von Knoeringen and Olof Palme

The previous section surveyed the arguments and topoi of the social democratic discourse about science and technology since 1999. The present section is going to compare the social democratic discourse during the Cold War and during the 21st century. Given the vastness of the reconstructing social democratic culture across Europe, I will focus on a limited number of references from the Socialist International and the three most prominent social democratic figures who paid particular attention to the relationship between socialism and science: Waldemar von Knoeringen (from the German SPD), Olof Palme (from the Swedish social democrats) and Tony Blair (from the British Labour Party). Their rhetoric is particularly significant to trace continuity and disruptions in social democratic policies and culture. First, I will focus on von Knoeringen and Palme, as they are representative of social democracy in the Cold War era, the period that Third Way supporters were trying to distance themselves from.

As the previous section showed, human capital was a common topos in the social democratic discourse of science in the 21st century. Human capital justified a new form of state intervention and thus a proper socialist

economic policy. With the loss of legitimacy for traditional industrial policy, physical planning and direct state intervention, investments in scientific research, education and training become the main tools of economic intervention. However, this was not a radical innovation.

At the 1956 congress, the SPD committed to exploit all the resources of the so-called "Second Industrial Revolution" to satisfy social goals. Waldemar von Knoeringen had the SPD commit to spend more on education and training to increase production.[49] In 1964, Olof Palme argued that it was necessary to think beyond a binary division between capital and labor and to focus on the third factor of production, meaning technological progress and qualitative improvement of the workforce. Making indirect references to the Human Capital Theory of Theodore Schultz and the work of Odd Aukrust, Palme argued that more than half of economic growth could be attributed to better education and training. The state had thus to direct its attention to developing this most important productive factor: "But if a krona invested in education often gives a greater return than a krona invested in roads, power plants, factories or machines, this is a situation that must inevitably affect our view of education and thus of society's education policy."[50] In 1967, Waldemar von Knoeringen returned on the need to increase knowledge and education to increase production:

> We are witnessing the explosion of human knowledge and the steady increase in productivity. There are more researchers alive today than in all of human history. New inventions, scientific research results that question the status quo are everyday news. This is all connected: the tremendous expansion of technology, technical knowledge and its implementation in productive power, i.e. the increase in the output of human labor power per hour and capital unit.[51]

Another topos typical of the Third Way/Neue Mitte is the idea that rapid technological development transformed everything, making old ideas and institutions obsolete. In 1982 the Socialist International also noted that scientific advance rapidly changed all the parameters of political action and state activity. Previous socialist plans had not taken into account television and microchip, and they had also ignored the environmental impact of technology. "The socialist parties of the world must take science and scientific policy seriously, else our record as defenders of community interest against special interests will be something of the past."[52]

This topos was already present in a Palme's speech from 1967 and he even quoted Marx to prove this point. Technological change created immense new possibilities, but it also created technological unemployment for thousands of skilled workers. "New technique creates new opportunities, gives us the chance to make more with the same efforts. But new technology also makes old technology obsolete."[53] Here Palme could quote precedents from previous industrial revolutions. This new industrial revolution brought forward by automation and cybernetics would be no less revolutionary, but now society had a greater awareness of the need to protect individuals. This was not just a matter of fairness, but also not wasting human potential. Waldemar von Knoeringen was also aware of the developments in computers and cybernetics and how they would radically transform the context for social democratic actions.[54]

Blair and Schröder insisted that computer and the information society had radically changed the context for socialism, but the idea of an information society was born in the 1970s. By 1983 Palme had already integrated information society into his discourse about socialism and technological progress. The argument Palme employed was that technological progress was continuously accelerating and was now difficult to understand and impossible to stop. The policy of the labor movement was to ride the wave of technological change to guide it:

> We can therefore never control technical development by simply resisting. Our opportunity is to be at the forefront of development. Then we can influence it.
>   In the labor movement, there has been essentially always a positive attitude to technical change. In development, we have seen promises of better lives and living conditions.[55]

Von Knoeringen also preached not resisting technical change and adapting:

> It is not a question of whether the big changes will come, it is just a question of how politicians position themselves and how they react. I think that social democracy in particular must draw sober conclusions from this. That means: structural reforms in the apparatus of the most important social institutions.[56]

The main difference between Palme's arguments and those of the Third Way a decade later was the sense of history. Palme could appeal to a long tradition of socialist arguments and policies about technological change that justified the policies for the information society. On the other hand, Waldemar von Knoeringen invoked the changes and discoveries in science as a reason to renovate social democratic ideology and shift it away from traditional Marxism.[57]

Another topos is the relationship between technological developments and politics. Socialists tended to see technology as a positive development, but not one that would become automatically beneficial. Technology was ultimately a neutral tool and how to use it depended on the people in charge. It was the mission of socialists that technology be used to benefit society. Palme and von Knoeringen insisted on the need not to be passive receptors but master of the change:

> This reflects the attitude of openness to existing technology. But it is not an unconditional, passive attitude. On the contrary, technical development must sometimes be controlled both hard and firmly.
>
> We must ask ourselves where new technical knowledge can lead, what results investments in different areas can bring about. The development is not destined. It can be controlled and influenced.[58]

> We will only be able to preserve the human if man does not fall under the laws of technology, if he does not become an object but a subject of the apparatus. The socialist question is thus: is it possible for man to develop his social faculties as much as he has already developed his technical ones?[59]

The continuities between the older and newer discourse on technology will emerge even more clearly by focusing on British socialism.

5. Continuity and change in Tony Blair

Tony Blair has not only been a key figure for European social democracy in the last decades, he is also assumed to represent a specific trend. Blairism is identified with a conscious break with traditional social democratic culture, the retrenchment of state intervention in favor of the markets and the introduction of neo-liberal elements. He himself encouraged this perception, by presenting as an iconoclast battling traditionalists.

It must be noted that scientific literature followed his lead. For Michael Kranert, Blair's speeches articulated the topos of crisis in order to justify his renovation of social democracy.[60] He takes the following speech as exemplary of his rhetorical strategy:

> As a father, as a leader, as a member of the human family, I ask this question of Britain's future. We live in an era of extraordinary, revolutionary change at work, at home, through technology, through the million marvels of modern science. The possibilities are exciting. But its challenge is clear. How do we create in Britain a new age of achievement in which all of the people – not just a few but all of the people – can share?[61]

According to Kranert, crisis was central to the discourse of the Third Way/Neue Mitte, as external factors introduce radical changes in society, economy, technology and ideology that require a recasting of socialist ideology in order to adapt for the new times. By postulating unavoidable constraints, the socialist leadership forced on the party membership an ideological turn more in tune with the new neo-liberal era.

While there is some truth in this discourse analysis, a more historically minded analysis will show the element of continuity within socialist culture. We already showed how Waldemar von Knoeringen warned that technological change demanded to move away from orthodox Marxism. Blair's topoi can easily be found in previous Labour leader. In 1957, Frank Cousins also said he was emotional about the future of his six-year-old daughter.[62] In 1958, Alice Bacon said that education policy had to be the equalizer of future opportunities: "I want to emphasise in conclusion that our policy is a policy for all our children, not just for a few brilliant children."[63] In 1958, Jim Griffiths also described a new era of technological change that demanded new political action:

> We are on the threshold of a new technical revolution. In all our plans this is a challenge to us. We can now get hold of, harness, discipline, guide these tremendous new forces so that the new industrial revolution which is beginning becomes the foundation of a new, a better Britain and not, as was the old industrial revolution, the beginning of the dismal Britain of the nineteenth century.[64]

The similarities are even stronger if we analyze an essay written by Blair in 2021:

> We are living through the most far-reaching upheaval since the 19th-century Industrial Revolution: a technology revolution of the internet, AI, quantum computing, extraordinary advances in genomics, bioscience, clean energy, nutrition, gaming, financial payments, satellite imagery – everything, every sphere of work, leisure and life is subject to its transformative power. The question is how it is used: to control humanity or liberate it, to provide opportunities for those presently without opportunity, or to put even more power, wealth and opportunity in the hands of those already well off.[65]

The fact that Blair picks up the same theme more than two decades apart show the centrality of the technological question for his world-view. However, rather than being distinctive of him, it is part of a long tradition of Labour culture. Blair could pick arguments from an established repertoire. As Palme already noted, invoking technological change as a disruptive factor for old hierarchies and institutions went back to Marx himself.

The same argument could be used for different ends by Marx, Palme or Blair. Luckily for them, this repertoire was stretchable to any purpose. Throughout the 1950s, Labour members had used the topic of the incoming technological revolution to justify either policies favoring central planning and nationalization or strategic openings to the middle class.[66] Blair's words are barely different from those of the idols of the Labour Left, Aneurin Bevan and Tony Benn:

> Science has opened up for us most flattering and pleasant prospects, but science has also opened up for us the most appalling future, unless we show now some vision and some understanding.[67]

> Technology, like all power, is neutral and the question is how do we use it.[68]

It is evident that the discourse on technological change was not just extensive, but also flexible. Social democrats continuously return to technology when looking for a solution for the problems of slow growth and unemployment, though their assumptions and ultimate goals change. Technology and science remain lodestars in the social democratic culture, despite many changes. However, if this is the case, why the fortunes of social democracy have changed?

6. Conclusions

Reflecting in 1987 on an essay he had written almost twenty years before, German literary scholar Helmut Kreuzer noticed how the attitude towards science had changed. The Oil Crisis and the Club of Rome signaled the end of unlimited growth. Huge technological transformations changed work and leisure. Political conflict was no longer over socialism and capitalism, but between the economy and ecology. Belief in progress declined, also thanks to pollution and medical disaster such as the Thalidomide and Three Miles Island. Opinion polls registered that the percentage of people who believed they would have an always better future went from 60 per cent in 1972 to 31 per cent in 1980. "That not everything that is technically possible should be realized – this formula found almost universal consensus as an imperative for future action."[69]

Further polls seem to confirm a greater skepticism towards the future and technological change. A Eurobarometer research enlightens on the attitude towards science in 2014, the year of the European elections in which social democratic parties struggled to find policies with which to convince voters.[70] While respondents were optimistic about the positive impact of scientific research on healthcare in the incoming decades, they were more skeptical about the positive contribution of technology in job creation. While optimism about technological innovation persisted in the Nordic countries, a marked pessimism was dominant in Italy, Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe. Most significantly, technological optimism was predominant among social groups with higher education. So while trust in science will remain a constituent element of social democratic policies and culture, it will probably win them less new votes than it did in the past.

It must also be noted that the emphasis of science is still present in the 21st century social democratic discourse, but notably less bold. Particularly, it is now openly challenged from the left. While older communists were even more enthusiastic about technological modernity than social democrats, the new left is more critical. Blair's pro-science essay in the 2021 met harsh criticism.[71] In addition, what good science dictates is much less clear than during the Cold War. The environmental and anti-nuclear movement have helped to deconstruct expertise by making scientific decisions more political and controversial.

Whether things will change, it is up to debate. The Covid-19 crisis opened the gates for greater economic intervention at European and

national level, finally satisfying many policy requests from social democrats. In addition, there is a greater emphasis on the role of science to solve social problems. A document the PES produced for the post-Covid world was much bolder in scientific matters and left-wing economic policies than anything put out before.[72] Opinion polls show that the pandemic generated a greater trust in science, at least in rich countries.[73] On the other hand, those rejecting scientific expertise in matters such as prevention and vaccination are a minority, but a motivated one. What history can teach us about the present moment is that the relationship between science, politics and democracy is not predetermined, but it will depend on the political decisions made by rulers and citizens.

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ALBANIA'S GLOBAL RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST ACTORS AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS DURING THE 1960S: GOALS, MODELS AND SELF-STAGING STRATEGIES

Idrit Idrizi

Abstract

This paper examines the complex interactions between politics, ideology, propaganda and identity, as well as between local, regional and global contexts during the Cold War, using Albania's relations with communist actors and revolutionary movements worldwide as a case study. The study first analyzes the context and character of the relations. Second, it examines the goals, expectations, and inspirational models of the Albanian regime. Finally, it examines how and why the regime sought to stage its global contacts in foreign and domestic propaganda. The paper hypothesizes that the country's global contacts and their staging were deeply shaped by the domestic context, decisively enabled by global developments, and significantly influenced by regional developments.

Keywords: Albania, Cold War, international relations, internationalism, Southeast Europe, Third World

1. Introduction

After the break with the Soviet Union (1961), in the context of isolation from the Eastern Bloc and alliance with Mao's China, communist Albania established links with numerous leftist groups and revolutionary movements in the Third World, as well as with Western Marxist-Leninist individuals and splinter groups.[1] Many of these ties faded after the 1960s. Until the late 1980s, however, the small country of less than three million inhabitants maintained a small but worldwide network of "sympathizers" and continued to present itself as a beacon of the international communist movement, while remaining one of the most isolated in the world.[2]

The focus of this research project is on communist Albania's global relations, which have been scarcely researched and mostly either completely ignored or only casually mentioned and presented as an absurdity, as well as their propagandistic presentation. The study first analyzes the character of the relations and the conditions under which they were established. Second, it examines the goals, expectations, and inspirational models of the Albanian regime in pursuing such an internationalist policy. Finally, it examines how and why the regime sought to stage its global contacts in domestic and international propaganda. The focus is thus on the considerations and strategies of the Albanian regime's leadership. As the project is at an early stage, the aim of the paper is to formulate initial hypotheses.

The study also takes into account the impact of global and regional developments, in particular the competition for leadership of the communist world between the People's Republic of China (Albania's main ally in the 1960s to late 1970s) and its ideological arch-enemy, the Soviet Union,[3] the internationalist tendencies in the Eastern bloc in the post-Stalin era,[4] and the very active presence on the international stage of Yugoslavia, but also of Romania and, in the 1970s and 1980s, even Bulgaria. Through his leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and his worldwide visits, Tito achieved global political prominence. Nicolae Ceaușescu tried to make a name for himself as a mediator in world politics and pursued a very active visiting diplomacy. Lyudmila Živkova, the influential daughter of the Bulgarian ruler, pursued a highly ambitious cultural diplomacy worldwide and was also active in the UN for the rights of women, children, and Third World countries.[5]

Overall, the study examines the complex interactions between politics, ideology, propaganda, mentality, identity, and culture, as well as between national, regional, and global contexts during the Cold War, using Albania as a case study. It holds the hypotheses that the country's global contacts and their staging were an important feature of the domestic Cold War culture, deeply intertwined with domestic politics, decisively enabled by global developments, and significantly influenced by the regional context.

2. State of the art

Research on Albania's communist history is mainly in its infancy. Foreign policy has received comparatively more attention. However, studies

conducted during the Cold War (by Western scholars and commentators) were based solely on (propaganda) material published by the Albanian regime, and thus on speculation. Most publications after the political change – to the extent that they are based on archival sources at all – are predominantly descriptive in style, focusing on a few topics and almost exclusively on the period before the break with China.[6]

The subject of this study represents an almost empty space in research. The first archival-based and theoretically reflected monograph on Albania's international activities during the Cold War, published in 2017, examines exchanges with the Soviet bloc and the People's Republic of China. Relations with leftist groups in the Third World and in the West are only touched upon in a few places.[7] However, the book provides important insights into the Cold War considerations and mentalities of the Albanian leadership until the break with China, and thus serves as a solid starting point. In an article published in 2019, the same author, Elidor Mëhilli, also offers some insightful suggestions on how to open up Albanian historiography to new perspectives. Among other things, he points to the regime's propaganda activities abroad, even during the so-called "isolation period," and argues that studying perceived "anomalies" such as the Albanian case can prove useful in testing general explanatory frameworks.[8]

The most relevant study for this research project is Ylber Marku's doctoral thesis on Albanian-Chinese relations. A subchapter of Marku's study deals with the joint efforts of Albania and China to attract communist actors in the Third World and Western left-wing groups in the wake of the conflict with the Soviet Union, illustrating them with two examples.[9] Nicola Pedrazzi's monograph on relations between the Italian Left and communist Albania until 1976 is also relevant. Pedrazzi examines in detail the activities, expectations, and interests of Albanian and Italian communists, contextualizing them against the backdrop of the Sino-Albanian alliance and the global Cold War.[10] Finally, also noteworthy is an article published in 2017 that provides a brief history of the "Albanian Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries", the institution responsible for the so-called "friendship associations."[11]

3. Sources, methodology and theoretical framework

The project is based primarily on sources from the archives of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA), the fund "Central Committee of the PLA – Relations

with Communist Parties and Marxist-Leninist Groups", especially the section "Relations with the Communist Party of China", and the fund "The Leading Organs" (the minutes of the meetings of the Politburo, the Central Committee and the Central Committee Secretariat). Published propaganda material is used only occasionally for illustration. It is also noteworthy that a number of documents from the PLA archives on exchanges with the Communist Party of China (CPC) have been translated into English and published online.[12] These documents provide important insights into the inner workings of the alliance and the attitudes of the two leaderships. However, they should be viewed as snapshots of a highly turbulent period in which the actors had to adapt frequently to changing circumstances.[13]

State socialist archival documents are generally characterized by ritualization and ideologization. Like other sources, they follow a specific rationality and largely reflect the subjective interests of those who created and ordered them. In view of these methodological problems, the study aims to reflect critically on the content of the documents, to interpret them in the light of the above-mentioned research questions and hypotheses, and to place them in a broader context, rather than simply replicating information.[14]

The Albanian archives of the communist era contain a large number of documents in many foreign languages and writings by leftists and regime sympathizers from all over the world. However, the existence of documents alone is not sufficient proof that a phenomenon played an important role and is worth studying. In fact, as the paper will show, and as one might expect, Albania's own resources were limited, its influence on politics in the Third World or in the West was almost non-existent, since the groups that maintained contact with Tirana were usually marginal ones. Beyond the search for such direct political interventions, however, a broader approach to such interactions and international activities is needed.

As Katherine Verdery noted long ago in her famous book "What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?", "(m)ore than simply a superpower face-off having broad political repercussions, the Cold War was also a form of knowledge and a cognitive organization of the world."[15] More recently, Theodora Dragostinova and Malgorzata Fidelis have also emphasized the importance of "shifting the focus to the production of knowledge and the transfer of ideas as important tools for shaping politics".[16]

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the nature of the Cold War conflict endowed smaller states with outsized ideological

importance.[17] Under such conditions, they were sometimes able to exert a disproportionate influence on international politics in various, sometimes indirect, ways. In the shadow of the Sino-Soviet conflict in the early 1960s, Albania, the smallest and most insecure country in the Eastern bloc, began to oppose the Soviet Union. This eventually led to the country's de facto expulsion from the Eastern Bloc. However, Laurien Crump, in an article entitled "The Balkan Challenge to the Warsaw Pact, 1960–1964," has impressively demonstrated how Albania's actions paved the way for Romania's successful emancipation from the Soviet Union a few years later and, ultimately, for the multilateralization of the Warsaw Pact. The same author has also co-edited a volume on margins of maneuver in Cold War Europe, which argues that the position of smaller powers vis-à-vis the superpowers was often an opportunity rather than a constraint.[18] Overall, recent scholarship on the Cold War has paid increasing attention to smaller countries and peripheries and the ways in which their domestic and international activities shaped the global Cold War.[19]

The study follows research on the new culture of internationalism in the Eastern bloc in the post-Stalin era.[20] as well as more recent approaches in Cold War studies that emphasize the diversity of national cultures (discourses, mentalities, concepts of order, self- and world-views) and their complex interdependencies with the regional and global context.[21] In doing so, the project also aims to contribute to the transnational and entangled history of Southeast European Cold War cultures.[22]

4. Prehistory of Albania's Cold War internationalism: insecurity and exclusion

In 1944–1945, when the Communists took power, Albania was a very young and highly insecure state. It was almost completely excluded from international politics and was one of the most backward countries in Europe in terms of economic and technological development. The Albanian state, founded in 1912, was recognized by the Great Powers in 1919–1920. During the First World War, it was occupied by several foreign armies, including those of neighboring countries, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Italy. Even before the beginning of the Second World War, the country was invaded by Italy, which subsequently treated Albania as a colony. The economic development of the country was comparable to that of the colonies in Africa.[23] During the Second World War, the Albanian communist

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partisans were under the total control of Tito's men. When the war ended, the future of the state was uncertain. Albania had been ignored in all the major Allied conferences, in Cairo, Tehran, Malta, Yalta and Potsdam. The same was true for the so-called "percentage agreement", which proved to be decisive for the fate of the Southeast European states during the Cold War. On 9 October 1944, during a meeting in Moscow, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin reached a secret, informal agreement to divide Southeast Europe, including Hungary, into spheres of influence. These talks, which Churchill did not reveal in his memoirs until 1953, had ignored Albania. The small country at the periphery did not seem important enough to be discussed at such meetings. Greece and Yugoslavia were the focus of Britain and the Soviet Union.[24]

After the end of the war, the Albanian state struggled to gain international recognition. The Western powers refused for a long time, and it was not until 1955 that the country was admitted to the United Nations. Greece claimed that the country had been an ally of Italy and therefore considered it an enemy, while also claiming the so-called Southern Epirus, the southern part of the present Albanian state. No representatives of the Albanian state were allowed to participate in the peace conferences. Under these conditions, this role was taken over by Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia represented the Albanian state at international meetings, such as the Potsdam and Paris conferences in 1945 and the Paris Peace Conference in 1946–1947. In Paris, the Yugoslav ambassador announced that the Greek ambassador had secretly offered to divide the country between Greece and Yugoslavia. Worse, the Albanian state was also largely ignored by the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav communists represented the Albanian Communist Party in the Communist International (Comintern) and in the Cominform. In fact, the Albanian Communist Party was the only one in Eastern Europe that did not receive an invitation to the founding meeting of Cominform in September 1947.[25] When Enver Hoxha, the leader of the PLA, visited Stalin for the first time in 1947, he was made clear to him that the Soviets had left the country to the Yugoslavs. In fact, Stalin had given Tito his consent to integrate the Albanian state into the Yugoslav one. Tito openly planned to integrate Albania either as the seventh Yugoslav republic or, in any case, as part of a Balkan federation together with Bulgaria. In January 1948, during a meeting in Moscow with Milovan Đilas, a close confidant of Tito's, Stalin declared that he "didn't have any particular interest in Albania". "We are okay with Yugoslavia swallowing Albania", he assured.[26] Only a month later,

however, Stalin harshly criticized Yugoslavia for its Balkan federation plans and for failing to coordinate with the Soviet Union. In June 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. Enver Hoxha, who in the previous months had risked losing his position to another leader favored by the Yugoslavs, took advantage of the Tito-Stalin split to emancipate Albania from Yugoslavia. All agreements were annulled, and from that moment on Yugoslavia became an archenemy.[27]

With the liberation from Yugoslav tutelage, a new era began in the history of the Albanian state, from isolation to integration into the new world order and international politics. For the first time in its history, this state became part of a multilateral alliance. For the first time in its history, with the support of a superpower, its territorial integrity seemed guaranteed. Albania's alliance with Moscow also brought it greater prestige and much-needed economic and technological aid. Now the Albanian Communists could appear as allies of the powerful Soviet Union, as Stalin's allies against Tito. On the island of Sazan in Vlora, 30 kilometers from NATO country Italy, the Soviets built a naval base. The Soviets were also a strong and indispensable promoter of the interests of the country, which had extremely limited means to promote itself internationally. During this period, there was a comprehensive exchange in all fields (ideology, propaganda, economy and technology, culture, etc.) with the Soviet Union and Soviet satellites.[28] As a rule, these exchanges were highly unbalanced, with the Albanian side mainly receiving aid or sending people for education and specialization. In this context, the PLA leadership attached great importance to measures to popularize the country in the Eastern bloc, first and foremost in the Soviet Union.[29] In January 1949, the Secretariat of the Central Committee (CC) of the PLA issued a "Platform for Popularization of the Country," which was aimed primarily at the Soviet Union.[30] In 1950, the "Albanian Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries" was established as the "leading and coordination organ for the propaganda and cultural relations with the foreign world".[31] Two years later, the Politburo decided to publish a political magazine called "New Albania" in order to strengthen the propaganda work towards foreign audiences.[32] The latter was considered to be "an instrument of high importance to strengthen the friendship with other peoples of the socialist camp, to bring peoples of non-socialist countries closer to the Albanian people, to popularize the successes of the Republic of Albania, and to disseminate socialist ideas to the world and thereby strengthen peace".[33]

With the change of patron from Tito to Stalin, Albania was upgraded from a satellite to a direct satellite of the Soviet Union. This partly contradictory development shaped the country's later internationalist engagement. On the one hand, under Soviet hegemony, Albania's status was clearly strengthened and the benefits were enormous. On the other hand, the country was still a satellite, completely dependent on the Soviet Union and, more specifically, on its political leadership. When Khrushchev initiated de-Stalinization, Enver Hoxha's power was seriously threatened.[34] The Soviet leadership provided Albania with an enormous amount of aid, but largely denied the Albanian regime's desire to build heavy industry. Albanian representatives often had to endure Soviet arrogance and imperial behavior. This had started with Stalin, but became more and more exaggerated during Khrushchev's rule. On a number of occasions, the Albanian leadership felt humiliated by the Soviet leadership. For example, Khrushchev could not bear to consult with Enver Hoxha about the suppression of the Hungarian uprising, but instead held talks with his arch-enemy, Tito.[35] The Soviets also planned to popularize Albania as a model for the Muslim world, which Khrushchev saw as a "precious gem that would attract the rest of the Muslim world toward Communism, especially in the Middle East and Africa"[36]. The Albanian leaders could not refuse, but they felt insulted because they were trying to get rid of religion and their aim was to strengthen relations with the Second World, not with African countries, which they perceived as a step backwards.[37] Nevertheless, Khrushchev's proposals show that the country, despite its marginal position and weakness, was perceived as having some potential that could be useful in the conditions of the Cold War. The PLA leadership also made use of this potential, especially later during the alliance with Mao's China.

5. Entering the stage of world politics

In 1960, at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow, Albanian leader Enver Hoxha attacked Khrushchev in an unprecedented manner. Hoxha's outburst was deliberately staged as a spectacle. It attracted great international attention. Although many communist leaders harshly criticized him and eventually Albania was excluded from the Eastern bloc, this was the moment when the country entered the stage of world politics for the first time in its history.[38] A few

months earlier, Hoxha had made the following statement to the Albanian Politburo, which demonstrates the transformation of the Albanian regime under the conditions of the Sino-Soviet conflict, from a submissive small state to a self-confident actor. It shows how this conflict enabled a highly insecure small state on the periphery of Europe to challenge a great power. It also reveals the central importance of ideology in the conditions of the Cold War. The leadership of a small country with extremely limited resources used ideology as a credit:

> "We used to be young but we are older now, and I am not talking about us as individuals but the party as a whole. We are no longer a one- or two-year-old party but a party that will soon count twenty years. We have not spent all this time lying on a bed of roses but in a bloody war against Fascism, the National Front, the English, the Americans, the Trotskyites, the Yugoslavs, the Greek monarcho-Fascists and all kinds of other enemies. We have thus learned Marxism from books, from war, from life."[39]

The alliance with China brought great benefits to the country and greatly expanded its room for maneuver in international relations. With the change of patron, Albania went from being a weak satellite to a strategic ally. It gained the support of a powerful country willing to honor it much more than the Soviets and willing to spend much more resources to promote its interests on the international stage. China did not hesitate to fulfill most of the demands of its strategic partner in Europe. It provided Albania with an enormous amount of economic and technological aid and helped the PLA leadership realize its dream of building a heavy industry. Albania was also able to persuade China to provide it with an enormous amount of armaments, although the CPC leadership refused to sign a military treaty.[40] Exclusion from the Eastern bloc gave Albania flexibility in international relations. China's need for an ally against the Soviet Union[41] and in the and in the United Nations, where it was not present until 1971, gave the Hoxha regime strong leverage over Beijing.[42] It was precisely these conditions that gave rise to Albania's highly active internationalism in the 1960s and shaped its character.

Before getting to the core of these activities, it is also important to look at the general context of the 1960s, which shows that Albania's internationalism was indeed a major trend of the time. Stalin had a Eurocentric foreign policy. Things changed in the Khrushchev era, when the Soviet Union discovered the Third World as an arena for the global

prosecution of the Cold War. Events there, such as decolonization and revolutions, had a strong echo in the Second World, but also in Western Europe. In the communist countries, the leadership undertook extensive measures to popularize these events, to stage them as proof of the fulfillment of Marx's prophecy of the decline of imperialism. The Eastern European communisms also tried to present themselves as countries that shared similar experiences with the decolonized peoples of the Third World. They too had been oppressed by empires and had liberated themselves. Therefore, they could serve as a model for these revolutionary movements. Several countries also undertook ambitious development aid programs, among which Czechoslovakia and East Germany were very active. East Germany pretended to be the first non-imperial German state and was supported exclusively by the Soviet Union to attract African countries. Communist leaders tried to encourage solidarity with the peoples of the Third World, for example by donating extra salaries. All in all, the Second World has discovered the Third World since the late 1950s.[43] In the case of Albania, it was mainly from the early 1960s, under the alliance with China.

6. Enver Hoxha's Albania, Mao's China and world communism

In June 1962, about six months after the final Soviet-Albanian split, a high-level PLA delegation traveled to Beijing. During six long meetings, representatives of the two allied parties exchanged views on many issues, but the main focus was on the conflict with the Soviet Union and the international communist movement.[44] During the first meeting, Deng Xiaoping analyzed the attitude of communist parties around the world, from India to Australia, Brazil, Tunisia and Switzerland. He spoke of the need to create a "revolutionary nucleus" in the international communist movement, but remained vague, stressing that this was a long way off.[45] Remarkably, Deng attributed to the PLA a better knowledge of the internal situation of the European communist parties.[46] The Albanian delegation indirectly proved him right by detailing developments in these parties and claiming to have received letters from Western European communist groups. The PLA representatives then took up the question of creating a "revolutionary nucleus in every communist and workers' party of the world", and presented this as the (only) way out of the precarious situation created in the international communist movements.[47] Calling the CPC

"the most important force in the struggle against imperialism and anti-Marxism"[48] and a "colossal force that increases every day and exerts an in-depth influence on the development of the world revolution,"[49] they not only flattered their ally but also indirectly appealed for a more active approach. The Chinese counterpart, however, remained cautious, arguing that this was a long and complicated struggle.[50] Nevertheless, he appreciated the Albanian information on developments in various communist parties and groups as "helpful".[51].

Overall, the CPC tried to walk a tightrope between mobilizing the PLA in an international struggle against the Soviet Union and moderating its radical approach. The Albanian communists, on the other hand, fully supported the idea of an international anti-revisionist movement led by the CPC and urged an aggressive struggle against the Soviets. In this context, they presented themselves as valuable fighters and interlocutors.

About a year later, the Albanian leadership approached the CPC with a strong and direct appeal to support anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist groups around the world.[52] Two PLA CC secretaries, Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia, requested a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Lo Shigao, specifically on this issue. According to them, Albania had received numerous letters and requests from Marxist-Leninist groups in Europe and beyond, asking for assistance with propaganda and other materials. In particular, Kapo and Alia discussed exchanges with Marxist-Leninists in or from Poland, Belgium, Brazil, France, Italy, England and Greece.[53] In this context, they urged China to support such groups "in a more organized and concrete manner"[54]. While proposing, among other things, to send propaganda material, Kapo and Alia claimed that a large number of Marxist-Leninist groups from "almost everywhere"[55] had approached the PLA about this. Moreover, numerous reliable PLA sources had allegedly proven that such material was highly effective.[56] The CPC response was again cautious and vague, emphasizing both the importance of a cautious approach and the interest of gathering "revolutionary forces".[57] In fact, in the summer of 1963, Beijing was more concerned with bilateral talks with Moscow. When negotiations to defuse tensions failed, Sino-Soviet disputes escalated, and the CPC leadership resumed its plans to build an alternative international communist movement.[58]

In September 1963, an Albanian delegation traveled to Beijing. After detailing the situation of many Marxist-Leninist groups around the world,[59] representatives of the Directorate of Foreign Relations of the CPC-CC promised their Albanian counterparts to help them build a foreign-

language publishing house and a powerful radio station.[60] Later that year, on 31 December, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai arrived in Albania for the first time and met with the country's leader, Enver Hoxha.[61] Zhou's visit to Tirana was part of a long tour of many countries in Asia and Africa, which the Albanian media had covered extensively, and which Hoxha now praised. The Albanian leader was full of praise for "great socialist China" as "an invincible fortress, a lighthouse for world's Marxist-Leninists, for the enslaved peoples that fight for freedom, for the revolutionary and national liberation movements in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, for the whole world's proletariat."[62] He presented his country and his party as capable of winning the sympathy of the Arab peoples in particular, arguing that Albania's Muslim background and its history as a small, poor semi-colony were favorable in this regard.[63] In this context, Hoxha pointed out that such propaganda activities required resources that Albania, as a poor country, did not have,[64] But he also stressed the need to support Marxist-Leninist groups worldwide and even to increase this support.[65]

This time, Hoxha did not have to make much effort to convince the Chinese leadership to take a more active approach to building an international anti-revisionist movement. After the failure of the Sino-Soviet talks and Mao's comeback in Chinese politics, Beijing had embarked on a radical foreign policy in the early fall of 1963.[66] Mao's trustee, Zhou Enlai, responded to Hoxha's speech with affirmation and praise. He praised Albania for its great contribution to the struggle against imperialism and revisionism...[67] and its determination and fighting spirit.[68] He expressed full support for Hoxha's idea of intensifying propaganda activities toward Africa and further encouraged the targeting of Marxist-Leninist actors in Western Europe.[69] More broadly, Zhou Enlai expressed the determination to engage in propaganda activities worldwide, pointing in particular to the national revolutionary upheavals in Asia, Africa and South America.[70] He also elaborated on the struggle against revisionism.[71] Zhou's words were received with great enthusiasm by Hoxha, who repeatedly emphasized that the views of the two parties were in complete agreement.[72] Hoxha then turned his attention to Europe, arguing that this region was the epicenter of revisionism. In this context, he ascribed a key role to Albania, even calling it an emerging center of anti-revisionist struggle in Europe. Hoxha claimed that his party was intensifying contacts with Marxist-Leninist groups in Western Europe, including those in some countries where China did not have an embassy, such as France and Italy. He also claimed to be in possession of valuable confidential information about the internal life

of communist parties in the Eastern Bloc, mentioning that in Poland at least 30 groups opposed party leader Gomulka. Finally, Hoxha proposed the establishment of a special unit at the Chinese Embassy in Tirana to improve the coordination of Sino-Albanian aid to revolutionary groups.[73]

In June 1964, the Sino-Albanian assistance to the Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary groups was institutionalized through the establishment of a monetary fund called "Solidarity fund", with an initial contribution of 500,000 US dollars by China and 200,000 US dollars by Albania. From that year on, China continued to contribute half a million US dollars annually.[74] Who were the groups that received support? What kind of support did they receive and for what kind of activities? Contacts were established with dozens of parties and groups around the world, on every continent, from neighboring Italy to New Zealand. Some contacts, albeit very limited, also existed with small, illegal communist groups in Eastern Europe. Most of the aid went to Marxist and revolutionary groups in Western Europe and South America. China and Albania were mainly interested in using it to publish, disseminate, and publicize propaganda material in their own languages that promoted the CPC and PLA and attacked the Soviet Union and the United States.[75] Accordingly, much of the aid consisted of financial support for such activities. Sometimes, however, at least the Albanian authorities also provided these groups with various consumer goods, from cotton to cigarettes.

For example, in the first three months or so of the Fund's existence, support included 3,750 US dollars to the Communist Party of Belgium for the salaries of two correspondents of the PLA newspaper "Zëri i Popullit" (Voice of the People); 1,870 US dollars to a Communist group in France for the salary of a "Zëri i Popullit" correspondent; 150 US dollars for each issue of the Italian newspaper "Nova Unita"; 5.000 US dollars as general support to the Marxist-Leninist Group of Franz Strobl in Austria and another 2,400 US dollars for the salary of a "Zëri i Popullit" correspondent and 200 US dollars to a member of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Australia.[76]

Activists from the Third World also came to Albania to receive political and military training. The existence of such training is mentioned in archival sources. For example, in 1967, the PLA-CC Secretariat decided to accept a group of six Congolese fighters for 5–6 months of military training, along with eight children and two women accompanying them. The Congolese Liberation Movement also received 2,000 US dollars and 200 US dollars for a typewriter.[77] However, it remains to be seen who exactly participated in such training. After the fall of the regime, numerous

interviews and newspaper articles were published with sensational claims about prominent guerrillas who were said to have received military and political training in Albania, such as Yasser Arafat, the deputy head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, known under the pseudonym Abu Jihad, the president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the long-time head of state of Gabon, Omar Bongo, and the president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and so on. The elite of the Albanian army is said to have been at the guerrillas' disposal.[78] In fact, all foreign communist activists who received political and military training used code names and false identity documents. The real names were never used, and both the guerrillas and the Albanian state were eager to hide them as a protective measure. The archives of the Ministry of Defense, which may contain relevant information on this matter, are still in poor condition and their holdings have yet to be declassified. As for Western European communist activists, it appears that both Albania and China were opposed to any assistance with military equipment or training.[79] Political work with such groups was comparatively easier than with those from the Third World, many of whom risked their lives, and also easier than with activists in communist countries who were clearly working illegally and would be imprisoned if discovered. China and Albania were able to establish links with many Western leftist groups, but these were generally of marginal size and importance even within the leftist environment in their respective countries. Sometimes different and competing groups were supported within the same country, which occasionally led to alienation from China and Albania.[80]

In 1960, during a conversation, Khrushchev warned Liu Shaoqi, then the third most powerful man in China: "We lost Albania, but we did not lose much; you won it, but you did not win much, either. The Party of Labour has always been a weak link in the international communist movement".[81] In the years that followed, however, China and Albania formed a close alliance in which, despite some internal contradictions, they publicly praised each other in the highest terms. Clearly, being the closest ally in Europe of one of the most powerful countries in the world represented a high point in the foreign policy of the Albanian state. Accordingly, the PLA leadership appeared very confident in public. A popular saying at the time, based on a formulation by an Albanian party leader, Hysni Kapo, was: "If someone were to ask us how many people do we have, our answer is 701 million."[82] Presenting itself as China's ally was of great benefit to the PLA leadership. On the one hand, it enhanced

its standing in the eyes of anti-Soviet Marxist-Leninist individuals and groups, thus increasing the chances of establishing contacts with them. Being an interlocutor, in turn, also meant a higher status vis-à-vis the CPC. Moreover, this rhetoric was clearly of great legitimizing value domestically. Thus, the rhetoric should be taken seriously, since the staged reality and the actual reality were closely intertwined.[83]

While Hoxha accused both the Western powers and the Soviet Union of imperialism, it is noticeable that he made a special effort to emphasize that the Soviets were no lesser evil than the Americans. He accused them of behaving like "new Nazis" and likened the Eastern Bloc to an empire. Furthermore, "under the camouflage of socialism", the Soviets were trying to gain a foothold in the Third World.[84] After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Albania's rhetoric against "Soviet imperialism" increased, and the country withdrew from the Warsaw Pact, a move that received widespread international attention. In addition, Albanian leader Enver Hoxha declared that his country was ready to assist Yugoslavia and Romania in the event of a Soviet invasion.[85] Although such an offer was clearly not based on a realistic assessment of Albania's military capabilities, the power of rhetoric should not be underestimated. Such behavior corresponded to and reinforced the image that Albania wanted to convey to its target audience: first, its own population, and second, leftist groups around the world, especially in the Third World. This was the image of a small and poor country with a long history of foreign rule, but heroic and fearless in its determination to fight for socialism, justice and freedom.

Albania was presented as a kind of natural and valuable ally of the peoples of the Third World.[86] For example, in a speech to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly in June 1967, the Albanian ambassador described a situation in the Mediterranean in which "American imperialists" and „Soviet revisionists" were fighting to „suppress us", "the freedom-loving peoples of Albania and the Arab countries", and to "put us in thrall"[87]. Furthermore, he portrayed Albania as the voice of a worldwide anti-imperialist front of oppressed peoples who were about to fight heroically and eventually win:

"The imperialist powers that hear the delegate of a small but indomitable people speaking here openly, fearlessly, without kid gloves and not in carefully chosen diplomatic terms, declare that this is a hardline speech and that the Albanian delegate is preaching in the desert. (…) (G)entlemen,

I am not preaching in the desert. It is you who are isolated, not we. We are the majority here, we are the overwhelming majority in the world. We are those who smashed Italian and German fascism, we are the immortal heroes of Vietnam, Algeria, the Congo, Cuba, Latin America, China and Pakistan, the heroes of the Arab peoples, of the peoples of Asia and Africa, the heroes of the enslaved peoples of Europe and the whole world. Therefore we will triumph over you, you will never defeat us."[88]

Hoxha also specifically drew comparisons between Albania's history and the situation in the Third World at the time, suggesting that because of this similar past, Albania could help with its experience. For example, he compared the crisis in the Middle East after the Six-Day War of 1967 to that in the Balkans before World War I, when "European imperialists had turned the Balkans into a field of intrigues" and then the "Balkan peoples, enslaved by and included in the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires, launched their uprisings and wars both against the yoke of major occupiers and against the chauvinist-imperialist aims of local chauvinist cliques."[89]

When interpreting Albanian propaganda, one must take into account the historical context and discourses of the 1960s. Stalin's communism was completely Eurocentric. But from the late 1950s, in the context of the acceleration of decolonization in Africa and the intensification of "anti-imperialist struggles" in South America and Southeast Asia, East European communists created a master narrative of a newly emerging global anti-imperialist space linking the Second and Third Worlds. According to this narrative, the contemporary anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World were of the same nature as those waged by Eastern Europeans against the Habsburg and Russian empires after the First World War. James Mark and Quinn Slobodian have argued that these analogies, "though sometimes tortured and riddled with their own blind spots, were nonetheless potent rhetorical idioms, enabling imagined solidarities and facilitating material connections in the era of the Cold War and nonalignment."[90]

A special place in the Albanian propaganda against imperialism was occupied by the states in the region and especially their leaders, who were portrayed as servants of the American and Soviet imperialists. Obviously, this rhetoric was used, among other things, as a weapon in the competition for the sympathy of the Third World and China. The greatest attention was paid to Tito, Hoxha's arch-enemy throughout this period, who had in fact gained enormous worldwide popularity with his Non-Aligned Movement. Hoxha claimed that Tito, this "old agent of the

Anglo-Americans" had been commissioned by Washington to create a third force to subjugate the newly independent countries of the Third World politically, economically, and militarily.[91] Whenever there was political turmoil, Hoxha would accuse American or Soviet imperialists, and often Tito, of being an "agent provocateur and organizer of putsches in favor of the Americans"[92]. Whenever Tito organized events within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement, Hoxha warned that this "Yugoslav agent of the Americans does not go into action without aims and objectives set by his patron."[93]

Relations with Bucharest were more complicated. Romania was the only East European country to maintain diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level even after the Soviet-Albanian split, and at the 1966 PLA Congress, for example, the Romanian Communists were the only representatives of an Eastern Bloc Communist Party.[94] Romania also maintained good relations with Albania's ally, China. However, this made the two Southeastern European countries competitors. When, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Albanian Defense Minister Beqir Balluku met with Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, who referred to Yugoslavia and Romania as "indirect allies," Hoxha and his men became furious. At a Politburo meeting devoted to this "incident"[95]the Albanian Minister of Defense worriedly reported about China's rapprochement with these two states. Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu described the Chinese actions as "anti-Marxist, hostile, and anti-Albanian"[96]. Party leader Hoxha, in typical fashion, drew a broader connection, calling the Chinese positions "harmful to the international communist movement, to the revolution and to the struggle against imperialism and modern revisionism."[97] Furthermore, raging against Zhou Enlai, concluding that he was a "total revisionist".[98] After the Sino-Albanian split, Hoxha and his men also stepped up their public attacks on the Romanian leadership. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was criticized as "a politician who turned with the political breeze, who followed the line of 'with this side and with that side', with Tito, with Khrushchev, and with Mao Zedong, indeed even with his successors and with American imperialism."[99] Ceausescu was portrayed as "one of the lesser minions of Dej […] struggling to become 'a world figure' like Tito, to take his place, thanks to a certain hypothetical resistance to the insidious pressure of the Soviets",[100] but who in fact was "the offspring of revisionism, whom Khrushchev and the Khrushchevites have used and are still using for their own purposes."[101] Finally, Hoxha also attacked Bulgarian leader Todor Živkov as an "element without

personality" who "came to the top with the aid of Khrushchev, and became his docile lackey",[102] allowing the "colonization of Bulgaria by the Khrushchevite Soviet Union".[103]

In the late 1960s, China began to shift from tension to expansion in international relations, abandoning its isolationist stance. A historic event took place in 1972. U.S. President Richard Nixon paid a seven-day official visit to China, ending an era of 25 years of no communication or diplomatic relations. Enver Hoxha wrote a letter directly to Mao, strongly opposing the Sino-American rapprochement and arguing, among other things, that such an action would also "gives strength to the revisionists to devalue all the struggle of China against the Soviet renegades."[104] The Chinese leader never replied. The Sino-Albanian disagreements were not made public until 1977, and joint efforts to attract leftist actors around the world continued until at least the mid-1970s, but the golden age of the Sino-Albanian anti-Soviet front and its activities to build an international communist movement was over.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, in the 1960s, through its alliance with Mao's China, Albania entered the stage of world politics for the first and only time in its history. In this context, Tirana made great efforts to win the sympathy of leftist individuals and groups around the world. Contrary to official PLA rhetoric, maintaining contacts with such marginal groups was hardly about contributing to world revolution. Rather, under the particular conditions of the Cold War in the 1960s, relations with leftist actors and highly aggressive anti-Soviet rhetoric constituted a kind of currency vis-à-vis a powerful state, Mao's China. The latter honored the small country on the periphery of Europe with the status of the most important ally in Europe and public praise as a beacon of true Marxism.

Endnotes

[1] Cf. Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 119–133.

[2] Grothusen, *Außenpolitik*, 134–145. On Albania's self-depiction as vanguard of the European and worldwide Marxist-Leninist movement still in the 1980s see especially Sulstarova, "Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism".

[3] See especially Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*; Zofka/ Vámos/ Urbansky (guest eds.), Cold War History 18/3 (2018), Beyond the Kremlin's Reach?.

[4] See for instance: Mark/ Apor, "Socialism Goes Global".

[5] While there are numerous studies especially on Yugoslavia's, but also on Romania's and Bulgaria's above-mentioned activities, due to space limitations, only two publications of general overview will be mentioned here: Brunnbauer/ Buchenau, *Geschichte Südosteuropas*, 295–296, 323–324, 337–338; Calic, *Südosteuropa*, 521–526, 529, 540.

[6] The state of research into communist Albania in general and into the country's international activities during the Cold War in particular is discussed in: Mëhilli, "Documents as Weapons"; Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 3–4; Idrizi, *Herrschaft und Alltag im albanischen Spätsozialismus (1976–1985)*, 31–40.

[7] Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 190–191, 206, 217–219, 224–225.

[8] Mëhilli, "Documents as Weapons", 92–95.

[9] Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 119–133.

[10] Pedrazzi, *L'Italia che sognava Enver*.

[11] Teli (Dibra), "Diplomaci në kushtet e Luftës së Ftohtë".

[12] Lalaj/ Ostermann/ Gage, "'Albania Is Not Cuba': Sino-Albanian Summits and the Sino-Soviet Split".

[13] See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*; Li/Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split*.

[14] Concerning characteristics, methodological problems and ways of approaching State socialist archive documents see especially: Creuzberger/ Lindner (eds.), *Russische Archive und Geschichtswissenschaft*.

[15] Verdery, What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?, 4.

[16] Dragostinova/ Fidelis, "Beyond the Iron Curtain", 578.

[17] Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 9.

[18] Crump, "The Balkan Challenge to the Warsaw Pact, 1960–1964"; Crump/ Erlandsson, *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe*.

[19] See for instance Dragostinova/ Fidelis, "Beyond the Iron Curtain"; Pieper-Mooney/ Lanza(eds.), *De-Centering Cold War History*.

[20] See among other publications: Mark/ Apor, "Socialism Goes Global". See also the website of the research project „Socialism Goes Global": http://socialismgoesglobal.exeter.ac.uk/ (13.2.2020).

[21] See for instance: Vowinckel/ Payk/ Lindenberger (eds.), *Cold War Cultures*.

[22] See the discussion of transnational and entangled history perspectives on the history of communism, which is also useful for Cold War studies: *East Central Europe* 40/1–2 (2013), thematic issue: Studying Communist Dictatorships: From Comparative to Transnational History; *Divinatio* 44 (2017), thematic issue: Comparative History of Communism in Eastern Europe: Methods and Objects. An example of an excellent study employing a transnational approach to research the Cold War culture of a Southeast European State is Theodora Dragostinova's project "The Cold War from the Margins: Bulgarian Culture and the Global 1970s". Among her publications see for instance: Dragostinova, "The 'Natural Ally' of the 'Developing World'".

[23] Grothusen, "Außenpolitik", 98–100. Cf., Mëhilli, "States of Insecurity".

[24] Grothusen, "Außenpolitik", 102–103.

[25] Ibid., 105.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 107. On Albanian-Yugoslav relations see, furthermore, especially Danylow, *Die außenpolitischen Beziehungen Albaniens zu Jugoslawien und zur UdSSR 1944–1961.*

[28] See Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao.*

[29] Ibid., ft.17, 256.

[30] Teli (Dibra), "Diplomaci në kushtet e Luftës së Ftohtë", 231.

[31] Ibid., 232.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 233.

[34] Mëhilli, "Defying De-Stalinization: Albania's 1956".

[35] Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 61, 95, 192-193; Grothusen, "Außenpolitik", 120.

[36] Cited in: Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 192.

[37] Ibid.

[38] On the Soviet-Albanian split see Danylow, *Die außenpolitischen Beziehungen Albaniens zu Jugoslawien und zur UdSSR 1944–1961*; Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet rift*. On Hoxha's scandal in Moscow see, furthermore, especially Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 84–92.

[39] Cited in: Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 200.

[40] See especially Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 133–157.

[41] See especially Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*; Li/Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split.*

[42] See especially subchapter "Mitigating China's isolation. Surrogate diplomacy" in Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 216–228.

[43] Cf. Mark/ Apor, "Socialism Goes Global".

44   Records of the meetings between the PLA delegation headed by Hysni Kapo and the CPC delegation headed by Deng Xiaoping in Beijing, 9-26 June 1962, in Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror i Republikës së Shqipërisë [Central State Archives of the Republic of Albania] (henceforth: AQSH), Fondi 14 [Fund 14] (henceforth: F.14) / Arkivi i Partisë [Archive of the Party] (henceforth: AP), Marrëdhëniet me Partinë Komuniste Kineze [Relations with the Communist Party of China] (henceforth: MPKK), Viti [Year] (henceforth V.) 1962, Dosja [Dossier] (henceforth D.) 6. All translations of quotations from archival sources and the titles of archival files are by the author.

45   Records of the first official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CPC, Beijing, 11 June 1962, in ibid., 7–23: 14.

46   Ibid., 16. Cf. also: ibid., 22–23.

47   Records of the second official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CPC, Beijing, 12 June 1962, in ibid., 24–55: 53.

48   Ibid., 42.

49   Ibid.

50   Records of the third official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CPC, Beijing, 13 June 1962, in ibid., 56–75: 60.

51   Ibid., 56.

52   Notes from the meeting of PLA CC secretaries Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia with the Chinese Ambassador to Albania Lo Shigao, Tirana, 6 July 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1963, D.4, 1–48.

53   Ibid, 12–21.

54   Ibid, 6.

55   Ibid., 10.

56   Ibid., 9.

57   Notes from the meeting of PLA CC secretary Ramiz Alia with the Chinese Ambassador to Albania Lo Shigao, Tirana, 20 July 1963, in ibid., 49–50.

58   Cf. Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 122–123.

59   Report of the meeting between the head of the Directorate of Foreign Relations at PLA CC Pirro Bita and the vice head of the Directorate of Foreign Relations at CPC CC, Beijing, 11 September 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1963, D.9.

60   Report of the meeting between the head of the Directorate of Foreign Relations at PLA CC Pirro Bita and a representative of the Directorate of Foreign Relations at CPC CC, Beijing, 17 September 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1963, D.10, 5–14.

61   The welcoming speech by Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu in Rinas airport (Tirana) on the occasion of the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, 31 December 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1963, D.31; Records of the talks between the Head of the Council of State of China Zhou Enlai

and the PLA leadership, Tirana, 2–8 January 1964, in AQSH, F.14, APMPKK, V.1964, D.25–25/1.

[62] Minutes of conversation between Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CPC, and PLA leaders, first session, Tirana, 2 January 1964, in ibid., 2–24: 5.

[63] Ibid., 12–13.

[64] Ibid, 13.

[65] Ibid., 19–20.

[66] Cf. Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 117.

[67] Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CPC, and PLA leaders, third session, 3 January 1964, in ibid., 41–63: 44.

[68] Ibid., 55.

[69] Ibid., 59–60.

[70] Ibid., 45, 47.

[71] Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CPC, and PLA leaders, fourth session, 3 January 1964, in ibid., 64–79: 64–68.

[72] Cf. for instance minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CPC, and PLA leaders, fifth session, 5 January 1964, in ibid., 80–98: 82–84.

[73] Ibid., 85–90.

[74] Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 124–125.

[75] Cf. Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 125–126.

[76] Suggestions on providing financial assistance to some Marxist-Leninist groups, in AQSH, F.14/AP, Organet Udhëheqëse [The Leading Organs] (henceforth: OU), Sekretariati [Secretariat], V.1964, D.26, 31–35: 31.

[77] AQSH, F.14/AP, OU, Sekretariati, V.1967, D.20, Decision number 22 on 10.2.1967, Giving assistance to the Liberation Movement of Kongo, 11.

[78] Molla, *Guerilas Made in Albania*.

[79] Cf. Marku, *Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978*, 132.

[80] Ibid., 130–132.

[81] Hoxha, *The Khruschevites*, 434.

[82] Cited in: Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 72.

[83] Cf. Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies*.

[84] For example, in an article commenting the political situation in the Middle East, Hoxha wrote that "the problem is to fight American, British, and French imperialism and their tools, one of which is the state of Israel; to fight Soviet revisionist imperialism which, under the camouflage of socialism, is seeking its place in the sun of the Middle East and the African continent." (Hoxha, *Reflections on the Middle East, 1958–1983*, 94–95.)

[85]   Grothusen, "Außenpolitik", 132.

[86]   Cf. the same image propagated by Bulgaria later: Dragostinova, "The "Natural Ally" of the "Developing World".

[87]   Hoxha, *Reflections on the Middle East, 1958–1983*, 70.

[88]   Ibid., 72–73.

[89]   Ibid., 93. Regarding Hoxha's position towards the Middle East crisis, see: Bishku, "Albania and the Middle East".

[90]   Mark/ Slobodian, "Eastern Europe in the Global History of Decolonization", 351.

[91]   Hoxha, *Reflections on the Middle East, 1958–1983*, 53.

[92]   Ibid., 54.

[93]   Ibid., 98.

[94]   Grothusen (ed.), *Albanien*, 130–131.

[95]   Records of the Politburo meeting on 26 October 1966, discussion point 4 "On a new incident with the Head of the Council of State of China, Zhou Enlai, during the visit of the Albania's party and state delegation headed by the Minister of Defense Beqir Balluku, that visited China during September-October 1968", in AQSH, F.14/AP, OU, V.1968, D.13, 225–243.

[96]   Ibid., 232.

[97]   Ibid.

[98]   Ibid., 234.

[99]   Hoxha, *The Khruschevites*, 215.

[100] Ibid., 217.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Hoxha, *The Khruschevites*, 212.

[103] Ibid., 210–211.

[104] Letter of the PLA CC, (signed by Enver Hoxha), addressed to the CPC, to Mao Zedong, 6 August 1971, regarding the coming visit of the American President Nixon to China, quoted in: Marku, Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949–1978, 243.

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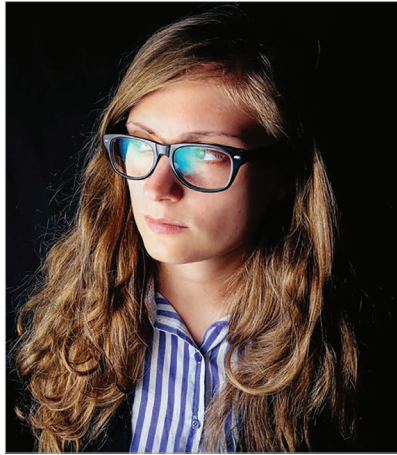
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THE FASCIST KATECHON AND THE COMMUNIST ANTICHRIST: HOW AUR PARTY USES SOCIAL MEDIA TO REVIVE INTERWAR LEGIONARY MANICHEAN THINKING

Adina Marincea[1]

Abstract

In 2020, the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR) – a recently formed and then largely unknown radical right party – managed to win seats in Parliament. Described by many as populist, nationalist, or far-right, AUR began to reveal its affinities with the interwar Legionary Movement, the autochthonous permutation of fascism.

This paper examines how AUR integrates in their political discourse interwar fascist ideas with right-wing populism and further disseminates these narratives through its three leaders' use of social media. It employs a hybrid empirical approach combining Natural Language Processing with Discourse Historical Analysis to critically deconstruct the discourses of AUR leaders George Simion, Claudiu Târziu and Sorin Lavric.

Keywords: populism, fascism, Legionary Movement, radical right, discourse analysis, communism

The results of the 2020 parliamentary elections in Romania surprised many, with the unexpected success of the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR) which managed to win 9% of the vote and 47 seats, despite having been formally established only a year before the elections. Most opinion polls had failed to predict AUR's success, and some even failed to include it in their surveys.

AUR's entry into parliament marked the end of a decade in which Romania was perceived as a somewhat exemplary outlier (e.g., Ban 2016) due to the absence of far-right or right-wing populist parties in the

Parliament. The Greater Romania Party (PRM), the traditional far-right party, has not had any electoral success at European or national level since 2009, and no other new party has managed to cross the electoral threshold.

The newcomer AUR was initially described with various labels ranging from anti-system, nationalist, unionist, right-wing populist or far-right to the subsequent revelation of its affinities with the Legionary Movement – the Romanian permutation of interwar fascism. However, the repeated denial by AUR leaders of such links with fascist/legionary ideology, despite many arguments supporting the claim (Cârstocea 2021; Clark 2020; Clej 2020; Gheorghiu & Praisler, 2022; Grădinaru 2020; Marincea 2022a, 2022b; Rațiu 2020), together with often ambivalent or ambiguous discourse strategies, can cast further doubt on their ideological positioning.

In this paper, I will examine how AUR integrates interwar fascist ideas and narratives, most typically from the Legionary Movement, into its political discourse and further disseminates these narratives through its leaders' use of social media – especially Facebook and, to some extent, YouTube. One of the factors that have contributed to the electoral surprise of AUR was its communication strategy, which, similar to other populist, right-wing and far-right leaders or authoritarian regimes in Europe and beyond, has relied heavily on social media[2] (Akgül 2019; Bobba 2019). The appeal of these platforms lies primarily in their capacity to provide a direct, unmediated connection to "the people" by bypassing traditional media gatekeepers (Kriesi 2014; Esser et al. 2016), which are often captured by hard-to-permeate state or private interests (Marincea 2021). Traditional media organizations usually have legal safeguards in place to define, monitor, or sanction violations of professional journalistic norms, although they are often insufficient or inefficient. Circumventing more established/institutionalized journalistic organizations makes it easier to share content that abides by no such deontological norms, even if, we might argue, these norms are increasingly eroding in mainstream media as well.[3] This facilitates the unchecked spread of mis/disinformation, hateful and anti-democratic content, conspiracy theories, and far-right propaganda that we have seen in recent years on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter or TikTok.

AUR is still frequently analyzed in scholarly works through the theoretical framework of right-wing populism (Popescu & Vesalon 2022; Gușă 2021), more often than through the lens of fascism (Buti & Constantin 2021). There is ample evidence that AUR, through its three main representatives – George Simion and Claudiu Târziu (formerly

co-presidents) and Sorin Lavric (President of AUR's Senate) –, combines a mixture of ideological affiliations. In addition, since clear conceptual boundaries between terms such as far-right, radical right (populism), neo-fascism, post-fascism have become more difficult to draw and often overlap in recent research, my aim is to analyze how AUR representatives combine right-wing populist rhetoric with discursive features typical of fascism, and more specifically of the legacy of the local Legionary Movement.

Like fascism, the Legionary Movement is characterized by a strong ultranationalism and hostility to communism, coupled with an anti-liberal and anti-pluralist stance, often resorting to violence; it is anti-modern and builds on the myth of a Golden Age and the promise of national rebirth (palingenesis) (Clark 2015; Ornea 1996/2015; Weber & Mihu 1995; Griffin 1991). The depicted "decay" of society is blamed on an internal enemy that threatens the nation – most often the Jewish people (Livezeanu 1995) and the ideological left. Like other forms of fascism, the Legionary Movement was action-oriented and driven by a charismatic leader (Iordachi 2004), promoted a masculinist (macho/patriarchal) culture, and combined mysticism and spirituality with the cult of death, martyrdom, and sacrifice, often manifested through rituals. However, unlike fascism and Nazism, the Legionary Movement was highly religious, with Orthodoxism as one of its driving forces.

1. Populism and the right-wing: The good, the bad, and the violent

Populism is one of those concepts that has been rendered almost meaningless by overuse and conceptual overstretching. It has been used to signify both *demagogy* and *democracy*, while also being weaponized by political actors aiming to delegitimize their opponents' claims. Conceptualizations of populism vary from left to right, from positive to negative, and from minimalist (Urbinati 2019; Mudde 2004) to maximalist (Urbinati 2019; Laclau 2005; Laclau & Mouffe 2001). This leads to different operationalizations and empirical approaches in the study of populism.

Whether populism is conceived of as positive or negative depends, as Barker (2020) notes, on political assumptions about the capacity and desirability of people's participation in politics, which distinguishes between representative (liberal) and participatory (radical) democrats.

For scholars who argue for more direct democracy (Laclau 2005) or for anticolonial politics (Mabandla & Deumert 2020), the good side of populism is that it involves people more directly in politics. For these scholars, populism is the result of a political crisis (of neoliberalism and austerity, of liberal democracy) and functions as a "cry for help" with democratizing potential (McCormick 2017). On the dark side, populism is associated with demagogy (Berend 2020; Grabow & Hartleb 2013), manipulative appeals to emotions (Aslan 2021), conspiratorial thinking (Bergmann 2018; Castanho Silva et al. 2017), right-wing nationalism, and anti-democratic, authoritarian regimes (Wodak 2015; Ekström & Morton 2017; Crowley 2020). From this perspective, populism is perceived as a threat to representative democracy (Müller 2016; Urbinati 2013).

In contrast to both elitist (*people should be ruled by elites*) and pluralist conceptions of politics (*compromise based on a diversity of perspectives*), populism gives sovereignty to "the people", which is seen in opposition to "the elite" (Bergman 2020). Therefore, anti-elitism and the appeal to "the people" are considered essential elements of populism, along with an "exclusionary form of identity politics" (Müller 2016) and a Manichean good vs. evil binary thinking that is used to exclude the Other – on grounds of ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, religion, ideology, etc.

Given these populist characteristics, scholars who study populism as a political communication style have identified four types of populist discourse (Jagers & Walgrave 2007): "empty populism" (referring only to "the people," often through appeals to the "common man"), "anti-elitist populism" (attacks on elites and references to "the people"), "excluding populism" (references to "the people" and exclusion of out-groups), and "complete populism" (which includes all of the above).

Right-wing populism adds to these elements "a generalized claim to represent 'THE people' in the sense of a homogenised ideal based on nativist ideologies, thus on *traditional body politics*. This dogma is accompanied by a *revisionist view of history*. The *rhetoric of exclusion* has become part and parcel of a much more general discourse about strangers within and outside the 'body', that is, the nation state" (Wodak 2015: 21).

Going one step further, if we add to this mix a revolutionary aspiration to reshape society from the ground up, to create an entirely "New Order", a "New Man" (because such ideologies are usually patriarchal and macho), with a very moralistic mindset, we enter the field of fascism. As Kershaw (2015) observed, the difference between fascism and other right-wing (ultra) nationalist authoritarian movements lies in its revolutionary dimension.

Unlike the latter, which sought to preserve the existing social order, as Kershaw notes, "fascism sought a revolution," but not "in terms of social class, as Marxists advocated, but a revolution nonetheless – a revolution of mentalities, values and will," one that "sought total commitment to the collective will of a united nation" and that "demanded soul as well as body" (Kershaw 2015: 235).

In the same vein, Roger Griffin's definition of fascism – that I use in this paper – is one that has garnered the most scholarly consensus and has been described by some as a "truly minimal fascist minimum" (Richardson 2017: 448): "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism" (Griffin 1991: 26). In Griffin's conceptualization, the core elements of fascism are a radical populist nationalism combined with the myth of national rebirth as a response to the (constructed) perception of national decadence. Unlike other far right ideologies – including, as Cârstocea (2021b) notes, Ion Antonescu's political thought, which aimed to preserve the state, making it conservative rather than revolutionary – fascism is revolutionary, aiming for radical transformation or a "new order". In Griffin's words (1991: 35), "At the heart of palingenetic political myth lies the belief that contemporaries are living through or about to live through a 'sea-change', a 'water-shed' or 'turning-point' in the historical process. The perceived corruption, anarchy, oppressiveness, iniquities or decadence of the present, rather than being seen as immutable and thus to be endured indefinitely with stoic courage or bleak pessimism, are perceived as having reached their peak and interpreted as the sure sign that one era is nearing its end and a new order is about to emerge."

Moreover, violence is a common trait of fascist politics, which appropriated some of the ideas behind the "propaganda by the deed" from 19th-century insurrectionary anarchism. However, unlike anarchism's bottom-up violence directed at the state and ruling classes in reaction to socio-economic and political inequalities, exploitation, oppression, and repression by the rich and powerful, fascism's violence was directed at those out-groups excluded from "the people," most often – at least in Europe and the West – on the basis of their identity. Fascist violence was and is usually directed against minority groups (ethnic, racialized, etc.) or those already marginalized and vulnerable (e.g. LGBTQIA+ communities, immigrants, refugees), and has frequently benefitted the complicity of the state and its (military and security) institutions, such as the police (Clark 2015; Dunnage 2004).

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However, with the fall of fascist regimes and their ideological discrediting, and the establishment of liberal norms that govern the predominantly liberal/constitutional democracies in Europe and the Western world, fascist violence – be it symbolic, political, or physical – is no longer legitimate in its brute form. For this reason, fascist ideas and violence are now often disguised or transformed through strategies such as calculated ambivalence, denial (Wodak 2015), dog-whistling (Åkerlund 2021), reframing, downplaying, etc., or confined to the discursive level. Consequently, today's right-wing populism and different far-right movements contain the seeds of fascism, from which fascism in its most explicit and violent form can always grow, even if physical violence is absent in their current state. This illustrates Finchelstein's (2019) concept of "post-fascism," which he sees as an adaptation of Cold War ultranationalist politics to the current historical context dominated by democratic representation. For this reason, current "post-fascist" movements, often described as populist, can be compatible with or even part of representative politics and parliamentary structures, as opposed to the ideal type of fascism, which is anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-parliamentary.

While this paper focuses mainly on the discursive dimension of AUR, it is important to add that AUR has displayed various forms of violence, coded or explicit, discursive as well as in its actions, both before and increasingly after elections. Some examples are George Simion's contribution to the escalation of the inter-ethnic conflicts that turned violent between Romanians and ethnic Hungarians in Valea Uzului in 2019, the physical aggression against unsympathetic citizens or his bullying of political representatives in Parliament – for example the Minister of Energy (PNL) or a USR deputy, and the frequent incitement of police and gendarmes at protests. Like Corneliu Zelea Codreanu – leader of the interwar Legionary Movement – and many of the leaders of the ultranationalist student movements, who displayed hooligan behavior that sometimes turned into physical violence, George Simion also has a hooligan profile. This was forged during two decades of active membership in the radical football stadium culture of the ultras, which included physical violence and altercations with the police. Simion was the founder of the magazine "Romanian Ultras" and a founding member of the xenophobic and racist football groups "Honor et patria" and "United under the tricolor" – whose members had committed physical attacks on antifascists (List 2018). Simion transformed his experience as an ultra

into a strategy of political action, both in his dealings with the police and gendarmes during his rallies, and in his activities in Parliament, increasing the level of political violence.

Some of the forms of political violence exercised by AUR have been the issuing of a press release minimizing the Holocaust (Marincea 2022c), for which a criminal investigation was opened and then closed, and their absence from the vote on the adoption of a statement on antisemitic manifestations and attempts to rehabilitate war criminals, which followed the antisemitic death threats received by the actress Maia Morgenstern (INSHR 2021). The author of the threats claimed that he was a member of AUR, which the party denied, and George Simion stated that "some sources say he is ethnically Jewish," repeating an antisemitic trope that blames Jews for antisemitism.[4]

2. The enemy of my enemy is my hero? Rehabilitation of interwar fascism through the anti-communist cult of the "Prison Saints"

I argue, in line with Raul Cârstocea's (2008) observation, that the concept of populism may not be adequate to understand the political landscape in Romania, which, especially after the fall of communism, is better described as a combination of radical right politics and nationalism, the latter being one of the few common factors found both in the interwar period and in the national-communist regime. Nationalism has survived and flourished even after the fall of communism – with parties such as the Greater Romania Party (PRM) or the United Romania Party (PRU), but also permeated mainstream parties and now witnesses a resurgence through AUR. For this reason, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional left-right conceptualization of politics, which fails to capture and explain the Romanian context. This is partly due to the absence of a significant left (Bucur 2004), despite, or perhaps because of, the long history of communism and the initial resistance in the early 1990s to the strong neoliberal pressures in the region.

The radicalization of neoliberalism that began in the 2000s and solidified in 2010 after the financial crisis (Ban 2011; Vincze 2015), further undermining the chance of a redefinition of the left, was the result of several reinforcing factors. Among them was the articulation of a strong anti-communist sentiment, which the University Square protests

of the 1990s continued from the '89 Revolution. This was consolidated both by academics who promoted libertarian economics (Ban 2011) and by intellectuals on the right who uncritically adopted interwar and ultranationalist ideas through the literature of legionary sympathizers such as Nae Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Mircea Vulcănescu, thus laying the groundwork for the rehabilitation and resurgence of ultranationalism (Hodor in Rațiu 2020).

A significant contribution to this result was the cultivation of "fascist hagiographies" (Biliuță 2021) through the "Prison Saints" movement, which was consistently built since the early 1990s and the University Square protests by a network of former political detainees of the communist regime (including members of the Legionary Movement), together with some intellectuals of the right and even politicians, as well as Orthodox priests and "civil society" NGOs, all sharing (ultra)nationalist and (ultra) conservative views. Together they created a media and publishing infrastructure through which they managed to (re)circulate interwar and legionary ideas, reinforce anti-communist and anti-left hostility, and create an indiscriminate cult of martyrdom that ended up promoting fascist detainees as "Saints" who sacrificed themselves for democracy. It is argued here that this process of liberal-washing former members or sympathizers of the Legion, which contributes to the radicalization of politics to the extreme right and to a revision of history that serves to give respectability to fascist ideas and representatives, is also part of AUR's communication strategy.

For the purposes of this paper and in the context presented, a more suitable theoretical framework is that used by Cârstocea (2008), following Shafir's (1999) conceptualization, which distinguishes between "radical return" and "radical continuity" parties. While both appeal to xenophobia and extreme nationalism, what distinguishes them is the historical (and, implicitly, ideational) nationalist legacy on which they draw – anchored either in interwar fascism or in national communism. According to Shafir, "radical return" parties "look to the neotraditional values associated with fascist parties in the interwar period and find models in such leaders as Josef Tiso, Andrej Hlinka, Ion Antonescu, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ferenc Szálasi, and Ante Pavelić" (Shafir 1999: 213). On the other hand, "radical continuity" parties, according to Shafir (1999), draw their inspiration from the communist legacy and, in the case of Romania, specifically from the Ceaușescu regime, and are characterized by "discriminatory policies toward the Hungarian minority, the pursuit of a foreign policy

independent of the Soviet line, and the encouragement of a Romanian national identity" (Cârstocea 2008: 27).

Examples of "radical continuity" parties can be found closer to the 1990s and in Parliament: Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare, or PRM), the Socialist Labor Party (Partidul Socialist al Muncii, or PSM), and the Party of Romanian National Unity (Partidul Unității Naționale Române, or PUNR) (Shafir 1999b: 214). However, looking at the political spectrum, after the fall of PRM, a slow downward process of "radical continuity" emerged, as parties that lost power became irrelevant, while "radical return" movements were on the rise, though less visible to the mainstream eye. Due to the physical and historiographical repression of the various fascist movements and representatives during communism, a neofascist movement after the fall of communism started from a different, much less consolidated and institutionalized position of power compared to the heirs of communism. For this reason, "radical return" groups operated more on a grassroots/extra-parliamentary level and slowly built their way to the top of mainstream politics over the last three decades.

Cârstocea (2008) identifies Marian Munteanu's Movement for Romania (Mișcarea Pentru România, MPR), registered on 23 December 1991, as the first "radical return" formation. The MPR shared with the PRM the anti-Hungarian, antisemitic, and anti-globalization views, but added to them a strong anti-communist position and a clear affiliation to the legionary legacy (Cârstocea 2008). Other parties and movements followed this ideological path, including the Party of the National Right (Partidul Dreapta Națională, PDN) and the New Christian Romania (Noua Românie Creștină, NRC) – 1992, The Party for the Fatherland (Partidul Pentru Patrie, PPP), founded in 1993 by a group of former legionaries, renamed in 2012 after the interwar party of the Legion "Everything for the Country" (Totul pentru Țară, TpȚ) and banned in 2015, and the New Right (Noua Dreaptă, ND) – 1999/2000, which became a party in 2015. The New Generation Party – Christian Democrat (Partidul Noua Generație – Creștin Democrat, PNG-CD), after businessman George Becali took over the leadership in 2004, also appealed more superficially to legionary symbolism, coupled with strong Orthodoxism, ultranationalism, ultraconservatism and aggressive, discriminatory language targeting different minority groups (Cinpoeș 2012).

In 2008, a part of the PPP members also established the Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu Foundation, named after the legionary who was also part of the armed anti-communist resistance in the mountains (Fundația Ion

Gavrilă Ogoranu), and who was one of the founders of the PPP and the continuator of the legionary ideas, becoming one of the cult figures of the contemporary neo-legionary movements. Also in 2008, the Orthodox Brotherhood of St. George the Great Martyr, Bearer of Victory (Frăția Ortodoxă Sf. Mare Mucenic Gheorghe purtătorul de Biruință) was born. In 2014, the Movement "Motivation: Romania" (Mișcarea "Motivația: România") was initiated by Călin Georgescu, who in November 2024 would win the first round of the Presidential elections, which led the Romanian Constitutional Court to cancel the elections on grounds of Russian interference and neo-legionary affiliation.

Other organizations that followed were the United Romania Party (Partidul România Unită, PRU) – 2015, which in 2017, together with PRM and ND, founded the alliance The National Identity Block in Europe (Blocul Identității Naționale în Europa, BINE[5]), the Association Gogu Puiu – the Haiduks of Dobrogea (Asociația Gogu Puiu – Haiducii Dobrogei) – founded in 2016 in close connection with the Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu Foundation, and the Association Ancestral Land ("Pământul Strămoșesc"[6]), founded in 2021 by Călin Georgescu, etc.[7]. In order to promote their ideas, many of these organizations or their members have set up a publishing infrastructure (e.g. newspapers, blogs, websites, social media pages, magazines or publishing houses that print books, magazines, pamphlets, etc.) or have managed to publish literature through existing mainstream or fringe publishing initiatives through contacts with similar ideology (see Cardinal Points magazine and ROST).

What they have in common, beyond their often collaboration, is a more or less openly acknowledged affiliation to the Legionary movement, manifested through references and commemorative rituals for its "heroes" such as Codreanu, Moța, and Marin, the replication of the "nests" infrastructure, and typical legionary practices (e.g., work camps) and aesthetics (e.g., green shirts). However, the symbolic affiliation has also been complemented by more recent ideological transformations that respond to the challenges of the present: anti-globalization attitudes, often defined as a continuation of interwar anti-bolshevism and also in relation to anti-progressivism (opposition to so-called "gender ideology", sexual education, right to abortion, feminism, etc.) – as a form of clinging to traditional values (e.g. "traditional family"). Added to this are strong anti-immigration demands, often mobilizing racist and ethnicist prejudices, and a "sovereigntist" orientation that translates into anti-EU sentiments or opposition to any kind of supranational governance. Antisemitism

has also not disappeared from neofascist movements, but rather is often transformed or insinuated in other discourses, such as anti-Soros rhetoric or conspiracy theories about a financial elite plotting to dominate the world, transnational corporations, the "global occult" or "political correctness" (INSHR 2018), and is often intertwined with the anti-communist rhetoric that has become increasingly prevalent since the 1990s (Cârstocea 2021a).

AUR marks a significant victory for the "radical return" parties, which for the first time in decades have managed to enter Parliament and thus the mainstream of politics and power. As Raul Cârstocea aptly observes (2021b), AUR goes beyond the "seemingly more benign 'populism'" that "has been however rendered almost meaningless by overuse and that glosses over significant differences within the political spectrum it covers," drawing closer to interwar fascism through elements such as anti-communism and palingenesis.

The aim of this paper is to empirically and more systematically track evidence to support this claim about AUR's ideological position, based mainly on what its discursive approach can reveal, coupled with some of its positions and actions.

3. Methodology

Since AUR's communication strategy relies heavily on the use of social media – especially Facebook, which, as shown above, is one of the preferred media for non-mainstream political actors, the corpus analyzed consists mainly of social media posts (in 2024 election campaigns, TikTok also became a popular channel for political actors). I have collected datasets downloaded with the CrowdTangle app before and after the 2020 elections, with content published on four pages: the Facebook page of the AUR party and the pages of AUR leaders George Simion, Claudiu Târziu and Sorin Lavric.

The parliamentary elections took place on 6 December 2020, and partial results were announced on 7 December. Therefore, my research corpus is divided into the following two intervals: before the elections (1 January 2020 – 6 December 2020) and after the elections (7 December 2020 – 1 June 2022). It is worth mentioning that in the pre-election period, only two Facebook pages were analyzed: that of AUR[8] – 537 posts, and that of George Simion[9] – 611 posts. This is due to the fact that Claudiu

Târziu and Sorin Lavric only started a public Facebook page after the elections: Lavric on 6 January 2021[10] and Târziu on 12 January 2022.[11]

The post-election corpus consists of 1,245 posts from AUR, 801 posts from George Simion, 248 posts from Claudiu Târziu and 136 posts from Sorin Lavric. This makes a total of 3,578 posts from four Facebook pages over the course of two years and four months.

I chose to focus more on the analysis of the pages of AUR representatives rather than the party's page because populist parties revolve around their – often charismatic (Iordachi 2004) leaders and gain popularity through a personalized style of politics (Engesser et al. 2017; Urbinati 2013; Roberts 1995). This is also visible in the number of followers of AUR's page – 153,000 as of July 2022, compared to George Simion – 1.2 million.

In analyzing the content of these posts, I have chosen a hybrid approach to compensate for the shortcomings of quantitative and qualitative methods taken individually. While quantitative approaches and the more recent computational methods have the advantage of facilitating the identification of patterns in big data corpuses, their limitation is that they may not seem to say much without in-depth qualitative interpretation. And for the latter, if used as a stand-alone method, it can raise suspicions of cherry picking and questions about the extent to which certain findings are present in the larger corpus.

In addition, the nature of the content itself generates some limitations on the use of certain analysis methods. For example, some of the Facebook posts contain short texts that are not well suited for automated topic detection (e.g., LDA topic modeling). Computational methods for text analysis can only be applied to the text of the posts, which means that they miss much of the actual discourse, which is often transmitted via (live) video. We know from previous research that (right-wing) populist leaders have a showman quality (Wodak 2015) and therefore prefer video posts, which they usually create themselves (Marincea et al. 2021b). Often, as in the case of George Simion, these videos can be very long, an hour or more. In order to apply corpus linguistic methods to the video content, transcripts would be required, which is very time and resource consuming.

In order not to miss this relevant video content, it was included in the current analysis using the computational methods used to identify the most popular posts or the presence of certain topics or keywords in the posts. For such video content identified as particularly relevant, important parts were extracted and translated to exemplify and strengthen the results of the quantitative analysis.

To sum up my hybrid research approach, in the first stage of analysis, I used Corpus Linguistics (Subtirelu & Baker 2017; Gries 2009) computational methods such as descriptive statistics (term frequencies) and unsupervised clustering algorithms to extract names and patterns, namely topics, from the posts using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling method.[12] In the second phase of the analysis, I went deeper and qualitatively analyzed the most popular posts and those associated with the identified topics and keywords or frequently relevant terms. This was done within the framework of Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) (Wodak 2001; Reisigl 2017), an approach from the field of Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak & Meyer 2015; Flowerdew & Richardson 2018).

This dual empirical approach was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. How do various AUR leaders combine elements of populist discourse (Kubát et al. 2020; Mudde 2007), such as anti-elitism, exclusionary politics, and people-centeredness, with characteristics of fascist (legionary) discourse, such as anti-communism, ultranationalism, Orthodoxism, mysticism, revolutionary politics, and palingenesis, etc. (Ornea 1996/2015; Clark 2015; Livezeanu 1995; Weber & Mihu 1995; Griffin 1991)?

RQ2. What are the discursive strategies mobilized by AUR leaders before and after the 2020 elections to recirculate fascist ideas in terms of tropes, visual elements, historical references, denial strategies that they use? Is there a visible radicalization over time, after entering Parliament?

4. "Brothers" not "Comrades": Orthodox patriotic conservative Romanians as "The people"

When it comes to defining who belongs to "the people" and who is excluded, there are similarities between the three politicians, but also differences in focus. A shared understanding is that the "we/us" is constituted by Christian Orthodox nationalists, "patriots", Romanian citizens (but there's no clear consensus among the three AUR leaders on who and on what grounds can "truly" aspire to citizenship.

Like Trump, George Simion often uses references to "Patriots", both before and after elections: "Oltenians, supreme patriots," "a group of patriotic hearts (AUR)," "Romanian patriots." Simion rhetorically asks the readers to choose a side, right after the elections, on 9 December

2020, creating a typical populist Manichean opposition of *good* (we, "the people") vs. *evil* (them, elites or "the other") opposition: "For every 9 bastards who hit AUR, 1 patriot appears! Are you with the bastards or the patriots?"[13]
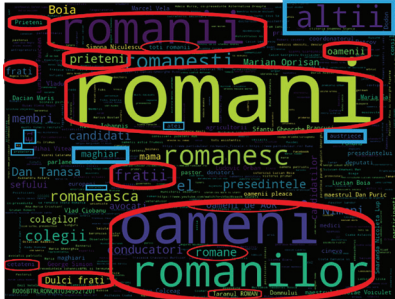

Figure 1. "The people" highlighted in red, "The others" in blue, in a Wordcloud based on most frequent words in George Simion's Facebook posts before the 2020 election results
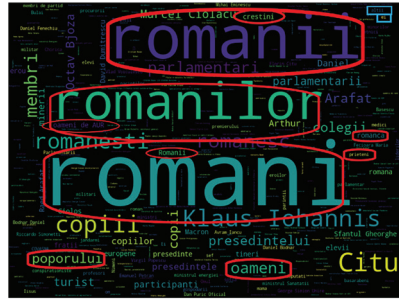

Figure 2. "The people" highlighted in red, "The others" in blue, in a Wordcloud based on most frequent words in George Simion's Facebook posts after the 2020 election results
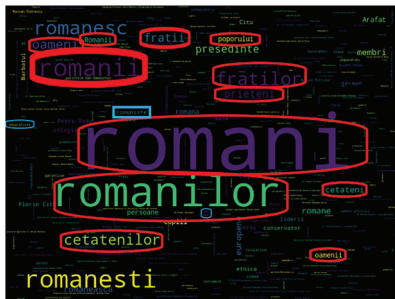

Figure 3. "The people" highlighted in red, "The others" in blue, in a Wordcloud based on most frequent words in Claudiu Târziu's Facebook posts after the 2020 election results
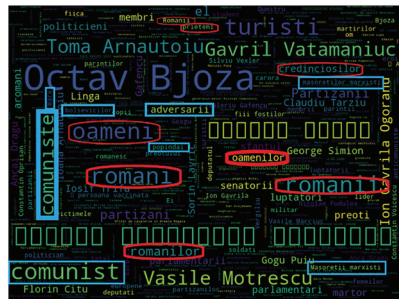

Figure 4. "The people" highlighted in red, "The others" in blue, in a Wordcloud based on most frequent words in Sorin Lavric's Facebook posts after the 2020 election results

Children and, less often, parents are often referred to as part of "the people" or, especially in Claudiu Târziu's posts, as gendered subjects, "man" and "woman". Taken together, these words denote an appeal to emotion and conservative values such as the heteronormative family.

In the pre-election corpus, references to "(the) people" and specifically "Romanians" are among the most frequent words on George Simion's page (Figure 1), which appears 143 times in the overall corpus and 146 times in the post-election corpus, making it one of the most common words in both intervals.

"We/us", "the people" is also expressed by words like "(the) people", "people of gold / AUR[14]", "(sweet) brothers", "the nation", "fatherland", "(His Highness) the Romanian Peasant"[15], "citizens", "friends". (Figure 5 , Figure 6). The same vocabulary is also common in the posts of Claudiu Târziu and Sorin Lavric (see. Figure 7, Figure 8). The colloquial term "brothers", which indicates a high degree of closeness resembling family ties, stands out in the posts of both George Simion and Claudiu Târziu. Due to its greater informality, it is not a common form of addressing the electorate in mainstream liberal democratic politics. It is compatible with the populist style of direct, unmediated communication that aims to reduce the distance between the populist leader and "the people" and make him seem like a "common man" (Bobba & Legnante 2017). In addition, the term "brother" and its even more colloquial form used by Simion, "sweet brothers", also has an ultranationalist symbolic charge, being frequently used by different prominent ultranationalist and legionary interwar figures (e.g. Codreanu 1940).

This can also be seen in the names of the various factions of these movements: among the first ultranationalist and antisemitic movements, founded by Amos Frâncu in 1919, was one called the Brotherhoods of the Cross. The same name was later given by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu to the youth divisions of the Legionary Movement. In his legionary guide (Codreanu 1940), he defined the Brotherhoods of the Cross as those "nests"[16] consisting only of urban young men between the ages of 14 and 20, who were to receive an education based on Christian and nationalist values, physical training (to prepare them to fight in defense of the Fatherland) and "sanitary" education (to protect them from "diseases," especially venereal diseases, which were considered a sign of moral decay). Codreanu's conception of the Brotherhoods of the Cross was also profoundly anti-communist from the start, and he gave instructions that "[the young Romanian] must be protected from communist literature

that rises up against God, against the Family, against property, against the Army."[17]

This shows that the specific terminology of the Brotherhood is not chosen at random, but rather signifies Christian and (ultra)conservative, (ultra) nationalist and patriarchal values that complement each other. The nation is perceived as a family and citizenship as a unity of blood – based on ethnicity and religion. It is fundamentally opposed to Marxist materialism, where religion plays no role or is at best tolerated, and to socialist internationalism, where solidarity is ascribed along class lines and across national borders. These ideological differences are translated into different terminology: while the extreme right uses terms like "brothers" or analogies like "Fatherland" or "Mother tongue" ("body politics"), these are much less common on the left side of the spectrum, where the terminology is less driven by traditional family values or body politics and tends more towards solidarity based on common struggles or alliances, as implied by terms such as "comrade" or the Romanian form "tovarăș", which are less common in radical or extreme right discourse or, when used, are often employed with an anti-communist goal (e.g. as a caricature of communist vocabulary). The extreme right and the Romanian adaptation of fascism (the Legion) have their own equivalent of the term "tovarăș"/"comrade", which is preferred in order to distinguish themselves from their ideological opponent, namely "camarad", whose closer translation would be "brother in arms".

In our corpus, we can identify the following tendencies: AUR uses "tovarăș" (and its declensions) the most, both before the 2020 elections (2 posts) and after (4 posts), always in a negative context. The aim is to attack political and ideological opponents of the USR (the most frequent target, considered by AUR to be a progressive party), PSD and PNL, by associating them with communist dictatorships in Romania, North Korea or the Soviet Union and suggesting that they are continuators of these regimes. To this end, AUR makes extensive use of historical tropes: "USR – ILLIBERAL FAR LEFT PARTY […] USR comrades, representatives of the LGBTQ+ International"[18] (Figure 9) (pre-election corpus), "comrades of the Central Committee of the USR",[19] "Comrade Barna-USsR",[20] "So let us understand, sir (or comrade?) Muraru, that you are an admirer of the Red Army?"[21] (post-election corpus). Moreover, in a post from 2021, AUR draws a parallel between "Bolshevik class-based discrimination" and discrimination based on "medical criteria" decided by "the new progressive order".[22] This was a reaction to the decision of the liberal minister of education to give priority to vaccinated students with a green

certificate for accommodation in student dormitories. The parallel could also be seen as an implicit historical trope, recalling the ultranationalist student movements of the interwar period, which grew out of students' frustration with campus conditions and their sense of being discriminated against by the increased access of Jewish students to higher education.

Figure 5. Anti-communist post on AUR's page before the 2020 elections using the word "tovarăș" (comrade) to attack political opponents perceived as progressives for supporting legal provisions (the introduction of sexual education in schools). The post is meant as a caricature showing Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Che Guevara and aims to label USR (a liberal, center-right party) as "far left iliberal"

On the other hand, the right-wing term "camarad"[23] is used only once on the AUR page, in the post-election period, and it has a positive connotation of friendship and solidarity, which is allegedly threatened and "traded" by the government's anti-Covid-19 measures, such as the green certificate, which AUR strongly fought against.

Claudiu Târziu uses the word "camarad" in 2 posts, one in reference to AUR leader George Simion[24] as "friend and comrade [prieten și camarad]", and the other in relation to the Ukrainian soldier of Romanian ethnicity who was killed by the Russian army near Odessa during the war in Ukraine, along with other "comrades/camarazi".[25] On the other hand, Târziu also uses the left-wing equivalent term "tovarăș" in a post with an unclear addressee: "You meet extraordinary people unexpectedly. If you have an organ to feel them, you remain comrade [tovarăș] with them for life".[26]

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While Sorin Lavric does not use the term "tovarăş", he does use "camarad" in a post in which he pays a long tribute to former legionary Valeriu Gafencu, presenting him as holy, a "saint without relics [...] the symbol of Christian sacrifice under the evil plunder of the communist regime",[27] whose prison "comrades/camarazi" put a Christian cross in his mouth, according to Lavric, "as a sign of recognition in the distant future", to facilitate his commemoration as a "Prison Saint" – as Lavric advocates.

Interestingly, George Simion avoids using both terms in his written posts, which could be a sign of awareness of their symbolic charge and part of his strategy to deny or hide certain ideological affinities.

5. Communists, Marxists and the Left: the perpetual enemy of "the people"

For all three AUR members, the main enemy – besides the political class – is the Left, which they most commonly define as "globalists," "progressives," "Marxists," and "cultural Marxists". This shows that they do not differentiate between liberals and the left, overlapping the two, seeing them as the direct heirs of the Bolsheviks and communists in general. For this reason, they share a strong anti-communist position, expressed in more direct or more subtle ways. The most openly virulent attacks come from Sorin Lavric, as will be shown in the following sections and as we can see from Figure 6 as well. Of the three AUR leaders, based solely on the text of their Facebook posts, Sorin Lavric manifests the most pronounced exclusionary and oppositional tendencies, and his most frequent enemies are "communists" and "Marxists". This is often coupled with other types of exclusion, most commonly antisemitism, and with anti-establishment rhetoric. A case in point is his virulent posts about the so-called "Marxist Masoretes", a readaptation of the old fascist trope of "Judeo-Bolshevism" (Wiesel et al. 2005):

> "Europe is beginning to be littered with busts of Marx. And I have to pretend I don't see them while President Iohannis talks about European values. What values? Those that come from the dictates of political correctness? The AUR party will ruin the plans of the Marxist masoretes: it will oppose their diabolical plan for planetary hegemony. You can't fool us anymore, you can't stop us. We are in Parliament, and from its benches we will give you a hard time, defending the Romanians from the egalitarian scourge with which you want to destroy European culture".[28]

George Simion seems to have toned down his anti-communist rhetoric somewhat, especially during the pre-election campaign. In one of his top 5 posts[29] from the pre-election period, a live video of his campaign visit to Pitești on 5 November 2020, when the gendarmes come to ask him if the meeting is authorized, Simion replies: "I had heard that this is a red county, but I didn't think it was like this". And then he continues: "We are Romanians, not Securitate members, not nomenclaturists who send their sons to give you orders." The "others" excluded from "the people" are those associated with the former national-communist regime, and there is also a general hostility towards the left – including the political elites perceived as such (PSD), coded as "the reds".

A similar manifestation of anti-communism, which brings Simion closer to the anti-communist movements of the University Square in the 1990s, which ended in the Mineriads,[30] rather than to interwar ultranationalist and legionary anti-communism is his March 2020 post of an older video[31] of a famous and controversial scene in which he brought funeral candles to the house of former president Ion Iliescu on his 79th birthday. In the text of the post, he refers to Ion Iliescu as an "old Bolshevik". In this case, Simion seems to mirror the frustration and anger of the 1990s, when students protested against former communist leaders or party members like Iliescu coming to power through elections shortly after the Revolution.

In the run-up to the elections, Simion seemed to target the political establishment and the power structures of the communist regime rather than the ideology itself. His attacks target the Securitate and its collaborators, the PCR and the nomenklatura, as well as their successors. This is sometimes combined with nationalist, revisionist views and anti-Hungarian sentiments, as in his attack on the historian Lucian Boia. "Spit here!",[32] he writes, an incitement to hatred and violence based on the accusation that Boia may have collaborated with the Securitate, but also because of his historical works, which Simion calls "anti-Romanian" and "against the official Romanian conception of history".

Simion often incites inter-ethnic hostility against the Hungarian minority in Romania and especially against UDMR, the political party that represents them, which he calls "Green Plague". This is also done by spreading conspiracy theories about Hungary's alleged plans to annex Transylvania: "the Aurora plan of dismantling Romania still exists," he states in a live video on his page.[33] Anti-Hungarian sentiments are almost as central as unionism in the politics of Simion and AUR, and, as Traian

Sandu insightfully observes, they replace the antisemitism typical of the Legionary Movement (in Clej 2020).

After the 2020 elections and with the entry of AUR into the Parliament, Simion's anti-communist rhetoric seems more openly ideological, or becomes more ideologized, possibly also under the influence of Lavric and Târziu. He uses words like "Bolshevik", "communist" not only to attack his political opponents, but also to exclude the political other and other minorities (e.g. LGBTQIA+). Criticizing the Mayor of Sector 1 in Bucharest, Clotilde Armand of the USR party, for bringing contemporary art sculptures to a public institution, Simion considers that it was an insult to the national art of Brâncuși's "Coloana infinitului", which symbolizes the sacrifice for the ideal of the Romanian Union, which "disturbed the Bolsheviks". He then continued: "Unfortunately, dear madam, only the Bolsheviks can applaud exhibits with an uncertain gender, as Mr. Cioloș likes."

In this post, Simion also uses calculated ambivalence, sarcastically attacking progressive notions of "gender", or what the ultraconservatives call "gender ideology". Simion displays a general anti-communist sentiment, associating the new progressive left with the Bolsheviks, while also implying that center-right parties like USR-PLUS are heirs to socialism because of the perceived progressive stance on issues like LGBTQIA+ rights.

After winning the elections, Simion's anti-communism became more visibly entangled with elements typical of legionary rhetoric, such as the cult of sacrifice, the cult of martyrdom, the cult of the hero. He uses labels like "Bolshevik" loosely, as an attack against political opponents (see Popescu & Vesalon 2022), even against the Liberal Party, which is economically on the right of the spectrum and socially conservative rather than progressive and anti-capitalist. Thus, we see an instrumentalization of anti-communism for political/electoral purposes. Like Sorin Lavric, Simion also expresses his condemnation of the liberal prime-minister's decision to dismiss Octav Bjoza – a self-proclaimed sympathizer of the Iron Guard (Totok & Macovei 2016) – from the position of representative of anti-communist political detainees, seeing it as proof of the "true color of the ruling party: it is the bright red of Soviet, Bolshevik tanks."[34]

Simion also stepped up his attacks on "globalists". In one of his top 5 posts, he edits a video showing a child – David Dumitrescu – who is made to look like he is standing on the tribune of the Parliament reciting an ultranationalist poem. The video has attracted 235,000 interactions, over 133,000 shares and nearly 3 million views. It is also a virulent attack

on the political class, described in harsh terms such as: "thugs without honor," "bastards," "filthy scum," "crooks, traitors, and bootlickers," "sellers of Nation and Country," etc. It is the "globalist" ruling class that is criticized for imposing progressive values that are considered incompatible with Christianity and nationalism:

"You've imposed immoral laws and *globalist* principles on us,
Saying that the Cross and the Flag should no longer exist.
And you forbade us our heroes who fought hard,
And in their place you made us put the rainbow against our will".[35]

Figure 6. Simion's edited video showing a child reciting an ultranationalist poem in Parliament

Here, too, the ideological other – the progressive – is combined with a type of othering based on sexual orientation and gender identity that targets the LGBTQIA+ communities that are excluded from the accepted definition of "the people". And this is again accompanied by the cult of the hero, as well as accusations of treason, threats of punishment – earthly and divine – "even beyond death", tropes that are very common in ultranationalist and legionary rhetoric (see Clark 2015; Manu & Bozdoghină 2010; Ornea 1996/2015).

Similar to Simion in the pre-election period, Târziu also has some posts in which his anti-communism is primarily used as a political instrument to attack the political class – especially the government – for carrying on the "sinful heritage" of the communist regime and especially the Securitate.[36] He goes so far as to suggest that the government, following EU decisions,

is "installing a new dictatorship" by choosing "press censorship as a form of fighting disinformation and war propaganda [...] as in the days of communism" instead of "democracy, [...] transparency, honesty and professionalism".[37] He uses communism to attack the establishment, namely the government and the EU for the decision to ban Russia Today and Sputnik.

However, these mentions are less frequent than the more ideological manifestations of anti-communism in his speech through attacks on the so-called "Globalist left" that "overturns and falsifies the norms and values inherited from generations"[38] or on "Globalist progressivism" that amounts to "toxic internationalism" and is compared to a "virus"[39] (body politics). These are opposed to "the moderation and sovereignty" promoted by conservatives.[40] Târziu also attacks the "Marxists" who promote gender ideology and sexual education: "This sinister ideology, of Freudo-Marxist origin, which, through the nonsense and confusion it promotes, is in fact a concerted attack on the family and normalcy [...], a tool of manipulation and indoctrination, and a pretext for a radically destructive agenda".[41]

Târziu also often attacks the ideological "communist" other, contextualized with the help of historical tropes related to the anti-communist resistance[42] and the myth of the "Prison Saints".[43] In fact, a significant part of the AUR leaders' anti-communist rhetoric consists of the indiscriminate promotion of the trope of the "Prison Saints", namely, the cult built around the anti-communist resistance who faced mass persecution by the communist regime through arrest and, in some cases different forms of torture.[44]

6. Cultivating martyrdom: rehabilitating anti-communist legionaries through the "Prison Saints" mythology

Since the 1990s, there has been an active and concerted effort to recover the history of this anti-communist resistance and to invest it with an aura of martyrdom, heroism, and even sainthood; the "Prison Saints" have become a collective political actor, portrayed as a model of courage, integrity, and virtue in the defense of democratic values and in the struggle against the tyrannical dictatorship of the "Red plague".[45] However, this claim is often factually inaccurate and revisionist, as it fails to distinguish between the many political detainees with different ideologies who were arrested for different actions, some of which were highly undemocratic and even

violent in themselves. As many scholars studying the archives have shown (Totok & Macovei 2016; Biliuță 2021), many of the "Prison Saints" that are celebrated today as heroes of democratic resistance were in fact militants, propagandists, and priests who had previously been active in the Legionary Movement and its different structures – like the Brotherhoods of the Cross or the paramilitary Iron Guard. Some were active during the genocidal Legionary Rebellion and held the same ultraorthodox, ultranationalist, pro-dictatorship and antisemitic views typical of the movement (e.g. Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu). Among them, some of the survivors continued their pro-legionary propaganda and ideas after the fall of communism through different media, organizations and networks.

Figure 7. LDA Topic Model applied on Sorin Lavric's posts. Topics 0, 1, 3, 5, 6 are about "Prison Saints" and anti-communist resistance

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The automated text analysis carried out on the posts of Târziu and Lavric shows that they actively cultivate the "Prison Saints" cult and rehabilitate precisely those legionary figures among the members of the anti-communist resistance around whom a cult has been built in the neolegionary movements after 1990. This is especially true for Sorin Lavric, whose posts prioritize this theme above all others, as we can see from the results of the topic models applied on his Facebook page. Of the 8 main topics identified (Figure 14), 6 of them are related to this topic. The most frequently mentioned names, as the N-gram analysis and the name extraction complement show, are those of Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu (the most frequent: 4 out of 136 posts), Gavril Vatamaniuc (3 posts), Valeriu Gafencu (3 posts), Vasile Motrescu (2 posts), Toma Arnăuțoiu (2 posts). While some of them were active members of the Legionary Movement (Ogoranu, Gafencu), others are considered to have had no connection with the legionaries (e.g. Arnăuțoiu, Motrescu), and others' legacy is still disputed or claimed by some to be connected to the legionary past (Vatamaniuc). All of them are eulogized by Sorin Lavric publicly in Parliament and on his Facebook page, regardless of their affiliation or lack thereof with the Legionary Movement. Moreover, the same names are frequently taken together in the commemorations organized by the contemporary neo-legionary factions: the Ogoranu Foundation, Everything for the Country Party, the Romanian Federation of Former Political Detainees Anti-Communist Fighters and neolegionary press. These indiscriminate associations serve the rehabilitation agenda, "cleaning" the names of Legion members from their legionary past and from the Legion's violent and antisemitic beliefs. If the anti-communist partisans are celebrated as heroes of democracy for fighting against a totalitarian regime, the same image is falsely associated with historical figures who were part of the highly anti-democratic, pro-dictatorial structure that was the Legion. Vladimir Tismăneanu (2015), head of the Presidential Commission for the analysis of the communist dictatorship in Romania, was one of the few anti-communist voices to publicly criticize and disassociate himself from this rehabilitation of the legionaries for the sole reason that they fought against communism.

Most of these names are also present in Claudiu Târziu's posts, but with a lesser focus. While Lavric clearly prioritizes the rehabilitation of the "Prison Saints" and the legionaries among them, Târziu focuses on a greater variety of topics, ranging from AUR-related issues to the war in Ukraine or Christian and ultraconservative values. His emphasis is on

Orthodoxism, which is nevertheless linked to anti-communism and the cult of the "Prison Saints".

He mentions Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu in 2 out of 249 posts and Arnăuțoiu and Vatamaniuc in only one post, while Gafencu and Motrescu are missing from his mentions.

Târziu is particularly interested in commemorating priests with legionary affiliations or sympathies. The most frequently mentioned (3 posts) is the legionary orthodox priest Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, who was also the initiator of the magazine "Rost" in the early 2000s. After his death, the magazine was continued in the same pro-legionary style by Claudiu Târziu and Răzvan Codrescu, the latter having also published several books, articles and interviews rehabilitating the Legionary Movement and some of its main figures, including Zelea Codreanu, and was editor-in-chief of one of the longest running and most explicitly neo-Legionary magazines – "Cardinal Points" (named after the book of legionary ideologue Nichifor Crainic), where Târziu was also a collaborator. Târziu and Codrescu had a long-lasting friendship and collaboration based on ideological affinities, organizing together many events commemorating the "Prison Saints" and rehabilitating legionary figures, promoting Codrescu's books and views (see Codrescu 2010; Târziu & Codrescu 2019).

Other religious figures, legionaries (or sympathizers) and former anti-communist detainees mentioned by Târziu, with whom he had close relations and whom he calls "friends" or "brothers", are the legionary priest Iustin Pârvu and the neolegionary nest Petru Vodă Monastery, Marcel Petrișor, Traian Popescu, Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu, Nicolae Stroescu-Stânișoara and Răzvan Codrescu. Some of them are also mentioned by Lavric.

7. Ultranationalism expressed through the language of "Body politic"

In the speeches of AUR members, the nation is often referred to with a vocabulary that draws an analogy to the human body. Such analogies between the body, various diseases, or parasites are reminiscent of the "body politics" of Nazi ideology (Musolff 2010), which also permeated the rhetoric of other interwar fascist movements, including the Romanian one (Bozdoghină 2012; Manu & Bozdoghină 2010; Volovici 1995). An example from the AUR election campaign: "When the body is estranged

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from the body of the land / Today / The ancestors accuse us / And the bells are ringing!"[46] The additional reference to disease is used to create fear of threat, that the body is under attack. This is one of the rhetorical devices of exclusion used by right-wing populists (Wodak 2015), as well as by the extreme right, (ultra)nationalists and fascists, and has been central to eugenics policies (Solonari 2015; Cassata 2011; Turda 2009, 2007).

Interestingly, in the specific case of AUR and George Simion in particular, this rhetoric most often serves an anti-system function, with the political class being the most common target, defined as a parasite infesting the state[47] and making it sick[48] or as diseases that are highly symbolically charged because they have decimated populations, such as the "Red Plague"[49] (referring to PSD) or "the Green Plague" (referring to UDMR).

Body and disease analogies in the speeches of AUR members are also ideologized and serve their anti-left/anti-progressive/anti-globalization agenda. We see a clear example in Sorin Lavric's podcast, who makes a clear analogy between the body and the nation, in order to create the warning of decay under the threat of the enemies of nationalism, namely "this current coming from Brussels, the extremely harmful neo-Marxist current":

> I will make the analogy between the nation and the organism. Just as the body has a metabolism without which it cannot exist, so the nation has a spiritual metabolism, which is nationalism. […] The decline of a nation begins when its self-consciousness cools to a thermal threshold beyond which it loses its immunity and national instinct. And then you can be sure that sooner or later that nation will turn to dust."[50]

In the same podcast, Lavric clearly specifies his vision of (ethno) nationalism as based on "ethnicity, language, religion" and as opposed to the definition of citizenship given by the "Brussels scribblers"[51] who want to "discredit the nation" by "inventing" the notion of a "civic nation" where citizenship is granted irrespective of religion or ethnicity. These beliefs are also shared by Claudiu Târziu, as can be heard in the podcast[52] that the two heads of AUR started together at the beginning of 2022.

8. The holy war between the Katechon and the Antichrist

In the face of such threats, which take on a religious dimension – being associated with the biblical apocalypse – AUR is portrayed as a Savior, a Defender, even a "Prophet" and biblical hero to fight the mythologized "war" against the Satanic neo-Marxists, globalists, progressives who are either allies or part of the national and supranational political elites (especially the EU) who allegedly want to destroy the nation, the family, Christianity and traditional values:

> We are Christians, and because we are Christians, history for us has a linear course, at the end of which appears eschatology, the end. You remember Carl Schmitt's [member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, active in supporting Nazism and antisemitism] theory that until the Last Judgment, if the Antichrist has not yet fallen into this world, and for us right now the Antichrist is this devastating neo-Marxism, if the Antichrist has not yet come, it is because there is a force that opposes the end of the world. And Carl Schmitt calls this the Katechon – which appears in the Epistle of St. Paul. May God let AUR be the Katechon of Romania that prevents the coming of the Antichrist. That's how I see AUR. Because we did not enter politics out of political calculation, out of cunning, but as an act of faith and revolt. (Lavric in episode 2 of the "Conservatorii" [the Conservatives] podcast).

To this, Târziu replies that they must oppose "evil" neo-Marxism, just as their ancestors opposed communism, which saved us from becoming "slaves".

Therefore, they argue, in the face of such "existential threats" and coming "catastrophe"[53] that nations have developed "antibodies" in the form of existing political parties that represent a mixture of right-wing populism, ultranationalism and ultraconservatism, far-right and neofascist politics: Fidesz in Hungary, Vox in Spain, Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS) in Poland and, of course, AUR in Romania.

The two ideologues of AUR, Lavric and Târziu, build an eschatological vision and attribute to themselves and their party a divine mission in a constructed war between the forces of *Evil* ("neo-Marxism", the enemies of nationalism, etc.), associated with the Christian representation of Satan or the Antichrist, and the forces of *Good*, associated with Jesus Christ, manifested through AUR and other far-right parties. This weaponization of

Orthodoxy to construct a "holy war" against the enemy, which also draws on body politics, was an important feature of the interwar ultranationalist antisemitic rhetoric, especially that of A.C. Cuza and Nicolae Paulescu (Manu & Bozdoghină 2010), which contributed to the radicalization of violence against the Jewish "Other" (and the Communist "Other", often portrayed as Jewish, and other minority groups such as the Roma population) that led to the Holocaust. It is also a patriarchal discourse that promotes a form of militarized spirituality similar to interwar rhetoric.

> It is not nationalism that leads to wars, but the struggle between Good and Evil. This is our vision, and this is what separates us from all those who claim to want the Good of the country and the Good of the planet. I do not believe that peace can be brought about by legislation, no matter how well done. I believe that only when we do everything we can in the service of the Good, and the Good prevails, can we have peace. But there can be no peace everywhere, because Good cannot be established everywhere as long as Evil exists in the world." (Târziu in ep. 2 of the podcast "Conservatorii")

In fact, the vocabulary of war is very present, in different contexts or with different nuances, in all the posts of the three AUR leaders, pointing to this implicitly violent vision of politics and socio-cultural tensions. For all three, the common enemy is on the left of the political spectrum, especially the cultural left[54] and "globalists", the perceived heirs of socialist internationalism, a threat to the nation. George Simion shares Lavric and Târziu's belief in a war between Good and Evil, only the terminology differs slightly, bringing him closer to Trumpism. In the motion he presented at AUR congress in March 2022, entitled "The Rich Romania Motion: Christian and Democratic," Simion states: "As the planetary battle unfolds today between patriots and globalists, between peoples and those without God, AUR stands firmly among the defenders of its peoples."[55]. A reformulation of Lavric's "Katechon" narrative, closer to national and religious conservative discourse. Simion also often uses war analogies to refer to opposition to the political establishment, which brings him closer to typical (right-wing) populist rhetoric.[56]

Claudiu Târziu also uses war-related vocabulary in his speech at the AUR congress: "We are the servants of a cause, not just party members, not to say soldiers, because now it is war [reference to the war in Ukraine] and we will be constantly asked to make sacrifices." He thus asks AUR

members to be ready for such sacrifices.[57] And in episode 3 of the Conservatorii podcast,[58] he addresses the members of AUR and tries to cultivate in them the "spirit of sacrifice", sacrifice in the form of money or even life at some point – *but not now*, he adds reassuringly, reiterating that they should be prepared. This consolidates AUR's positioning as a "radical return" party, relying on rhetorical devices typical of the legionary movement, such as the cult of sacrifice, the cult of death, and also its fascist dimension, resulting from an implicit revolutionary vision:

> No one is asking you to give up your life for the party or the country. No one is asking you NOW. Perhaps the time will come when we will be forced to choose: to live on our knees or to live on our feet, whatever the risks. Even at the risk of losing our lives. But now is not the time. But we have to keep in mind to have this perspective, to think that we can also get there. (Târziu in ep. 3 of the podcast "Conservatorii")

9. "The Resurrection is our country project": Orthodox palingenetic ultranationalism

Returning to Roger Griffin's (1991) conceptualization of fascism as "a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism," we have already seen the elements of populist ultranationalism in AUR's rhetoric, but to what extent do the party's representatives also display a revolutionary vision in which the current alleged decay of society would be replaced by a national rebirth?

Such a vision is clearly present in the beliefs of AUR ideologues Sorin Lavric and Claudiu Târziu, as shown in their discourses from the Conservatorii podcast presented earlier. They construct a sense of impending catastrophe, of a society in decay, of nations on the verge of extinction because of "neo-Marxism" – their Antichrist. At this turning point in the struggle between Good and Evil, Christians and the Antichrist (or those without religion, an implicit reference to atheist socialism), AUR is depicted as the "Katechon of Romania that prevents the coming of the Antichrist", and implicitly, AUR members are prophets or "soldiers" with a divine savior mission.

The myth of national rebirth as a result of peak decay appears in different forms in the speeches of various AUR members. Immediately after the electoral success in December 2020, Lavric sent a public call

to intellectuals on the right to support AUR and "put their shoulder to the wheel of a spiritual rebirth".[59] At the AUR Congress in March 2022, Claudiu Târziu spoke in his speech of a "national rebirth movement [...] to rebuild from the ground up, on the path of normality, a Romania lost in transition".[60] This vision is similar to Lavric's: "the rebirth of this nation on its true Christian foundations, full of love for country and nation."[61]

George Simion's motion to the Congress also paints a picture of a country in deep crisis, "where the demographic deficit has reached apocalyptic proportions" and the population is "impoverished, discouraged and hopeless". This bleak picture of the present is contrasted with the promise of a brighter future, in which Romania would take its rightful place among the leading countries: "we can be reborn from our own ashes and we can be among the respected peoples of the world."[62]

Similar to the interwar legionary movement, which was an autochthonous permutation of fascism adapted to the local context by the addition of radical Orthodoxism, contemporary permutations follow the same direction. This is most evident in the speech of Andrei Dîrlău[63], a theologian and member of the AUR Senate, at the Congress, where the fascist myth of national rebirth is interpreted through a Christian lens, that of Christ's resurrection:

> I tell you that an era is ending, the period of the so-called transition, an endless transition into nothingness, into economic, social and demographic disaster [...] After 33 years[64], the Resurrection is coming, Romania must be resurrected, and this resurrection will be done by you, who have brought AUR here, where it is now, through your courage and your work. You will resurrect Romania, you will be, you must be, the Resurrection of Romania, you will be, you must be, the Resurrection of this country. And you will be, because you already are. The proof is that you're here. Together we will raise Romania from the deadly sleep of indifference, of betrayal, of theft, of lies, of enmity between Romanians and Romanians. **Resurrection is our country project […]**

A similar revolutionary Orthodoxist thinking is shared by the ideologues of AUR in the 14th episode of their podcast entitled "Christ the Revolutionary"[65] where they draw a parallel between Christ's Resurrection – that they deem "a turning point" – and the political mission of Christians. Claudiu Târziu states that Jesus "calls us to a revolution", meaning "a process of restoring us as human beings". This "personal revolution" is opposed by the alleged "counter-revolution" of the left,

which Lavric calls "the tool of the Devil", whose aim is "the destruction of man, his dehumanization" by removing the "divine tremor" and isolating man from God. It is the duty of Christians, they add, to stop the Evil that is now coming through legislation (possibly alluding to issues of sexual education and gender identity) and to "better the other" not in a despotic way, but by personal example. Claudiu Târziu seems to calculate his words, using revolutionary terminology as a dog whistle, while calibrating his discourse with more mystical connotations on a personal rather than political or collective level. This may well be a strategy of calculated ambivalence in order to avoid being labeled an extremist, a clear concern for all AUR leaders, who have repeatedly denied such accusations (Marincea 2022c).

A similar strategy is used by George Simion, whose revolutionary mentions are more concise and/or ambivalent. Some examples: in January 2022, during the live video of the celebration organized by AUR in memory of the poet Mihai Eminescu (one of the leading figures of the legionary mythology), he states: "We must peacefully complete the revolution of the Romanian people".[66] A similar ambivalence is present in an interview right after the 2020 elections, where Simion stated: "We are a form of revolution, our model is the conservatives in Poland."[67]

It would appear from these statements that the AUR leaders are reframing the concept of Revolution in a peaceful, conservative, personal or spiritual way that would show them as moderates. However, in the context of their other discourses, where they construct a "holy war" against an ideological opponent and call on Christians and AUR members to be ready to sacrifice their lives when the moment comes, there are enough indications that the ambivalence is more of a dog whistle than an authentic political moderation.

In addition, the revolutionary dimension is also suggested by the cult of different revolutionary figures that is cultivated within the AUR in relation to the 1989 revolutionaries, the interwar legionaries or the revolutionaries of 1848. This clearly shows their affinity and admiration for revolutionary politics.

10. Conclusions

AUR has often been described as a mixture of ideological affiliations ranging from far-right or right-wing populist to ultranationalist and (neo)

fascist or, more precisely, (neo)legionary. A conceptual clarity regarding their ideological position seems hard to achieve, not only because of the differences between the main leaders of AUR, but also because of the frequent ambivalence or contradiction between their actions and statements and their ulterior denials or reframings. This paper argues that this type of ambiguity is a calculated political strategy, and shows how AUR leaders use social media to revive and update fascist narratives in conjunction with right-wing populist rhetoric.

AUR is not the first political formation to return to interwar fascist politics – such parties or "grassroots" groups have emerged since the 1990s, as the paper shows. However, AUR is the first "radical return" party to succeed in entering mainstream politics. By reviving Legionary ideas and tropes such as the cult of death, sacrifice, martyrdom, by commemorating fascist figures, especially by proposing them for sanctification through the myth of the "Prison Saints", they normalize fascism and bring it into mainstream circulation. All this while denying or using different discursive strategies to avoid being held accountable and sanctioned for promoting fascist ideas or symbols.

In answering the two research questions that guided the empirical research, the study shows how AUR leaders combine populist rhetoric with fascist elements, and that while they sometimes prioritize or frame topics differently, they share a common ideological substrate. The analysis focuses primarily – but not exclusively – on the discursive level, using a hybrid research approach that combines quantitative methods like Corpus Linguistics with the more qualitative DHA.

The analysis shows that AUR leaders tend to define "the people" in ethnonationalist and religious terms, while many groups are implicitly or explicitly excluded from the collective "we". The most demonized by all three AUR leaders is the ideological other – the leftist, progressive (or culturally liberal), (neo/cultural) Marxist, communist, Bolshevik, or globalist – all terms used interchangeably to denote a strong and explicit anti-left and anti-liberal sentiment. Anti-communism is also used in attacks on political elites and in the exclusion – either subtle or overt – of different minority groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community, refugees, the Jewish minority, atheists. Antisemitic gestures or remarks, including the repetition of the fascist "Judeo-Bolshevism" trope, are also present in different forms, often disguised by different discursive strategies such as denial, calculated ambivalence, minimization.

The preferred target of exclusionary populism sometimes differs among the three AUR leaders beyond their clear anti-left consensus. In the case of Simion and Lavric, "the other" is often defined in ethnic and religious terms and expressed implicitly rather than explicitly. Simion has a clear anti-Hungarian agenda, which he promotes through conspiracy theories about plans for Hungarian domination of Transylvania, reigniting historical ethnic tensions between Romanians and the Hungarian minority. Lavric, on the other hand, is less concerned with Hungarian ethnicity and more hostile to the Jewish community, which he repeatedly refers to as "Marxist Masoretes". As for Târziu, his exclusionary attacks are less often based on ethnicity and more often on conservative grounds, targeting LGBTQIA+ groups and progressives who promote "gender ideology" and sexual education and are perceived as a threat to traditional (family) values.

All three AUR members, as well as the party itself, manifest a rhetoric of "total populism" that combines anti-establishment positions with people-centeredness and exclusionary politics. Their political affinities and oppositions are also manifested at the linguistic level through the vocabulary chosen, which denotes Christian ultraconservative, ultranationalist and patriarchal values and overlaps to some extent with the terminology and tropes used by the Legionary Movement. Also similar is the instrumentalization of popular culture for political propaganda, as AUR and its leaders are very adept at promoting their views through audio-visual materials such as memes, (live) videos, poems and songs, aesthetics and symbolism, rituals and ceremonies.

AUR goes beyond mere populism and even beyond far-right politics by adding other elements specific to fascist politics, such as virulent anti-communism and ethno-religious ultranationalism combined with palingenetic and revolutionary visions. Like the Legionary Movement, AUR retains Orthodoxism as an autochthonous Romanian trait of local fascist thought and borrows from the legionary repertoire the cult of death, the cult of sacrifice and martyrdom, and that of the movement's leaders. This process of mythologization is constructed through the anti-communist cult of the "Prison Saints", which introduces mysticism into its politics.

The palingenetic and revolutionary dimension of AUR's political vision is intertwined with Orthodox eschatological myths such as the resurrection of Christ and the Last Judgment. Lavric, in particular, borrows from a Nazi intellectual the political interpretation of the biblical Katechon as the force that defends Christians against the coming of the Antichrist and the End of the World. He instrumentalizes Christianity for political

and electoral purposes, as the interwar fascists had done before him, and defines AUR as the heroic Katechon fighting the biblical war against the "neo-Marxist" Antichrist.

This view is shared by Claudiu Târziu, who is well rooted in a network of former members and active supporters of the Legion – including priests and the neo-legionary publishing infrastructure that has been working for three decades to rehabilitate Legionary ideas and leaders.

On the other hand, George Simion initially seems less concerned with such complex ideological-spiritual-political devices. Orthodoxism, however, is a central element of his discourse, as are conservative values and virulent anti-communism. But while Târziu and Lavric could well be defined as AUR's ideologues, Simion – a former football ultras and gallery leader – is more pragmatic and action-oriented, reminiscent of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, whom he also copies.[68] He draws inspiration not only from the Legionary Movement, but also from Trumpism and the alt-right, along with the far-right stadium culture. Although often on a more superficial level, his discourse and actions are intertwined with legionary symbolism (such as his Codreanu-inspired 2022 wedding) and ideas, possibly under the influence of Târziu and Lavric, especially after their 2020 electoral success.

Simion shares the Manichean patriarchal rhetoric of AUR ideologues about an alleged global war in which AUR is the defender of Christians against the evil, Godless Left. The main difference is the specific vocabulary they choose. While Lavric and Târziu return to Orthodox ultranationalist and fascist repertoire of the interwar period, Simion updates this terminology and anchors it in current international right-wing political rhetoric (e.g. "patriots" vs. "globalists"). This strategy may serve as a dog whistle, circumventing liberal and anti-fascist norms by drawing on the more respectable and less compromising language of populism and conservatism. But the fascist core that resides in palingenetic and revolutionary visions is also present in Simion's discourse, as most clearly shown in his candidacy motion at AUR congress.

Endnotes

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2 Nonetheless, AUR also complemented its online strategy with intense offline campaigning, travelling around the country, especially in rural areas, during the electoral campaign.

3 Recent examples from two of Romania's leading TV stations (Digi24 and Antena 3) shared disinformation content: On 1 June 2022 on the Evening News, Digi24 aired a 14-year-old video of a Russian young boy being interviewed in a club, claiming that it was a present-day interview with a Russian soldier about the war in Ukraine. Antena 3 aired in March 2022 images from a video game, while the journalists and participants in the TV show commented as if it were real footage from the war in Ukraine, where a Russian plane being shot down.

4 A similar strategy was used in May 2022 by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who falsely claimed that Adolf Hitler had Jewish origins.

5 The acronym BINE also means "good".

6 The exact same name was used for the official newspaper of the Legionary Movement (see Clark 2015)

7 Other recent similar organization can be found in Totok 2018

8 Facebook page (FB): partidulAUR

9 FB: george.simion.unire

10 FB: pagina.sorinlavric

11 His public pages can be accessed at: claudiutarziuaur. Previously, Târziu also had (and still has) a personal account (claudiu.rost), but due to privacy concerns (acknowledging, however, that the information set as public on Facebook is considered public similar to that on other platforms) and because CrowdTangle does not allow downloading of data from personal accounts, the posts from his personal profile were not included in the analysis.

12 The computational scripts have been elaborated with the support of dr. Sergiu Nisioi, who is specialized in Natural Language Processing (NLP).

13 FB George Simion, 09 December 2020, https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/2927970227424128.

14   "Oameni de AUR". This is a play on words. In Romanian, AUR – the name of the party – means gold. So the implicit suggestion is that the members of the party are valuable like gold.

15   "(Măria Sa) Țăranul ROMÂN". The legionary discourse was also centered around rurality, making the peasant as the ideal typical Romanian.

16   "Cuiburi" – the name of the legionary groups that formed the infrastructure of the movement

17   Codreanu, 1940, Point 22, p. 18.

18   FB AUR, 11 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/179412730210469.

19   FB AUR, 04 January 2021, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/250765039741904.

20   FB AUR, 24 July 2021, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/370952811056459.

21   FB AUR, 30 April 2021, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/318920432926364.

22   FB AUR, 05 May 2021, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/321611222657285.

23   FB AUR, 10 October 2021, https://www.facebook.com/103445844473825/posts/422873145864425.

24   FB Claudiu Târziu, 25 April 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/142439481669821.

25   FB Târziu, 26 February 2022, https://www.facebook.com/104417752138292/posts/125469820033085.

26   FB Târziu, 16 May 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/148169761096793.

27   FB Sorin Lavric, 18 February 2021, https://www.facebook.com/102671705122498/posts/116029047120097.

28   FB Lavric, 01 March 2021, https://www.facebook.com/102671705122498/posts/119298133459855.

29   FB Simion, 05 November 2020, https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/360354055190348.

30   The Mineriads were a series of inter-political and violent miners' uprisings that took place in the 1990s as a counter-reaction to the University Square (student) protests also known as "Golaniada" against the political actors who had taken power after the fall of Ceaușescu's national-communism and were accused of being heir of the former regime. The latter mobilized miners to (violently) repress the protests.

31   FB Simion, 03 March 2020, https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/2654572231430597.

32   FB Simion, 22 January 2020, https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/2618624328358721.

33 FB Simion, 23 May 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100044563410651/posts/515998700220602.

34 FB Simion, 16 March 2021, https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/3009036822650801.

35 FB Simion, 27 April 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100044563410651/posts/538456584316451.

36 FB Târziu, 07 April 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/137402768840159.

37 FB Târziu, 11 March 2022, https://www.facebook.com/104417752138292/posts/129261956320538.

38 FB Târziu, 26 May 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/150920784155024.

39 FB Târziu, 12 May 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/147250554522047.

40 FB Târziu, 11 February 2022, https://www.facebook.com/104417752138292/posts/120622217184512.

41 FB Târziu, 24 March 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100077113097685/posts/133530425894060.

42 FB Târziu, 14 February 2022, https://www.facebook.com/104417752138292/posts/121699170410150.

43 FB Târziu, 12 March 2022, https://www.facebook.com/104417752138292/posts/129491089630958.

44 However, recent historical research has pointed out that the torture suffered by some of the legionary detainees in contexts like the infamous "Piteşti experiment" may have been the source of legionary violence, rather than communist violence, as it has been widely claimed (see Demetriade in Observatorul Cultural No. 994, 08 November 2019).

45 The phrase was heavily used by the interwar fascist and ultranationalist propaganda internationally, as well as in Romania. Some examples of interwar newspaper articles using the "Red Plague" ("Ciuma roşie") phrase to attack communism and promote fascist ideas can be found in newspapers like *Foaia Poporului* Year 47, nr. 6, 5 February 1939, p. 3 and *România Nouă*, in articles praising Hitler and his antisemitic views or Mussolini's fascism, or in unionist, anti-Soviet propaganda.

46 The verses are part of a longer nationalist poem recited by a 4-year-old Bessarabian child at a popular talent show on one of the leading TV channels in Romania and have a unionist claim: the Romanians and Moldovans are "blood brothers" and therefore the two countries should be united again. George Simion shared a video capture of this segment of the show on his page. This is his 3rd most popular post before the elections. In February 2020, it reached almost 3 million view on his page, and another 2 million on other 3 pages where it was crossposted (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2855395961216032).

[47] George Simion in a video of his speeches during the election campaign in different cities, post from 30 November 2020 titled: "In Arad and Oradea, about the infestation of the Romanian state with party membership cards" (https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/2918430901711394).

[48] Phrase from George Simion's pre-election campaign at a meeting with the people of Pitești. The live video from 05 November 2020 is his second most popular post from the pre-election corpus, reaching close to 3 million views and over 44,000 shares (https://www.facebook.com/2212856535602171/posts/360354055190348).

[49] See also the previous note regarding the fascist origins of the "Red Plague" phrase.

[50] In the first episode of Lavric's podcast called "Despot de Nuanțe" ("Despot of Nuances"). The episode is titled "NAȚIONALISMUL" ("Nationalism") and was published on 30 January 2022 (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=690688468616671). He published only 4 episodes of the podcast, as he then launched the podcast "Conservatorii" ("The Conservatives") together with Claudiu Târziu, where they discuss the same political ideas. The other 3 episodes are on Lavric's activity in the Parliament, on Euroscepticism and on his anti-Marxist and anti-communist views.

[51] In Romanian: "Conțopiștii de la Bruxelles". In Episode 1 of "Despot de Nuanțe".

[52] Episode 2, "Nationalism", of the podcast "Conservatorii", published on YouTube on 3 February 2022 (https://youtu.be/chIBgbAsDfM) and shared on their Facebook pages.

[53] Also in Episode 4 of "Conservatorii" podcast (https://youtu.be/yMyeXvAjXNk), titled "Conservatism", the two construct this narrative of impending doom caused by "devastating progress" and the Evil forces of neo-Marxism and induce the idea of a war between Good and Evil, as opposed to the "illusion of peace" and of AUR being the "Katechon" that defends the forces of Good against the Antichrist.

[54] Sorin Lavric, in the first episode of his podcast on Nationalism: "The Antichrist is nothing but this neo-Marxism, disguised either in the political correctness, or in the LGBT movement, the doctrine of sexual identity etc."

[55] FB Simion, 27 March 2022, "THE RICH ROMANIA MOTION: Christian and Democratic", https://www.facebook.com/100044563410651/posts/518417639653679.

[56] E.g. In a live video from his electoral campaign, one of his top posts with almost 3 million views, Simion cites "The art of war" by Sun Tzu when talking about the political class.

[57] A video of the Congress was posted on Simion's Facebook page, 27 March 2022 (https://www.facebook.com/100044563410651/posts/703611214015619), but was subsequently removed.

58 Episode 3. polls – unity – honour, published on Târziu's YouTube channel on 8 February 2022 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Zo0v_gz5E).

59 See: r3media.ro/multumiri

60 FB Simion, 27 March 2022, "THE RICH ROMANIA MOTION: Christian and Democratic".

61 In Episode 12 of "Conservatorii" podcast titled "Anticommunism, necessity or trend?", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5f-xGlBCII.

62 In George Simion's post that publishes the text of his motion at the Congress of AUR.

63 At the congress held on 27 March 2022, when the new leadership of AUR was elected, George Simion and Claudiu Târziu (the two co-presidents of AUR) ran on the same motion. There was only one competing motion led by an AUR deputy from Constanța, Dănuț Aelenei, who stated that the reason for his candidacy was to prove that there is still democracy in AUR – hinting towards the criticism expressed by several (ex)members regarding Simion's authoritarian leadership. Aelenei also complained that his motion was not sent to the party members. The lack of transparency was also denounced by the press, which was not allowed to attend the Congress.
Andrei Dîrlău, who read the motion, was part of Aelenei's team. The Congress changed the leadership structure: instead of two co-presidents, only one such position remained – that won by Simion. This strengthened the accusations of "dictatorship" that were already circulating within the party.

64 Previously, he made a religious analogy: "33 years since the 1989 Revolution, the same as Christ's age when he died on the cross and resurrected".

65 Published on 21 April 2022 on Facebook and YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMm7NR3WUYY.

66 FB Simion, 15 January 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100044563410651/posts/532367194611605.

67 See https://romania.europalibera.org/a/interviu-george-simion-despre-cine-e-%C3%AEn-spatele-aur-legionari-rusia-%C8%99i-politicieni/30990612.html.

68 Simion borrowed the aesthetic of the traditional shirt called "ie" that Codreanu used to wear, and organized his wedding in a similar fashion to Codreanu.

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VICTORIA MYRONYUK

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Biographical note

Between 2016 and 2024, Victoria participated in numerous theatre festivals, residencies, and fellowships, including Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart, Germany), Pontica Magna Fellowship (Bucharest, Romania), and the Gaude Polonia Scholarship (Poland). Her work explores participatory theatre practices, sensory dramaturgy, and the reconstruction of ritual frameworks, with an emphasis on fostering intimacy, trust, and collective storytelling. Victoria continues to engage with participatory and inclusive practices, combining theatrical innovation with social reflection in her artistic research.

THE MEMORIAL DINNER

Victoria Myronyuk

Abstract

"The Memorial Dinner" is a speculative essay that deals with the search for alternative ways of remembering and (re)imagining the past, especially (close) people, events, and relationships. After an unsuccessful attempt to find documentary evidence in archives about the life of her great-grandmother Agatha, the author finally arrives at a spiritual gathering dedicated to the rituals of ancestral knowledge. The ceremonial gathering takes the form of an eclectic commemorative dinner, bringing together participants from different contexts and creating an atmosphere of connection. Quasi-ritual actions experienced during the dinner result in the fusion of the participants' memories of the deceased and trigger Victoria's involuntary memories. This brings her closer to recognizing performative power as a productive tool for fusing imagination and memory and for creating sensory images of the past. Finally, the narratives and thoughts that emerge in the relational setting become fragile monuments of our past (or/and deceased), facilitating the liberation of feelings such as rebellion, acceptance, forgiveness, or affection, and building the potential for inner transformation and therefore - relief.

Keywords: memorial dinner, ritualistic performance, involuntary memories, method of remembering

On All Saints' Day I go to a village in the Belgian mountains, the Ardennes. On my way, the hills begin to roll. Everything is studded with gold, but the vision is not susceptible to the sweet autumn spleen. I have the feeling that the landscapes are hiding something. American flags over the fields remind us of the blood of the soldiers, but there are no cemeteries or memorials to be seen. The horizons are densely covered with green and yellow veils, as if they had been intact since prehistoric times. But have the wounds of past battles been sealed and healed by the nets of subterranean mycelium?

Bored with observing the landscapes, I dive back into my Instagram stories from the visit to Creutzwald, the town where my great-grandmother Agatha was probably born.

- The view of the city of Metz from the roof of the Pompidou Museum.

- I walk down the street with my Berber friend and he plays a Hutsul bird-shaped pipe that I gave him for his birthday. He says he is calling the spirit of my ancestor to help me make peace with her.

- The lighted candle in memory of Agatha in the cathedral of Metz.

- Flickering trees outside the car window with my writing on it: "Going to Creutzwald".

- Selfie at the Creutzwald administration before my request for information about Agatha's birth.

- I share my disappointment in a video after the officials found no evidence of her birth in the Centennial Metrical Books.

- Beautiful modernist floral ornaments on a house in Creutzwald.

- An overgrown path in the forest with growing honeysuckle. There is my writing on it: "The path to the former coal mine where Agatha's parents worked."

- A red brick factory building with no windows. There are huge rusty gates with a banner "La Houve".

- A stained-glass of the local church with Saint Mary holding Christ.

- I tell in a video that this image made me think that maybe Agatha was not officially registered as a newborn in this town because her parents considered themselves temporary workers and did not plan to stay. So, they might have thought it wasn't important.

- I stand on the bridge and watch huge fish in the spring. They swim over each other, forming black crosses.

Suddenly I remembered that I had read somewhere about the name Creutzwald - it comes from German and means "cross in the forest". I ask my Blablacar driver if he has heard anything about this cross. He replies that there are only legends about it and that no one has ever seen it.

"You know, the story of this cross is like my futile search for my great-grandmother's life story: lots of legends and no facts," I sigh. "I came to Creutzwald to see if I could find any proof of her birth here... And it was the last hope to get a real brick in the sand fortress of her life that I have been building for several years... And it fell."

"Why?" the driver asks, looking at me through the mirror.

"Because I didn't find anything... And, you see, I don't know how to explain it, but I have this strong inner feeling that the fate of my great-grandmother Agatha, full of constant displacements, and my precarious wanderings as an artist have common roots. When I consider the fates of other women in my family who were constantly looking for a safe home... It seems that we are all repeating a pattern... So, by finding and visiting Agatha's birthplace, I hoped to symbolically honor her and thus complete this endless transgenerational journey."

"I see. I can't say anything about your family's history, but getting back to the cross... I just remembered that my mother once told me that there was a small group of older women in Creutzwald who used to dress up nicely once a year and 'go to the cross' with flowers. People say that they actually found some nice places in the woods, made some cross-like flower decorations, and talked to each other. Nothing extraordinary. Now, according to my mother, there is only one woman left in that group, and once she even invited her to go to the cross because she was too old to do it alone and had no one to communicate with. But my mother refused to go because she thought it was too esoteric.

***

Several cars were already parked near the stone house, and I noticed several other people standing in front of the entrance. As I approached them, I tried to guess how many of them had come the same way: seeing the announcement on Facebook about "The Circle of Rituals. Ancestral Knowledge." Everyone looks confused and probably quite hungry, since we were asked to abstain from food, sex, and fighting for twelve hours before coming here. However, I cheated and ate a huge kebab on the way.

The door opens and a smiling hostess greets everyone with a hug and shows us the bathroom to wash our hands. The hostess asks us to call her nun Ella.

I am happy to see Ella because we know each other quite well but have not had the opportunity to communicate over the past few years. When I was a student at an institution associated with artistic research, Ella was its co-founder and my tutor. We always had a warm connection and I suspected that we would keep in touch after I graduated, but I couldn't foresee any of the possible scenarios of this meeting. Now, seeing her as a spiritual guide, I realize that this evolution into a nun has become a kind of continuation of her work in the field of performative rituals, but on a deeper level of self-consciousness, I suppose.

After we wash our hands, Ella invites us into the salon, which is furnished with DIY furniture. In the center is a table covered with a black tablecloth with images of various human bones. Ribs, shins, collarbones, shoulder blades, hands, and feet look scattered across the fabric, while in the center of the composition are huge crown-like pelvic bones. In its hole, five tall candles dimly light the salon, emitting a pleasant smell of beeswax. On the table are also eight large glasses and two jars with a red substance. Ella, dressed in a beautiful white vintage blouse, sits at the piano in the corner of the room and begins to play a melancholy tune. The participants slowly gather around her in deadly silence.

"Welcome to the memorial dinner!" The host announces solemnly while playing the piano. "I am very happy to open my home and my heart to you. Tonight, we will work on feelings of loss and/or the need to let go of certain things/people for the sake of our personal growth and transformation."

Ella stops playing and walks to the seat at the top of the table, gesturing for us to stand around it.

"We will intend to create an environment of connection with the deceased: loved ones, enemies, ancestors, focusing your attention on healing generational wounds and getting in tune with the world around you. And there is an important message! This empty seat next to me is left for the person who has passed away. Tonight, I would like you to invite someone from your ancestors to this place, someone you would like to thank, someone you would like to say goodbye to, or someone you'd like to give the finger to, because I know that not all of our relatives were the nicest people. If you didn't know this person personally, try to imagine him or her in detail, draw a portrait, describe his or her qualities. After all, we will also call them "The One Who Sits There" or, for short, "TOWST. Deal?"

Everyone nods.

"First, let's close our eyes for a moment and focus on this empty chair. Who would you like to invite to this memorial dinner?" Ella begins to play the singing bowl.
"Who needs the light of your memory to appear at this table?
Who needs the engine of your word to appear at this table?
Who needs the fire of your heart to appear at this table?
Let the TOWST arise from the warmth of men thinking of their loved ones,
Let the TOWST absorb the truth of these walls covered with the attentive ears,

Let the TOWST bring the wisdom of the ancestors accumulated over the
years.
North, South, East, West,
Let peace nest among us, and one, two, and three, let our TOWSTs appear.

Now you can slowly open your eyes."

I open my eyes and notice that the faces of the people around me
have softened after this ritual introduction. Ella slowly reaches a hand
toward the empty chair with a Thomas the Apostle motion, as if to touch
the transparent entities to verify their presence, but abruptly pulls the
hand away.

"Just kidding! No need for verification." The guide smiles sarcastically
and immediately changes the subject. "Would any of you like to share
your reasons for coming here?"

Everyone hesitates. After a long pause, an older woman, Jane, with
beautiful gray hair, spoke briefly about the loss of her husband. She wants
to talk about it because grief has become the main meaning of her life and
it devastates her. Another woman with a sharp look and a shiny T-shirt
wants to bury a relationship with her ex-lover.

"It drowns me," she continues.

The middle-aged man who introduced himself as Steven wants to get
rid of the fear of death that periodically comes over him.

"As soon as I leave the apartment, it immediately begins to follow me,"
the man complains. "I go to work, she is at my back, I go to a bar for a beer,
she is waiting for me. She's dressed traditionally, in a long black dress,
but she's also wearing a baseball cap with a buffalo on it. And she says
nothing, just looks at me with her dark eyes, sometimes blinking strangely.

The voices of the participants are muffled, as if the TOWSTs sitting at the
table could hear their requests and be offended. I also whisper something
about Agatha and my destiny: "My great-grandmother was born 200 km
from here, or so the legend goes... I wanted to make a certain pilgrimage
there... to honor this place and... to complete the cycle through this trip...
but I found no proof of her birth there... so I thought I would come here
to get some help... because I feel I am repeating a certain pattern in my
family...".

It's hard for me to continue because of the lack of words and air. *No
one asks me for details... What kind of cycle do I mean? Maybe everyone
is guessing?* I continue the sentence in my mind. *For some reason, I feel*

that I am going through another circle, carrying other people's bones in my pockets. And every time I try to get rid of the burden, I put my hands in the pockets and feel their weight, their rough texture and sharp shapes... but I can do nothing with the burden of their black emptiness that complicates my pace... I want to bury the bones in the ground and plant my own flowers on them.

We sit in silence for a while, while the other two participants, a young guy who looks like a young John Malkovich and a punk girl named Elke, don't feel like sharing anymore.

Ella takes a small velvet bag out of her pocket and shakes its contents, producing a deaf sound of grains.

"I propose to hold a lottery, the results of which will make you all winners." The guide unties the bag and hands it to Elke. "Please take a bean and remember the number on it."

Elke takes out the large black bean with one written on it in Roman style with golden paint. She passes the bag around the table so that everyone can draw their lot. I take the bean with the number five and give it to Steven, who tosses the beans in the bag one more time before picking one. He gets number seven.

"As I said, all of you are lucky people who will get the chance to embrace destiny for the moment and get a little message from your TOWST, so you'll be able to get a hint on how to deal with your problem... how to make peace with whoever you've invited to this table."

1

"So, let's announce the first lucky winner of the Memorial Dinner lottery, and it will be number... one! Please unfold the little message from your TOWST that is in your cup and tell us the news!"

Elke doesn't seem excited to be the first, but she takes the piece of paper out of her glass, unfolds it slowly and reads it in her lively Flemish accent:

> **"Give me a sip of the drink and pour my land,**
> **and you will be freed from the dead hand."**

"Hm. Interesting." Ella says. "How do you understand it? Keep in mind that 'the dead hand' means the unwanted, lingering influence of the past."

The girl shrugs and reads the message again, trying to decipher the meaning.

"It sounds like blackmail, LOL."

"Do you have any idea why your TOWST is asking you that?", Ella seems to be quite persistent in getting the interpretation out of Elke.

"No."

A tense pause hangs in the air. Everyone waits in silence, for it's clear that there is some meaning in this message for Elke, but she is reluctant to reveal it.

"If you wish, we can leave you out of the lottery," the guide decides, using a radical instrument.

Elke lowers her eyes and sighs.

"Ok, if you want to hear it so much... Let's say I was... angry with my grandfather, my TOWST... When he was dying... I didn't come to say goodbye... even though I loved him so much... I can't forgive him... even though he regretted it..."

"Does he affect you in any way now?" asks Ella quietly after a minute, trying to embrace the girl with her voice.

"I dream about him quite often. Actually, it's the same dream..., a nightmare..., where his corpse follows me..., puts his fingers into my wound somewhere here...", Elke points to her chest. "Do you know what I mean?

"If you can't forgive him yet, what would you do as a first step to free yourself from his dead hand?"

"I have no idea... Maybe I would pour everyone here a drink... and my TOWST... and drink together?", Elke's voice becomes almost inaudible and I notice that she is crumpling the received paper message in her hands.

"So, I announce Elke as the sommelier for tonight!", Ella exclaims happily. "You are a person who will irrigate our thirsty land with alcoholic or non-alcoholic rain. Here you have two choices, stewed fruit and wine. Meanwhile, I invite all of you to remember the most intense moment with your TOWST, that is, the moment when its essence would become sensible in your mind and could sprout through the blackness of oblivion."

Moving from observing Elke's dance with wine on the table to the fire of candles, I begin to remember April 2016. I arrived in the small Polish village of Vinsko, in the house of Agatha, which I had inherited in a very strange way, almost by lottery. The walls of Agatha's house were completely covered with mold. It grew from the base of the walls to the ceiling, creating surrealistic patterns. One afternoon, I walked into one of the rooms as the sunlight fell on this beautiful greenish moldy wall, and suddenly I saw my great-grandmother's face on it. At least, I thought it

was her. Anyway, I got so scared that I ran out into the garden, climbed up the cherry tree, and watched the house for a while to make sure the mold wasn't following me. What if this mold has already gotten into my brain? OMG! What if it has made me isolate myself on that tree? And what if it is growing out of my brain like a fungus, like those zombie ants on the Discovery Channel?

While sitting on that tree, those thoughts, the cherries in my stomach, and the inhaled mold fermented in my body, so for the first time in my life, I decided to make wine. I took the large glass bottles I found around the house, took a bucket of cherries, added some sugar, and buried the future wine in the clay floor of the basement of the house, leaving only a small glass tube on the surface for air to pass through. I don't know why, but I had the feeling that this wine had to stay in the ground. Maybe because it was done in the Caucasus, my grandfather's homeland and the homeland of winemaking. Or maybe because of the origin of the village's name, "Vinsko," which dates back to the Middle Ages, when the place was surrounded by many vineyards. All in all, this wine-making ritual seemed to be quite fruitful for producing wine with extraordinary healing properties against family amnesia, capable of healing transgenerational wounds.

So, I left the house for several months, and when I returned, I discovered something unexpected. It turned out that my need for symbolic anti-amnesic healing had been superseded by the more urgent needs of several of my alcoholic neighbors. I was told that one of the intruders who drank the wine died soon after, and I hoped it was not because of the "extraordinary properties" of my wine. But what if it really worked and I could have brought back the story of Agatha? What if her figure had become more real in my mind than the moldy portrait on the wall? I try to drown this thought in the cup of wine Elke has just poured for me. Anyway, both wines were fermented by the same mushrooms, right? Will this wine have a similar effect?

My thoughts are continued by the words of Ella.

"The first toast is to our TOWSTs as the culprits of this memorial dinner. May their invisible presence become a container with a favorable microclimate in which the seeds of our memory and imagination will germinate into beautiful trees or mushroom through our brains!"

The participants smile and take a sip of wine, looking at the empty chair.

"How is the wine, by the way?" asks Ella.

"It's okay, I hope it has some healing properties too," I express my thoughts publicly.

"What do you mean?"

"I hope it heals my ignorance about my TOWST... You see, I feel that the more I try to develop the past into something tangible, the more it becomes porous and elusive."

"I understand." Ella gives me a very comprehensive look. "Let's see what your message from the TOWST has to say about this."

5

"Let me consult where your message from the TOWST might be?" The guide closes her eyes and turns to the empty chair as if listening for some clues. "Try looking in your left pocket?"

"Really?" I search my left pocket skeptically and take out some small receipts I have been carrying for months.

"I'm afraid the message from the TOWST must have gotten lost in my trash," I reply sarcastically, but Ella keeps her eyes closed and frowns.

"What about the right one?"

I politely look in my right pocket, but there is nothing there either.

"It must have fallen out," the guide says before I can answer.

I look around, and on the floor and to the right of me, I notice the small paper folded into a small origami bird.

"Read it out loud, please?" asks Ella with some satisfaction in her voice.

> **"Grant me a good word from the grains**
> **of your spiritual wealth and pain."**

I read the message seriously, as if it were my personal constitution.

"It looks like your TOWST wants a good speech about her? Do you have a good story to tell?" asks Ella, looking at me with her olive eyes.

"I'm not sure it will contain any intellectual riches, but these are, shall we say, my first memories of my TOWST, great-grandmother Agatha." I pause for a moment to gather the various images in my head into a clear narrative. "I remember the early 1990s in Ukraine, a very difficult time after the collapse of the Soviet Union... My parents used to drive from the small Ukrainian village where we lived to my great-grandmother Agatha's village in Poland with a car full of goods that could be sold at the local market. Even though I was able to spend the whole summer there, I couldn't remember Agatha's face... It was kind of blurry... Instead, I remember her legs very well, they smelled very tasty, or rather... the kitchen where she used to cook smelled very good... It was the smell of fresh bread and... soup... with cabbage... and potatoes...".

"Then there is the next fragment of memory in my head... I am eight years old. I remember clearly the moment when I was at my neighbor's house and my mother called to tell me that Agatha had died. I took a bicycle and, on the way home, I tried hard to squeeze out some kind of regret, but instead I just felt... hunger. But when I got home, my mother was cooking something in the kitchen that felt very familiar to me. I started to eat, and my tears somehow automatically came out of my eyes, because I realized that it was the same dish from Agatha's kitchen..."

I look at one of the ribs on the tablecloth and don't know if I should continue.

"You know, there is a popular saying in the Bible: Jesus turned water into wine, but then Chuck Norris came in and turned that wine into beer," Ella says in an unexpected turn of phrase, and some people appreciate her joke with a heartfelt laugh. "I'm far from being Chuck Norris, but I was also wondering why on earth we have to bring red wine to memorial dinners and not beer? Or cider, for God's sake!"

I start to get angry because the guide who is supposed to facilitate our connection is now doing the opposite, interrupting my sincere story with a stupid joke about Chuck Norris and abandoning me on the way she brought me.

"So, I did some serious scientific research on Google and found out that our ancestors decided that their ancestors liked to drink blood. No kidding! For many centuries they killed people and animals to please their dead relatives. Later, however, this became economically unreasonable, so someone wise decided to trick the deceased by replacing blood with drinks that resembled blood. And it seemed to work! So here is an important ethical question: Do you think that replacing wine with beer will defame us? And what if instead of being sophisticated about our TOWSTs, because only good things are said about dead people, we try to say something... ordinary about them?"

Some people agree with the TOWST suggestion by nodding.

"I brought a bottle of Belgian dark beer, my favorite." Ella grabs a bottle of Leffe from under the table. "And I will give it to the person who dares to tell the cheesy story about his or her TOWST. For the sake of balance, let's bring some common sense into the conversation about the dead!"

"Sorry, but first of all, I didn't bubble my story... and secondly, I haven't finished it yet," I try to bring some justice into this game with the changing rules. "I'm sure my great-grandmother Agatha would not mind beer! And not even for drinking... She used it in her parenting methods.

For example, when she had to take care of me, she would soak my pacifier in beer and I would sleep for hours. My mother was quite amazed by Agatha's superpower for a long time, until one day she revealed that special hangover smell from my mouth..."

"Oh my God..." Leila, a middle-aged woman with piercing eyes, expresses her shock.

"Yes, but then I found out that it was quite a common practice back then," I smile. "But Agatha herself preferred something stronger to drink, vodka or hooch... And I have to tell you the truth, at the end of her life she used it too much... One of the reasons for that was apparently that she was able to make it out of anything: beetroot, rye, wheat, any kind of fruit that grew in the garden... I am sure that in time she would have invented a way to make hooch out of urine and become even greater than Chuck Norris."

The people around me start to giggle. Ella smiles, too, and hands me a bottle of Leffe.

"I drink to you, Agatha! To your pluses and minuses, and to finding my balance between them in remembering you." I take a sip of the dark beer and the pleasant caramel taste fills me with pleasure. I feel how the amorphous face of Agatha, sitting in the empty chair, has slowly blurred into a smile.

3

"And now there is a message for the next winner under the number three." Ella looks at Steven, the man who came to get rid of the fear of death, and shows him two clenched fists. He shudders. "Which hand did your TOWST choose for delivery? Left or right?"

He looks at Ella, pleading for advice, but her face remains cold.

"I think it's the right hand..."

"Are you sure?"

"Well..."

She unclenches her right fist and there is nothing. The man looks confused, as if he has just lost something enormously important.

"It's no big deal, but remember that such messages will always be in the left hand, as it is closer to the heart. Look."

She shows a small piece of paper on her left palm and suggests that he read it.

"The smell and taste will crack the mundane.
Fill the empty body with the source of life again."

"What's on your mind?" The guide tries to break the man's stupor with her voice, but he doesn't seem to respond. "May I try to help you interpret this with a story? It will help to bring some thoughts to the table."

"Remember in Proust's 'Remembrance of Things Past' there were madeleine cakes? They made the narrator remember a particular situation from his childhood. That is what happened to you, Vicky, when you ate your great-grandmother's soup."

I nod in agreement with her statement.

"There is an interesting legend about the origin of the Madeleine cake. People say it comes from Lorraine, in eastern France. In the 1700s, a woman named Madeleine made these cakes from her grandmother's recipe at a reception given by the Duke of Lorraine, Stanislaw Leszczynski. He liked the cake so much that he began to order it for his other aristocratic parties. Thus, it spread to the tables of the rich in other countries. For today's commemorative dinner, I thought about the prototype of Madeleine cakes that would help to revive our memories, but of course this dish can't be universal for everyone. So, like Madeleine, I've decided to cook something from my grandmother's culinary arsenal. Firstly, I want to remember her with this dish, and secondly, I want to spread this dish among people. I hope you like it and include it in your future receptions," Ella smiles.

"Do you think this story somehow triggered some associations with the message?"

Steven doesn't look very convinced by Ella's introduction.

"My TOWST is that this woman with the gray hair in the baseball cap is Buffalo. And I can feel her smelly presence here beside you, Ella."

"Are you sure it's her, Steven? Maybe it's me that stinks!"

He smiles. "Maybe she's not sitting on the chair next to you, but somewhere in this room, for sure. I think her message made me realize that I should fill my life with more meaning..., more interests, more tastes and smells..., everyday things..., because lately it has been all about her! I'm not living my life because I'm too obsessed with this lady. And the more I see her, the more transparent I become. I suspect that this is also somehow related to my COVID experience... My senses were blocked for some time, and this deepened my feelings of frustration and invisibility. I guess my sticky TOWST wants to help me by giving me a hint on how to avoid becoming another zombie-like creature like her".

Steven looks around as if waiting for agreement on his interpretations. No one answers, but there is empathy in the air.

"That makes sense," Ella says after a pause, "I propose that you become a medium between the realm of the TOWSTs and our table for this evening, serving us the first dish and thus filling our empty stomachs with life energy. Does that sound like a task for your first day's work?"

"I don't mind. If only the Buffalo Lady would stay here with you."

"She will, but gradually," Ella answers calmly.

0

While Steven serves a soup that looks like blood, Ella wants to show us a trick.

First, she demonstrates her empty arms, then with some quick manipulations a white bean suddenly appears in her open palm, looking like the one from our lottery. Ella covers it again with her fingers and in a second it slides out of her mouth.

"Wow!" exclaims Elke. She hadn't expected such entertaining moments in the evening program.

"So, I want you to show the bean I won in the lottery, and it's the number 0, which is not the message from the TOAST, but an exercise. I will announce it a little bit later. Now I would like to hear some of the culinary memories associated with your TOWSTs. Are there any particular types of food that you associate with him/her?

Jane, who had been silent most of the evening, suddenly announces: "I can't stand pizza! Especially the 'four cheese' kind. Just the smell of it makes me sick, and then I start crying. You see, we used to order that pizza on Friday nights with my husband, and I used to cover the table with the shiny tablecloth that we bought almost thirty-five years ago on our honeymoon in Italy. And since my husband died... I can't walk past an Italian restaurant on my street without feeling sick to my stomach... I've also given away the tablecloth and redecorated the room... But can you imagine, sometimes the pizza delivery guys ring at my door and get the floor wrong... and I yell at them, "Fuck off!

"My TOWST is my relationship with my girlfriend..., ex-girlfriend," Leila, dressed in a denim costume, corrected herself. "We broke up last month...actually she left me...and that left a huge black hole in my heart that I try to fill with coffee...tons of coffee. I used to watch my beloved in the morning while she was making this coffee and walking around the apartment in her black silk kimono. She would slowly take milk and butter

out of the refrigerator, then put a beautiful Turkish jezve on the stove and make the best coffee ever out of an ordinary supermarket package. I still can't remember the exact recipe for that morning's coffee, but it was the most delicious experience of my life. Now, when I am alone, I make that coffee every day with the same ingredients, trying to get the same smell and taste, but I fail. I don't know why, but I am sure that once I discover the secret of this recipe, it will call me again.

The stories of Jane and Leila triggered a situation in my memory that highlights another strange connection between me, Agatha, and food. Once I was working in the garden near her old house and a man walked by on the street. Suddenly he stopped in front of me and started talking about Agatha and other members of the circle of village housewives in which Agatha was a leader. As a child, the man had often attended the culinary workshops held at Agatha's house, as his mother was also a member. So he decided to share his memories of the amazingly delicious food the Circle used to prepare for weddings. He also assured me that these women were the best cooks in the region and that I should be proud to have such an ancestor. Then he began to describe each dish in detail, as if I had a duty to carry on the tradition of cooking and also of gathering people around a table, because according to him, today everyone suffers from extreme loneliness. He also told me that Agatha used to have a bunch of pumpkins in her house and would often give them to the neighbors as a symbol of good relations. I took his words to heart and planted some pumpkins. And when I got the first harvest, I decided to bake them with herbs and honey and invite some elderly neighbors for a cup of vodka. Establishing my intimate ritual dedicated to Agata's circle, her community work, and also the habit of sharing felt joyful. But after the stories of the women at the memorial dinner, I began to doubt whether I should follow Agatha's pattern. Should I bury the performative habits of the past in the ground along with the invisible bones I still carry?

"Before we start eating, I offer you a little cannibalistic exercise," Ella says with a mischievous smile, "and I promise no one will get hurt. You may know that some anthropological studies suggest that in prehistoric times there was a ritual of eating the flesh of the defeated enemy... It was said to give the victors qualities such as wisdom and power. What happens when we try to eat this dish with the idea of our TOWST? I don't mean imagining that we're eating his body specifically, because that might end badly, but I'm suggesting that we consume some kind of his trait with this liquid that would benefit your life today."

"What feature would you eat to alleviate your suffering and internal protest?

What strength would you eat to heal your wounds and become stronger?

What ability would you eat to step over the abyss and land on stable ground?"

"I also ask all of you, except Steven, to move away from the European focus on the smell and taste of the food and instead pay attention to the sensation you get after eating the food. What does it do to your body and mind? How do you feel inside?"

"Finally, I also ask you to eat this dish in silence so that you can concentrate on the process of eating.

The red liquid tastes unpleasant. It's sweet and sour at the same time, as if someone decided to mix cherries and mushrooms in a soup. I try not to focus on the taste. I swallow the warm substance and feel it gently enter my body, bringing me back to the garden near Agatha's house. I sit on the cherry tree and spit the stones onto the ground, trying to anticipate where they will fall in the grass. I realize that the question of their survival is also a lottery and will only succeed if many other elements of the ecosystem are involved in the process. If a cherry pit falls into the perfect spot in the grass with the perfect microclimate, if it is not swallowed by the squirrels, if the rain provides it with enough moisture, if the blind living wires of the mycelium in the soil locate it and saturate it with nutrients, it will eventually sprout.

Strangely, this single cherry pit is connected to everything around it, and its fate depends on the synchronization of many sources. For example, the roots of this cherry tree that I am sitting on are somehow connecting with the mold spores from the wall of Agatha's house through the fungal rhizomes..., the spores that I inhaled with the air.... ... these micro-compounds will settle in my intestines and perhaps become the first fungi to decompose my body when I die, turning my flesh into soil... Then, in turn, the endless network of mycelium will connect my remains to the bodies of other living and non-living creatures through its endings: The saliva of a neighbor who spat out a cherry pit, the bones of my great-grandmother from the local cemetery and with greenish mold on the walls of her house. In the end, all our remains, wrapped in mycelium, will shine underground like a starry sky..., like neurons in our

brain..., communicating, announcing danger, uniting in alliances with the microorganisms, plants, trees, thus connecting everything to everything....

The last spoonful of soup melts in my mouth, provoking the thought that our memories are like this cherry pit. They can also win the lottery, the potential to sprout, but they need the whole bunch of synchronizations, and probably the most important one is the connection with the underground mycelium wires that supply the nutrients and help the cherry pit to take root. What are these nutrients? How do you make it germinate?

2

"It's said that 90 percent of the world's conflicts happen because people are hungry!" Ella starts the next round with the internet meme. "So what do you feel now that you have eaten your ancestor? Have you gained any new feelings, sensations, perhaps abilities?"

The people around the table look at each other skeptically. Only one young man, who looks like a young John Malkovich, keeps his eyes closed and remains a concentrated face, as if he's examining the inner change.

"Let's try this on our winner number two. Have you received a message from the TOWST, Joshua?" Ella raises her voice to be heard. "Do you feel any changes?"

Joshua nods, but makes no further movement. Ella approaches him and whistles in his ear. Eventually, he gets up as well and they both move towards the bedroom, leaving us frustrated.

Maybe Ella decided to help John Malkovich decipher the symbols of the message on her bed, LOL? I start to visualize the possible pictures of this process in my head, but suddenly he comes back with the golden wireless microphone for karaoke. *Has he acquired a singing talent from his TOWST and we're going to have a party now?* However, he announces that he gained a new ability right after eating the dish, and now he can talk to the dead. He will demonstrate this by interviewing himself in a past life.

"I should say that this person will only come here if you applaud well," Joshua's voice becomes almost alien through the cheap microphone, and I feel the goose skin covering my body.

Everyone begins to applaud uncertainly, looking at Joshua like a newborn freak. He continues, "No, that's not a proper welcome for the deceased! Come on, don't keep the precious guest waiting!" He turns on a cheerful melody of Balkan turbo-folk and begins to move artistically. This relaxes us a bit and we decide to support Now-Joshua and Then-Joshua with some loud applause.

Suddenly a crouching figure with an ugly face and old-fashioned clothes enters the salon from the bedroom. As this figure slowly approaches the astonished people at the table, I realize that this is Ella in a mask, dressed in a woman's clothing. The mask has a long, crooked nose, an elongated chin, and dark lips, looking like a cross between an old woman and death. The figure slowly walks over to the table and takes the place of the TOWSTs, leaving everyone guessing whether this was planned or improvised.

Staring at Joshua, the woman drinks a glass of wine in one gulp. He seems hesitant to answer the first question.

"Who are you?" he finally asks the woman into the microphone. Then he hands it to the woman-death, which makes the whole thing even more ridiculous. Through the tiny hole in the mask, I can see Ella's lips moving. She lifts her head to the ceiling and squeezes out some strange sounds from her larynx that resemble the scream of the dying beast. It takes several minutes before her voice begins to wheeze and crack.

> **"Fulfill my empty holes in the wall of sense,**
> **do not take my paths, they are all insane,"**

Joshua recites the lines into the microphone as if translating Ella's sounds. She slowly puts her arm on his shoulder and he closes his eyes again, concentrating on the transmission of information. There is an electric pause in the room as everyone watches the miracle of mind reading.

"I killed someone," Joshua shocks us with the news, "I lived in the Caucasus and had to flee my home because of the "blood revenge". The man I knew insulted my sister, meaning he didn't want to marry her, and I had to do it. I knew that after this "family duty" I would have to leave my home and change my name, but I had no choice. The hardest thing was when I went to his house to kill him, he greeted me saying, 'Don't worry, I will always live with you, brother...' Sorry, I feel pain in my chest."

Joshua opens his eyes and swallows his cup of red wine. His face looks terrified, acknowledging the "truth" about his past life, while everyone around him becomes more and more confused by the whole performative situation. Joshua walks away from the table and Ella, in the role of Woman Death, slowly follows.

***

The people at the table remain silent, realizing that it will take some time to digest this mini-performance. Elke and I sneak out into the yard

to have a cigarette, suspecting that smoking isn't welcome during the memorial dinner. We inhale the first puff with orgasmic faces and stand for a while looking at the dark shapes of the autumn forest.

"It is not comparable to Joshua's pain, but I also feel this burden in my chest... as if I were repeating the 'crazy paths' of my ancestor," I try to improve the atmosphere with my "lighter" story. "I know it sounds very esoteric, but it's very real... You know, I'm busy with performing art projects and I'm always in the way..., jumping from residency to residency..., being a typical representative of a new precarious social class..."

"I feel your pain," Elke says. "I'm a graphic designer."

"Sister!" I continue. "So when I started discovering Agatha's life, I realized that my nomadic lifestyle in the arts and my great-grandmother's constant relocations have similar patterns, even though she lived most of her life under socialism and I am forced to move by the capitalist system of artistic consumption..."

I inhale more smoke to make it easier for myself to verbalize the "truth".

"How do you know she was an artist?"

"Well, a kind of interdisciplinary one, as we would call her now... When I started collecting some legends about her life, I got a valuable piece of the puzzle from a 94-year-old neighbor. She told me a story about how Agatha built a wooden cart with her own hands, without any nails. Then, together with other women from her circle, they drove it to a neighboring town to present a singing program for the festival. They also dressed in traditional costumes and baked huge festival breads decorated with long wheat patterns. In the end, they won the grand prize and a trip to a resort. This old woman even showed me the photo from her collection of a group of women sitting on the sheaves of hay in front of the big wagon. They were drinking lemonade and talking... And there was only one woman with a piercing look staring at the camera... I understood just by that look that it was Agatha."

"Do you have that photo somewhere?"

"Yes, it's on my Instagram."

"I'd love to see it!"

I pull out my phone and search for the photo I took that day among the hundreds of other everyday things.

"She looks really stiff... But her face also expresses a little joy, don't you think?"

"Maybe. At that moment, I knew almost nothing about her to understand her mood... Just some random stories that I could not put together. After

that story, I became interested in Agatha's carpentry skills, but everyone in the village kept repeating that it was an ordinary skill of a person from 'the East'. Then my grandmother Emilia, Agatha's daughter, suggested that she might have learned it in Siberia, since she had been sent there in 1947 for… What is the English word for "wasting public money"?

"Defalcation."

"Defalcation? A strange word. I must confess that I didn't expect it. In those days, exile to Siberia for nationalism was a common thing for some, but the discovery that your ancestor was not a victim of political repression, but possibly an ordinary thief, destroyed the romantic elements in Agatha's story."

"I can somehow understand what you felt," Elke says, as if continuing my story by lowering her eyes. "I got a knife in my heart when I discovered that my loving and best grandfather in the world was a Nazi who wrote letters praising the number of dead Jews in the Dachau concentration camp."

"I am sorry to hear that, Elke," I say almost inaudibly, not expecting to hear such a confession. I hug her and feel her tears fall on my chest.

"What's going on here?" Ella's voice suddenly makes us shudder.

"Well, we're just exchanging some information about our TOWSTs," I answer.

"How is Joshua?", Elke asks, wiping away her tears.

"He will need some time to process the knowledge he has received, but at least now he has recognized the source of his burden and is on his way to relief. So, would you like to join us for the rest of the memorial dinner?" asks Ella politely.

"Yeah, sure. I just need a moment to finish a story," I answer.

Ella leaves and Elke and I sit looking at the raindrops on the roses.

"So what was the result of your search for Agatha?"

"The result was the realization of failure." I laugh. "I started to look for some facts about her exile in Siberia, wrote various requests to archives in Ukraine to learn more details of this story. No luck. All the institutions said that they had no information about Agata Kowalewska's case. Then I tried to find any evidence of her forced labor in Germany during the Second World War, since I also found out that she was taken as an Osterbeiter, the worker from the East… and again the German Red Cross simply sent me Agata's letter from 1991, in which she asked for proof of her three and a half years of work there… and said that the search hadn't progressed since then and they couldn't provide any additional information. Finally,

when I came to her probable place of birth, which is 200 km from here, there were no records of her birth there either..."

"Now I understand why you came here. I think you will find her here... but in a different way". Elke nods enigmatically and invites us back into the salon.

> **"Fulfill my empty holes in the wall of sense,**
> **Do not take my paths, they are all insane".**

We enter the salon just as Leila is reading her message from her TOWST. Her reaction is skeptical.

"I already fill the holes of sense with the tons of coffee that make sense to me. But I don't understand whose paths I shouldn't take."

"Maybe you shouldn't follow the path you made for yourself to get your relationships back?", Steven suddenly interjects with his interpretation. "Coffee won't bring them back to life, it might just make you crazier."

"That's bold!", Leila seems shocked by this interference in her private relationship with her ex by a stranger she has known for two hours.

"Sorry if it sounds presumptuous on my part."

"Well, it does."

"I apologize again. I just thought that sometimes it is good to give another perspective to something that is already defined by you, it can open up more options..."

"I'm with you on this, Steven," Ella says. "I understand this message from your TOWST as a clear appeal to bury your relationship and thus bring new senses into building your foundation, which is now filled only with liters of coffee... You would need something solid. What do you think of this scenario?"

"I came here with that scenario! But I'm afraid that if I don't bury these relationships properly, I might exchange coffee for something more serious... which will ruin my life... I'm good at that, you know."

"We'll try to do our best," Ella takes Leila's hand and squeezes it. "But the most important task is yours. Do you promise me that you will work hard to help yourself?"

"I do."

"Elke, as tonight's sommelier, could you make a cup of coffee? And for you, Steven, I have a small task: could you light two candles and put them in the corner of the small table? Jane, please, could you bring a bouquet of pink roses and rosemary from the garden? And you, Vicky, come here and comb Leila's hair."

"Eee..." I look at Leila in astonishment.

"Don't worry, it's not difficult," Ella hands me a golden plastic comb. "Just make her feel relaxed with your movements and try to think of something positive."

I stand up and awkwardly approach Leila, who is getting ready on the chair. For a moment I watch Ella as she instructs everyone to make a quick altar and slowly dip my comb into Leila's short but thick hair, trying to focus on something positive. The more I comb her, the more her dark hair reveals some gray strands that sparkle beautifully in the candlelight.

I remembered one of the funny dialogues I had with a similarly short-haired old woman when we were talking about Agatha, sitting in the village bank. The woman first stared at me for some time, as if I were a ghost, and then asked in a low voice:

"Are you the one who works in the house on Mickiewicz Street?

"Yes, ma'am. How do you know?"

"Everybody knows! Is it true that you are related to Agatha?"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm her great-granddaughter..."

"I know, I was just checking."

"Oh, I see."

"Agatha was a great woman... You know she taught me how to drink vodka?"

"Wow, that's really... cool."

"Don't get me wrong. She was the leader of the women's organization called the 'Circle of Village Housewives' and she used to organize various cooking classes at her house..."

"On how to drink vodka?"

"I see you're funny, aren't you?"

"No idea, ma'am."

"I'll be watching you! So, Agatha's wise advice was not to drink just one cup of alcohol! Do you know why?"

"No idea, ma'am. Why?"

"Because one cup of vodka goes all the way down your leg and you start to feel dizzy and stumble. You always have to drink an even number of cups to balance both legs... And you know what? It really works."

I smile to myself as I remember this dialog and notice how Leila tilts her head towards me and actually leaves it in my palm. Meanwhile, Ella has already taken out a large green silk shawl from the handmade wooden wardrobe and instructed the others to build an improvised altar in the

corner with flowers, herbs, candles and a cup of coffee in the middle. She called Leila and arranged everyone around the altar in a kind of circle of witnesses. Finally, the leader kneels down in front of the altar and pulls Leila next to her, covering herself with this green cloth. We can only hear some of Ella's whispers as she performs over Leila.

"What could be the ritual to fill Agatha's holes in the wall of sense, so that she would not have drunk so much at the end of her life?", the question suddenly arises in my mind. "Would it have worked?"

6

The whole ritual took about thirty minutes and reminded me visually of the confessions I used to make to an Orthodox priest in a village church. And the memory made me shudder. The women finally get up and run out into the yard to stand in the heavy rain for a while. When they come back soaking wet, Ella asks Steven to serve the dessert and Elke to make some herbal tea while they change in the other room. Suddenly Joshua appears in the salon, he starts to help Elke to make the tea with a calm look of "nothing happened".

I go up to Jane for a little chat, since it's obviously her turn to get the last message for tonight from her TOWST, and I notice that she's a little nervous.

"How are you, Jane?"

"A little confused by all this… I'm not sure this is my way, you know…"

"I know. I would also say that it's an experiment for me too… But I think that the miracle of these rituals happens somewhere in the middle between Ella's action and our performance, between memory and imagination…, in the moment of our belief in them…"

Jane smiles sadly, signaling that there is a problem with the last and most important question.

Steven brings a large bowl of chocolate fondue to the table and places it in the middle among the bones. Then he also brings pieces of various fruits and cheeses in strange abstract shapes, as if an inept sculptor had carved them by hand. Tea is served and everyone gathers around the table to wait for Ella, who remains in the kitchen. She enters carrying a black plate with several chocolate eggs, similar to "Kinder Surprise," and places them in front of Jane.

"Take your message," the guide instructs. "It's inside the egg, so you have to break it." "Can I choose anything?"

"Yes, you will choose the right one, don't be afraid."

She makes a concentrated pause before making a choice. Then she takes the one in the middle and breaks it with one hand.

"Let the sweet melt your bitter knot,
Drain your pain through the globetrotter action."

Jane recites the message and nods thoughtfully to herself.

"I got the message. It's quite clear..."

"Is it? That's great then. I just want to warn you that this bitter knot will have to be loosened in order to implement the plan, otherwise it will prevent you from doing so."

"Could be."

Strangely enough, nothing happens after this conversation. We calmly string the fruits with the wooden sticks and dip them into the chocolate fondue, exchanging some jokes about the shapes they take after dipping into the thick brown substance. I got a long, swirling piece of coconut that, after being covered in chocolate, resembled a chain of DNA.

"Does it look like a DNA strand to you, too, or is that just my projection?" I ask Elke, who is trying to pull her crooked cheese flower out of the hot chocolate.

"Yes, definitely!" she replies, grabbing a spoon to help a drowning cheese in the bowl.

It is a strange synchronization. I remember the moment when I was completely disappointed to learn anything more about Agatha and decided to take a DNA test. This test was supposed to show me where my ancestors came from, the paths of their migration, and I thought it might somehow reveal the secret of my own permanent nomadic lifestyle. So I sent my DNA sample to Texas, USA, and just a few days ago I finally received an apology from the National Post for losing it... and an offer of compensation. I imagined for a moment how my saliva had been wandering for months through the piles of letters and parcels from unknown senders, without a final destination, and I thought... Wow, it resembles all my efforts in this endless search for Agatha... But what is the appearance of this DNA chain on this table? Should I eat it and symbolically consume the failure of Agatha's research? Does it mean burying the bitter knot of her story in my body? Will it finally close the circle of paths apparently defined by DNA?

"Fuuuuuuuuuccck!" exclaims Elke as she places a melted swastika-shaped cheese flower on her plate. It has lost several petals in the hot chocolate and turned into the brown ideological symbol.

"Beautiful sun sign," Ella interjects.

"It's not!" replies Elke, almost screaming. "Should I eat it? What the fuck?!"

"You don't have to eat anything," the guide tries to calm her down. "It's just a dessert, and if you don't want to eat it, just don't."

"I also have something in the shape of a knife," Joshua complains. But all I see is a melon stick with a chocolate covered tip. "What is this message about?"

"Well, I just got a shape of Ireland," Jane adds sarcastically about her torn apple slice. "Does that mean I have to start my journey from there?"

Leila and Steven look at their chocolate fruits in confusion, trying to unravel the mystery of the hidden message.

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"Ok... I see that we have arrived at the end," Ella continues quickly. "But to end the memorial dinner, I would like to use this last drink to thank our TOWSTs for being with us tonight. I feel it was important to invite them to our tables to remember their stories. I also feel that their figures have become more convex with each word of our participants, and I hope that the messages from your TOWSTs will bring you on the righteous path to inner peace...

"And to the TOWSTs: Sorry if there was no scandal or blood as you might have wished for this memorial dinner, not everything was as you wished or remembered, but we reserve the right to rethink the past for a better future".

"So, to your past and our present, in glory for the future."

Ella takes a sip of wine and leaves the salon. In a minute, however, she reappears with several thin mattresses with four long black straps sewn to the sides, which she scatters on the floor. Then she asks each of us to choose a suitable place and lie down, closing our eyes. First, we do a tantric meditation that makes us imagine a golden shining sieve coming down from above, entering our body, gently melting its boundaries, cleansing the dirt on its way, breaking the dark knots that cause discomfort and pain. The sieve moves slowly through our brain, leaving it bright, then it enters our chest, taking away the burden and loosening the tension in our stomach. Finally, it goes down to the pelvis, filling it with warmth. It also relaxes our endings and makes them float. The golden sieve leaves our body and cleanses it down to the last cell. Our body becomes shiny, clean and full of warmth.

I feel how my body is covered with a thick blanket and I am tightened by the straps of the mattress, which immobilize me and create a kind of cocoon that must be reborn in a new creature. Then a kind of mask is placed over my face, blocking my nose from breathing. I start to panic.

"Don't worry, we will try to go deep now. Trust me." Ella whispers in my ear. "Try to breathe through your mouth."

She puts a thin wooden straw in my mouth, which makes breathing more concentrated. I take a deep, slow breath and exhale, repeating the same words in my head:

I am the world, the world is in me,
I am the world, the world is in me,
I am the <u>world</u>, the world is in me...

I listen to the silence, trying to hear any sounds from the neighbors. Instead, there is only dense emptiness and thick time, like chewing gum that stretches endlessly. Darkness begins to materialize in the walls of the abyss that I am sliding down... and I feel the ground melting from the heat of my flesh... I am sinking gently, trying to reach the treasure that sparkles in its blackness and attracts me like a magnet. I can see it from afar and know that it will be able to ignite the spark in my cavity of meaning. It will fill my inner wall of meaning. It's the intense smell of the coal that guides me, which is extracted from the millennial rocks and hidden from me down there. It is impossible to get there in the usual way: all the tunnels are closed, filled with the impassable layers of tears, sweat, blood and bones. The locks on the entrances are rusted, the names of the workers erased, the documents burned. The deeper I drown towards the largest coal deposit, the more its solid materiality becomes liquid. It begins to float, soaking my body with the black substance through my veins, making it heavier. It pulls me down to the bottom, to the treasure that is now poured into an underground black spring that seeps out in different directions. An unbearable weight pulls me down to the black water that swallows me with its tongues. They speak with the fragments of voices, juggling words in languages unknown to me. One voice cries out in despair while others chant prayers. I start screaming too, trying to get out, reaching my hands for the exit, but instead I can't move a finger. I start cursing, trying to scare the voices around me, don't let them take me to the river that will float me to the invisible underground streams and disappear forever. It seems like there is an eternity between me and them and there is nothing that could help.

Suddenly I hear an approaching purr that brings me from the bottom of the abyss to my dark and tight coffin. The purr embraces me with care and love and begins to float with me over the living room where we are lying, over this house, over Belgium. I laugh to myself because I have managed to saddle a purr to fly over the European cities and villages, becoming even cooler than "Alice in Wonderland". This flight makes me feel calm and safe, I can see several lights below, reflecting the continuation of life. In a moment I find myself flying over Agatha's house in Vinsko, and I see an old woman sitting near the entrance. I try to stop, to touch the ground, to hold the past in my hands. But my purring didn't stop, it continued its rhythm, as if in unison with my heartbeat. I take one last look at the house from above, trying my best to imprint the image in my mind and store it somewhere in my chest.

As Ella unties me, I see the first rays of sunlight, which seem to be especially bright this morning. She asks us to do a little meditation together and to keep silence until the end. So when we leave, we all hug each other and I feel, just by touch, how everyone spent the funeral. When Elke comes to me to say goodbye, she asks me with a look if it worked for me. I don't know what to say, I just point my arm to my chest.

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Biographical note

PhD, University of St. Andrews (2004) Dissertation: *The Jews in the Balkan Provinces of the Roman Empire. An Epigraphic and Archaeological Survey.* Alexander published a number of articles in refereed academic journals and book chapters. Books: with D. Noy and H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis, Band I: Eastern Europe*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 2004; with J. Davila and R. Bauckham, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2013. He also participated in various conferences, workshops and invited talks at University of St Andrews; University of Cambridge; University of Birmingham; Aix-Marseille University; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; University of Haifa; University of Sofia; American Research Center in Sofia.

DAILY LIFE OF JEWS IN THE EARLY BYZANTINE BALKANS AND THE AEGEAN

Alexander Panayotov

Abstract

My article aims to recover a neglected area of history, and contribute to the study of minorities within larger political structures. I will focus on the daily life, communal organisation and leadership of the Jewish community, and the social status, occupation and cultural concerns of its members. The scope of my article is defined temporally and spatially. I will discuss epigraphic, literary and archaeological evidence, dated between the 4th and the 8th century, related to the geographical areas of the Balkans and the Aegean.

Keywords: Jews, Christians, daily life, Byzantine Empire

The daily life of Jews in Byzantium remains largely an unexplored territory with many, sometimes contradictory, scholarly constructs of how it developed during the early period of the Empire. This is partially a result of the insufficient information provided by the available sources. My aim here is to present an overview of the evidence concerning Jewish life in the Balkans and the Aegean between the 4th and the 8th century. This will allow for the inclusion of the widest possible selection of literary, legal, epigraphic and archaeological sources. Turning to the available material, it is evident that the literary sources are less revealing than the archaeological and epigraphic ones. Late Roman and Byzantine authors for their part were not particularly interested in the daily life of the Jewish population of the Empire. In certain cases, Jews are mentioned only in relation to a political event they participated in, like the uprising of 641 against Patriarch Pyrrhus in Constantinople (Patriarch Nikephoros, *Breviarium* 31.18, ed. Mango 1990). Thus, the importance of archaeological data and inscriptions cannot be underestimated. The archaeological evidence includes, so far, four excavated synagogues, three Jewish tombs and a number of moveable

artefacts and miscellaneous findings. Legal sources remain a solid source for the attitude of the Byzantine government towards Jews although in certain cases, especially in the period of concern, it is possible that they might envision the Christian population of the empire that would be tempted to convert to Judaism.

The synagogue was the centre of Jewish communal life and I will continue by reviewing the archaeological evidence for the existence of synagogues in the Balkans and the Aegean. Synagogues have been excavated at Stobi, near Gradsko in North Macedonia, Philippopolis, modern Plovdiv in Bulgaria, and Onchesmos, modern Saranda in Albania, and on the islands of Aegina and Chios.

The existence of a synagogue in Stobi was documented in 1931, when the donor inscription of Claudius Tiberius Polycharmus was discovered on a column in the courtyard of a three-aisle basilica in the central area of the city (IJO I, 57–58). According to the inscription, dated to the 2nd–3rd century, Polycharmus donated the ground floor of his house, including a *triclinium* (dining room) and *tetrastoon* (study room), to the local Jewish community, but kept the upper floor for himself and his family (IJO I, Mac1). This building was discovered by the American-Yugoslav team that excavated the site in 1970–1976 and was designated "Synagogue I" (Poehlman 1981: 238). A marble plaque and a number of frescoes from Synagogue I discovered during the excavation of the Central Basilica bear inscriptions referring to Polycharmus' donation (IJO I, Mac3–4; Wiseman 2009–2011, 326–334, nos. 4–5; Babamova 2012: 31–33, nos. 20, 23–24). Polycharmus' house and the synagogue were destroyed, along with other public buildings in the city, in the late 3rd century following an earthquake (Wiseman 1986: 41).

Soon after, in the early 4th century, a new building was constructed on the same site, called "Synagogue II" by the excavators, but with a different architectural plan. In the previous period, the Jews of Stobi used to gather in a large room on the ground floor of Polycharmus' house, while the new building was specifically constructed for a synagogue. It was a long rectangular structure with one large hall measuring 13.3 x 7.6 m and two smaller rooms attached from the south. Synagogue II also had access to a building, designated "House of Psalms", located to the south of the Central Basilica, which had a number of rooms, a courtyard with large water basin with niches and a latrine (Kitzinger 1946: 134–140, figs. 186 and 191; Wiseman, Mano-Zissi 1971: 407). The connection between the two buildings would support the interpretation of "Synagogue II" and the

"House of Psalms" as a synagogue complex, with a main hall and series of ancillary and storage rooms, similar to those excavated in Ostia (1st–4th century), Bova Marina (4th–6th century), Hamam-Lif (Naro, 6th century), Saranda (Onchesmos, 4th–5th century) and Chios (4th–6th century).[1]

The main hall of the synagogue was accessed from the west through a forecourt paved with mosaic. The walls of the main hall had frescoes and graffiti in Greek scratched on the walls and the entire floor was decorated with a mosaic made of separate patches of geometric design, which suggests several stages in its construction (Kolarik & Petrovski 1975: 66–75, esp. 69). Foundation stones, probably for benches, were found in front of the south wall of the hall. A small stepped platform standing against the east wall of the main hall was, possibly, used as a bema, and fragments from a marble Torah ark were also discovered during the excavations (Wiseman & Mano-Zissi 1971: 410–411). The discovery of three *menorah* graffiti scratched on the plaster coating of one of the service rooms confirmed that the building was indeed a synagogue (IJO I: 61).

An inscription witnessing the repair of the mosaic floor of a colonnaded corridor (*peripatos*) in the late 4th or 5th century by the *phrontistes* Alexander was discovered in 1977 (Wiseman 2009–2011: 341–346, no. 10; Babamova 2012: 33, no. 25). The office of the *phrontistes* refers to a person who was chosen to oversee or supervise a reconstruction or building project and would indicate that Alexander was responsible for providing funds for the repair of the mosaic floor (Robert 1964: 53, n. 2). Another, unpublished, inscription, dating to the second half of the 4th century, refers to the size of the mosaic floor laid in the entrance room of the main hall of the synagogue. The mosaic was laid down by an anonymous donor who fulfilled a vow to the God of Israel.[2] A lead seal, dated to the 5th century, found in one of the sewer pipes of the "House of Psalms" bears the image of a *menorah* and possibly belonged to the head of the Jewish community of Stobi – Eustathius (IJO I, Mac2). At the end of the 5th century, the synagogue was supplanted by the Central Basilica. It appears that the construction of the Basilica started when "Synagogue II", or at least its main hall, was still in good condition. The roof tiles were carefully removed and stored aside while some of the original walls were repaired. This fact raised many questions about the relations between Jews and Christians at Stobi. It has been suggested by one of the original excavators that the building came into Christian possession by force (Moe 1977: 157). However, there is no direct evidence of forced transfer of the ownership.

The remains of a synagogue in Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv) were discovered in 1981–1982 during excavations of a large residential area close to the centre of the ancient city. The synagogue was a rectangular structure, measuring 13.5 m (north-south) by 14.2 m (east-west), with a north-south orientation and with a main hall 9 m wide, and two aisles each 2.6 m wide, and a large forecourt on the north side. The forecourt was probably separated from the main entrance of the synagogue by a colonnade (Kesjakova 1989: 29; Kesjakova 1999: 76). Two large, but partially destroyed, mosaic floors were discovered in the main hall of the building. The first floor contains one of the most elaborately decorated mosaics discovered in the Jewish Diaspora – the images include a *menorah* and a bunch of the "four species" (*lulab*, *ethrog*, willow (*aravah*) and myrtle (*hadass*) associated with the annual Jewish festival of Sukkot (Booths) and described in Lev. 23: 40.[3]

Figure 1. The mosaic floor of the synagogue in Philippopolis

Three dedicatory inscriptions in Greek, dating to the 4th–6th centuries, preserved in the first mosaic floor record the donation of Cosmianus and another benefactor who provided funds for the mosaics (IJO I, Thr1–2; Williams 2007). The benefactors had alternative names – Joseph and

Isaac – a practice attested among Jews in Stobi (IJO I, Mac1), Philippi (IJO I, Mac12) and Thessaloniki (IJO I, Mac14-5) in the Balkans. The inscription from the central panel of the mosaic provides information, in a similar way to the inscriptions from the synagogues in Apamea and Stobi, about the size of the mosaic donated by Isaac – approximately 35 m^2. The second floor of the building was decorated predominantly by geometric figures. The synagogue was probably built in the 3rd century, partly destroyed by the Goths in 250–251 and rebuilt in the early 4th century. It was badly damaged again in the early 5th century, but was soon restored with several alterations to the original plan, including the extension of the east and west walls and construction of a well or fountain. It is not clear, however, whether the new building continued to be used as a synagogue. The building was destroyed by fire in the late 6th century together with most of the surrounding area (Kesjakova 1982: 29–31).

The synagogue of Aegina is located in the vicinity of the harbour of the ancient city. It was excavated in 1928, but found in poor condition, with only a few parts of the original walls remaining (Mazur 1935: 26–32). The synagogue was a rectangular building with a single hall (Mazur 1935: 13 x 7.6 m; Welter 1938: 13.5 x 7.6 m) filled entirely by a mosaic floor and an apse (diameter 5.5 m) in its eastern wall. The synagogue floor comprises a mosaic with geometric design, on the eastern edge of which there is a white strip that has been identified as a safety mark indicating the spot where the stairs leading to the bema or the Ark began. The presence of such a construction, however, remains uncertain. The entrance to the synagogue hall is marked on the west by two mosaic inscriptions. The inscriptions refer to the donation of Theodorus and his son Theodorus the Younger, who provided the funds and supervised the completion of the synagogue building and mosaic (IJO I, Ach58–9). The inscriptions are dated to 300–350 and provide reference to the offices of *archisynagogos* and *phrontistes.* The synagogue was built in the 4th century and destroyed in the 6th century when a Christian necropolis and as small church were built on site (Mazur 1935: 29–31; IJO I, 205).

The remains of a late antique synagogue were discovered in Saranda (ancient Onchesmos), on the Adriatic coast of Albania, in the early 1980s, but were not explored until 2003, according to Albanian archaeologist Etleva Nallbani. The building, located near the central park of Saranda, comprises a large rectangular hall with adjoining rooms to the west. The main hall and the adjunct rooms are entirely covered in mosaics. One of the mosaics bears the image of a *menorah*, flanked by a *shofar* and *ethrog*.

Another mosaic is filled with images of animals, trees, and includes a possible representation of a Torah shrine. The synagogue has been dated to the 4th–5th centuries. It was supplanted by one of the main churches in Onchesmos in the 6th century (Nallbani et al. 2011: 66–73).

Recently, a new synagogue building was discovered in Chios. The building is located in the old part of Chios town and is currently being excavated by the 3rd Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities. The building consisted of a main hall and ancillary rooms (Missailidis 2021: 1387–1393). The floor of the main hall is covered by an elaborate mosaic incorporating two dedicatory inscriptions in Greek. The inscriptions refer to the donation, following a vow, of Ilasius and his son Damalius, who provided funds for and oversaw the construction and decoration, with a mosaic floor, of the building (CIJG 67–8). Both donors held the office of *phrontistes*, in a similar way to the benefactors of the synagogues of Stobi and Aegina. The text of the inscriptions also provides reference to the LXX text of Ps. 119:165. Based on preliminary photographs of the mosaic inscriptions the synagogue can be dated to the 4th–6th centuries or later.

Synagogues dated to the 3rd–6th centuries are also attested epigraphically in Corinth, where we have a door lintel with partially preserved inscription, dated to the 3rd–5th centuries, designating the synagogue of the Jews (IJO I, Ach47; CIJG 70), and in Mantinea, where an inscription, dated to the 4th century, commemorates the donation of Aurelius Elpidis for the construction of a pronaos of the local synagogue (IJO, Ach54; CIJG 85). A recently discovered capital of a small marble column (*kioniskos*) bearing the image of a *menorah* may indicate the existence of a synagogue in Edessa. The partially destroyed column and the capital, together with the base of another similar column, were found during excavations of the eastern gate of ancient Edessa (Chrisostomou 2013: 522, fig. 215; 525). A lead seal with the image of a *menorah*, similar to the one found in Stobi, and the name Theodorus was also found in the same area (CIJG 39). It is possible that the seal was used by the leader of the local Jewish community, in a similar way to the seal found in Stobi, and the columns were part of a Torah shrine in the synagogue. The existence of a Samaritan synagogue in Thessaloniki is probably attested by the bilingual dedicatory inscription of Siricius from Neapolis (Nablus in Palestine). The inscription is dated to the 4th–6th centuries and includes a blessing in Samaritan Hebrew and the text of Numbers 6.22-7 in Greek (*Berakhah* – the benediction of the priests; IJO I, Mac17; CIJG 41).

The only synagogue from the areas concerned mentioned by Byzantine authors is the one in the Copper market of Constantinople. The synagogue was supplanted in the 5th century by the famous church of the Mother of God of the Copper Marker, which was built either by the empress Verina, wife of Leo I (457–474) or by Theodosius II sister Pulcheria, to house the Virgin's girdle. The sources also mention the presence of Jews engaged in manufacturing and trading of copper handiwork in the area (Panayotov 2002: 320–331). Thus, despite the increasing anti-Jewish legislation since the death of Theodosius I (379–395), we find synagogues in the main administrative centres in the Balkans – Constantinople, Philippopolis, Thessaloniki, Stobi, Corinth, Argos, but also in smaller towns like Saranda and Mantinea. Some Jewish communities were well established in the social and economic life of their cities and maintained good relations and communication with other communities, as indicated by the already mentioned unpublished inscription from Argos. The inscription suggests good family relations between the Jewish communities of Argos and Corinth in the 4th century.

The new attitude in imperial legislation toward the Jews is probably best expressed in a law promulgated at Constantinople on 15 February 423, in the names of Theodosius II (408–450) and Honorius (393–423).[4] The legislator affirms the protection of synagogues against deliberate destruction, ordering that the Jewish communities should receive places for the construction of new synagogues to replace those converted illegally into churches. But, at same time, he prohibits the construction of new synagogues. And finally, in 438, Theodosius II enacted a law that, while repeating his previous legislation on Jews and Samaritans, recognised the right of the Church to confiscate newly built synagogues.[5] This probably sealed the fate of the synagogues of Stobi, Saranda and Constantinople that were converted into churches in the 5th and 6th centuries.

However, the frequent legislation on this matter indicates that the imperial government was less than successful in enforcing these laws (Linder 1987: 74). The importance of the synagogue for the communal life of the Jewish communities did not diminish, as suggested by evidence from inscriptions and Byzantine laws. The synagogues continued to be used for community gatherings, liturgical readings of the Torah and celebration of the Sabbath and the annual Jewish festivals. The importance of these factors for the preservation of the Jewish identity of these communities is suggested by the law of Justinian from 8 February 553, which confirmed the freedom to use Greek and languages other than Hebrew in synagogue

scriptural readings (Novella 146; Linder 1987: 402–411, no. 66; Linder 1997: 32). The law also suggests a continuous tension within Jewish communities in the Byzantine Empire related to the language of the synagogue readings (de Lange 1996: 132–133). This source and the language of the inscriptions reviewed here strongly suggest that the Jews in the Balkans and the Aegean used Greek as their daily language and in synagogue services. The permitted translations of the Hebrew scriptures in Greek by Justinian's law were the LXX text and Aquilas' translation. This is confirmed by the use of the LXX text of Ps. 119 in the donor inscriptions from the synagogue excavated in Chios and in Thessaloniki, where the wall of a Jewish tomb is inscribed with a paraphrase of the LXX text of Ps. 45:8 and 12 (IJO I, Mac13; CIJG 45).

The institution and the building of the synagogue were considered holy by the Jews of Stobi (IJO I, Mac1, l. 11; Babamova 2012: 33, no. 25), where both Synagogue I and II are referred to as ἅγιος τόπος ("holy place"; IJO I, Mac1, l. 11) and ἁγίας συναγωγῆς ("the holy synagogue"; Babamova 2012: 33, no. 25, ll. 6–7).[6] A similar term ἁγιστάτη συναγωγῆ ("the most holy synagogue") is evidenced in epitaphs from Beroea (IJO I, Mac7; CIJG 34), and Phthiotic Thebes (IJO I, Ach23).[7] The daily observation of the prescriptions of the Jewish law and personal piety and devotion was an important feature in the life of the Jewish communities of Stobi, Argos and Chios between the late 4th and 6th centuries. This is suggested by epigraphic evidence. In his donation inscription from Stobi, for example, Claudius Tiberius Polycharmus notes that "I […] lived my whole life according to (the prescriptions of) Judaism" (IJO I. Mac1, ll. 6–9) and one of the inscriptions from the mosaic floor of the synagogue of Chios begins with the exclamation "Peace to those who love your Law" – a paraphrase of the LXX text of Ps. 119:165, emphasising the importance of studying and knowing the Jewish Law (CIJG 67, ll. 1–2). But Jewish religious life in the Byzantine Empire was much more complicated. There was apparently a messianic excitement among Jews in Crete in the 5th century, which ended tragically for most of those who participated in this movement. The evidence comes from Socrates Scholasticus, who writes that a Jewish impostor claiming to be Moses gathered a large following among Cretan Jews, probably in the 430s, and led them into the sea, where they drowned or were rescued and converted to Christianity (*Hist. eccl.* 7.38; PG 67, 825–828).

The synagogue – and the Jewish community – served also as a guarantor against the violation of the graves of the deceased members of

the community and in certain cases provisions were made to receive the penalty provided for such a violation (Philippi, IJO I, Mac12; CIJG 47; Thessaloniki, IJO I, Mac15; CIJG 40). This was of special importance since Jews in the Balkans shared cemeteries with pagans and Christians. Jewish burials and cemeteries have been excavated in Thessaloniki and the site of ancient Doclea (near Podgorica in Montenegro). A number of Jewish tombs were discovered in the eastern necropolis of Thessaloniki, located just outside the walls of the ancient city on the site of the University of Thessaloniki (IJO I, 13–14). This was the principal Jewish burial place from Late Antiquity until it was destroyed by the German occupation forces, with the help of the Greek authorities, in 1942 (Molho 1962: 376–383). The necropolis was also used by pagans and Christians in the Roman and Byzantine periods and there was no separate Jewish cemetery. It contained a number of undergound vaulted tombs, two of which were painted with *menorot* and dated to the 4th–5th centuries (IJO I, Mac13). The tombs were discovered in 1961 in the south-east end of the necropolis. The Greek inscription preserved on the wall of one the tombs is a paraphrase of the LXX text of Ps 45:8 and 12 (Κύριος μεθ' ἡμῶν! "The Lord is with us!"; IJO I, Mac13; CIJG 45). This acclamation has not yet been attested on Jewish monuments, but is frequently found in Christian inscriptions. Another inscription dated to the 4th century and inscribed on a small marble plate used to seal the entrance to the tomb mentions the name of the deceased: Benjamin, also called Dometius (IJO I, Mac14; CIJG 43). From the same area also came two Jewish sarcophagi with inscriptions in Greek (IJO I, Mac15; Nigdelis 2006, 334–42, no. 20). A Jewish tomb was discovered in 1960 in the eastern necropolis of ancient Doclea. The tomb, with a *menorah* painted on the north wall, is located in the south-east end of the necropolis which otherwise includes only pagan burials. The tomb has been dated to the end of the 3rd century or the first half of the 4th century (Cermanović-Kuzmanović & Srejovic 1963/4: 56–61, figs. l, 2, 3a-b, 4; IJO I, 20).

The epigraphic evidence also provides information for Jewish communal organisation in the areas concerned. The Jewish community is described with different terms in the epigraphic and literary sources – like "the synagogue" (Thessaloniki, Beroea, Philippi and Stobi; IJO I, Mac1, 7, 12, 15; CIJG 34, 40, 47) or "the people" (ὁ λαός in Larissa; IJO I, Ach1, 3–4, 8–14: CIJG 7–14, 16–17, 19). The epigraphically attested Jewish communal offices and titles in the Balkans and the Aegean, like *presbyter*, *archegos, archisynagogos, archon*, were borrowed from Graeco-Roman

civic terminology and adapted to Jewish usage with no uniform meaning and function. I think that the use of this terminology actually helped the Roman and Byzantine legislators to easily regulate the Jewish communities. It was the structure of the Jewish community, with its presiding officers and their duties, that was important. Perhaps it would not be too much to suggest that this structure was seen as similar, apart from the Patriarch and the *archipherekites* in Babylonia, to that of late Roman and Byzantine public or religious institutions. In turn, the legislation could have actually influenced the use of Graeco-Roman civic terminology within the Jewish communities in the Balkans, thus helping to preserve their communal structure. The inscriptional evidence from the areas concerned suggests that the *archisynagogos* was the leader of the Jewish community whose role included a wide range of communal and religious duties. This is confirmed by the position and function applied to the office in Roman and Byzantine legislation. One local variation is attested on an epitaph from Larissa, where the head of the community holds the title *prostates* (IJO I, Ach5; CIJG 15). Another important Jewish communal office regulated by Byzantine legislators and evidenced on inscriptions from the Balkans, for example from Thessaloniki (IJO I, Mac18) and Beroea (IJO I, Mac8; CIJG 35), was that of the presbyter (elder). The presbyters were, together with the patriarchs and the *archisynagogoi*, exempt from compulsory public liturgies in the laws of Constantine the Great of 29 November 330 and Arcadius and Honorius of 1 July 397 (CTh 16.8.2, 16.8.13; Linder 1987: 132–138, 201–204, nos. 9, 27). Here the exact function of the office remains unclear, although it seems that legislators in the 4th century understood it as both an administrative and a religious one. However, for Byzantine legislators of the 6th century and later the Jewish presbyter was a communal officer with mainly religious duties related to the synagogue service as indicated by the already mentioned law of Justinian from 553 (Linder 1987: 402–411, no. 66). Here the presbyters are outlined as the community officers empowered to prevent members of the Jewish community from reading the scriptures in Greek. I think that it would be reasonable to assume that the holders of this office were members of the governing body of the Jewish community. This was recognised by the Byzantine legislators who established the presbyters as a privileged group of office holders who continued to play an important role in the Jewish community until the 9th century. Other epigraphically attested Jewish communal offices and honorary titles in the Balkans and the Aegean include *pater synagoges, pater laou, archegos, archon,* but

the exact function of these offices is difficult to determine, and it seems that its meaning varied from place to place. The *phrontistes*, attested in Stobi, Aegina and Chios, was not exclusively a Jewish office and quite possibly designated a person who was chosen to oversee or supervise a reconstruction or building project. A glimpse into the organisation of the Jewish communities in the Balkans is provided by the title *sophos* in Argos, which is rarely attested in Jewish inscriptions. The title occurs in an epitaph from Argos, dated to the 3rd–4th centuries, and was probably used with a reference to Jewish scholars or the office of the rabbi (IJO I, Ach51; CIJG 69).[8] More information about the structure of the Jewish communities and especially the synagogue service in the Balkans and Aegean during the period concerned is provided by an epitaph from Beroea dated to the 4th century that commemorates a Jewish psalm singer, saluted in the text of the inscription as "most renowned in hymns of (the) Hebrews" (IJO I, Mac9).The information from inscriptions and Byzantine law suggest that the structure of the Jewish communities in the areas concerned was not drastically affected by the anti-Jewish legislation and the established community organisation with its presiding officers continued to function at least until the end of the 6th century.

The position of the Jewish communities in the cities of their residence is difficult to determine. It most probably depended on the local social, economic and political environment. The laws of Arcadius (395–408), Theodosius II and Honorius (408–450), from 404 and 418 banned Jews and Samaritans from service in the imperial administration, but they were allowed to continue their service in the provincial and local administration (CTh 16.8.16; CTh 16.8.24). This is confirmed by epigraphical evidence from Larissa, where the Jew Alexander was a lawyer or rhetor (*scholasticus*) in the 4th–6th centuries (IJO I, Ach5; CIJG 15), and from Oescus, where, if the reconstruction of the text is correct, Ioses held the title of *principalis* – a non-commissioned officer – in the 4th century (IJO I, Moes1).
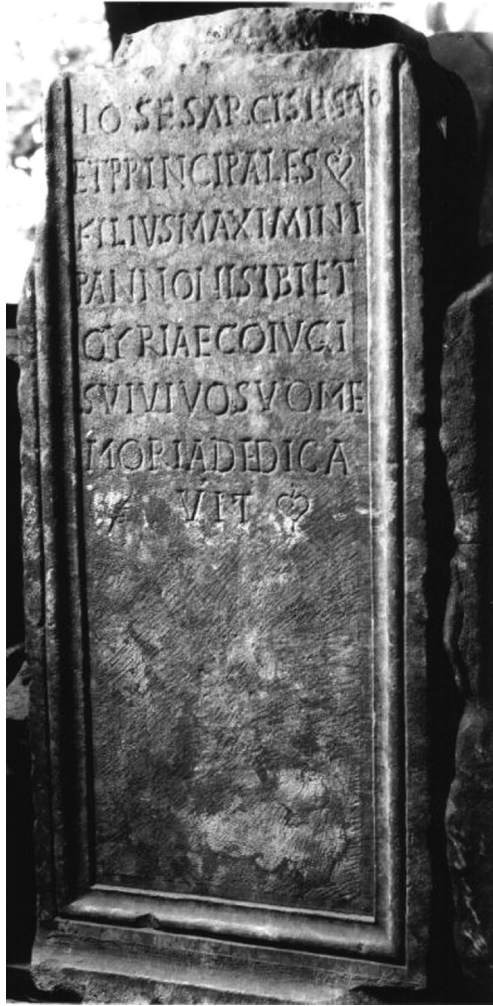
Figure 2. Funerary inscription at Oescus

There is no possibility to reveal the nature of the daily relations between Jews and Christians in the areas concerned due to the lack of evidence. However, the epigraphic evidence suggests that Jews and Christians were not violently separated communities in the Balkans and Aegean.

The only evidence of a possible confrontation between Jews and Christians is actually quite late. According to the *Passio* of St Philip, bishop of Heraclea/Perinthos, modern Marmara Ereğlisi in Turkey, composed in the late 5th or early 6th century, the Jews of Hadrianopolis mocked the saint before he was martyred in the 4th century (ASS 50.9, col. 546; de' Cavalieri 1953: 65, 130, 144, l. 7; Delehye 1933: 242–245). However, it is not clear whether Jews appear only as characters in the text for the sake of the anti-Jewish argument. The next reference is even later. According to the Byzantine historian of the 12th century John Zonaras, the synagogue in the Copper market of Constantinople was built after the local Jews bribed the prefect of the city. The story takes place in 390–394 when, during his Western campaign, Theodosius I resided in Milan. The synagogue was burned by the city mob and the emperor ruled that it should be rebuilt at the expense of the arsonists. What follows in the narrative of Zonaras is a dialogue between Theodosius and Ambrosius very similar to the one that, according to Sozomen and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, took place after the massacre of 390 in Thessaloniki.[9] The Emperor, faulted for his decision by Ambrosius, pleaded that it was in accordance with the law, but after a passionate speech delivered by the bishop, he rescinded his judgement. Then he even forbade the construction of new synagogues in Constantinople, ruling that they can be built only on the city's outskirts. However, I think we should read Zonaras account as a reflection of the conditions under which the Jewish population of Constantinople lived in the 12th century, not as evidence of anti-Jewish violence in the 4th century.

Inscriptions also shed light on the status of women and children within the Jewish communities. Three epitaphs from Byzie, modern Vize in Thrace (IJO I, Thr3), Phtiothic Thebes in Thessaly (IJO I, Ach18; CIJG 24) and Kissamos in Crete (IJO I, Cre3; CIJG 32), dated to the 3rd– 5th centuries, refer to the titles of *presbytera, archisynagogissa* and *archegissa* held by women. These titles could refer, I think, that women inherited or acquired the titles through marriage (IJO II, no. 12). However, in the inscription from Kissamos the deceased woman holds two titles, *presbytera* and *archsynagogissa*, (IJO I, Cre3; ll. 2–4) which makes their explanation even more complex. The problem here is that the exact function of the office of the *presbyter* within the Jewish community is difficult to determine, and it seems that its meaning varied from place to place (Panayotov 2014: 171–172). This was also the case of Jewish children who were also recipients of titles, obviously, inherited from their parents. Thus, in an epitaph from Beroea dated to the 4th–5th centuries a deceased three-year-old child is described

as *mellopresbyteros* ("a presbyter-to-be"; IJO I, Mac10; CIJG 35). This particular title designates a person who is going to hold the office and is similar to the titles *mellarchon* and *mellogrammateus* held by children and adults in Rome in the 3rd and 4th centuries (JIWE II, nos. 100–101, 179–180, 231, 259, 404). Unfortunately, however, the sources do not reveal much about the position of children within the Jews communities in the Balkans and the Aegean. The epitaphs, however, provide us with some, although limited information. In the Balkans, an epitaph from Senia in Dalmatia dated to the 3rd–4th centuries commemorating Aurelius Dionysius from Tiberias, a carpenter and father of three children, suggests that the deceased claimed through *ius liberorum* of Augustan legislation some advantage as exemption from public duties or guardianship (IJO I, Dal).

Some information about the day-to-day relations between Jewish and Christian children can be deduced from the Christian miracle stories concerned with the conversion of non-Christians to Christianity. Thus, the story reported both by Gregory of Tours and his contemporary Evagrius is about the son of a Jewish glass-worker who following the example of his Christian classmates and ate from the communion bread. (*De gloria martyrum* 9, ed. Krusch 1885: 44). The story apparently took place near the Copper Market of Constantinople, which was associated with Jews as early as the 4th century. The story, however, would also suggest that Jewish children were not excluded from the Christian society and that they did not separate from other non-Jewish children. The lack of separation between Jews and Christians in their daily life would facilitate a pattern of broad cultural influences between the two groups in the early Byzantine Empire – like names and terminology, as evidenced by the inscriptions placed by Jewish sailors in the Grammata bay on the island of Syros ((IJO I, Ach72–73; CIJG 65–66). This can also be observed through the evidence about the occupation of Jews in the Balkans and the Aegean.

Little is known about the occupation of Jews in the Balkans and the Aegean and the list of examples is as follows. An epitaph from Athens dated to the 3rd century refers to the office of *proscholos* held by a Jew called Beniames (Benjamin) (IJO I, Ach27; CIJG 85). The common translation of the term is "assistant schoolmaster" (LSJ s.v.), and the deceased could have been a Jewish teacher or, as Irina Levinskaya has noted, even a doorkeeper to a pagan grammarian in Athens (Levinskaya 1996: 161–162). The already mentioned epitaph from Larissa records a Jewish lawyer or rhetor (*scholasticus*) in the 4th–6th centuries (IJO I, Ach5; CIJG 15). The inscription may suggest that despite the laws of Honorius

(404 and 418), Valentinian III (425), Theodosius II (438) and Justinian I (527) that prohibited Jews from serving in the imperial administration, they continued to be involved in the local Byzantine administration (Linder 1987: 222–224, no. 33; 280–3, no. 45; 305–313, no. 51; 323–337, no. 54; 356–367, no. 56).

The appearance of Jews as lawyers or in other high positions in the public administration or the army is rare in inscriptions and literary sources. The only other evidence from the Balkans is an epitaph from Oescus (near modern Gigen, Bulgaria) dated to the 4th century. The deceased person is called Joses, possibly a Jew, who held the position of a non-commissioned officer (*principalis*; IJO 1, Moes1). Other epigraphic evidence from the areas concerned is two inscriptions placed by Jewish sailors on the rocks of the Grammata Bay on Syros and dated to the 4th century. The first inscription records the prayer of Eunomius and his fellow crewmen from Naxos for a safe sea voyage (IJO I, Ach72; CIJG 65). Another graffito from the same area is inscribed by certain Heortylis and is set as a prayer upon his safe return from his sea voyage (IJO I, Ach73; CIJG 66). It is interesting to note that both graffiti were inscribed among similar Christian and pagan prayers. Jews are mentioned in the literary sources as producers of copper handiwork, traders in old clothes, glass-workers, moneylenders, physicians, merchants and smugglers of silk garments and tavern owners (Panayotov 2017: 170–171).

In the early Byzantine period, Jews are mentioned as manufacturers and traders of copper handiwork in the area of the Copper market of Constantinople (Panayotov 2002: 320–328). More evidence is provided by the Life of St Hilarion the Hermit written by Jerome, where we encounter a Jewish dealer of old clothes in Methone in the 4th century (*Vita S. Hilarionis eremitae* 38, PL 23, 50). In the following centuries, professions of Jews are rarely mentioned in the sources. Procopius refers in the 6th century to a watchtower called Ἰουδαῖος near the fort of Dorticum (modern Vrav, Bulgaria), which was part of the Roman fortifications on the Danube (*De Aed.* IV.6.21). The tower was probably built near a tavern owned by Jews (Panayotov 2004: 52–55). Further information on professions practiced by Jews is provided by Christian hagiographic literature, miracle stories and anti-Jewish polemical texts of the 6th and 7th centuries. Thus, the already mentioned story reported both by Gregory of Tours and his contemporary Evagrius about the son of a Jewish glassmaker. He was punished by his father for eating from the communion bread together with his Christian friends and thrown into his workshop furnace. The

boy miraculously survived for three days in the furnace with the help of the Mother of God. He later converted to Christianity together with his mother. There is no need to comment on the purpose of this story, which was clearly intended as propaganda for the benefits of conversion to Christianity. However, it provides information for professions held by Jews in Constantinople. The term used by Gregory of Tours to describe the Jewish glass-worker is *vitrarius* (*uitrearius*), while Evagrius has the Greek ὑαλουργός – both referring to a person who works in a glass workshop. The Jewish glass-worker from the story could have even produced glass ware for the needs of the local Jewish community. The story apparently took place near the Copper Market of Constantinople, which was associated with Jews as early as the 4th century. Evagrius dates the story to the episcopacy of the patriarch Menas (536–552; *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.36, ed. Bidez, Parmentier 1898: 185–186). Another miracle story related to the area of the Copper Market of Constantinople and set in the 7th century also provides information for professions practiced by Jews. In the well-known legend of the miraculous icon of Christ the Guarantor (Ἀντιφωνητής), one of the main characters of the story, the Jew Abraham, was a moneylender (Nelson, Starr 1939–1944: 289–304). Jewish physicians are also mentioned in the Christian hagiographic literature. According to the Life of St. Simeon Stylites the Younger, a Jewish physician called Timotheus attended to the ailing emperor Justin II (565–578) in Constantinople (*Vita* 208–209, ed. van de Ven 1962: 179–180). Jews were also engaged in occupations that were not always endorsed by the law. The anti-Jewish polemical text known as *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* describes the conversion of the Jewish merchant Jacob, a scholar of the Torah, who immigrated to Constantinople from Ptolemais-Akko in 602–603. In 632 Jacob was involved in the illegal export of silk garments from Constantinople on behalf of a Greek merchant (*Doctrina* V.20, ed. Déroche 2010: 214–219).

The evidence presented above suggests that Jews in the Balkans were not isolated and that they were actively involved in the daily life of the Roman and Byzantine cities. We find them practicing professions from all levels of society – from the humble dealer of old clothes in Methone to the lawyer in Larissa. Jews were also physicians, traders, builders and artisans active in industries like production of copper handy work and glassmaking. Similar professions were also practiced by pagans and Christians and there is nothing specifically Jewish about them (van der Horst 2014: 53). Jews also continued to be active in the administration of the cities and in the army, as suggested by the *principalis* in Oescus and

lawyer in Larissa, and despite the frequent anti-Jewish legislation during the Byzantine period.

Conclusion

The information presented from inscriptions, archaeological data and literary sources suggests that Jews were well established in the main administrative centres of the Balkans and the Aegean and enjoyed relative peace and prosperity until the 8th century, despite the frequent anti-Jewish legislation during the Byzantine period and the changing policies of the Christian Roman emperors – from the traditional Roman policy of protection of Jewish privileges to the reaction against Judaism and Jewish religious influence among Christians under Justinian I (527–565) and the forcible baptism of Jews under Heraclius (610–644). The restriction of Jewish civic and political rights in the Byzantine Empire did not have an overall negative impact on Jewish communal life and economic activity and individual Jews and whole communities managed, successfully, to preserve their Jewish identity.

Endnotes

1   Levine 2000, 273–81; Nallbani et al. 2011, 66–73.
2   Personal communication by Professor Ruth Kolarik, Colorado College, USA. I am grateful to Professor Kolarik for providing me with information about this inscription.
3   Photograph published under Wikimedia Commons license. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
     File:Synagogue2.jpg (accessed 16 July 2022).
4   *CTh* 16.8.25. Consult Linder 1987: 287–289, no. 47. Nevertheless, it is certain that there was reaction against this law since a second law, *CTh* 16, 8, 26, from 9 April 423, reaffirmed it only two months after the first promulgation. Consult Linder 1987: 289–95.
5   *ThNov* 3. Consult Linder 1987: 323–37, no. 54. It is interesting to note that three years earlier, in 435, Theodosius II promulgated a law, *CTh* 16.10.25, that commanded the destruction or redevelopment of pagan temples into Christian churches.
6   The corresponding Latin term *sancta synagoga* occurs in inscription from the mosaic floor of Hammam-Lif, Naro in Tunisa, synagogue (Le Bohec 1981, 177–8, n. 13).
7   This designation occurs also in Asia Minor, in inscriptions from the synagogues of Philadelphia in Lydia, Hyllarima in Phrygia, Side in Pamphylia (IJO II, nos. 49, 20, 219).
8   This title also occurs on a sarcophagus from Trastevere, Rome (JIWE II, no. 544).
9   Sozomen, *HE* 7, 25. 1–7 (*PG* 67, 1493–1497); Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HE* 5. 17–18 (*PG* 82, 1232–1237); and the letter of Ambrosius to Theodosius sent after the massacre, Ambrosius, *Ep.* 51 (*PL* 16, 1209–1214).

Abbreviations

AIPHOS	*Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*
CIJG	Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum Graeciae
CTh	Codex Thedosianus
De Aed.	De Aedeficiis
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
IJO I	Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis, Band I: Eastern Europe
IJO II	Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis, Band II: Kleinasien
JIWE II	Jewish inscriptions of Western Europe II: The City of Rome
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina

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27 MAY FREEDOM AND CONSTITUTION DAY IN TURKEY: A CHRONOLOGY OF A FAILED NATIONAL HOLIDAY 1963–1980

Nadav Solomonovich

Abstract

Despite a growing number of studies on the introduction of new holidays as part of nationalist state-building processes, few have examined the reception and contestation of these holidays by various political groups in their struggle to redefine the state. This article examines the role of national celebrations in redefining Turkish identity and statehood by focusing on a case study of a Turkish national holiday, the 27 May "Freedom and Constitution Day" (*Hürriyet ve Anayasa Bayramı*). It examines the rationale and means for its introduction after the 1960 military coup, as well as its contestation by different societal actors, until it was finally abolished in 1980. It thus highlights the constant negotiation between social and political groups and the state over the nature of Turkish nationalism.

Keywords: national celebrations, Turkey, Constitution Day, holidays

1. Introduction

On 3 April 1963, the Turkish Parliament passed a law which officially made May 27, the day on which a military coup had been conducted three years earlier, a national holiday entitled "Freedom and Constitution Day" (*Hürriyet ve Anayasa Bayramı*). The law received an overwhelming majority in Parliament and was approved by 291 votes, with only two MPs opposing and one abstaining.[1] In introducing the reasons for this new holiday, the attached explanation to the law stated that when the youth and the military were faced with undemocratic rule, they,

> the *protectors* of Turkish independence and the Republic, felt the need to use their right *to resist*, and on 27 May 1960, the Turkish Armed Forces made a noble intervention and used the right of revolution to return to

the principles of revolutionism and *re-establish* the rule of law […] In this respect, the date of 27 May 1961 [on which a new constitution was published] is a happy day when the Turkish Nation, gathered 'around the national consciousness and ideals' and 'as an indivisible whole that shares its destiny, joy and sorrow,' left the painful days behind it. Remembrance of today is really important for finding ourselves. By celebrating this day, the Turkish Nation will have tasted and enjoyed a victory that was *won* after great losses.[2]

Although this is a somewhat idyllic description of events, and although the Turkish government did not spare any efforts in promoting this holiday, in reality it was only celebrated by certain groups of the Turkish public, while being fiercely contested by others throughout its existence. In the end, it lasted less than two decades before it was finally abolished. This raises the question: why did the holiday fail? To answer this question, one must first understand the aims, functions, and mechanisms of national celebrations in general, and of Turkish national holidays in particular.

2. National celebrations in Turkey

State nationalism as reflected in national celebrations and holidays has been a popular topic of research over the past two decades. According to Elie Podeh, history has shown, particularly since the French Revolution, that new regimes may invent a calendar of celebrations while erasing or significantly changing the previous one. Alternatively, a new regime may keep the old calendar and add new holidays. In such cases the calendar reflects the state's evolving national narrative. Similar to other invented traditions and symbols used for nation building, the aim of state celebrations is to tie the individual more firmly to his or her territory ("homeland"), political community ("nation"), and the incumbent regime, through the creation of a shared historical past, memory, and values. "The national calendar, in a nutshell, tells the story of the nation, passed on from one generation to the next through holidays. In many ways, the calendar provides a reliable mirror of the core belief system of the nation. Its analysis, therefore, takes us into the very inner mechanics of nation building and state formation."[3]

Similarly, in her study of nationalist reforms in the early Turkish republic, Hale Yılmaz argues that national celebrations "have been

important instrument of political socialization, legitimacy and mobilization in Turkey," and suggests studying them as "invented traditions" aimed at promoting the formation of Turkish national identity.[4]

According to Arzu Öztürkmen, in addition to religious holidays, there is a long list of "important days" in Turkey that can be classified into four categories. The first and most important category is that of *national holidays*: the opening of the Grand National Assembly by Atatürk in 1920 is celebrated as "National Sovereignty and Children's Day" (*Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı)* every 23 April, which also emphasizes the importance of children for the country's future (a point frequently stressed by Atatürk); Atatürk's landing at Samsun on 19 May 1919 is celebrated as "Atatürk's Commemoration and Youth and Sports Day" (*Atatürk'ü Anma, Gençlik ve Spor Bayramı*); the ending of the War of Independence on 30 August 1923 is celebrated as "Victory Day" (*Zafer Bayramı*), and on 29 October 1923 the declaration of the Republic's independence is celebrated as "Republic Day" (*Cumhuriyet Bayramı*). In addition, one must not forget Atatürk's Memorial Day, commemorated on 10 November (*10 Kasım Atatürk'ü Anma Günü*). The second category comprises *other important holidays related to the Republic's reforms* such as Red Crescent Week (*Kızılay Haftası*) and Language Day (*Dil Bayramı*); the third category includes *local holidays with "national significance,"* such as the independence day of a certain locality or a day when Atatürk paid a special visit to a particular town, for example, "the Liberation of Izmir" and "Atatürk's First Visit to Ankara"; and the fourth category is *traditionally celebrated local festivals.*[5]

According to Sara-Marie Demiraz, these national holidays were created to mirror the new Turkish Republic, its values, and its new secular order. Although religious holidays were still celebrated by the public, national holidays and celebrations based on secular ideas and non-religious events were promoted by the Turkish government. Their increasing number underscores the importance Kemalists ascribed to national holidays and memorial days during the early phase of Turkish state building.[6] The vast majority of national holidays in Turkey were established by Atatürk's single-party regime (1923–1938), and most of them revolved around his character or the secular and western reforms he promoted. In the words of Gizem Zencirci, "these national holidays were public displays of the new Turkish nation as cleansed from religious symbols and rituals."[7] While a few of these holidays have received some scholarly attention, as have the new celebrations introduced (or re-introduced) in Turkey since the

1950s,[8] they were usually analyzed from the very limited prism of the state, asking: What did the state try to achieve by introducing these holidays? How did it try to shape or reshape Turkish nationalism, especially in the first two decades of the republic?[9]

While these questions are important, most studies neglect another crucial dimension: the reception of these holidays by the various Turkish publics.[10] Did some communities, such as religious, political, and ethnic groups, challenge certain holidays by not participating or by trying to celebrate them or commemorate the memorialized events differently? Did ethnic or political groups try to promote their own special days and if so, what was the state's reaction?[11] Existing studies also neglect the temporal element of these national holidays, usually focusing on the first couple of decades of the republic, but very rarely asking what happened later: How did national celebrations evolve over time to reflect changing political and social circumstances, such as the rise and fall of various political actors (for example the rise of the Democrat Party in 1950 and that of the Islamic parties since the 1970s)? Were these holidays impacted by the military coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980, and if so, in what way?

Thus, this article investigates two elements of national holidays in Turkey. First, it examines the aims of the holidays and their reception by the public at the time of their introduction, and second, it studies their evolution over time, focusing either on their re-interpretation by the state or on how they were practiced, contested, negotiated, and re-interpreted by the public. This article scrutinizes the "Freedom and Constitution Day," which was first introduced and celebrated after the 1960 coup, but was eventually abolished in 1980. Surprisingly, while there is a vast literature on various aspects of the 1960 coup, very few studies examine the national holiday that was introduced to celebrate it, aimed at unifying the nation and legitimizing the coup.[12] This holiday thus serves as an example of a failed national celebration. To understand why the military felt the need to intervene in civilian politics for the first time in Turkish history, it is necessary first to delve into the background of the 27 May "revolution".

3. Historical background to the 1960 coup

During the late 1950s, the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti – DP*) regime showed increased authoritarianism, limiting the freedom of the press, clashing with university professors, the opposition parties, and the

military.[13] In addition, due to the DP's economic policies, Turkey suffered from hyper-inflation, an acute balance of payments crisis and great shortages of imported consumer goods which affected the daily lives of civil servants and state employees.[14]

İsmet İnönü, the former prime minister and leader of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP)* was attacked during a tour of the DP heartland in the Aegean, and in early April 1960 troops were used to stop him from holding a meeting in the city of Kayseri. When he refused to turn back, the troops were withdrawn. On 18 April, the Democrats in the assembly decided to establish a committee with wide powers to investigate the activities of the opposition. The committee, composed exclusively of hardline DP members, was to report its findings within three months and during which time all political activity outside the assembly would be banned. Even newspaper reports of assembly debates were now forbidden. The establishment of the investigatory commission was denounced as unconstitutional by law professors at Istanbul and Ankara universities. When disciplinary action was taken against the professors (for engaging in politics), student demonstrations and riots erupted. In response, the government sent the military to suppress the student riots, and as a result a student, Turan Emeksiz from Istanbul University, was shot and killed, and the universities were closed. The use of troops to suppress demonstrations in turn led to a large silent demonstration by cadets of the War Academy through Ankara on 21 May. The press, which under the censorship restrictions could not report on the riots, instead gave extensive coverage to the student demonstrations in Korea, which brought down President Syngman Rhee around this time.[15]

A few days after PM Menderes announced that the "investigation" into military-opposition ties would be published, the military, led by the younger officers, carried out the first coup in Turkish history.[16] The military explained its reasons on national radio:

> Honourable fellow countrymen! Owing to the crisis into which our democracy has fallen, in view of the recent sad incidents, and in order to avert fratricide, the Turkish armed forces have taken over the administration of the country. Our armed forces have taken this initiative for the purpose of extricating the parties from the irreconcilable situation into which they have fallen, … [and will hold] just and free elections as soon as possible under the supervision and arbitration of an above-party administration, … [They will hand] over the administration to whichever party wins the election.

This initiative is not directed against any person or group. Our administration will not resort to any aggressive act against individuals, nor will it allow others to do so. All fellow-countrymen, irrespective of the parties to which they may belong, will be treated in accordance with the laws.[17]

To prevent abuse of power, as in the case of the Democrat Party, a new liberal constitution was approved in a referendum held on 9 July 1961 by 61% of the votes. This constitution created the Constitutional Court, able to return laws to Parliament if deemed unconstitutional, and established the National Security Council that gave room to military involvement in politics. The constitution also focused on issues such as fundamental rights and freedoms, working life, the right to form a trade union, the right to collective bargaining and strikes, and also allowed extensive freedom of the press and communication and political rights.[18]

As a result of the coup (which was defined by the press as a revolution), the Democrat Party was closed down and its leaders were put on trial for violating the constitution. Many members of the government were sent to prison and fifteen were sentenced to death. However, twelve of the sentences were commuted, but not those of Prime Minister Menderes and his finance and foreign ministers, and they were hanged in September 1961, leaving a legacy of bitterness which was to poison the political atmosphere for years to come. According to the historian Feroz Ahmad, Menderes became a martyr, and his memory was exploited for political ends by virtually every politician and party. The Democrat Party became a part of history, but its political base remained a much-coveted prize by all the neo-Democrat parties. Two such parties were formed in 1961 as soon as political activity was restored. The larger one, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* – AP), was led by a retired general with close ties to the junta. In the general election of October 1961, it won almost 35% of the votes, compared to the 36.7% who voted for the CHP, in what some commentators referred to as "a tribute to the power Adnan Menderes continued to exercise from the grave and a vote of censure against the military regime which had ousted him."[19]

4. Commemorating and celebrating 27 May

According to Yael Zerubavel, myths and symbols are created or rediscovered in order to support the hegemonic narrative, but the relationship to them tends to change over time.[20] Zerubavel argued that these myths also preached and promoted the notion of self-sacrifice for the greater good of the state. In return, the state assures the remembrance of personal sacrifice through public commemoration, such as rites (national ceremonies and military funerals), fixed days (memorials), material objects (monuments) and assigned spaces (military cemeteries) that transform the private person into a national symbol.[21] As I will demonstrate below, "Freedom and Constitution Day" included many of these forms of commemoration. One example of the transformation of personal sacrifice to a national symbol is the state's treatment of the abovementioned Turan Emeksiz and Nedim Özpolat, an Istanbul High School student who died in the demonstrations following 28 April. These two civilians were recognized by the state as "Martyrs of Freedom" [*Hürriyet Şehitleri*], along with a few soldiers who died in the coup, and they were buried in Anıtkabir, Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara.[22] The decision to bury the "Martyrs of Freedom" in Anıtkabir, the most sacred place for the secular followers of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was just one of the ways in which his character, ideology and image were used to try to legitimize the coup and the holiday commemorating it. Another example of this connection is evident from the fact that many of the officers who participated in the coup and the journalists and academics who supported it, described it as a "revolution" [*inkılap*, in Turkish], thus linking it to one of the six principles of Kemalism (added to the constitution in February 1937), "revolutionism" [*İnkılâpçılık*].[23] By using the same word, they were able to draw legitimacy from Atatürk's legacy, arguing that they were implementing his ideology.

According to Turgay Gülpınar, Emeksiz became an important figure in the social memory of the period, and in addition to the building of a monument in his memory at Istanbul University, statues of him were erected in various parts of the country. However, Gülpınar adds, during the 1970s, Emeksiz increasingly became a symbol of the socialist opposition and the government refrained from mentioning him, and after the 1980 military coup, the government tried to erase his memory by renaming places previously named after him.[24]

5. Public celebrations

When studying national holidays, one of the basic questions is how these holidays were celebrated in public. Was there an official ceremony and if so, where was it held? Who participated in it and what did it involve? Some files in the Republican Archive, as well as many articles published by the local press at the time, allow us to get a clear view of the way the holiday was celebrated in Ankara, where the main ceremony was held at Anıtkabir, but also in other cities. A ceremony program from 1965 sheds light on the official celebrations. First, it states that the holiday will start on 26 May at noon and would be celebrated until 27 May at midnight. During that period, state offices, institutions, organizations, buildings, cinemas, stores, streets, squares, monuments, and public transportation vehicles should be decorated with flags, adorned with greenery and illuminated at night until the morning of 28 May, thus making the holiday visible in every corner of the public sphere.

The official ceremony was to be held in Anıtkabir and include a visit to the graves of the "Martyrs of Freedom." The ceremony started at 9 a.m. and was led by the Turkish President, with the participation of the Prime Minister, ministers, the leaders of the various political parties, the head of the Constitutional Court, the Chief of the General Staff, and high-ranking officials and military personnel, university rectors and deans, students and teachers, heads of local and national federations, and other associations.[25] One group is very much absent from the plan, the general public, since it seems that participation in the ceremony was limited to the abovementioned groups, which, as one might guess, did not help the holiday's popularity. Unfortunately, the program does not describe the ceremony itself in detail, except for the fact that representatives of the abovementioned groups laid wreaths on the graves of Atatürk and the "Martyrs of Freedom."

After the ceremony, members of the military walked, together with youth groups, to the Hippodrome, where another ceremony took place. This ceremony started at 11 a.m., with a band playing the national anthem while a young officer raised the Turkish flag accompanied by a young girl on his right, and a young male student on his left, thus trying to strengthen the link between the youth and university students to the revolution and the holiday.[26] After the raising of the flag, the ceremony continued with two minutes of silence for the "Martyrs of Freedom," followed by speeches given by one representative of each of the following

groups: the government, the military, and Turkish youth. The speeches were then followed by the singing of the *Youth March* and the *27 May March* and after that a joint parade was held.[27] According to press reports of the ceremony in previous and subsequent years, this was the general structure or model for ceremonies across the country.[28]

As we will see below, ceremonies in other cities were also held at the same time, thus trying to instill the holiday and the events it commemorated as part of the Turkish national identity, since according to Ben-Amos and Bet-El, "[t]he simultaneous observance of ceremonies also coincided with the modern concept of national time, based on the imaginary unity of the community synchronically commemorating the same historical event in like form."[29] The singing of the national anthem was also an important aspect since, according to Podeh, the anthem is a formal symbol transferred by music and performance, which also conveys a message of sacredness. It thus helps to give form to an event by marking its opening and closing.[30] Referring to the Jewish commemorative prayer, *Yizkor*, in memorials in Israel, Ben-Amos and Bet-El argue that the ceremonies cannot be considered completely secular affairs and "the very act of employing prayer in the ceremonies bears witness to their religious nature and links them to the historical narrative in which the Jewish people metamorphose from a religious community to a modern national one."[31] While during the Korean War in the early 1950s memorials included recitation of a prayer for the dead Turkish soldiers (*al-Fatiha*), during the official celebrations of Freedom and Constitution Day, no prayer took place, which highlights the secular nature of the holiday and its planners, as opposed to the DP era which was viewed as having been more positive toward religion.[32]

One of the central questions is how the holiday was celebrated in the public sphere, beside the official ceremony in Ankara. While sources for this are not always available (especially regarding the periphery), a program of the celebrations in Izmir in 1963, planned jointly by the municipality and the local Ege [Aegean] University, might shed light on the question. The plan was very similar to that of the main ceremony in Ankara, e.g., the starting date of the holiday, the decoration of various buildings in the public sphere, and the illumination of public places at night. The ceremony in Izmir started at 9 a.m. as well and included a gathering of soldiers, university students, and youth organizations in the central "Republic Square." The ceremony itself included greetings by the governor and the garrison commander, the flag was raised during the singing of the national anthem, a wreath was laid on Atatürk's Monument by representatives of

the province, garrison, municipality, institutions, political parties, and other establishments. The crowd observed a two-minute silence for the "Martyrs of Freedom" and Atatürk, and speeches were given on "the meaning and value of 27 May" by young university students, and representatives of the military garrison, and of the "Hearths of the Revolution" [*Devrim Ocağı*] (an organization founded in 1952, for the protection of the revolution and principles of Mustafa Kemal). The ceremony ended with a parade with the participation of the Scouts, university students, and students at the military schools.[33] But ceremonies alone were not enough to legitimize the new holiday, therefore the state also promoted the holiday through the education system. The next section examines the representation the holiday and the 27 May revolution in school textbooks and journals approved by the Ministry of National Education.

6. The holiday in school textbooks and journals

It is generally agreed that school textbooks play a prominent role in children's cultural upbringing. In their formative years, children's minds are particularly elastic and vulnerable. School textbooks have the capacity to influence their value system and this change may well remain with them for the rest of their lives. This renders the school system and textbooks in particular key tools with which states can inculcate their citizens with a shared collective identity. Textbooks are therefore often employed to promote a certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order.[34] Therefore, it is not surprising that school textbooks, booklets and journals for school children were used in order to introduce and explain the "27 May Revolution" to young children. Since the writing of new textbooks (or the updating of old ones) takes time and since the original textbooks were prepared one year in advance and did not include any references to the 27th of May, the Turkish Ministry of National Education sent the schools booklets on the topic, written and published by the Ministry itself. It also approved other booklets published by various publishing houses. According to Çağhan Sarı, the 27 May especially affected elementary school curricula in various subjects including history and civics, but also literature (with a play titled "May 27 School Play") and music (with a booklet titled "May 27 Marches").[35]

While school textbooks have received some scholarly attention, journals aimed at elementary schools approved by the Ministry of

Education have been somewhat neglected. One such journal for the third grade dedicated to the new holiday was published in May 1966. It includes some guiding questions on its first page such as: When is Freedom and Constitution Day celebrated? What is the difference between this holiday and other holidays? What does freedom mean? What would happen if it did not exist? The journal also included questions about the coup (using, of course, the term revolution), asking why it was conducted, when did it take place, and so on. The holiday itself was described by the journal as follows: "The youth, who were entrusted with the protection of the Republic, carried out a revolution with the support of the Turkish Armed Forces. A new government was formed. The constitution was renewed. This is why the date of 27 May 1960 gained importance. Long live the Turkish youth! Long live our heroic military!"[36]

Similarly, another journal for the third grade, published in May 1972, introduced the holiday as follows:

> Before 1960, our nation's government administration had made some restrictions on Atatürk's Revolution, in democracy and freedom issues. This behavior was against the principles of the constitution and democracy. For this reason, disagreements arose between the enlightened Turkish youth and the government administrators. The youth's rightful demands for the benefit of our nation were not met. There was a tense atmosphere in our country. In order to avoid bad results, the Turkish Armed Forces took over the administration on 27 May 1960. The government took those responsible to court. Penalties were given to those who were guilty according to the law.
>
> The Constitution was re-formed, and a new Constitution was adopted on 27 May 1961. This day, which brought wider rights and freedom to the Turkish nation, was accepted as Freedom and Constitution Day.[37]

Interestingly, both journals included a picture of cooperation between a uniformed soldier (or soldiers) and civilians, including both men and women, thus sending a message of unity, that the "revolution" and the subsequent holiday represent everyone.

Similar journals for the fourth and fifth grade put more emphasis on the importance of the constitution. The journal for the fourth grade dedicated an article to the importance of a constitution, starting with the Ottoman constitution of 1876, and the first Turkish constitution of 1924. While the DP's authoritarian tendencies were not mentioned by the journal, the need for the new constitution was presented to the children as an attempt to prevent the future abuse of state mechanisms, or as stated by the journal

"such a constitution had to be made so that whoever or whatever comes to power would not rule the country according to their own views."[38]

The journal for the fifth grade explained that the revolution was conducted in order to "ensure national unity and prevent fraternal quarrels," and that the ministers and deputies of the Democrat Party were arrested. It then introduced the process of drafting the new constitution including the recruitment of university law professors, the construction of the Constituent Assembly [*Kurucu Meclis*], and the referendum conducted on 9 July 1961 and the approval of the constitution.[39]

7. Sacred spaces or contested spaces? The Bayonet Monument in Taksim

One of the most important means of commemoration available to the state is building monuments. According to Maoz Azaryahu, monuments "embod[y] the link between history and geography, community and terrain, society and environment, culture and nature in the process of forging an identity between past and present." The size and topographical location of monuments determines the amount of public exposure they receive and the attention they attract to themselves and to the story they wish to tell. Azaryahu added that there are two main types of monuments: remote monuments which sometimes become tourist attractions, and monuments situated in the center of cities which are constantly encountered by passers-by. The main difference between the two is that "remote monuments may be less frequented, but the encounter with them is characterized by intense awareness of their significance. City monuments, by contrast, are woven into the urban texture so that a maximal number of random encounters is guaranteed, although each encounter carries a low charge of symbolic potential." The monument's location also affects their symbolic significance. Monuments built at the place they were designed to commemorate attain an "aura of sacredness", while monuments located in city centers "endow their location with sacredness."[40]

One of the most controversial symbols of the 27 May revolution was a monument built in Taksim Square in Istanbul, one of the most important and symbolic places in Istanbul. The monument, seven meters tall, shaped like a bayonet placed on stones surrounded by a laurel branch (the symbol of 27 May revolution), was built in front of the Republic

Monument (*Cumhuriyet Anıtı*), the most iconic monument of early republican Turkey, commemorating the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 on one side, and with the Atatürk Cultural Center on the other. The new monument was located in a central and visible location, and therefore redefined the experience of the square. While I was unable to find the exact date on which it was built, according to an article published on 27 August 1962 in the journal *Akis*, the Justice Party was critical of the monument and "launched a campaign against it, saying it should be removed from there."[41]

From an article published in *Milliyet* on 29 June 1966, we learn that although the initial attempt to remove the Bayonet monument from Taksim failed, some groups did not despair and tried to find a new way to get rid of it. According to the article, there was a new attempt to remove the monument using the local municipality:

> The removal of the 'bayonet,' which reminds us of 27 May and its reasons every time it is seen, has been put forward by some people for a year now, arguing that it should be removed because there was no [official] decision to build it. However, this reason was not considered sufficient to remove the bayonet. Those who followed the idea of removing the bayonet found a new way to do it fifteen days ago and proposed to the City Council to build a pool instead of the park in Taksim, where the bayonet is located. At the meeting of the Municipal Council last week, it was decided to allocate 250 thousand TL from the budget of the Directorate of Science Affairs for the construction of the pool. After a while, the park in front of the Opera will be turned into a circular pool and the 27 May bayonet will be removed.[42]

While the details are not entirely clear, this attempt failed as well, and the monument remained in Taksim until the 1980 military coup. However, it serves as an example of the way some groups tried to contest the holiday and its representations in the public sphere by targeting the monument.

8. 27 May postage stamps and commemorative coins

Monuments were not the only means in which the state represented the "revolution" and holiday in the public sphere. Various objects relating to the holiday were introduced by the state, including stamps and commemorative coins. According to Donald M. Reid, stamps are excellent primary sources for the symbolic messages which governments

seek to convey to their citizens and to the world. "Stamps resemble government buildings, monuments, coins, paper money, flags, national anthems, nationalized newspapers, and ambassadors as conveyors of official viewpoints."[43] The state organized a nationwide competition to design commemorative stamps via the Turkish post service (*Posta Telgraf Telefon* – PTT) celebrating the "revolution." According to *Milliyet*, the winner of the competition was a young artist named Erdoğan Değer, who got to design the first stamp in a series of four. According to the article, his design, which was inspired by a poem named "White Horse Rising," depicted a white horse on a red background, breaking his chains, hinting at the DP's oppression broken by the revolution.[44] The rest of the series, which was published on 1 December 1960, included a stamp depicting the friends of Turan Emeksiz carrying his body while in the background, one can see the Atatürk and Youth Monument at Istanbul University, in which a young woman holds the torch of freedom, a young man holds the Turkish flag, and Atatürk stands in the middle with his hand raised up high. A caption at the bottom of the stamp quotes from the revised version of the Plevne March, rewritten shortly before the coup as an anti-DP march: "What is the world coming to? A brother shooting his brother?" Another stamp included the face of Atatürk, linking him again to the revolution, and a torch (symbolizing freedom), while in the background one can see soldiers on the one side and youth on the other. The last stamp depicted a soldier who has broken his chains and is helping a wounded young man. There were at least three versions of the first day envelopes published together with the stamps. The first two included a larger version of the white horse stamp (although the horse itself appeared on one in gold and on the other in red), while the third one included a map of Turkey with the caption "27 May" in the middle of the country, a bayonet symbolizing the military on its right side, a pen symbolizing the academia and intelligentsia on the left, and the torch of freedom in the center.[45]

In addition to stamps, in November 1960 the state also decided to mint commemorative 10 Lira coins. These coins bore Atatürk's picture on the obverse, and the emblem of the "27 May Revolution" consisting of a torch (symbolizing freedom), scales (symbolizing justice), the Turkish flag, a bayonet (symbolizing the military), an eagle and an anchor, on the reverse. Above the emblem appeared the Crescent and the Star along with Atatürk's famous saying, "Sovereignty Belongs to the Nation." Below the emblem appeared the date of the "revolution," 27 May 1960, and underneath it, a laurel branch symbolizing peace.[46] The state's difficult

economic situation led many couples to donate their wedding rings to the state in a show of support. These couples received instead a cheaper alternative wedding ring inscribed with "27 May 1960."[47]

Most of the commemorative or celebratory aspects of the holiday examined thus far have focused on the state's attempt to promote the holiday. But this is of course only one side of the holiday, which can tell us nothing about its reception. How did people react to it? Did they participate in the ceremonies or ignore them? Did certain groups criticize the holiday, and if so, why?

9. Talking about a revolution – the reception and contestation of the holiday

During the early 1960s the "27 May Revolution" and the holiday celebrating it were praised by many national newspapers who objected to what they described as the DP's authoritarianism. Writing in 1961, just a few days before the first anniversary of the coup, Nadir Nadi, a well-known journalist and a previous supporter of the DP, wrote the following in *Cumhuriyet*: "In two days, we will celebrate the first anniversary of May 27th… The Revolution, with its youth, the army and its Atatürkist staff, stands immaculately as the success of the whole nation."[48]

Similarly, in 1964 the journalist Burhan Felek praised the revolution in general and the holiday specifically, pointing to the freedom of the press as one of the main changes from the policy of the DP and its extensive censorship over the press. According to him, "May 27 was made an official holiday by law… in fact, if this law had not existed, after 10–15 years, the people would celebrate it spontaneously. Because as a nation, we have gained a lot from this revolution. For once we got freedom; so much freedom that we can personally criticize 27 May. Can there be a better proof in favor of the revolution?"[49]

Writing in 1968, Nadi acknowledged that not everything was rosy, but according to him, the problems faced by the republic and the way they were managed, served as an indication that it became a "real democracy". Unfortunately, he added, not everyone was happy about this development:

> After 27 May, much has changed in our country. Social and economic problems, which we know as an indispensable element of real democracies, are handled in an atmosphere of freedom that has never

been seen before in our history, and the solutions are explained to the public. Horrified by the situation, the conservatives are confused about what to do in their desperation, they try to intimidate the public or to empty the dirt in their hearts by cursing 27 May. But their efforts are in vain. The Republic of Turkey will surely find the way to reach the level of contemporary civilization in the footsteps of Atatürk. Those who are unwilling to implement it fully, because they are anxious to prune our Constitution, the keeper of our freedoms, in a way that suits their own interests, have not dared to touch it until today.[50]

The Turkish left was extremely supportive of the new constitution which allowed it to operate out in the open and supported workers' rights, the formation of new political parties and so on. As a result, they also supported the new holiday. One example of this support can be seen in a short booklet published by the cultural office of the Turkish Worker's Party [Türkiye İşçi Partisi – TİP] in Izmir in 1964, titled "Freedom and Constitution Day." After elaborating on some of the articles in the new constitution, the booklet expressed its appreciation for the new constitution, but also its fear that the leaders of the existing political parties who "work for the benefit of the ruling classes" would try to deceive the public by resisting the constitution. It thus congratulated all citizens on the Freedom and Constitution Day and called upon its supporters "to unite around the Turkish Workers' Party, which is fighting to ensure the full implementation of the constitution."[51] Similarly, the leftist journal Yön expressed its appreciation of the constitution and holiday by stating: "Today, aside from all the ceremonies, it [i.e., the constitution] should be read in every school, in every cafe, in every meeting. It should be reconsidered whether all daily events are in conformity with the Constitution. This political and legal text, which is our only advanced document, should be interpreted and explained over and over again."[52]

But not everyone supported this so-called revolution and the holiday dedicated to it. Unlike Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet and Milliyet newspapers, very little place was given to the news of the holiday in opposition newspapers. For example, the Son Havadis newspaper, which supports the Democrat Party and its successor, the Justice Party, began to criticize the 27 May, "Constitution Day", and the CHP in 1965, when the Justice Party came to power. In an article published in May 1967, Orhan Seyfi Orhon wrote: "We are against all kinds of revolutions, including the 27th of May, we will not allow any socialist revolution, communist revolution, fascist revolution, or military revolution."[53]

Two years later, in 1969, Orhon continued to criticize the holiday: "May 27 is not a national holiday, it is a political holiday. While the hearts of the unhappy people weep blood on political holidays, the happy ones celebrate the holiday. These kinds of holidays are the ones that an authority imposes on the nation… For this reason, it cannot continue, neither as a national holiday, nor as a political holiday." He especially criticized the coup against the Democrat Party and underlined that this holiday cannot be permanent like other national holidays.[54]

Towards the end of the 1960s, violence and instability plagued Turkey. An economic recession late in that decade sparked a wave of social unrest marked by street demonstrations, labor strikes and political assassinations. Violent clashes erupted between left-wing workers and students' movements on one side, and Islamist and militant Turkish nationalist groups on the other. From the end of 1968, and increasingly during 1969 and 1970, left-wing violence was matched and surpassed by far-right violence, notably from the Grey Wolves. On the political front, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party government, re-elected in 1969, also experienced trouble. Various factions within his party defected to form splinter groups of their own, gradually reducing his parliamentary majority and bringing the legislative process to a halt. By January 1971, Turkey appeared to be in a state of chaos which led to another military coup, this time through an ultimatum.[55] The new regime's first priority, to restore law and order in the country, was equated with the repression of any group viewed as leftist, thus leading to the closure of the Turkish Workers' Party, as well as leftist youth organizations such as the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey [*Dev-Genç*].[56] In addition, the main leftist journal, *Ant* (which succeeded *Yön*), was closed in May 1971.[57] The new regime also made several amendments to the constitution in September 1971, stating that fundamental rights and freedoms could be restricted for the protection of national security and public order, and that newspapers and magazines could be confiscated by the authorities.[58]

The 1971 coup and the subsequent changes in the constitution led to a further decrease in the latter's legitimacy, as well as that of "Constitution Day," among an increasing number of groups. As time passed, there were those who had originally supported the holiday, but became increasingly disillusioned with it. Oktay Akbal, a journalist and an author, was one of them. In an article published in *Cumhuriyet* on 27 May 1973, he referred to his expectations of the constitution: "Now we need to laugh at our dreams of that day! We wrote a lot of articles, praising what 27 May brought and

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what it will bring! I come across those articles. In a drawer, in a closet, between the pages of an old book... Sometimes a reader will remind me, 'What was your enthusiasm in those days, your endless hopes and dreams?'… 27 May is a meaningless holiday. We call it Constitution Day, but that Constitution, which was considered an event to be celebrated, is no longer in existence. Where is the 1961 Constitution, where is it now?"[59]

Son Havadis continued to criticize the holiday also in the 1970s. Yalçın Uraz wondered about the nature of the holiday and the reason for its existence in an article published in May 1975: "If freedom is the use of the free will of citizens, then the Freedom Day should be 14 May 1950. Why Constitution Day? Was this the first time a constitution was made in Turkey? If a constitutional holiday is going to be celebrated… shouldn't it be the first constitution made during the Ottoman Empire?"[60] By referring to 14 May, the day in which the Democrat Party first came to power, Uraz clearly criticized the coup of 27 May, and "Constitution Day" as illegitimate, since they were carried out against the will of the people.

Some political leaders also started to voice their objection to the holiday. In a speech given in the city of Kayseri on 27 May 1977, Süleyman Demirel, the head of the Justice Party, criticized the constitution and called for its amendment – thus also delegitimizing the holiday dedicated to it. According to him, "today is constitution day. But this constitution needs to be changed." He added that "today, the Constitutional Court and the Council of State are above the state. The will of the people must be acted upon fully. I ask you, who will rule the country?"[61]

Maybe the best example of the fact that the holiday lost its legitimacy and importance among the public in general was the fact that no political leader participated in the annual ceremony in Ankara in 1978. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit of the Republican People's Party was abroad; Demirel of the Justice Party and Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the islamist National Salvation Party (*Millî Selâmet Partisi*), remained in Istanbul; and Alparslan Türkeş, one of the leaders of the 27 May coup who later established and headed the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), was in Erzurum.[62]

In May 1979, Süleyman Demirel explicitly called for the abolishing of the holiday, arguing that the constitution and the holiday were rejected by millions in Turkey. According to him, "the 27 May holiday should be abolished… If you want peace in Turkey, the wounds inflicted by the 27 May revolution must be healed… the 27 May holiday should be abolished because it is the day of the revolution which was not

approved by the majority of the nation, as millions of our citizens say no to this constitution."[63] Demirel soon got his wish, but not in the way he expected. On 12 September 1980, the military conducted another coup and remained in power for three years, during which it also introduced a new constitution and abolished the old holiday.[64]

10. Conclusion

Although the decision to fix 27 May as a national holiday enjoyed a large majority in Parliament in 1963, it failed to create unity and promote a shared historical past, memory, and values; in fact, it did exactly the opposite. The holiday suffered from a lack of legitimacy, since among large segments of the population it was viewed as a holiday that celebrated the expulsion of their elected representatives, and thus silencing their voice and oppressing them. Moreover, the legitimacy of the holiday also decreased as time passed, since it was evident that the liberal constitution was at least somewhat responsible for the rising tension and violence in the streets.

According to Berna Pekesen, the short-term democratization that was ironically provided by the constitution introduced after the military coup in 1960, was thwarted by the ups and downs of political repression after the military coup in 1971, which turned out to be a decisive blow against the polarized but vibrant civil society. These processes led to extreme frictions. Turkey in the 1960s, and particularly in the 1970s, was torn between violent activism and instable politics, exacerbated by the ideological fault lines of the Cold War. The dramatic rise of political violence, exercised between right-wing and left-wing activists, and then again between the former and the security forces, had reached the scale of a civil war by the end of the 1970s, resulting in a death toll reaching well into several thousands of civilians, thus paving the way to another military coup and a new, more conservative, and less liberal constitution.[65]

As a result, even those who first approved of the holiday, such as the Turkish left, who hoped the constitution would promote social justice, were oppressed by the state. The amendments of the constitution in 1971 which made it less liberal also diminished its legitimacy among those who supported it in the first place precisely for that reason.

On 17 March 1981 the holiday was officially abolished by the new regime due to the fact that it had lost its legitimacy among the people. The

attached explanation stated that the holiday failed in gaining the public legitimacy it needed to survive and that developments which had occurred since its introduction made it obsolete: "Since 1963, 27 May has been celebrated as Freedom and Constitution Day. This day is the day when the 1961[sic] Revolution and therefore the 1961 Constitution are celebrated. However, as a result of the developments that took place especially since the 1970s, the suitability of the 1961 Constitution became debatable for our society and it lost its attractiveness among the people as a holiday."[66]

Endnotes

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2   Ibid.

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4   Hale Yılmaz *Becoming Turkish Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923–1945* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), p. 179. One should note that Imperial celebrations were used already during the Ottoman Empire to strengthen the legitimacy of the regime and to convey various messages to the people. On that see Hakan T. Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa!: Osmanlı Devletinin son yüz yılında Merasimler* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004).

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A FEW THINGS THE CHURCH-BUILDING INDUSTRY TELLS US ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA[1]

Giuseppe Tateo

Abstract

Based on a central survey published by the SSRA in 2016, this article reflects on the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania after 1990. Two aspects are given special attention: the nationalist orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC), which seems to replace spiritual and theological symbolism, and the relevant role of state authorities in providing favorable legal measures and generous public funding to religious groups. In this light, I look skeptically at the paradigm of religious revival and propose alternative avenues of research: the organizational revival of the ROC, the de-secularization of property, and the privatization of faith among younger generations.

Keywords: religious infrastructure, People's Salvation Cathedral, Postsocialist Romania, nationalism, religious revival, Romanian Orthodox Church

This paper examines the social significance of the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania since 1990. If "infrastructure" is understood as "the basic systems and services that a country or organization uses in order to work effectively",[2] the term "religious infrastructure" refers not only to houses of worship, but also to sanctuaries, monasteries, the administrative buildings that allow religious organizations to function, and religious monuments. As I will argue, the construction of religious infrastructure is far from limited to liturgical necessities. Rather, it is a valuable vantage point from which to view three decades of societal change brought about by postsocialism.

In the first section, I will discuss a centralized survey by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs (SSRA), which compiles the data provided by the 18 religious groups recognized by the state. The impressive number

of places of worship built in recent years reveals the existence of an industry working at full speed, encouraged by generous public funding and some legal measures adopted in the 2000s. What theoretical lens better captures the emergence of this highly visible religious infrastructure? I will try to answer this question by offering a brief overview of the sociological and anthropological literature that deals with the comeback of religion in the public arena after the collapse of socialism.

Focusing on the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC), the paper examines the political relevance of the church building industry beyond its strictly liturgical and pastoral functions. The nationalist and exclusivist overtones of the new Orthodox cathedral under construction in Bucharest (Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului, CMN), for example, suggest a certain continuity with the socialist and pre-socialist past. Similarly, the legislation behind the booming religious infrastructure reflects new patterns of church-state interaction: Stan and Turcescu (2012) spoke of "partnership" – in light of a series of protocols signed in the 2010s – but more broadly, the term could designate the transfer of state property to the ROC and the other religious groups favored by Laws 261/2005 and 239/2007. The paper concludes by reflecting on a paradox that has emerged in the last two decades: at a time when religious infrastructure is once again one of the main elements of the urban built environment, the authority of the clergy in society is waning, and younger generations tend to understand faith as a private matter, distancing themselves from communal religious life (Gog 2007).

1. Introduction. A few numbers on the church-building industry

In 2016, the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs published the results of a survey that reported the number of houses of worship owned by each of the 18 recognized religions in Romania. It turned out that almost ten thousand places of worship had been built in the 26 years following the fall of socialism, more than one per day (see Appendix 1). This also means that more than 30% of the religious buildings in Romania were built in the postsocialist period. The data reveal a process of great importance, namely the boom of the church building industry.

Appendix 1 shows that the denominations most active in building houses of worship are the Baptist, Adventist and Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal and Adventist churches now own 10.68% and 4.63% of

the houses of worship, although they represent only 1.92% and 0.43% of the population, respectively. At first glance, these figures contradict those who accuse the ROC of building too many houses of worship, since the Orthodox Church has built as many churches as the Roman Catholic Church and far fewer than the neo-Protestants. According to the 2011 census, the ROC represents 86% of the religious population, but owns only 60% of the houses of worship: in 1989, before the postsocialist religious pluralization, it owned 70% of them.

The return of a few hundred churches to the Greek Catholic Church and, above all, the boom of the neo-Protestant churches mentioned above help to explain this change. However, in order to understand such discrepancies, we need to take a step back and look at how the state finances recognized religious groups. According to the Romanian Constitution and Law 489/2006 on Religious Freedom, there is no state religion in the country. Law 489/2006 states that the Romanian state is neutral in matters of religion, but encourages religious expression, affiliation and practice. This means that it tries to guarantee equal treatment to all recognized religions and supports them financially. At the national level, religions are financed by the SSRA, which is a government agency. It receives funds from the state budget (and from the state reserve funds) and redistributes them according to the number of believers belonging to each religious group. Thus, the ROC should receive 86% of the SSRA's annual budget, the Roman Catholic Church 4.6%, and so on.

The expansion of the church-building sector is a direct consequence of the substantial economic support provided by public institutions. The government funds channeled by the SSRA to the 18 religious groups have increased year after year, reaching a new record in 2018 after a predictable decline due to the economic crisis (see Table 1 below).

Year	Total	Support for salaries	Building and repairs
1990	16,814	15,694	1,120
1991	32,661	29,231	3,430
1992	141,008	118,338	22,670
1993	629,370	575,350	54,020
1994	2,002,697	1,731,167	271,530

1995	2,705,743	2,290,452	415,291
1996	4,165,736	2,997,036	1,168,700
1997	8,809,587	7,369,437	1,440,150
1998	10,947,815	8,347,875	2,599,940
1999	26,256,196	17,188,236	9,067,960
2000	68,434,671	40,447,371	27,987,300
2001	84,285,808	67,693,308	16,592,500
2002	62,630,921	51,181,321	11,449,600
2003	94,994,803	69,316,363	25,678,440
2004	108,881,385	90,751,585	18,129,800
2005	141,890,789	111,122,500	30,768,289
2006	178,484,990	132,502,990	45,982,000
2007	314,729,598	151,298,543	163,431,055
2008	351,373,638	83,949,388	267,424,250
2009	367,700,856	261,451,356	106,249,500
2010	322,231,883	238,478,383	83,753,500
2011	321,819,440	236,012,375	85,807,065
2012	314,158,126	249,894,126	64,264,000
2013	344,843,488	275,640,988	69,202,500
2014	426,715,194	277,452,694	149,262,500
2015	464,167,780	286,199,396	177,968,384
2016	477,065,515	355,952,640	121,112,875
2017	564,008,599	492,614,865	71,393,734
2018	803,107,368	588,746 441	214,360,927
Total	5,867,232,479	4,101,369,449	1,765,863,030

Table 1 Amount of money allocated from the state budget for the salaries of the clerical staff of religious units and for the construction and repair of places of worship between 1990 and 2018 (in Romanian lei).

The last column of the table covers the construction and renovation of houses of worship. The money is still redistributed in proportion to the number of believers, but the units applying for funding are not the religious organizations themselves, but each administrative unit alone. In the case of the ROC, each bishop submits a list of parishes in his diocese that are applying for funding. It is up to the bishop to decide which parishes will be placed at the top of the list. In 2015, the SSRA received 1,600 applications and accepted 1,450 of them, so not all applicants will receive funding from the state budget. The government reviews the applications through the SSRA and allocates a sum of money in two tranches, in the first draft of the state budget and then in the budget amendment. When it comes to renovating cultural monuments such as wooden churches or monasteries, churches can also apply for funding from the European Union and the Romanian Ministry of Culture. However, the renovation of cultural monuments does not seem to be a priority for the ROC, which instead used a large part of the SSRA funds to build the new national cathedral.

Churches are also funded by regional and local councils, which are independent of the government and thus not bound by the SSRA's redistribution principle. But if most public funds are distributed according to the principle of proportionality, how can we explain such a big difference in the number of churches built by neo-Protestants compared to other churches? The impressive growth of neo-Protestantism in many parts of the world is now a well-known fact, as it has been extensively studied in the anthropology of Christianity in general. As reported in some studies carried out in Romania (Pop 2009, Cingolani 2009, Fosztó and Kiss 2012), these denominations have grown by filling a gap in the religious market, by finding new ways of conceiving community life, faith and prosperity in a period of extreme social and economic precariousness, such as the postsocialist restructuring. In less than three decades, they have managed to expand their network of parishes, relying on funds from abroad and combining economic capital and volunteer labor in a very efficient way.

However, the data circulated by the SSRA does not distinguish between a small chapel and a monastery or a whole religious complex. If the ROC owns only 60% of the churches today, it is because of the way it has used public funds. Instead of continuing to build neighborhood churches, the ROC used a large portion of the public funds it received to build more than thirty cathedrals throughout the country. The tallest of these is the national cathedral, currently under construction on Arsenal Hill in central Bucharest. Some others are being built in small towns (Voluntari, Fălticeni),

and in many cases the work began in the early 1990s (see Appendix 2). On the one hand, this can instantiate the desire to build new places of worship after decades of state atheism. On the other hand, it reveals the ambitions of local politicians to host major works, the opportunity for construction companies to make handsome profits, and the inclination of local clergy to erect imposing religious edifices. When it comes to renovating cultural monuments such as wooden churches or monasteries, churches can also apply for funding from the European Union and the Romanian Ministry of Culture. However, the renovation of cultural monuments does not seem to be a priority for the ROC, which instead used a large part of the money from the SSRA to build the Bucharest cathedral.

Therefore, the ROC has built fewer, but much larger churches. There are two reasons for building such impressive cathedrals. The first is "organizational" so to speak. It is the strengthening of the ROC as an organization that helps us to understand the high number of new cathedrals built after 1990. In general, churches and cathedrals differ not only in size but also in function: only those houses of worship that contain the seat of the local metropolitan, archbishop or bishop are considered cathedrals. As a clergyman who is a member of the Romanian Patriarchate explained to me, the plan for territorial administration developed by the Holy Synod in the 1990s originally called for the creation of one diocese for each county. This must have sounded like an ambitious plan, since Romania was then organized into 41 counties and only 15 dioceses.

The fact that each diocese must have a representative cathedral within its borders helps to justify the construction of 34 cathedrals in 30 years and the construction of new administrative buildings *(centre eparhiale)*. The ROC is organized in Romania (excluding its dioceses abroad) into 29 dioceses, of which 14 have been created since 1990 (seven have just been re-established after being dissolved by the communist leadership, and another seven have been newly created). Furthermore, in order to provide pastoral care for the many Romanians who have emigrated, the ROC has launched a program of administrative and infrastructural expansion throughout the world: among the dozens of new churches and administrative buildings, it is worth mentioning the two cathedrals under construction in Madrid and Munich.
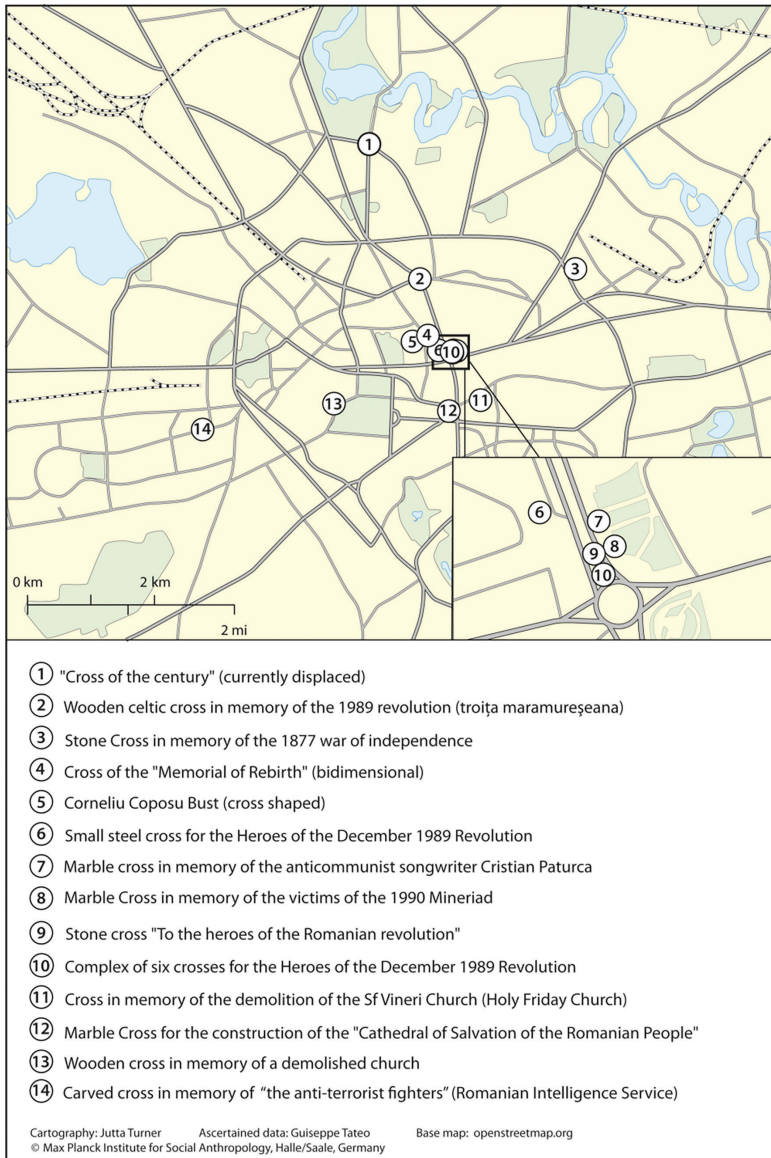
The second reason for the multiplication of imposing cathedrals is symbolic: building on a large scale is a way 'of reaffirming one's presence in an age of religious pluralization. In addition to the impressive data of the neo-Protestant churches, the comeback of the Greek Catholic

Church is another motive for the ROC to reassert its importance. The Greek Catholics are the only other denomination building a cathedral: in fact, the cathedral of the "Martyrs and Confessors of the 20th Century" in Cluj, which is intended to be a "manifesto of the presence of Greek Catholicism", is nearing completion.[3]

Since the birth of Greater Romania, Transylvanian cities have been used as a kind of interdenominational battleground: already in the interwar period, the construction of the Orthodox Cathedral of Cluj was meant to "visibly mark that Transylvania belonged to [Orthodox] Romania", as if the Greek Catholics were not part of it (Iuga 2015: 96). Similarly, it is no coincidence that one of the largest Orthodox cathedrals currently in the country is the one inaugurated in 2016 in Baia Mare (northern Transylvania).

The construction of Orthodox cathedrals throughout the country, I argue, must also be read through the lens of inter-religious competition.[4] In a comparative analysis of how rival groups challenge each other in a context of religious plurality, Hayden and Walker identify two basic criteria for indicating dominance: perceptibility and centrality (Hayden and Walker 2013: 413–414). The former is measured by the visibility, audibility, and massiveness of religious sites. The latter refers to the "location of important economic or political activities" (ibid.: 414). If all cathedrals – not only Orthodox ones – aim to be as central and visible as possible, only one can claim to fulfill the criteria of dominance properly. The one being built in Bucharest is the highest Orthodox cathedral in the world, located in the center of the capital, on one of the 'highest points of the city (Arsenal Hill), perceptible not only visually but also acoustically thanks to the 15 km range of its bells, and only a few hundred meters away from the Parliament, the Ministry of Defense and the Romanian Academy of Sciences.

Finally, in addition to the construction of new churches and cathedrals, the transformation of the religious infrastructure also includes crosses and cross-shaped monuments, which have multiplied in Bucharest since 1990. Sociologist Irina Stahl mapped all the crosses present in the city before 1989, and then those installed in the 1990s and 2000s (Stahl and Jackson 2019). She counted nearly 200 crosses installed between 1989 and 2009. There are two main motivations for placing crosses, she explained. First, relatives or friends would place a cross to commemorate their loved one. Second, crosses should protect the dead who died without receiving the

1. "Cross of the century" (currently displaced)
2. Wooden celtic cross in memory of the 1989 revolution (troiţa maramureşeana)
3. Stone Cross in memory of the 1877 war of independence
4. Cross of the "Memorial of Rebirth" (bidimensional)
5. Corneliu Coposu Bust (cross shaped)
6. Small steel cross for the Heroes of the December 1989 Revolution
7. Marble cross in memory of the anticommunist songwriter Cristian Paturca
8. Marble Cross in memory of the victims of the 1990 Mineriad
9. Stone cross "To the heroes of the Romanian revolution"
10. Complex of six crosses for the Heroes of the December 1989 Revolution
11. Cross in memory of the demolition of the Sf Vineri Church (Holy Friday Church)
12. Marble Cross for the construction of the "Cathedral of Salvation of the Romanian People"
13. Wooden cross in memory of a demolished church
14. Carved cross in memory of "the anti-terrorist fighters" (Romanian Intelligence Service)

Cartography: Jutta Turner   Ascertained data: Guiseppe Tateo   Base map: openstreetmap.org
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Map 1. Map of crosses and cross-shaped monuments placed in Bucharest by state authorities and civic associations between 1990 and 2016

sacraments of confession and anointing (that is, whose death was not properly celebrated according to religious practice).

If small crosses are erected by ordinary citizens and have no political overtones, cross-shaped monuments are inaugurated by state institutions or civic associations and constitute what I have called the monumentalization of the cross (Tateo 2020: 177–188). This is a process whose religious character is also linked to the commemoration of the dead, but it is also an act of symbolic purification of space charged with political meaning. Such interventions are also a tool for certain authorities and public figures to whitewash their image by jumping on the bandwagon of the dominant anticommunist discourse. The Ministry of Culture, the ROC and the Romanian Intelligence Service have installed cross-shaped monuments in the capital not only to commemorate the dead or the demolition of churches, but also to place themselves on the right side of history.

2. Theoretical frames: religious revival, postsecularism, re-consecration

The comeback of religion in the public space of postsocialist cities and towns unfolds through permanent (churches, crosses, cathedrals) or temporary (public rituals, processions, pilgrimages, etc.) means and has been interpreted by social scientists as evidence of religious revival (Tomka 2011, Voicu 2007, Voicu and Constantin 2012), sacralization (Kiss 2009), revitalization (Pickel 2009), or renewal (Heintz 2004). A first problem with this strand of research is that it tends to equate state policy with everyday practice, assuming that state atheism in Romania produced atheist citizens who, once socialism collapsed and churches reentered the public sphere, became religious subjects. Moreover, terms such as "religious revival" and "sacralization of space," which are widespread in the above-mentioned literature, tend to associate the visibility of religious symbols and buildings with an increase in belief, belonging, and practice, but ignore that they are – at the same time – charged with moral and political significance. Talk of sacralization can be highly misleading when newly constructed religious sites are contested. The national cathedral has been recently inaugurated, many churches have been erected and crosses placed, but this does not necessarily mean – or at least not only – that religiosity is higher or more widespread than before 1989. All this is accompanied by unprecedented critiques, inchoate forms of anticlericalism, and new modes

of coexistence between secularist sentiments, religious identification, and spiritual practice (Gog 2007, 2016).

In an attempt to look beyond apparent ruptures to find actual continuities –, an approach I sympathize with –, Tamara Dragadze (1993) showed that ritual activity and religious literacy survived Soviet atheism in Georgia through domestication (i.e., in the home environment). However, as Agnieszka Halemba pointed out, survival does not necessarily mean stagnation: anthropological work on religion after socialism revealed deep changes in the way people understood religious organizations and their role in the public sphere (2015: 24).

In Romania, state atheism did not translate into the eradication of religion, but rather into its ideological appropriation and seclusion in the private sphere. It is not surprising, then, that the right to manifest one's faith in public was enthusiastically exercised in the early 1990s: it was during this period that the foundations were laid for many churches and cathedrals, some of which turned out to be overly ambitious projects that are still under construction.

I argue that in the Romanian case, speaking of religious revival can be misleading unless it is limited to the early years of the 1990s and revival is understood "first of all [as] a return to tradition" (Borowik 2002: 505). The project of the new Bucharest cathedral – its name, architecture and symbolism – instantiates the ROC's intention to regain a dominant position in a pluralized religious market and the role of privileged interlocutor with the state. The interwar period has a special place in the collective memory of many Romanians, as it coincided with the country's maximum territorial expansion. This is also true for priests and bishops who, in the conversations and interviews I had with them during my fieldwork, referred to it as a glorious epoch for the church. For example, some found it strange to apply "secularist" measures, such as preventing clergy from running in local administrative elections, when between the two wars the Patriarch was even briefly appointed Prime Minister and episcopes were senators.

When understood as part of a more general trend not limited to postsocialism, religious visibility in urban contexts has also been read as the sunset of the secular age (Berger 1999) or the dawn of a new post-secular era (Beaumont and Baker 2011, Habermas 2008). Interestingly, the lens of the post-secular has been used by Sergiu Novac (2011) to interpret the case of the People's Salvation Cathedral. As new houses of worship proliferated in the country after decades of forced socialist secularization, it may seem reasonable to resort to the concept

of post-secularism. However, the postsecular city as Beaumont and Baker understand it – inspired by Habermas – emerges "by contrast to the utopian liberal uplift of the secular city (in which the role of the church and theology is to act as force of social progressive change and a cultural exorciser against all oppressive practices which reinforce hierarchies of power and dependency)" (Beaumont and Baker 2011: 2). I would argue that such a description would hardly fit any Christian Orthodox context, where church-state relations have evolved differently from Western Europe. The principles of symphonia and partnership – or the ideological subjugation of Orthodoxy under socialism – seem to contradict a scenario in which the church acts as an anti-hierarchical force.

In conclusion, an anthropological analysis of postsocialist religious infrastructure in Romania should avoid out-of-context and far-fetched generalizations, as is the case with the adoption of post-secularist theories. Those approaches that insist on a religious revival or re-enchantment of postsocialist countries are equally problematic, as they fail to represent not only the political and instrumental use of religion, but also the voices that contest such a powerful resurgence of public religions. My suggestion then is to read the booming of religious infrastructure in Romania as a form of "re-consecration", as this term is less value-laden and comes from what is undeniable: that rituals of consecration were performed for rising churches and placing crosses. These are to be understood as acts of re-signification of public space after decades of state atheism. Re-consecration is a specific way of giving new meaning to space, which is related to the use of religious buildings, symbols, monuments, rituals and practices.

In other words, the visibility of religious signifiers should not be directly linked to an increase in religiosity and church attendance. Newly built religious infrastructure does not have a simple pastoral and liturgical function, nor is it solely the opera of grassroots action. On the contrary, the boom in this sector would not have been possible without the generous funding of the SSRA and the lobbying of state authorities by the ROC. In the following sections, the symbiosis of (Orthodox) church and state is examined from two privileged angles: the nationalist symbolism of the People's Salvation Cathedral, and the legal measures adopted in the 2000s regarding the financing and transfer of property to churches. In this light, I argue that it is misleading to speak of a religious revival: the real revival concerns the ROC as an organization capable of building over 30 cathedrals, multiplying its clerical and lay personnel, and expanding its pastoral activity abroad.

3. Church building as nation building

The consecration of the newly built cathedral of the Russian Army in Moscow in June 2020 has once again drawn media attention to the merging of state authority, public resources, national symbolism, and Orthodox identity in post-Soviet Russia. The cathedral was built on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. This is not surprising, because if we look at all the large cathedrals built in the post-socialist space in the last three decades, we soon realize that they often organize their symbolic structure not according to strictly spiritual or theological principles, but according to some fundamental moments in the history of the nation-state. New, imposing cathedrals built in recent times were originally meant as a "thanksgiving" to God for military and territorial victories against the Ottomans (the CMN in Bucharest), for a desperate victory over the French invader (Moscow's "Christ the Savior"), and to celebrate the country's first constitution (Warsaw's "Temple of Providence").

During the keynote lecture at the European Academy of Religion 2020 conference, sociologist Kristina Stoeckl interpreted the case of the Russian Army cathedral using the familiar paradigm of "civil religion," coined by Robert Bellah in 1967 to describe not simply "the worship of the American nation, but an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality" (Bellah 1967: 20). "Civil religion" means the adoption of religious attitudes toward civil and national symbols and institutions. However, the symbolic organization of the new cathedrals that emerged after socialism indicates something different: not the glorification of the nation through religious signifiers, references, and sentiments, but the identification of the church of the majority with the nation-state.

Let us take the case of the CMN by analyzing its intended "public function",[5] its name, and its architecture. As already suggested by Stoeckl, the juxtaposition of the American civil religion with the nationalist orientation of the Orthodox churches may sound bold at first, but it is not without foundation: the ROC itself found inspiration in the US while working on the new People's Cathedral. As former ROC spokesman Fr. Constantin Stoica explained to me in 2016: "We are now trying to impose the label 'National Cathedral', just like Americans have the Washington national cathedral … and like in all other European countries which have a representative cathedral for the religion of the majority. Not just Rome, the Vatican, St Peter … see also St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna or St Paul's in London".[6]

The reference to the USA is not Father Stoica's personal interpretation, but was explicitly mentioned by the National Church Council. The choice of the ROC to justify new branding strategies by looking to the near or far West indicates a versatility that has too often been denied by visions of Orthodoxy as anti-modern, stuck in the past, hostile to Western Christianity, and lacking in adaptability. In this particular case, the ROC is attracted to the Washington cathedral model because it serves as a "national house of prayer," i.e., it is used for state funerals of US presidents and memorial ceremonies (Nelson 2010: 70). The fact that this cathedral formally belongs to the Episcopal Church is irrelevant compared to its privileged relationship with state institutions and national identity. The new cathedral in Bucharest aims to fulfill similar functions, such as the celebration of the dead soldiers and national heroes who died in the war. By changing the name to "national cathedral", the emphasis was shifted from the theme of salvation to that of national belonging.

After the completion of the cathedral, the national heroes of all times will be honored every year on two special occasions: the national day – 1 December – which celebrates the Great Union declaration of Alba Iulia and falls one day after the day of the cathedral's patron saint, and Ascension Day. In fact, in 1995, the Parliament passed a law stipulating that national heroes should be commemorated on the same day as the Feast of the Ascension. Changing the calendar is rarely a neutral operation, as states have used this tool for social engineering purposes or ideological agendas. Such practices have not stopped in contemporary Romania, as shown by the decision to celebrate a religious holiday and a uniquely national one on the same day.

The second aspect I would like to discuss is the name of the cathedral. The formula "People's Salvation Cathedral" appeared for the first time on 10 May 1920, when Metropolitan Miron spoke in favor of the construction of a new national cathedral to celebrate the birth of Greater Romania. "The Cathedral of the People *(Catedrala Neamului)*," he said before the Holy Synod and King Ferdinand, "will prove to be ... a visible symbol of our unity in faith and law" (Noica 2011: 47). After him, King Ferdinand spoke. In naming the future cathedral, he used a different phrase, "Church of Salvation *(Biserica Mântuirii)*," while it was Metropolitan Pimen who first spoke of a "Church of Salvation of the People" (Vasilescu 2010: 502). This formula brings together religious identity and nation-building strategies, suggesting that the annexation of regions populated by ethnic

Romanians, accomplished through the Trianon pact of 1920, was the manifestation of God's will.

The word *neam* is difficult to translate into English, as the term "people" does not properly convey the sense of unity of blood and descent that *neam* suggests, and it is perhaps better expressed by formulas such as "kin" or "ethnic nation". The close relationship between nationalism and kinship has already been explored in the Romanian context by Verdery, who suggested bringing "national identities into the larger category of social relations within which [...] they belong: kinship [...] Nationalism is thus a kind of ancestor worship, a system of patrilineal kinship in which national heroes occupy the place of clan elders in defining a nation as a noble lineage" (Verdery 1999: 41). In his speech to the Holy Synod in 1920, King Ferdinand provided a perfect example of what Verdery meant: in explaining the reasons for the construction of the national cathedral, he drew inspiration from "our good ancestors: Stephen the Great ... Michael the Brave ... Matei Basarab ... up to King Charles I." Foreign kings such as Charles and Ferdinand Hohenzollern – whose family came from what is now Baden-Württemberg – became part of the patrilineal lineage that constitutes the Romanian ethnic nation. Against this background, the decision to name the new cathedral after the salvation of the Romanian people becomes clear: to celebrate Greater Romania as the realization of a national project aimed at territorial, religious and ethnic homogeneity.

The choice of such a name in the 1920s – in the context of a monarchical state that sought legitimacy for its new borders also through the church – probably did not cause any misunderstandings. Almost a century later, however, it did. As early as June 1990, church leaders proposed to Prime Minister Petre Roman that discussions on the construction of the national cathedral, whose official name remained unchanged, should be resumed.[7] The decision to leave the name of the cathedral untouched, to establish a bishopric in each county, to allow clergy to enter politics, to teach religion in public schools, and to obtain the status of official religion reveals the ROC's goal after the end of socialism: to regain the privileged status it enjoyed during the interwar period.

Like *neam*, *mântuire* is also a complex term that requires explanation. Although it is commonly translated as "salvation," it retains a spiritual nuance that makes "redemption" a good alternative. It is this latter connotation that most people have understood since the project was revived by Patriarch Teoctist in the 1990s. "Salvation" or "redemption" was meant in a purely theological sense, not in a geopolitical or national sense.

After all, who would think of the Romanian nation's salvation from the threat of neighboring enemy empires more than 70 years after World War I? Church leaders decided to keep the name conceived in 1920 for the sake of continuity with the interwar period, thus demonstrating their "utopian and static theology of history",[8] but ended up being misunderstood by the general public and criticized by the country's most famous Christian Orthodox intellectuals and theologians.

Teodor Baconschi is a renowned theologian and former Romanian ambassador to the Vatican. After the 1989 revolution, he was part of the "Group of Reflection for the Renewal of the Church", along with Patriarch Daniel (then Archbishop of Moldova) and other prominent Orthodox clergy and laity. Until recently, he was also a conservative politician with reactionary and Islamophobic tendencies. According to him, the 'name of the cathedral is "a "manifesto of ethnophiletism",[9] which accepts the territorial organization of the church on an ethnic basis. Thus, salvation is no longer a matter of personal interaction with God, but can be achieved by an individual as part of a collective, be it a nation, *ethnos*, or tribe (the English translation of the ancient Greek *fulé* from which the term comes). It has been considered a heresy since 1872, when the Council of Constantinople intervened against the self-proclaimed independence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church from the Constantinople Patriarchate (Gillet 1997).

A position similar to Baconschi's is taken by Adrian Papahagi, a Cluj-based philologist and former politician known for his conservative Christian and neoliberal stance. Beyond the inadequacy of the name from a strictly theological point of view, Papahagi focuses on the sheer continuity of the nationalist rhetoric endorsed by church leaders during and after the Ceaușescu regime. Papahagi supports the building of a national cathedral, but its name, location, and architectural style make the current project an "unfortunate encounter between nationalist and communist ideology."[10] Thus, the name of the cathedral is not only a reference to the original project elaborated in the 1920s, but also reflects the more recent socialist past, as it seems to reuse some of its nationalist tropes (a view shared by Stan and Turcescu 2007). Indeed, it is striking that even conservative figures like Baconschi and Papahagi, who had no reason to criticize the project and are often apologetic towards the ROC, found the name of the cathedral totally inappropriate.

For Petre Guran, a well-known Byzantinist and former state secretary of the Ministry of Culture, "this name is subject to nationalist

interpretations nowadays. Which nation or *ethnos* should be represented by this monument?" (Guran 2007: 55). In contrast to the aforementioned intellectuals, Guran 'not only criticized the ethnophile thrust, but also noticed the exclusivist danger lurking behind the name of the new cathedral, defining as anachronistic the decision to propose the same name despite a completely different historical context.

Between the two world wars, the school of thought of the philosopher Nae Ionescu influenced young students who later became influential Romanian thinkers of the twentieth century, such as Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, and Mircea Eliade. Drawing on mysticism and spiritual practice, Ionescu sought to create a Romanian philosophy, using Orthodox identity as a founding element. However, nationalism and Orthodoxy evolved in his thinking into discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. For Ionescu, only Orthodox Romanians were to be considered true Romanians, while Romanians belonging to other religions or denominations were assigned a lower status and could at best aspire to be "good Romanians" (Ionescu [1937] 1990: 201).

A theological interpretation of the cathedral's name 'is reminiscent of Ionescu's thinking (as it combines ethnic and religious identity, excluding non-Orthodox ethnic Romanians), and even if it was somehow understandable at the time, it cannot help but provoke criticism today. 'For Father Daniel Avram, spokesman of the Greek Catholic bishopric of Cluj-Gherla, leaving the name of the cathedral untouched means promoting an exclusivist ideal: if the Romanian *neam* corresponds to Christian-Orthodoxy, what is the place of non-Orthodox ethnic Romanians? On the other hand, the Greek Catholic Church is also building a cathedral in Cluj, whose name "Martyrs and Confessors of the 20th Century" emphasizes the persecution suffered during the state atheism by religious groups, "all of them," Father Avram stressed during our brief interview. For Avram, however, this was the only controversial aspect of the CMN: he did not object at all to the idea of building a new Orthodox cathedral, probably because the Greek Catholic Church was also building an imposing one. There are long-standing disputes between the two churches, from legal disputes over property rights before 1948 to their competing historiographies of the formation of the Romanian state and national identity, but the recent flourishing of the church-building industry reveals a common interest: to assert their right to visibility in the public sphere after decades of state atheism. Moreover, as I have said before,

when more money flows from the government to the ROC, it means that all the other denominations also receive more money.

Let us return to the name of the cathedral. When I asked Orthodox clergy about the 'official name of the cathedral, they usually agreed with the idea that even though salvation is an individual matter, it also concerns 'one's ethnicity. Father Horia is a priest in his sixties who leads a parish in the west of the city. He had worked in the Chancellery of the Romanian Patriarchate in the past, which was no surprise considering how elaborate his language style was (so much so that I had to ask for explanations a few times). During one of our conversations, we were sitting on the veranda of the parish house, drinking some homemade *horinca*,[11] he told me that the salvation of whole ethnic groups was acceptable theologically, because "at the crack of doom every *neam* will be in front of God ... And I imagine it like this, with Jesus' words from John's Apocalypse: 'My Father's house has many rooms'." Therefore, it is not heresy for Father Horia to say that each *ethnos* has its own place in heavenly kingdom.

Clerics justify collective salvation by referring to the Gospel, as in this last case, or in a more patriotic way not directly inspired by Scripture. "God will also judge us according to our ethnic belonging, considering how much we loved and defended our country," a young monk in a monastery in northern Romania told me. Another priest in Bucharest told me that "salvation is individual. But each kin has its own heritage. Just like the Lord speaks to the people of Israel, He can speak to every kin." Therefore, regardless of how convinced they were of the current name of the cathedral, many priests I met understood it in a purely theological sense. Therefore, it was with great surprise that I read the interview published by ROC spokesman Vasile Bănescu in October 2016, in which he stated:

> "Only in the unfortunate case of theological illiteracy could one believe that ethnic groups receive salvation collectively, therefore it is not a matter of a group salvation of the entire Romanian *neam* ... Such an expression strictly refers to the salvation of our country, of our *neam*, using the terminology of that time, from foreign domination. We are talking about the War of Independence, which led to the independence of the united Romanian principalities, the future Romanian state."[12]

My first impression was that the ROC spokesman had just defined as "theologically illiterate" some of the most respected Orthodox intellectuals and theologians of contemporary Romania, not to mention all the

Orthodox clergy who have interpreted and supported the title of the Cathedral in theological terms. Moreover, Bănescu's statements confirm the strategic turn taken by the ROC. In February 2016, as a (silent) response to the growing criticism, the National Church Council equated the name "Cathedral for the Salvation of the People" with "National Cathedral" (Nicolae 2016).

In addition to its name, the CMN project is nationalist in its architectural design. In December 2009, the Patriarchate organized a meeting to discuss the project of the future cathedral. During this meeting, Patriarch Daniel clearly stated that the new religious complex should condense autochthonous stylistic elements: "we don't wish a building whose style has never been built on Romanian soil... The new cathedral should be a Latin-Byzantine basilica, traditional, especially in the interior, but with a Romanian taste, a point of connection between East and West" (Vasilescu 2010: 538). The winning project of the 2010 competition was chosen because it followed the church's wishes very 'closely. The chief architect, Constantin Amaiei, described it as a combination of the Byzantine style – vaults, domes and pendentives – with specifically Romanian features (the so-called Brâncovenesc style, represented by arcades, colonnades, cornices and niches), respecting tradition and not adding any modern element. He condensed the project into three concepts: Orthodox space, Byzantine tradition, and national culture.[13] In line with the ROC's current nationalist aspirations, the concept of a "Romanian-Byzantine style", to which Amaiei refers, first became popular in art historiography at the turn of the twentieth century as an attempt to reconcile two seemingly opposing paradigms: continuity with Byzantine and Paleo Christian art on the one hand, and the glorification of specifically national traits on the other.

Finally, as further evidence of the nationalist agenda of the ROC leaders, one could point to the extensive canonization program of Romanian-born saints after 1990. Probably because of the lack of local saints (the most popular saints are all from modern Turkey or the Balkans, from Saint Nicholas to Saint Parascheva, from Saint Filofteia to Saint Dimitrie) and the competition with the other Orthodox churches, an increasing number of Romanian saints have been promoted both in liturgical hymns and prayers and in the iconographic plan of newly built or renovated churches.

The presence of nationalist symbols, discourses, and practices within the walls of Orthodox churches is widely acknowledged and has been an element of continuity throughout the history of the Romanian nation-state. However, in post-socialist Romania, the boundaries between the

Romanian state, the nation, and Orthodoxy continue to blur, as evidenced by the realization of a major religious project financed almost entirely with public funds, for which ad hoc laws have been promulgated, whose location is right between the Palace of the Parliament and the Ministry of Defense, and whose name has no theological connotation but honors the memory of national heroes.

Benedict Anderson's famous definition of nationalism as "chance turned into destiny" (Anderson 1983: 12) seems to have been coined for the recent trajectory of the Bucharest cathedral. The convergence, after 1990, of political actors willing to do anything to win the support of the church, with the election of a young, ambitious and determined Patriarch like Daniel Ciobotea; the ability of the ROC to inscribe itself at the center of the postsocialist agenda; the approach of the centenary of Greater Romania: all these circumstances were turned into destiny by the Church, which described the realization of the national cathedral as a project of indisputable national interest, postponed only by a chain of misfortunes. It took postsocialism and a peculiar alignment of political interests to bring it back to its destiny.

4. Church-state partnership and the de-secularization of property

The collapse of the Socialist Republic and the establishment of the current democratic polity marked a new phase in the historical trajectory of church-state relations. This is especially true when we look at the role of the state in building the infrastructure of religion. As early as January 1990, the Holy Synod set out a series of political demands to be discussed with Prime Minister Petre Roman, including "the restoration of the right of archbishops to be members of the Senate, the presence of the ROC in the Constituent Assembly, and the inclusion of a reference to God in the text of the Constitution" (Conovici 2009: 78). The term "partnership" (Stan and Turcescu 2012), coined to describe the formal and informal exchanges between state authorities and church leaders after 1990, replaced the long-standing symphonic paradigm, which was considered outdated not only by scholars but also by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians. In the context of the high political instability typical of postsocialist restructuring, political parties – regardless of their ideological orientation – often sought the patronage of the church in order to gain electoral support. In turn,

after decades of illiberal conditions, churches finally had the opportunity to re-enter the public sphere. This was true for the ROC as well as for its competitors, especially those that could benefit from foreign economic support, such as the Pentecostal Churches.

The liberalization of the religious market pushed the Orthodox Church to secure its dominant position, from lobbying for legislation on religious freedom and public funding of religion to acquiring real estate and privileged access to public institutions such as hospitals, army units, prisons, and schools (G. and L. Andreescu 2009). Thus, since the end of socialism, the ROC has sought to regain its role as the main public religion, that is, to reassert its presence in all three spheres of the polity identified by Casanova (1994): the state, political society, and civil society. While Stan and Turcescu (2012) used the concept of "partnership" to define this strategy, especially in light of the protocols of cooperation in social work and public education signed at the end of the 2000s, I will rather use the construction of places of worship to illustrate the modes of interaction between state and church authorities at different levels, and try to offer a perspective that looks at the resurgence of the ROC without focusing exclusively on religiosity.

The transfer of the land on Arsenal Hill to a private, non-state organization such as the RP is the most obvious case of the process of "de-secularization" of property brought about by laws such as the aforementioned 261/2005 and 239/2007. The latter ratifies that real estate granted as a free loan to religious denominations can become the property of the respective denomination upon request. It is up to the state authorities to examine and possibly accept such requests. By "de-secularization of property" I am provocatively alluding to the so-called "secularization" of church property initiated by A.I. Cuza in 1863, when real estate belonging to Orthodox churches and monasteries became state property. Going in the opposite direction – i.e. giving state property to religious organizations for free – the body of legislation analyzed in this section represents a new stage in the history of church-state relations in Romania.

Let us take another example of the "de-secularization" of property: in the last fifteen years (2004–2019) social democrats have tried several times to transfer the ownership of thousands of hectares of Romanian forests to the Archbishopric of Suceava and Rădăuți, on the pretext that the ROC had already managed forests in Bukovina during the interwar period. Although such attempts were deemed unconstitutional, and although the church lost a long legal battle against Romsilva, the state-owned company

in charge of managing national forests, in 2017, social democrats again tried to privatize woodlands in favor of the ROC.[14] Most of the time, such favors to the Orthodox Church are linked to elections, as if the in-kind transfer of real estate, financing, or land would constitute electoral support.

In the 2000s, a number of laws, government resolutions, and emergency decrees laid the groundwork for Christian denominations to engage in hectic church-building activities with public funding or to legally acquire state property. As far as the ROC is concerned, the legal framework discussed here underpins the 'powerful organizational revival of the church. Similarly, the realization of the highest Orthodox cathedral in the world has been facilitated by the legislation produced during these years. This legislation, which has favored the de-secularization of state property, has occurred regardless of the political hue of the governments involved; such laws have been enacted by cabinets led by liberals such as Călin Popescu Tăriceanu as well as by social democrats such as Adrian Nastase. In particular, the neoliberal blueprint launched by Tăriceanu included a widespread privatization program that included concessions to the ROC and other religious organizations. Since it is not related to the legitimate restitution of church property confiscated by the communists, the de-secularization of property is only one aspect of the widespread privatization of state assets, which in turn is one of the main features of neoliberal regimes in postsocialist Romania (Ban 2014, 2016).

5. Conclusion: churches go public, but believers go private?

If the religious revival is indeed a return to tradition, the postsocialist era can be defined not as the reawakening of religious life after decades of state atheism, but as the ROC's attempt to regain its privileged role vis-à-vis the nation-state, as it was in pre-socialist Romania. According to the same logic, the re-consecration of public space by church-building and cross-placing activities is performed by the Orthodox church both as compensation and as purification after the forced socialist secularization, although the relationship between the ROC and the socialist power was more ambiguous than the church presents it.

Based on a central survey published by the SSRA in 2016, in this paper I have discussed some aspects of the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania after 1990. Against the background of more than ten thousand places of worship built, the ROC stands out not for the

number of churches built (about four thousand), but for the more than 30 cathedrals that have been erected all over the country. These new cathedrals represent an ambition for symbolic dominance in a context of pluralization of the religious arena, are inspired by a nationalist and exclusivist orientation, and instantiate the territorial restructuring of the ROC as an organization that aims to create a diocese for each county. It is in this latter sense that I have proposed to focus on the revival of the ROC as an organization, rather than on a supposed revival in terms of religiosity and church attendance.

The boom in the church construction industry is based on the system of public funding of religious groups, which in recent years has been heavily influenced by the construction of the People' Salvation cathedral: the need to complete this magnificent project has led the SSRA to channel more and more money into it. Since the funds provided by the SSRA are distributed to the denominations in proportion to the number of believers, all religious groups have benefited from the generosity of the state. In other words, the renewed visibility of the religious infrastructure is primarily due to the involvement of the state through new legal measures and increasing public funding. In this sense, both scholars (Stan and Turcescu 2012) and investigative journalists (Stoicescu and Oncioiu 2019) have characterized the evolution of the relationship between the ROC and the state as a form of "partnership".

At a time when the consecration of the new Bucharest cathedral testifies to the identification of Orthodoxy with the Romanian nation, and religious signifiers are again multiplying in cities and towns, recent sociological analyses (Gog 2007, 2016) report the progressive privatization of religious life among the younger generations. The privatization of religion – i.e. the tendency to develop one's own religious activity outside the broader religious community, thus following a self-made mode of religious practice and identification – goes hand in hand with the "pluralization of life-worlds" (Gog 2007: 796) and the process of individualization that regulates the lives of urbanites in capitalist and liberal societies. The rise of anticlerical sentiments, the diminished authority of the clergy, and the plight of the ROC are to be understood within a broader process of erosion of traditional religions that has been developing in Romania over the last three decades: while magnificent cathedrals are inaugurated and the ROC asserts its public presence, younger generations tend to replace institutionalized religion with new spiritualities, and private faith is preferred to communal religious life.

Endnotes

1 This paper interpolates material from a monograph I have recently published, whose main case study is the newly-built Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest (Tateo 2020). The interviews here reported were collected during my fieldwork in Bucharest in 2015 and 2016.

2 Cambridge English Dictionary. (n.d.). Infrastructure. Dictionary.Cambridge. org. Retrieved on 1 July 2020 from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ dictionary/english/infrastructure.

3 Interview with Daniel Avram, spokesperson of the Greek Catholic diocese of Cluj-Gherla.

4 The political will to finance the CMN became particularly urgent in recent years, as the cathedral was to be inaugurated in November 2018, coinciding with the centenary of the Declaration of the Great Union of Alba Iulia. However, this has meant that not only the ROC, but also all the other religious groups have benefited from the generosity of the government. If the reader wondered why the new National Cathedral was not really challenged by other religious competitors, this is one of the reasons. One could easily say that the CMN project has forced the government to channel more public funds to the SSRA, which in turn has broken all records in financing religious buildings. When more money goes to the ROC, it means more money for everyone.

5 "The cathedral will host events of national relevance. The public utility of religious organizations is ratified by the law on religious freedom 489/2006 and consists also in celebrating feasts of national and civil significance. Religious ceremonies of public and national relevance, like the commemoration of the heroes of December 1989 and the celebration of the Great Union Day, will be held in the new cathedral, which will also host exhibitions, cultural events and anniversaries of national relevance in the adjacent six-hectare park." Retrieved on 15 July 2020 from http:// catedralaneamului.ro/simbolism-teologic/, my translation.

6 Father Constantin Stoica, interview with the author.

7 Decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1990, CVIII (11–12): 177–178.

8 This is the definition that Radu Preda, one of the most well regarded Romanian contemporary theologians, gave during our interview.

9. Theodor Baconschi, interview with the author.

10. Adrian Papahagi, interview with the author.

11 A brandy made with plums and distilled twice to increase the alcohol content.

12 'INTERVIU: "Se vor face multe teze de doctorat despre construcţia Catedralei Mântuirii Neamului", *Digi24.ro*, 7 October 2016. Retrieved on 15 December 2017 from http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/social/interviu-se-vor-face-multe-teze-de-doctorat-despre-constructia-catedralei-583785.

[13] Constantin Amaiei, head architect of Vanel Exim company, personal communication by email.

[14] "Cadoul PSD pentru Biserică: Dragnea vrea să facă, prin lege, Arhiepiscopia Sucevei și Rădăuților proprietară peste pădurile pe care le-a pierdut, definitiv și irevocabil, în instanță", Hotnews.ro, 7 June 2018. Retrieved on 8 October 2019 from https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-22495609-cadoul-psd-pentru-biseric-dragnea-vrea-fac-prin-lege-arhiepiscopia-sucevei-ilor-proprietar-peste-durile-care-pierdut-definitiv-irevocabil-instan.htm.

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Appendix 1. Houses of Worship in Romania (updated to 31 December 2015)

No	DENOMINATION	Houses of worship in usage before 1989	Houses of worship built after 1989	Houses of worship still under construction	Total number of houses of worship	Percentage of believers according to the 2011 census	Percentage of houses of worship owned	Number of believers according to the 2011 census	Number of believers for every house of worship
1	Biserica Ortodoxă Română	12,134	3,191	1,078	16,403	86.45%	59.90%	16,307,004	994
2	Episcopia Ortodoxă Sârbă de Timișoara	58	3	2	63	0.08%	0.23%	14,385	228
3	Biserica Romano-Catolică	1,241	351	40	1,632	4.62%	5.96%	870,774	534
4	Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică	0	334	79	413	0.80%	1.51%	150,593	365
5	Arhiepiscopia Bisericii Armene	22	0	0	22	0.002%	0.08%	393	18
6	Biserica Creștină Rusă de Rit Vechi din România	46	20	1	67	0.17%	0.24%	32,558	486
7	Biserica Reformată din România	998	314	40	1,352	3.19%	4.94%	600,932	444

8	Biserica Evanghelică C.A. din România	246	0	0	246	0.03%	0.90%	5,399	22
9	Biserica Evanghelică Lutherană din România	39	6	2	47	0.11%	0.17%	20,168	429
10	Biserica Unitariană Maghiară	131	15	1	147	0,31%	0.54%	57,686	392
11	Cultul Creștin Baptist	735	790	46	1,571	0,60%	5.74%	112,850	72
12	Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie din România	170	272	17	459	0,23%	1.68%	42,495	93
13	Biserica Evanghelică Română	192	20	2	214	0,08%	0.78%	15,514	72
14	Cultul Creștin Penticostal	793	1,950	182	2,925	1.92%	10.68%	356,314	122
15	Biserica Adventistă de Ziua a Șaptea	424	762	83	1,269	0.43%	4.63%	80,944	64
16	Federația Comunităților Evreiești din România-Cultul Mozaic	103	0	0	103	0.02%	0.38%	3,519	34
17	Cultul Musulman	61	17	3	81	0.34%	0.30%	64,337	794
18	Organizația Religioasă Martorii lui Iehova	0	368	2	370	0.26%	1.35%	49,820	135
TOTAL		17,393	8,413	1,578	27,384			18,785,685	

Source: State Secratariat for Religious Affairs, updated to 31 December 2015.

Note: Houses of worship include churches, monasteries, skites, chapels, synagogues, mosques, etc. Administrative buildings were not taken into account.

Appendix 2. New Orthodox Cathedrals in Romania, 1990–2019

	Name	City, County	Construction time
1	**Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului**	București, Ilfov	2010–under construction
2	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Zalău, Sălaj	1990–under construction
3	**Catedrala Sfânta Treime**	Arad	1991–2008
4	**Catedrala Învierea Domnului**	Oradea, Bihor	1995–2012
5	**Catedrala Nașterea Domnului**	Suceava	1991–2015
6	**Catedrala Episcopala Sfânta Treime**	Baia Mare, Maramureș	1990–under construction
7	Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului	Bacău	1991–under construction
8	Catedrala Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul	Fagaraș, Brașov	1995–under construction
9	**Catedrala Învierea Domnului**	Caransebeș, Caraș-Severin	1997–under construction
10	Catedrala Pogorârea Sf. Duh	Onești, Bacău	1990–under construction
11	**Catedrala Episcopală Sfântul Mare Mucenic Gheorghe**	Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Mehedinți	1994–under construction
12	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Buzău	2002–2009
13	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Slobozia, Ialomița	1996–2004
14	**Catedrală Arhiepiscopală și Regală**	Curtea de Argeș, Argeș	2009–under construction
15	Catedrala Ortodoxa Învierea Domnului	Fălticeni, Suceava	1991–under construction
16	Catedrala Intrarea Domnului Iisus în Ierusalim	Voluntari, Ilfov	2007–under construction
17	Catedrala Nașterea Maicii Domnului și a Sfintei Cuvioasei Sfintei Parascheva	Focșani, Vrancea	2000–2019
18	Catedrala Eroilor	Hunedoara	1999–2010
19	Catedrala Nașterea Domnului	Brăila	1996–under construction

20	Catedrala Sf. Ioan Botezătorul	Craiova, Dolj	1990–under construction
21	Catedrala Pogorârea Sfântului Duh	Pașcani, Iași	2002–under construction
22	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Slatina, Olt	1994–2009
23	Catedrala Sf. Împ. Costantin și Elena	Râmnicu Sărat, Buzău	2009–under construction
24	Catedrala Sf. Împ. Costantin și Elena	Urziceni, Ialomița	1996–2002
25	Catedrala Nașterea Maicii Domnului	Gura Humorului, Suceava	1995–2004
26	Catedrala Sfânta Treime	Vatra Dornei, Suceava	1991–2002
27	Catedrala Sfântul Gheorghe	Topoloveni, Argeș	2003–2008
28	Catedrala Sfântul Gheorghe	Nehoiu, Buzău	1991–2008
29	Catedrala Sfântul Sava	Buzău	1993–2015
30	Catedrala Eroilor	Târgoviște	1991–2005
31	Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului	Râmnicu Vâlcea	1992–2007
32	Catedrala Sfânta Teodora de la Sihla	Sihastria Monastery, Neamț	1995–2004
33	Catedrala Eroilor Tineri	Ploiești,	1992–1999
34	Catedrala "Sfânta Treime" și "Sfânta Cuvioasă Parascheva"	Motru, Gorj	1996–2004

Key: Cathedrals in **bold**: housing the seat of an eparchy (archbishopric or bishopric). The other cathedrals included in the list are defined as such by the RP but host no eparchial seat. In such cases the term "cathedral" rather stands for a particularly important and imposing church in a specific area.

NEW EUROPE FOUNDATION
NEW EUROPE COLLEGE

Institute for Advanced Study

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.

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 that 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 which supported the research projects of the fellows included in the volume:

- *NEC Fellowships (since 1994)*
  Each year, the NEC Fellowships are open to both Romanian and international outstanding young scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

315

- **_Ștefan Odobleja Fellowships (since 2008)_**
  The fellowships awarded in this program are supported by the National Council of Scientific Research and are part of the core **NEC Fellowships** program. They target young Romanian researchers.
  Project number PN-III-P1-1.1-BSO-2016-0003, within PNCDI III

- **_Pontica Magna Fellowships (2015-2022)_**
  This program, sponsored by the VolkswagenStiftung (Germany), invited young researchers, media professionals, writers and artists from the countries around the Black Sea (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), but also beyond it, in Central Asia, for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College. During their stay, the fellows had the opportunity to work on projects of their own choice.

- **_NEC UEFISCDI Award (since 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 (UEFISCDI) 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, and meant to complement and enlarge the core fellowship program.
  Project number: PN-III-P3-3.6-H2020-2016-0018, within PNCDI III.

- **_Spiru Haret Fellowships (since 2017)_**
  The _Spiru Haret_ Fellowships target 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. The Program is financed through a grant from UEFISCDI (The Romanian Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding).
  Project number PN-III-P1-1.1-BSH-3-2021-0009, within PNCDI III

- *Porticus N+N Fellowships (since 2020)*
  The 'Nations and Nationalisms' (N+N) Program, developed with financial support from the Porticus Foundation, aims to approach one of the main challenges faced by societies, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe: a growing tension between nationalizing and globalizing forces in a world dominated by migration, entanglement, digitization and automation. The *Porticus N+N* Fellowships are open to international candidates working in all fields of the humanities and social sciences with an interest in the study of nations, varieties of nationalism and/or populism, and the effects of globalization on national identities.

- *AMEROPA Fellowships (since 2020)*
  Organized with financial support from Ameropa and its subsidiaries in Romania, and with academic support from the Centre for Government and Culture at the University of St. Gallen, this program aims to investigate the conditions and prerequisites for democratic stability and economic prosperity in Romania and the neighboring region. The *Ameropa* Fellowship Program is open to early career Romanian researchers in history, anthropology, political science, economics or sociology. Each year, an annual workshop will be organized in the framework of the *Ameropa* Program.

- *DigiHum Fellowship Program (since 2021)*
  The *Relevance of the Humanities in the Digital Age* (DigiHum) Fellowship Program is proposed jointly by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia and the New Europe College Bucharest, and is developed with the financial support of the Porticus Foundation. The program is intended to accommodate a broadest range of themes pertaining to Humanities and Social Science, provided that they link up to contemporary debates about major challenges to the human condition stemming from the technological advances and 'digital modernity'. The program addresses international scholars.

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