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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

The *New Europe College Yearbook* is an annual publication by the New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study. It features original research by the institute's fellows, completed during their fellowship programs. What makes the *Yearbook* stand out is its commitment to bringing together contributions from a wide range of academic fields, methodologies, and perspectives. This diversity gives the publication a unique, open character that reflects the varied interests of its contributors.

The present volume brings together ten research articles, which we hope can open a broader conversation about culture and history's entanglements with ideology, violence, and identity. Anca Diana Axinia's study on gender and violence in the representation of the Bucharest Pogrom (1941) illuminates the ways in which narratives of atrocity intersect with constructions of gender. Malte Fuhrmann's reflection on Ottoman urban infrastructures examines the competing temporalities of modernization and tradition, as symbolized by the opposition between ox-driven and steam-powered transport. Petro Kuzyk's analysis of Ukraine's alleged "East-West" divide within Western discourse provides an insightful critique of how geopolitical imaginaries are constructed and perpetuated. Adrian-George Matus's study of authorship in the archives of Radio Free Europe invites reflection on the politics of media and historical memory during the Cold War. Manuel Mireanu's article explores how civic engagement can evolve into extremist mobilization, focusing on the case of far-right groups in Romania. It examines the conditions and motivations behind their readiness for action. Dan-Alexandru Săvoaia's examination of Romania's tripartite delegations to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the 1920s highlights the tensions between multilateralism and national social reform efforts. Roman Shliakhtin's investigation into Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* reveals how historical narratives have been shaped to deflect blame and protect political patrons, using the Battle of Manzikert and the fate of Romanos Diogenes as a case study. Lucian Vasile's exploration of Romanian refugees in the early years of communism

provides a deeply human perspective on displacement and survival under repressive regimes. Nataliia Vusatiuk's intellectual biography of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara situates the Ukrainian poet and scholar at the crossroads of modernism and socialist realism, exposing the ideological constraints imposed on cultural production. Lastly, Edward Waysband's study of Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork's *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* (1911) uncovers an early case of right-wing émigré terrorism, revealing the transgenerational dimensions of extremist thought.

Together, these contributions illuminate some unexpected ways in which intellectual, political, and cultural dimensions are intertwined. We hope that the essays collected here will not only contribute to their respective fields but also encourage further interdisciplinary dialogue and engagement.

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Biographical note

Anca Diana Axinia received her Ph.D. in history from the European University Institute in Florence in 2022. Her dissertation *Women and Politics in the Romanian Legionary Movement* is the first systematic study of women's participation and gender relations in the Romanian Legionary Movement. The publication of her research findings has begun in 2023 with an article in the *European Review of History* and chapters in two forthcoming edited volumes published by Brill and Bloomsbury Academics.

GENDER AND THE REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE BUCHAREST POGROM (JANUARY 21-23, 1941)

Anca Diana Axinia

Abstract

This article examines the participation of women in the Bucharest pogrom and the representation of their violent actions, in particular in relation to transitional justice. The Bucharest pogrom was one of the first very violent episodes of the Holocaust in Romania. It occurred during the so-called legionary rebellion, a confrontation between General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. In the immediate aftermath of the events, rumors started to circulate on the involvement of legionary women and their savage cruelty. Despite the recurrence of this element in several accounts, the participation of women in the Bucharest pogrom has never been thoroughly investigated so far. After the introduction, the first section will analyze the interrelations between women, gender, and violence in the Legionary Movement before the pogrom. In the second section, I will present the case study of a couple who took part in an episode of the pogrom, through the prism of the legal proceedings undertaken against them. Their long legal history, and the analysis of the interactions among defendants, victims, and the courts, will allow us to follow the changing definitions and meanings of the categories of violence, perpetrator, and responsibility throughout the years.

Keywords: Holocaust; Romania; women; gender; Legionary Movement; transitional justice

1. Introduction

On January 24, 1941, Emil Dorian, a Romanian Jewish doctor living in Bucharest, registered in his diary the first news of the events that occurred between January 21st and January 23rd. "We had a civil war.", Dorian wrote. "Gradually we learn about the fight […] and – something I could never have imagined – [about] the pogrom that for two nights and two days swept through the Jewish quarter".

[1] The "civil war" mentioned by Dorian was the so-called legionary rebellion, which put a violent end to the brief experience of the National Legionary State. Installed in September 1940, this political regime was built on the fragile alliance between General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. The legionary rebellion offered Antonescu the opportunity to outlaw the Legionary Movement and install his own military dictatorship, with the backing of Nazi Germany.[2]

The Bucharest pogrom was one of the first very violent episodes of the Holocaust in Romania. Torture and assassinations, which resulted in hundreds of victims, were accompanied by the destruction of more than a thousand Jewish stores, houses, and workshops. The Coral Temple (Templul Coral), the main synagogue of the city and the symbolic heart of the Jewish community of Bucharest, was devastated, together with most of the other smaller synagogues. The dimensions and violence of the pogrom led Jean Ancel to write, in his extensive work devoted to the Holocaust in Romania, that "had this pogrom been committed in some period other than the Holocaust, it would probably have gone down in history as the largest pogrom against Jews since Kishinev (1903)".[3]

Details and photographs of the atrocities committed against the Jewish population started to circulate in the days following the pogrom. Episodes such as the massacre perpetrated at the Bucharest slaughterhouse, where bodies were found hanged on the hooks, became paradigmatic of the extreme cruelty and inhumane ferocity displayed by the legionaries.[4] Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the legionary rebellion, rumors started to circulate on the involvement of legionary women and their savage cruelty. Emil Dorian noted in his diary that "here too, as elsewhere among criminal monsters, there have been women".[5] Jean Ancel, in his already mentioned work on the Holocaust in Romania, has underlined the fact that legionary women "tortured, murdered, and looted their Jewish victims".[6]

This article is the result of my preliminary research on legionary women's participation in the Bucharest pogrom and the representation of their violent actions, in particular, as we shall see, in the context of transitional justice.[7] As historian Adrian Cioflâncă has underlined as recently as 2021, the Bucharest pogrom is still a largely under-researched subject.[8] And even more so are its gendered dimensions. The development and research trajectories of Holocaust studies on and in Romania partially explain these gaps. The study of the Holocaust in Romania is still a "new" field of inquiry which, since 1989, has gone through different stages and

has followed different research interests. Understandably, during the first two decades of research in newly-opened archives, priority was given to the assessment of dimensions, responsibilities, and underlying motivations, ideologies, and rationales. As a result, crucial works have been devoted to the role of Ion Antonescu and his state apparatus, to the economic and ideological aspects of the Holocaust in Romania, as well as to the logics of violence and the peculiarities of the Romanian case.[9]

The assessment of the dimensions of, and the responsibilities for the Holocaust in Romania represented in the 2000s both a historiographical and a political necessity. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, a common trend, widespread at popular and institutional levels alike, tended to minimize or altogether deny Romania's participation in the Holocaust, deflecting all responsibility towards Nazi Germany. This position became, however, increasingly undefendable in light of the new emerging archival evidence and the historiographical efforts of many scholars; concomitantly, the negotiations for Romania's entry into NATO and later the EU prompted the government to intervene on this matter. The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was established in 2003 and its final report was approved the following year.[10] The state officially recognized the country's participation in the Holocaust and the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was founded in 2005.

Writing in 2012, Roland Clark has observed how these institutional interventions and the creation of a permanent research center have contributed to an expansion of the field. At the same time, however, research on the Holocaust in Romania still lacked the perspectives of cultural and gender histories.[11] The past decade has registered if not an explosion of research, surely a much wider opening towards previously unexplored issues, with broader social, geographical and cultural scopes. While a comprehensive survey of these works is beyond the scope of this article, among them are studies devoted to the persecution and extermination of the Roma population, to Jewish forced labor, the Romanian army, the pogrom of Iași, the Kishinev ghetto, and transitional justice, together with works on memory studies and on Holocaust representation in media.[12]

In this wave of new and wider research scopes, the inclusion of women as subjects and of gender as a category of analysis has remained marginal at best. But this is far from being an aspect specific to the historiography of the Holocaust in Romania. Marion Kaplan has observed how gender analyses, while able to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding

of the Holocaust as a human experience, were met with reluctance by traditional historians and rarely included in mainstream narratives.[13] While perceptions have gradually changed as far as the victims are concerned, research on women "perpetrators" has fought even longer and harder against cultural stereotypes and uneasiness in order to be taken seriously. After an initial focus on women in the concentration camp network, pathbreaking research has started to explore the less clearly definable roles and responsibilities of "ordinary" women, mainly in relation to the Holocaust, but increasingly also in other genocidal contexts.[14]

Following this line of inquiry, I will explore the figure of the legionary woman as perpetrator, along and beyond the rumors surrounding the cruelty and the violence displayed during the Bucharest pogrom. Firstly, a brief section will provide an overview of the relationships between women, gender and violence in legionary ideology and practice before the pogrom. The rest of the article will be devoted to the case study of a legionary woman who took part in an episode of the Bucharest pogrom with her husband (a "legionary couple"[15]). Inspired by works on women perpetrators from Italy and Hungary, and guided, at the same time, by the available sources, I will follow the legal proceedings undertaken against her at different times, within two very different political regimes engaged in their own understanding of transitional justice.[16] The legal history of this legionary woman sheds light on changing perceptions and representations of the concepts of violence, responsibility, and antisemitism among the prosecutors, the witnesses, the defendants, and the judges.

2. Sister, Fighter, Martyr: Gender and Violence in the Legionary Movement

In his remarkable reconstruction of the Iași pogrom (27-30 June, 1941), Jean Ancel characterized the participation of women in the pogrom as a "phenomenon". The space devoted to women's actions is scant but revelatory of the author's perception: "during the events that occurred in Iași reappeared the phenomenon of the *Romanian woman* – legionary or not – who takes part in the pogrom, shows an uncompromising hatred, beats and breaks, as already happened during the Bucharest pogrom six months earlier".[17] After these introductory remarks, a few more pages describe some of the violent actions perpetrated by women during those days. The choice of the word "phenomenon" and the use of italics

suffuse women's participation with a sense of awe, of disbelief, as if this phenomenon could be read as the ultimate sign of a society's loss of any moral compass.

Beyond cultural stereotypes around women's "nature", the sense of bewilderment provoked by the presence of women in the context of violent events stems also from a failure to fully acknowledge them as historical and political subjects. If women are absent from "general" reconstructions or appear in them only marginally, their participation in extraordinary events can easily be framed as a "phenomenon". But women *were* there, before and after the extraordinary events, and, as well as their male counterparts, they faced political choices. In interwar Romania, some women joined the Legionary Movement, founded by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927 and later one of the major far-right, fascist and antisemitic parties of the interwar era.[18]

The Legionary Movement has become the subject of renewed historiographical interest in the past decade. More comprehensive and theoretically refined monographs have reconstructed the movement's political and social history, as well as the life and activity of Codreanu and his immediate entourage.[19] Increasing, though not systematic attention has been devoted as well to women's participation and gender relations within the Legion.[20] The presence of an active and organized women's section is considered as one of the movement's more "innovative" features, in a country where women were still a marginal presence in the political sphere.[21]

The Legion's rhetoric, tinged with militarism and violence, was certainly more appealing to men, and in fact its membership was overwhelmingly male. Nevertheless, the movement was open to female membership and recognized the importance of attracting women and including them in its activities. Throughout the movement's expansion, in particular in the mid-1930s, the number of women followers increased, bringing also a wider diversity in its social composition. The forms of political activism available to legionary women depended on multiple interactions between gender, class, age, and marital status. Ultimately, women's actions and degree of involvement rested upon the decisions and considerations of the male leadership of the movement. Dynamics of relative power within the women's section and in relation to legionary men often shaped and defined women's political agency.

These different dynamics of power impacted also legionary women's relationships with the movement's ideologies and practices of violence.

Even before its official foundation as the "Legion of the Archangel Michael" in June 1927, violence represented a distinctive feature of the Legionary Movement's first nucleus of members. A violent language, permeated by virulent antisemitism and by attacks directed toward various "enemies" was accompanied by physical violence, displayed in street riots, student protests and, ultimately, in political assassinations. Several assassinations marked the history of the movement, starting with the murder of the police prefect of Iași by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1924. At that time, the future leader of the Legion was taking his first political steps and the assassination and the subsequent trial, which ended with an acquittal motivated by "legitimate defense", boosted his popularity at a national level. This first, almost initiatory assassination, was followed by others, and some of them became part of a legionary "mythology" of violence.

The assassinations of the Jewish industrialist Tischler Mohr and of the Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Duca, in May and December 1933 respectively, became paradigmatic in this sense. The Legion defended the Romanian people from the Jewish "threat" and concomitantly defended itself and its activities from the incessant "attacks" of the state. This ideological and propagandistic issue became an increasingly important feature of the legionary self-portrait, in particular during the years 1936 and 1937. Writing in 1937, the prominent legionary member Alexandru Cantacuzino described violence "as a form of national education, as a force aimed to arouse the virtues of the Romanian people".[22] Another legionary ideologue, Dumitru C. Amzăr, presented legionary violence as a necessary defensive action, which occurred when the "soul" and the "honor" of a legionary member were repeatedly demeaned and offended. Thus, a violent act by a member of the Legion was never an act of aggression, but rather a retaliation, a revenge, or a response to a previous enemy strike.[23]

By designing its political activity as warfare, even if a "defensive" one, the Legion was an inherently violent movement and violence was inextricably linked to political action. It acquired an ordinary dimension through violent language and attitudes, with the effect of producing and maintaining a state of fear and uncertainty among their targeted "enemies", in particular the Jewish population. The inclusion of women in this narrative of violence, as well as their participation in violent actions, followed a more complex path. The Legionary Movement envisaged a women's section from its foundation in 1927. The following year, a language aimed at incorporating women into the militaristic world

of legionary ideology and discourse started to emerge. The Legion's ideological elaborations during this early stage can be traced throughout the pages of the movement's first magazine *Pământul Strămoșesc* (The Ancestral Land, 1927-30, 1933).

In spring 1928, the magazine announced the foundation of the first formal women's section, the "sisters of the Legion". The women of the section were presented as a group of "fighting women", introducing the concept of the woman fighter for the first time in legionary language.[24] Even more militarized accents accompanied the foundation of the first women's group – called *cetățuie* (small fortress) – in the city of Galați. The language of the article is permeated by military metaphors, and the "fortress" is defined as a "soldierly" organization.[25] Thus, ideologically speaking, the Legion was presented as an army, and every member, men and women, as a potential fighter. The choice of the word "small fortresses" to define women's groups is in line with the rhetoric of "defensive" violence mentioned above.[26]

As was the case with many other ideological stances, the concept of the legionary woman fighter was further elaborated in the mid-1930s, concomitantly with the Legion's expansion in following and political importance. In 1935, the prominent legionary commander Ion Banea, in a booklet called *Rânduri către generația noastră* (Lines for our generation), called for the participation of women alongside men in the great legionary battle:

> "We find ourselves today in a moment of great transformations, of fight. From this honorable battle, the women of our times can't be missing. We want the woman of our generation to be a fighter. *We want her to be a comrade.*"[27]

The role of legionary women as "fighters" and "comrades in arms" became an increasingly important theme in legionary gender discourse. The meanings and implications related to the potential role of women as fighters were analyzed at various times in the mid-1930s, signaling thus a need for this issue to be addressed more deeply by legionary ideologues.

As was often the case in legionary discourse, ideological stances and rhetorical choices were constantly reshaped and modified by actual circumstances and practices. The attention given to the issue of the woman fighter in the mid-1930s was very likely fostered by the growing number of women who joined the Legion, and by the discussions on various

role models these women found available or desirable for them within the movement. Legionary ideologues seemed particularly concerned with the education and training deemed appropriate for women. In this sense, in a document intended for internal use it was stated that women's education should be in accordance with the "feminine" spirit and should encourage and privilege "feminine" predispositions, at professional and social levels.[28] However, inflamed by the rhetoric of battle, the spectrum of appropriate options for women became wider.

Thus, what did it mean for the women who joined the Legionary Movement to have different, if not contradictory, models to conform to? Was the idea of fighting and contributing to the defense of the nation appealing to women? Could women militate alongside men? Could they be violent? Could they be heroes? The legionary poet and ideologue Radu Gyr tried to find answers to these and other questions in a booklet published in 1936 and developed from the text of a lecture he gave at the University of Iași in December 1935. In this relatively long booklet, replete with literary and cultural references, the author considered the ways and forms of women's participation in the "spiritual, moral and national heroism" that he ascribed to the "revolutionary" legionary youth. Starting from the premise that women had a crucial role to play in the heroic endeavors of the Legion, Gyr analyzed these roles and "missions".

The grounds of his theses comprise a wide range of presumptions and stereotypes about feminine "psychic" qualities and women's "natural" superior morality and intensity of feelings. As a result, for Gyr women were naturally inclined toward self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, and these virtues, central to the legionary ethos, could be stimulated by women, first and foremost in their roles as wives and mothers. But being wives and mothers were not the only roles available, given the inexhaustible qualities of women. They could be intellectuals, and at the same time, cultivate the arts and crafts inherited from their grandmothers, and they could even be called to defend their own homes and their country "weapons in hand". Enumerating a wide range of role models, from Joan of Arc and Antigone to the Virgin Mary, what the author envisaged in the booklet was the quasi-absurd ideological construct of a "heroine" or better, a "super-heroine" expected to fulfil a variety of duties and roles by virtue of her extraordinary qualities and spiritual greatness.[29]

The booklet of Radu Gyr represented the most systematic attempt to offer an ideological framework for the roles and models available to women in the Legionary Movement. However, throughout the highly

rhetorical and metaphorical discourse, the practical actions of a legionary woman fighter remained very vague. The direct connection between women and violence was not directly exposed. While legionary women were depicted as potential fighters, heroines, and "comrades in arms", the exercise of violence by women did not emerge in a straightforward way. Gyr briefly hinted at this possibility when he presented legionary women as able to defend their country "weapons in hand", if necessary. Being a fighter might have entailed to be ready to die for the Legion and for the nation, but significantly, there was no mention of women's readiness to kill.

Militarized language and women's participation in legionary "battles" notwithstanding, committing acts of violence remained a taboo. This taboo was primarily an ideological one, but also a practical one. The issue of self-sacrifice, was, on the contrary, more in line with legionary discourse and its passive character made it more suitable for women as well. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has observed, the construction of women as "naturally" non-violent, mostly in relation to their role as "life givers", has often excluded women from the very conceptualization of violence, especially collective violence.[30] In this sense, the incorporation of women into the legionary "army" was not taken to its extreme, and in legionary discourse there was little ideological room for women to commit violent acts.

This taboo, however, was mostly valid in the case of physical violence. Nonetheless, the legionary political project was inherently and overtly violent. Not only was its political activity envisaged as warfare, but the entire legionary ideology and the future "legionary world" the movement strove to build were grounded in violence. Antisemitism was the backbone of legionary ideology, and various forms of violence against the Jewish population constituted an integral part of the movement's political activity. To this violence legionary women members and sympathizers contributed in manifold ways, through their support to the Legion and the adoption of a violent language and attitude toward the Jewish population. Women's voices were seldom present in legionary publications and propaganda material. In the very rare cases when they were, women proved to have incorporated the violent antisemitic language promoted by the legionary discourse.

The first article published in *The Ancestral Land* written by a legionary woman, the student Maria Vieru, contained all the elements typical of legionary propaganda. Despite what would come to be called (by legionary men) women's "sensitivity", the violence of her language was not sweetened merely because it was written by a woman or directed

to women readers. The references to "Jewish dirt" were as crude and straightforward as the ones written by male authors.[31] A similar example is offered by the songs written by Viorica Lăzărescu, seemingly the only woman songwriter of the movement. Songs were a very important element in the legionary rituals, and they were sung at meetings, events, and commemorations. There were songs dedicated to various regional groups, to the "legionary youth", to the "heroes" who had died in battle, like Ion Moța and Vasile Marin. Songs marked important moments and figures of the Legion and collective singing reinforced the bonds of legionary fraternity.[32] In Lăzărescu's lyrics the main legionary themes are not "feminized" or translated into gendered terms. Many of her lyrics featured "calls to battle", indicating their composition in a period when the concept of politics as warfare was well-established, as was women's contribution to the legionary struggle. Moreover, in the song *Înainte* (Forward), Lăzărescu mentions the "vile pagans", who were bringing to the Romanian people only "injustice and tears".[33]

The brief period during which the Legionary Movement came to power alongside Ion Antonescu represented yet another, short-lived but significant, shift in discourses and practices in relation to women's participation. The National Legionary State lasted from September 1940 to the so-called legionary rebellion and the concomitant pogrom of January 21-23, 1941. The Legion seized power after two years of underground activity, characterized by extreme violence and dramatic changes. Codreanu, together with many other prominent members, had been assassinated and a great number of legionaries were imprisoned. With the proclamation of the National Legionary State in September 1940, the prisoners were released and legionary cadres both old and new tried to resurrect the Legion from its ashes. But violence was not abandoned, on the contrary: the few months of the regime were characterized by chaos, incompetence, arbitrary violence, revenge against former "enemies" and the instituting of a state of terror for the Jewish population.

In this context, the discourses on and the activities of legionary women took at least two very different paths. On the one hand, the creation of the "Organization of Legionary Ladies" in October 1940 grouped together old and new supporters from the upper classes.[34] These "ladies", and several other legionary women, engaged in philanthropic activities and offered a wide range of social provisions. An ample series of social initiatives were covered by the press and saw the participation of many high society women, legionary and otherwise. The union of different nationalist

political forces was deemed necessary given the moment of crisis and the potential entry of Romania into the war, which did not happen, however, until June 1941.

On the other hand, the Legion commemorated women "martyrs" who had lost their lives for the legionary ideal. The very restricted number of women to have "fallen in battle" transformed them in legionary discourse into exceptional examples of strength, sacrifice, and devotion. Among these women, the ultimate "heroine" in the legionary pantheon was Nicoleta Nicolescu, the Legion's first commander of the women's section and personal friend of Codreanu. In July 1939, Nicolescu was arrested and subsequently tortured and assassinated by the police. In the fall of 1940, among the incessant ceremonies, memorials, and commemoration of dead legionaries, Nicoleta Nicolescu received constant attention. An article from the time even used the expression "Nicoletele", a collective plural name to designate the legionary "heroines" as a group.[35] Her ashes, along with those of other legionary "martyrs", were reburied in Predeal (in the Carpathian Mountains) at the end of October 1940, during a solemn ceremony.[36]

Thus, in the months preceding the rebellion and the pogrom, legionary women emerged, especially in propaganda, as detached from the ordinary violence that characterized this period. On the one hand, groups of respectable legionary "ladies" became the organizers and the managers of various welfare services. These "constructive" activities overshadow and conceal any other form of women's participation during this period. On the other hand, the legionary women closer to the exercise of violence were treated as fallen "heroines", presented as innocent victims of a murderous persecution. But in-between the two ends of the spectrum, the "lady" and the "martyr", there was an entire range of legionary women who were motivated, among other reasons, by ideology, opportunism, family ties. Some of these legionary women participated, in various forms, in the rebellion and the pogrom of January 21-23, 1941.

3. A Legionary Couple in the Jilava Forest Massacre

3.1 Victims, Perpetrators, and the Limits of Justice

The vast majority of the victims assassinated during the Bucharest pogrom were found shot dead, robbed of their clothes, and scattered in the

snow of the Jilava forest, on the outskirts of the city. Throughout the night between January 21st and 22nd, at the height of the pogrom, legionary teams rounded Jews from their homes, using these break-ins also to steal money and jewelry, often "offered" to them by the victims themselves in the desperate attempt to save their lives. The Jews were then brought to various legionary headquarters and offices: some of these locations came to be known in the historiography of the pogrom as "torture centers".[37] Here the Jews were beaten, often with savagery and by numerous legionaries. The latter tried to extort additional money from the victims and in some cases forced them to "sell" their shops and businesses for symbolic sums.

After the beatings and the extortions, around 90 Jews were brought outside Bucharest, in a forest close to the village of Jilava, today a suburban small town of around ten thousand inhabitants. Here, very close to the main road which still connects Bucharest to the city of Giurgiu on the Danube, legionaries shot the Jews who were brought there with different transports in the hours preceding the dawn of January 22nd.[38] Rabbi Herș Guttman, one of the very few survivors, described the last stages of the massacre in a deposition given in December 1949:

> "[…] we were packed like sardines into a van, we were about 40 Jews. The van started driving and we drove for a long time without realizing […] where we were being taken. At one point, we heard shots and the truck stopped. We knew that the end had come and that we would be shot too. The Jews started to cry, to pray, to appeal to me as a rabbi, but there was nothing we could do. The truck door opened in the back. We saw that we were on a road, in the middle of the forest, without knowing where. There were five or six armed legionaries in the car and they started to take out the Jews, and shot them, two by two, with dizzying speed".[39]

Rabbi Guttman was brought to the Jilava forest together with his two eldest sons, Iancu and Iosif, who both died almost immediately after being shot. Their father survived and, in the morning, he started walking on the road close to the forest edge. He arrived at a building that turned out to be the town hall of Jilava. Many legionaries from the village and the nearby localities were gathered there, since during the days of the rebellion they occupied a great number of administrative buildings. Guttman was taken in by the legionaries and closed in a room with around eight other Jews who also survived the first massacre and arrived there probably in similar

ways. At night, this small group was brought back to the killing site in the forest and shot again.

Rabbi Guttman survived this time as well, and arrived again at the Jilava town hall, where he received the same treatment as the day before. However, it was January 23rd and the rebellion was about to be crushed by the authorities. During that day, regular soldiers cleared the town hall, first brought him to the police station of Jilava and then finally back to Bucharest. The incredible story of the Rabbi's survival of two shootings started to be known and registered already in the immediate aftermath of the pogrom. The renowned Romanian Jewish journalist Felix Brunea-Fox interviewed Guttman and wrote a heartfelt and detailed account of his story around February 1941.[40] As we shall see below, in the following years, and until the early 1950s, Herș Guttman would appear as a key witness in the different trials held against the legionaries of the Jilava town hall.

Among them, at the center of my analysis stands the "legionary couple" formed by Constantin Doncu, the mayor of Jilava during the legionary rebellion, and his wife Elena. During their subsequent trials, many different actors took part in the reconstruction and the narrative of the events. Beyond the prosecutors and their key witnesses, other legionary members from Jilava and the nearby localities (many also on trial), inhabitants of the village, passersby, neighbors, relatives were called to testify. While the history of transitional justice in Romania has started to receive increasing scholarly attention over the past decade, most of this attention is still devoted to the major protagonists and trials, in particular to Ion Antonescu, his entourage, and the higher echelons of the army in the territories occupied by Romania during the war.[41]

Less attention has been devoted so far to "minor" trials, to "ordinary" perpetrators or accomplices, to events at the micro-historical level. Even less explored are the gender dimensions of transitional justice. Elena Doncu, her husband, and other legionaries from Jilava went on trial for the assassination of the small group of Jews who survived the first mass shooting in the forest. While the executors of the greater massacre were not identified, the composition of this tight legionary group and the process that led to the decision to kill the survivors emerges from the indictments and the depositions. The transcripts of the legal proceedings also shed light on the social and political interactions between defendants and witnesses, on the widespread antisemitism and the thin line that separated "formal" legionary members from "non-legionary" accomplices and passive bystanders. At the same time, the motivations of the prosecutors,

the charges, the discourses used by the defense, and the languages of the different convictions open significant windows on the more general priorities and perspectives of different political regimes.

Elena Doncu, her husband and other eighteen men faced a group trial in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion and the pogrom. The sources available on the legal proceedings held by Military Tribunals during the Antonescu regime are very scant. A great part of this archival material got lost in a fire. Some files that I managed to consult at the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), which took over this collection, show signs of burning and many pages are illegible. However, some of these documents have been preserved due to different circumstances. In this case, a copy of the sentence from 1941 was requested by the court when the case was reopened at the end of the 1940s. Thus, while the transcripts of the different stages of the trial are missing, the sentence contains nevertheless rich information on the role played by the various defendants in the assassination of the Jews and on the position taken by the prosecutors.

Constantin Doncu, even if he was the mayor of Jilava in those days, was not physically present during the imprisonment of the Jews in the locales of the city hall and their subsequent assassination. At the outbreak of the rebellion, he left for Bucharest and participated with many other legionaries in the occupation of the County Prefecture.[42] As a result, he was convicted only for the crime of rebellion and sentenced to five years in prison and two years of internment.[43] In charge of the Jilava town hall and one of those involved in the decision of assassinating the Jews was Eduard Tomescu. He appears as well in the reconstruction of the events given by the above-mentioned journalist, Brunea-Fox, based on the interview with Rabbi Herș Guttman. Tomescu, "young, beautiful" and cruel, promised the Rabbi he will not survive another time.[44] Tomescu was indeed only 19 years old at the time of events. He received one of the heaviest convictions: a total of 25 years of hard labor and ten years in prison.[45]

Three men were convicted for the material execution of the assassinations. One of them, Petre Ivănescu, committed suicide when he realized that the legionary rebellion had failed.[46] The other two, even if they had both totally or partially admitted their involvement in the first hearings, during the trial tried to deflect all responsibility on Ivănescu. In the attempt to exculpate themselves, they declared to have committed the crimes forced by Ivănescu, who allegedly threatened them with his weapon. The court, however, rejected these claims, since all of them

were armed, so that nobody was in the position to force others with a weapon.[47] As a result, they were convicted and sentenced to 25 and 15 years of hard labor.[48]

Elena Doncu was the only woman in the group of defendants and she was accused of complicity in murder. No explicit reference was made to her gender, at least not in the sentence. Nevertheless, her cooking for the legionaries present at the Jilava town hall is mentioned among the various forms of complicity of which she was found guilty:

> "[Elena Doncu] encouraged the executioners to commit the murders by telling them that orders were given to execute the Jews; she brought food to the defendants grouped in the town hall, coming several times during the day to inquire about the unfolding of the events in Jilava and in Bucharest, where her husband was. She saw that they did not have enough ammunition […] she prepared 36 cartridges, and [then another] 30 cartridges caliber 12, and seven caliber 16, and she gave them to the mayor's secretary […]"[49]

For the complicity in the assassination of the Jews, and in particular for having manufactured the cartridges, Elena Doncu was convicted and sentenced to five years of hard labor and two years of internment.[50]

Elena Doncu (spelled Dancu) appeared also in an article published in the newspaper *Universul* (The Universe) on February 3rd, 1941, that is, a few days before the final verdict of the Military Tribunal. With some imprecisions, the article reconstructs the assassination of the Jews by the group of legionaries from Jilava. In this reconstruction, Elena Doncu encouraged Eduard Tomescu, who was allegedly (and unlikely) "hesitant", to kill the Jews "by throwing 12 bullets on his table".[51] Thus, the newspaper article places her at the center of the decision-making process that led to the death of the Jews kept hostages in the Jilava town hall. Since the complete transcripts of the trial are missing, it is not possible to establish with certainty if she threw the bullets to encourage Tomescu to make a decision. It seems, however, a sensationalist detail: the connection between Elena Doncu and the cartridges was correct, but throwing them on the table adds a cinematographic effect suited for a newspaper article.

Before pronouncing the verdicts, the court declared that it considered as extenuating circumstances that the perpetrators were members of the Legionary Movement, and as such, they were influenced by "concrete propaganda". As an example, the transcript shows the complete lyrics

of a legionary song with a strong antisemitic content and very violent exhortations to "clean" the country of "leeches".[52] Because of this extenuating circumstance, the court did not condemn any of the material executioners to a life sentence, which was initially proposed by the prosecutors. The new regime emerged after the rebellion, a military dictatorship ruled by Ion Antonescu, had to punish the rebels while carefully avoiding to place the pogrom at the center of the rebellion. Within a few months from the events, the regime promulgated new and increasingly harsh antisemitic legislation and, in June 1941, entered the war as a key ally of Nazi Germany.

Elena Doncu was released from prison already on December 1st, 1942.[53] On the contrary, her husband was still in prison at the beginning of 1944. While he did not take part in the assassination of the Jews in Jilava, his position as mayor during the National Legionary State and his enduring legionary allegiances were among the reasons that prevented an early release. In March 1944 he submitted a request for release to the Ministry of the Interior, where he stated that:

> "[…] as mayor of the regime then in power, I did nothing but timorously executing orders […] I did nothing on my own initiative […] all my life I have been an honest man […] I am married with three children who have been left without any moral and material support […] I have always regretted the circumstances that have brought me to the accused's bench […] only the events, often stronger than human will, have brought me where I am"[54]

Doncu's exculpatory motivations did not, however, result in his release. The prison authorities, asked for an opinion on his case, declared him a "rebellious" and "dangerous" element, still strong in his legionary beliefs.[55] While I could not trace so far the motivations that led to the early release of Elena Doncu, it is possible to suppose the concurrence of different causes: as a woman, she did not hold any position of power in the regime; her sentence was relatively light; and as a mother of three children with both parents in prison, it was more "natural" to allow her to return to family life.

3.2 Gender, Politics, and Moral Responsibility

Two years later, in April 1944, Elena Doncu started to be followed by the police and to be considered a "suspect", most probably of ongoing legionary activity. This renewed attention towards her from the authorities coincided with the last months of the Antonescu regime. Brief entries on her movements and contacts were registered at regular intervals between April and early September 1944. Since her husband was in prison, she maintained the family by working as a seamstress, especially doing knitwork and embroidery for different clients in Bucharest. The suspicion of her being engaged in legionary propaganda among her clients in the city appeared to be unlikely by May, after a few weeks of investigation. According to the reports, she was struggling with great economic hardships and was often supported by her brothers-in-law.

However, the situation appears very different in the summer of 1944. In June, the police registered that she was spending most of her days in Bucharest and often returned home only late in the night. Moreover, an informant from the village of Jilava told the agents that Elena Doncu was still in contact with former legionaries, whom she met in the city. This information was corroborated, in the view of the police, by a change in her lifestyle. She and her children were well dressed, and on Sundays she went to the theater or to the movies. Since her earnings as a seamstress could not explain these "luxuries", it was assumed that she was materially supported by various legionary members from Bucharest. This addition to the reports registered in August 1944 is one of the last detailed entries on Elena Doncu's activity. The file continues throughout the year 1945, but it does not contain further new information.[56]

As in most belligerent countries, the years 1944 and 1945 represented a period of great turmoil for Romania: the fall of Antonescu and his military dictatorship in August 1944, the continuation of the war on the side of the Allied forces, and, following the end of the war, the gradual setting up and consolidation of the new communist regime. The main and most urgent priority was the judgment and punishment of those responsible for the war and for the terrible crimes committed. The process of transitional justice took different forms in the various national contexts, each with their own specificities and outcomes. In Romania, similarly to other countries of the former so-called Eastern bloc, special courts were assigned for this kind of legal proceedings, the "People's Tribunals", in Bucharest and in Cluj. As already mentioned above, the functioning of these tribunals and

the sentences pronounced by them have received increasing scholarly attention, in particular as far as major figures such as Antonescu and his entourage are concerned.[57]

From 1947 onwards, the task of prosecuting and convicting "minor" perpetrators returned to ordinary tribunals. A new law was also promulgated in the same year, in which the category of crimes against humanity was more clearly defined, and expanded in its reach.[58] Even before the promulgation of the new law, Elena Doncu came again under the eye of the police. In March 1946, the police section in charge of preparing a file on her as a "legionary suspect" asked the Military Tribunal for a copy of the sentence from 1941, when she received her first conviction.[59] Two years later, in November 1948, she was arrested, held in custody, and in July 1949 formally charged for crimes against humanity for "having participated during the legionary rebellion in the massacre of the Jews in the Jilava forest".[60]

Alongside Elena Doncu, the prosecutors charged for crimes against humanity Vasile Mihăescu, a priest in the nearby village of Mierlari. In the first trial of 1941, his involvement was deemed marginal: he was acquitted of the most severe crimes, such as rebellion and complicity in murder. He was convicted only for criminal possession of a weapon and sentenced to one year and a half in prison.[61] Together with these two defendants, who were present in the Jilava town hall during the days of the events, another woman from a nearby village was initially accused, but, as we shall see, her case was ultimately dropped by the court. The drafting of the indictments and the collection of testimonies by the prosecutors were long and meticulous. Witnesses were heard multiple times between 1949 and 1951. The actual trial began in the last months of 1951, and lasted until June 1952.

An important element in building the case against Elena Doncu was represented by her legionary allegiances. In most testimonies collected by the prosecutors over two years there is a mention of this aspect, either to confirm or to deny it. The witnesses were mostly neighbors and inhabitants of the village of Jilava, who thus supposedly knew her relatively well or saw her often, especially when her husband became mayor during the National Legionary State. Many witnesses stated that she was a legionary supporter: they saw her wearing the green shirt (the legionary uniform), others declared that she was also armed.[62] Rumors about her participation in the events clearly spread in the village and some of them were mentioned in the statements, which included gruesome

details. A witness "heard" that Elena Doncu led the massacre of the Jews in Jilava; another that she went to the forest to bring the ammunitions to Petre Ivănescu (the executioner who later committed suicide), and guided him towards the bodies that were still moving.[63]

Another group of witnesses declared not to know whether Elena Doncu was a legionary or not, and others, though not very numerous, declared that they had never seen her wearing the green shirt. A witness even described her as "a most hardworking woman".[64] Her mother-in-law declared that she never saw her in legionary uniform, and that during the days of the massacre Elena Doncu was at home.[65] This latter statement is contradicted by other witnesses, who saw her at the town hall, and especially by one of the key witnesses of the trial, doctor Eugen Solomon, who was also kept hostage in Jilava by the legionaries, but survived. Rabbi Guttman, in a long deposition given in December 1949, declared that he saw "a woman" at the town hall, but did not think he would have been able to recognize her.[66] Eugen Solomon, on the contrary, recognized Elena Doncu: he remembered her coming to the town hall and, "with an air of superiority", asking one of the legionaries present there to show her the hostages. He also "heard" that she was the one who armed the executioners.[67]

During one of the first rounds of interrogations, in 1949, Elena Doncu admitted that she went to the town hall during the days of the rebellion, but only to look for her husband, whom she had not seen for three days. At the town hall, she met the already mentioned Eduard Tomescu, who told her that her husband was in Bucharest. After receiving this information, she just returned home and she "took care of the household chores". As far as her legionary feelings were concerned, she firmly denied any involvement in the Legionary Movement, of which "she knew nothing".[68] Eduard Tomescu, who was serving his sentence in prison, was also interrogated in 1949. His deposition is pervaded by a self-exculpatory vein, and Tomescu presented himself as the most "compassionate" of the group. Apart from this very improbable self-portrait, in his statement he placed Elena Doncu among those who decided to assassinate the Jews imprisoned in the town hall. Moreover, according to Tomescu, she also brought two guns.[69]

During the trial, which lasted from fall 1951 until June 11th, 1952, the defense of Elena Doncu changed its line. By that time, the case built against her was strong, and it appeared perhaps unrealistic and legally useless to claim that Doncu was unconnected with the facts. Instead, the

defense opted for two different arguments: firstly, that she was not one of the material executioners of the assassinations, and thus not directly responsible for them; and secondly, that she had already been convicted for the same crime in 1941, and in line with the legal concept of *res judicata* (judged matter), she could not be prosecuted again for the same offense.[70] When the sentence was pronounced on June 11th, 1952, the court nullified both these arguments, and used a broad definition of the concept of responsibility in crimes against humanity to motivate its verdict.

The court considered Elena Doncu "a fervent legionary", a woman motivated by "racial hatred", who pursued the "criminal political goals of the legionary organization". She procured the necessary weapons and ammunitions, which showed the "degree of her perversity" in contributing to the "mass extermination of Jews". The court acknowledged as a fact that she did not participate directly in the assassinations and did not execute the Jews personally. However, she was an accomplice and as such, she was materially and *morally* responsible for the massacres in the Jilava forest.[71] As for the *res judicata* invoked by the defense, the court clarified that she was now charged with a crime (crimes against humanity) that did not exist at the time of the events, and that made it a different object of judgment. In conclusion, Elena Doncu was convicted and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor.[72]

As anticipated above, another woman, Elisabeta Scarlat, was initially prosecuted together with Elena Doncu and others involved in the Jilava massacre. She was accused of complicity in the assassination of Marcel Gherwirtz, who survived the first mass shooting, but was ultimately killed by the group of the Jilava town hall on the following night. The case against her was based on a statement already given by the victim's father in 1945, and included in the proceedings of the 1951 trial. Marcel Gherwirtz, who was only 17 years old, severely wounded but alive after the first massacre, waited until morning "hidden among the dead bodies" in the forest. He then walked away and arrived in the village Regele Ferdinand (today 1 Decembrie), not far from Jilava, where he asked for help and shelter Elisabeta Scarlat, who ran a tavern in the village. She "pretended to be moved" by the boy's despair and let him in. While he was asleep in her house, however, "this devilish woman" went to the village town hall, also occupied by legionaries, and denounced the boy. He was brought to the Jilava town hall, where he was imprisoned in the same room as Rabbi Guttman and the other few survivors of the previous night. Unlike the Rabbi, Marcel Gherwirtz did not survive the second massacre.[73]

In his statement, the victim's father described the trials held in 1941 as a "mere parody", and many perpetrators escaped judgment.[74] While a much higher number of those involved in the massacre were convicted or at least prosecuted under the 1947 law, at this trial the court dropped the case against Elisabeta Scarlat. The motivations invoked shed light on the underlying rationale of the proceedings and on the many possible interpretations of the concept of responsibility. For the court, "the most plausible" reason that prompted the defendant to denounce the boy was the wish to avoid trouble with the authorities. It could not be held that she "knowingly contributed" to the boy's death, because no evidence could indicate that she was aware of the massacre committed in the Jilava forest. Moreover, there was no evidence of "even a slight participation" of the defendant in the "actions undertaken by the legionaries for the extermination of the Jews".[75]

In conclusion, in the opinion of the court, Elisabeta Scarlat denounced Marcel Gherwirtz to avoid the possible "nuisance" that could derive from hiding a Jew "*at that time*".[76] However, the possibility of facing serious consequences, or even light "nuisance" for sheltering the boy was extremely unlikely even in that context. It is not possible to assess with absolute certainty if Scarlat had already heard of the great massacre in the forest before reporting Gherwirtz's presence to the legionaries of the village. But again, it is extremely unlikely that she was completely unaware of what was happening in the village. In the declaration she gave during the investigations, mentioned in the proceedings, she tried to exculpate herself by stating that she went to the town hall to help the wounded boy. Allegedly, Gherwirtz himself had asked her to call the company for which he worked in order to come and take him back to Bucharest. As a result, she went to the town hall, where was the only telephone available in the village.

This exculpatory statement must have appeared as unrealistic to the court, since it was mentioned but rejected as inadmissible proof in the decision to drop the case.[77] Thus, from the analysis of the court's motivations to clear Elisabeta Scarlat from all the charges seem to emerge two main elements. Firstly, though expressed in a convoluted language, it was determinant that Scarlat was not a legionary woman, or this did not emerge from the investigations. Whether she sympathized with the movement, or supported its ideology while not being involved in it actively, was beyond the competence of the court. Secondly, there was a limit to how wide the concept of responsibility could be, especially

with regard to what was called in the conviction of Elena Doncu, "moral" responsibility. For the court, Scarlat denounced Marcel Gherwirtz without knowing that he would have been assassinated. If she suspected it, or expected it, or if other motivations, beyond the fear of "troubles" from the authorities prevented her from hiding the boy and thus saving his life, were deemed aspects that did not pertain to the realm of law.

In the meantime, about 500 kilometers west of Bucharest, in the Severin County, Elena Doncu's husband Constantin was also on trial during the same months of 1952. His trial initially appeared as completely unrelated to the events in Jilava, since Constantin Doncu was arrested there under a different identity. A connection to his past existed nevertheless: he was now on trial for being part of a "subversive organization" composed of several former legionary members.[78] While his involvement in the organization ultimately emerged as marginal, the investigations conducted for the case led to the discovery of his real identity. Constantin Doncu was released from prison in 1947, and in 1948 he left his family, changed his identity, and moved very far away from Bucharest. During the trial of 1952 he declared that in 1948 he knew he would have been arrested again, and though he "did not feel guilty", he decided to flee and live under a different name.[79] As for his family, he stated that he had interrupted any contact with his wife in 1948.[80]

The disclosure of his real identity led to a new trial, during which he was charged for crimes against humanity in relation to the massacres in Jilava. The trial also involved a few other men from the group convicted for the first time in 1941. In 1953, however, it emerged that Constantin Doncu was not physically present in Jilava at the time of the massacre, but that he was in Bucharest together with other rebellious legionaries. For this reason, his case was to be judged separately from the others.[81] In May 1954 he was convicted for crimes against humanity and sentenced to ten years of hard prison. The court motivated the verdict by stating that "though he personally did not commit any murder, his attitude before and during the massacre proves that it was prepared and executed with his knowledge". Moreover, all witnesses "unanimously" declared that both him and his wife were "fervent legionaries", who held legionary meetings at their home, and possessed many weapons and munitions. Thus, even if he was not present personally during the events, his "racial hatred towards the Jewish people" linked him to the massacre, which was perpetrated "with his knowledge and approval".[82]

4. Conclusions

In spite of the severity of the sentence and the insistence of the court on the principle of wide responsibility, Elena Doncu was released from prison in November 1955.[83] The decree nr. 421/1955 granted amnesty to various categories of offenders convicted for crimes against peace and crimes against humanity.[84] Elena Doncu's case fell among one of these categories: those who were sentenced to more than ten years in prison and did not commit murder "on their own initiative". The decree thus reversed the notions of complicity and "moral" participation that guided the trials for crimes against humanity. Similar to these notions, the assessment of what one's "own initiative" entailed was open to interpretation and to political priorities. While Elena Doncu was immediately released, others from the group of the Jilava town hall, like the priest Vasile Mihăescu and Eduard Tomescu, served their sentences until 1964.[85] Constantin Doncu, Elena's husband, could not benefit from the amnesty because the decree excluded those who held official positions during the National Legionary State and the Antonescu regime, and he eventually died in prison in 1956.[86]

After both her convictions, Elena Doncu was the first to be released from prison among the small group of legionaries more closely involved in the assassination of the Jews imprisoned in the Jilava town hall. Her gender was never explicitly invoked as a determining factor during the trials and in the decisions that led to her release. Gendered structures, however, might have had an impact on her legal history, as it emerges more clearly from the 1951-52 trial and her subsequent release in 1955. In relation to other women, such as Elisabeta Scarlat, Elena Doncu's legionary activity, mentioned by many witnesses and gaining additional strength, perhaps indirectly, by the position of her husband, made a difference in the assessment of her participation. Her complicity was ideologically motivated and guided by clear intentions. When compared to legionary men, on the contrary, her political beliefs and role were probably considered marginal. Elena Doncu was a poor seamstress almost in her 50s when she was released, and her gender, class, and age very likely did not qualify her as a potential danger for the regime.

In all likelihood, most of the women, legionary or not, who participated in the Bucharest pogrom will remain anonymous, and their deeds impossible to reconstruct. Since gender is a contributing factor in the structuring of cultural and political beliefs, there is a tendency not to hold women responsible as a result of their supposed non-violent and apolitical

"nature". Documented cases that involve the direct participation of women in violent actions are overall far less numerous than those involving men, but, as Wendy Lower has remarked, these cases have to be taken seriously and not "dismissed as anomalies".[87] For a more comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust in Romania, the participation of women needs to be included in our historical knowledge, not as an appendix, or a "phenomenon", but as an integral part of this history. As this article shows, there are whole sets of still unexplored sources which can help us analyze how gender, in its interrelations with class, age, personal relationships, and political affiliations contributes to shape the exercise, the representation, and the memory of violence.

Endnotes

1   Emil Dorian, *Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary, 1937-1944* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), 138.

2   On Ion Antonescu and the military dictatorship, see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally. Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). For an account of the so-called "legionary rebellion" of January 1941, see 52-68. For the most recent work on the National Legionary State, see Florin Muller, *Statul national-legionar (septembrie 1940 - ianuarie 1941)*, Bucharest: Corint, 2025.

3   Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania* (Lincoln-Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press-Yad Vashem, 2011), 149-164. Feelings of abnormality, of enormity, in relation to the events of the Bucharest pogrom were expressed by the contemporaries. The renowned Romanian Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian registered in his diary on February 4, 1941: "[…] the fact is that we have experienced one of the worst pogroms in history. […] The stunning thing about the Bucharest bloodbath is the bestial ferocity of it […] I haven't found anything more terrible in Dubnow" [he refers to Simon Dubnow's *History of the Jews*], see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935-1944. The Fascist Years* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 316.

4   News on the crimes perpetrated at the slaughterhouse were also registered by Sebastian in his diary, see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935-1944*, 316. For additional details on this and other episodes of the Bucharest pogrom, as well as for an assessment of victims and damages, see Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu (eds.), *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, 112-115.

5   Emil Dorian, *Quality of Witness*, 140.

6   Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, 161.

7   With the expression "transitional justice" I intend in particular the postwar legal proceedings held against the perpetrators of the Holocaust in different countries. While the literature on this topic is extremely vast, for a general overview see Nico Wouters (ed.), *Transitional Justice and Memory in Europe (1945-2013)* (Cambridge Antwerp Portland: Intersentia, 2014).

8   Adrian Cioflâncă, '80 de ani de la masacrul antisemit din ianuarie 1941' [80 Years from the Antisemitic Massacre of January 1941], *Scena9*, 20 January 2021, retrieved at https://www.scena9.ro/article/masacru-antisemit-bucuresti-jilava-legionari-ianuarie-1941.

9   Among these works, see at least: Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: the destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*; Jean Ancel, *The economic destruction of Romanian Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007); Valentin Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

University Press,2009); Armin Heinen, *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007)

[10] The Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania is also available online at https://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Raport%20Final/Final_Report.pdf.

[11] Roland Clark, 'New models, new questions: historiographical approaches to the Romanian Holocaust', *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol. 19, No. 2, April 2012, 303–320.

[12] Among these works, see at least: Petre Matei, 'Roma Deportations to Transnistria during World War Two. Between Centralised Decision-Making and Local Initiatives', S:I.M.O.N. – *Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation*, 9 (2022) 2, 26–50; Dallas Michelbacher, *Jewish Forced Labor in Romania, 1940–1944* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); Grant T. Harward, *Romania's Holy War. Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); Paul A. Shapiro, *The Kishinev Ghetto, 1941-1942. A Documentary History of the Holocaust in Romania's Contested Borderlands* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015); Valentina Glajar, Jeanine Teodorescu (eds.), *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[13] Marion Kaplan, 'Gender. A Crucial Tool in Holocaust Research', in Larry V. Thompson (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies IV: Reflections on Religion, Justice, Sexuality, and Genocide* (Northwestern University Press, 2003), 163-170. Ruth Klüger, Holocaust survivor and professor of German Studies, wrote in her renowned memoir *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (2001): "[…] wars, and hence the memory of wars, are owned by the male of the species. And fascism is a decidedly male property, whether you were for or against it", quoted in Elissa Bemporad, 'Memory, Body, and Power: Women and the Study of Genocide', in Elissa Bemporad, Joyce W. Warren (eds.), *Women and Genocide. Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 5.

[14] In this growing field of research, see at least: Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013) and Elissa Bemporad, Joyce W. Warren (eds.), *Women and Genocide.*

[15] For one of the first descriptions of these sources, see Marius Cazan, 'The Bucharest Pogrom: New Archive Documents', in *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări*, 10/2017, 9-29.

[16] For Italy, see Cecilia Nubola, *Fasciste di Salò. Una storia giudiziaria* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2016); For Hungary, see Andrea Pető, *The Women of the Arrow Cross Party* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), in particular 61-87.

17 Jean Ancel, *Preludiu la asasinat. Pogromul de la Iași, 29 iunie 1941* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), p. 85 emphasis in the original.

18 The use of the name "Legionary Movement" instead of "Iron Guard" has become increasingly prevalent in the most recent literature. However, the designation "Iron Guard", as well as "the Legion" (implicitly referring to the movement's first name, "the Legion of the Archangel Michael"), are still used interchangeably by scholars in the field. The different names were originally related to different periods of the movement's political life, but they tended to be conflated and used indistinctly from the second half of the 1930s.

19 Among the most recent works on the Legionary Movement, see Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2015); Traian Sandu, *Un fascisme roumain. Histoire de la Garde de fer* (Paris: Perrin, 2014); Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea "Căpitanului"* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017).

20 For one of the first accounts of women's participation and gender relations in the Legion, see Maria Bucur, 'Romania', in Kevin Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 57-78.

21 Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-war Romania* (Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004), 86-89.

22 Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Cum suntem* (Sibiu: Editura Curierul, 1937), 3.

23 Dumitru C. Amzăr, *Naționalismul tineretului* (Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1936), 26.

24 'Informațiuni', *Pământul strămoșesc*, 15 March 1928, II, 6, p. 14-15.

25 'O cetățuie a surorii Legiunii la Galați', *Pământul strămoșesc*, April 1, 1928, 8.

26 This paragraph is derived in part from a section of a published article, see Anca Diana Axinia, 'In this country, women are also soldiers': interrelations between age and gender in the women's section of the Romanian Legionary Movement', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Volume 31, Issue 3 (2024), 468-491.

27 Ion Banea, *Rânduri către generația noastră*, 1935, p. 15, [emphasis in the original], in ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 279/1938, f. 21.

28 ANIC, Fond MI-D, dosar 17/1933, f. 99.

29 Radu Gyr, *Femeia în eroismul spiritual, moral și național* (Bucharest: Ed. Cetățuia Legionară, 1936).

30 Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 163-193.

31 Maria Vieru, Ân preajma sărbătorilor. Apel către surorile legionare', *Pământul strămoșesc*, 15 April 1928, II, 8, pp. 6-7.

[32]   On the role of songs and collective singing in the Legionary Movement, see Roland Clark, 'Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism', *Cultural and Social History*, 10:2, 2013, 251-271.

[33]   ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 221/1940, ff. 6-7, 29-32.

[34]   ANIC, fond MI-D, dosar 12/1940, f. 79.

[35]   Mihai Stelian Rusu, 'Domesticating Viragos. The Politics of Womanhood in the Romanian Legionary Movement', *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 5 (2016), 149-176, 169.

[36]   ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 257/1940, f. 9; dosar 262/1940, f. 97.

[37]   Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, 158-160.

[38]   For an account of the events and the names of the victims of the Jilava forest massacre, see the brochure issued on the occasion of the commemoration of the Bucharest pogrom in 2016, available online at https://www.csier.ro/documente/brosura/pogrom.pdf

[39]   CNSAS, Fond penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 365.

[40]   Felix Brunea-Fox, *Orașul măcelului* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1997), 83-103.

[41]   For a review of the most recent literature on postwar justice in the Romanian context, see Emanuel-Marius Grec, 'Romania: Historiography on Holocaust and Postwar Justice Studies', *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*, 2023; 1(1): 259–270.

[42]   CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 670.

[43]   Ibid., f. 679.

[44]   Felix Brunea-Fox, *Orașul măcelului*, 99.

[45]   CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 679.

[46]   Ibid., f. 665. The sentence mentions the suicide notes left by Ivănescu.

[47]   Ibid., f. 661.

[48]   Ibid., f. 680.

[49]   Ibid., f. 662.

[50]   Ibid., f. 679.

[51]   ANIC, Fond MI-D, dosar 10/1939, f. 159.

[52]   CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, ff. 675-676. The song in question is 'Imnul Legiunei Arhanghelului Mihail' [The Anthem of the Legion of the Archangel Michael].

[53]   Ibid., 733.

[54]   CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 080530 vol. II, f. 120.

[55]   Ibid., f. 122.

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[57]   Bogdan Chiriac, 'The Trial of the Antonescu Group (May 6 – 17, 1946) and the Communist Takeover in Romania. A Historical Interpretation.' PhD diss., Central European University, 2017; Alexandru Climescu, 'Law, Justice, and Holocaust Memory in Romania', in Alexandru Florian (ed.), *Holocaust Public*

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69   Ibid., f. 590.

70   Ibid., f. 270, 211.

71   Emphasis mine.

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75   Ibid., f. 443.

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OX VS. STEAM
"INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE MAKING OF URBAN SPACE: CRITICAL APPROACHES" AND "CULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE, MOBILITY"*

Malte Fuhrmann

Abstract

Istanbul and other Eastern Mediterranean port cities adapted some elements of nineteenth century state-of-the-art steam-propelled urban transport at a very early stage. However, these coexisted for nearly 150 years with more time-proven forms of muscle-propelled vehicles. Based on the concept of *chronopolitics*, this article enquires into the attitudes that residents and visitors to these cities developed towards this wide range of possibilities to move about the city. Did steam- and muscle-propelled mobility coexist peacefully or were they framed as a clash between different evolutionary stages?

Keywords: Urban transport; infrastructure; tramways; chronopolitics; Ottoman Empire; Istanbul; Izmir

1. Introduction

When I was teaching in Istanbul around the year 2018, on the way to my university, the shuttle bus would pass a 2.5 km state-of-the-art car tunnel. Inaugurated in 2010, it consists of two separate tubes, has high power ventilation, and uninterrupted radio and mobile phone reception. Pedestrians and cyclists are banned from using it. But at the tunnel exit, which was in a shantytown being demolished to make space for high-rise

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residences, I repeatedly saw a horse grazing on the well irrigated green strip between the different car lanes. Involuntarily, I was always seized by a sentiment of sympathy for the horse and whoever placed it there.

The horse grazing on a grass strip that was originally designed to please the eye of drivers before they entered a dark and dull concrete tube seems to me symptomatic of the kind of contrast that was much more frequent and relevant in this region 100-150 years ago, especially in Istanbul and other major cities of the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. That is, state-of-the-art infrastructure coexisted with other infrastructure forms with a longer history. Around 1900, steamers raced with commercial rowing boats crossing the straits or gulfs of the various port cities; camels, donkeys, and ox-carts competed with trains in bringing the cash crops of the interior to the ports, while electric trams and, soon after, cars plowed through crowds of pedestrians. City streets and houses could be illuminated by a wide number of energy sources, from candles to vegetable oil, gas, or electricity. In the very long run, some of these technologies died out or were marginalized, but between 1830 and 1930, the process seemed much more complicated in the Eastern Mediterranean. Steamship connections, railway lines, horse-drawn and later electrically powered tramways appeared, but were never developed to anywhere near their full potential, resulting in a long transition phase characterized by the coexistence of a wide variety of forms of mobility and combustion.

In what follows, I will attempt to gauge the relationship between them. What sense did contemporaries make of the coexistence of these modes of communication and illumination in their times? Was this coexistence taken as a given? Were they seen as complementary, serving different purposes within the urban framework? Can we therefore assume that for residents of cities on the Eastern Mediterranean, ox-carts and steam trains were not signifiers of different stages, with the latter quickly phasing out the former? Or was their relationship more one of conflict and if so, why? Did the one seem modern and the other outdated or was their relationship more complex?

As the question of popular reception is always a difficult one for historians, this article cannot give the ultimate answers; it must work with some conjectures and the qualitative interpretation of a limited number of sources, rather than a broad, representative sample. Also, there are a number of theoretical questions to clarify. In a first step, we shall ask about the wider relevance of the questions posed: what does a positive or a negative attitude to a particular form of propulsion signify? Here, the theoretical framework of *chronopolitics* can help. To then gauge the

spectrum of possible positions towards modes of transport and technology in general among contemporary intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire, we will have a look at the positions some of them took towards the railways in particular, or towards technological change in general. We will also ask whether such comments stood in contrast or in harmony with observations by people from outside the region. Having thus established the theoretical and discursive framework, we will then turn to the empiric evidence: what actually were the available transportation modes in late Ottoman port cities that people had access to? From among them, we shall concentrate on the *tünel* or underground metro system and on tramways, while also briefly discussing camels and port infrastructure. Finally, we will pose the question of how these attitudes changed over time, focusing on the late Hamidian period just prior to 1908, and what the effect of the Young Turk Revolution was, and then cast a look upon possible changes in attitudes in the interwar period (1923-1941 for the Eastern Mediterranean).

2. Can the Hare and the Porcupine be Friends? On the Coevalness of Different Transport Speeds

To begin, we must ask: What is it that makes us rank different forms of propulsion and energy according to some prescribed scale, categorizing them in the process? A popular view in many Western and Central European writings of the nineteenth century, which was later canonized in development theory, is that once an innovation appears that more efficiently serves the needs of society than the old one, the old technology will die out and the new one will conquer the market.[1] But what happens if this process of technology replacement is not straightforward, but unsuccessful or at least protracted? To answer this, we must discuss the "contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*), a notion popular in German sociology and historiography. Fernando Esposito and Tobias Becker have recently summed up the debate, synthesizing and operationalizing the terms within the field of *chronopolitics*. Asserting that all time constructs are inherently political, the two authors differentiate between the politics of time, the time of politics, and politicized time. The latter includes what Johannes Fabian has called the "denial of coevalness" and Dipesh Chakrabarty the "politics of historicism:" an entity, organizational form, cultural manifestation, economic activity, technical appliance, or, in our case, mode of transport or source of energy is delegitimized on the grounds that it transgresses

against an unquestionable chronopolitical order. Since the nineteenth century, this has mostly been an evolutionary model of progress:

> "In a world where the new is valorized and the old devalued, the dichotomy between old and new, past and present, the untimely and the timely, becomes central to how politics is legitimized …."[2]

Based on this simple juxtaposition, several erudite evolutionary teleologic orders have been drafted, from philosophy via anthropology and sociology to (last but not least) history, which already in its most basic methodology relies on arranging events and agents according to chronological sequences. Fernando Esposito mentions Jacques Turgot, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Henry Maine, Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward B. Tylor, John Lubbock, and Walt Whitman Rostow as just some of the influential names who (re)created stage models of human society, economics, and statehood for their respective disciplines.[3]

What do Marx's "progressive epochs" or Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* have to do with a horse grazing in front of a car tunnel in Istanbul? A lot. As mentioned, such evolutionary models of progress have focused on technology as driving forces of change. The inventions of bronze tools, agriculture, or steam combustion are all believed to have catalysed new eras of economics, society, and politics. Historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists have long criticized this idea of technical innovations as automatisms of change. David Graeber and David Wengrow have drawn our attention to the transitional period of several millennia between the invention of agriculture and its dominance in food production, during which many societies relied only to a small extent on crop raising for their diet.[4] The industrial revolution, many historians claim, was rather an "industrious revolution," sparked by humans willingly or forcedly intensifying and extending the labour they invested into formal work, rather than the sudden appearance of steam power.[5]

Nonetheless, the assumed automatisms of technical progress continue to inform not only academic debate, but also public memory, especially in the fields of transport. Here, the assumed teleology begins with hominids leaving their cave on two legs and climaxes in space travel. Every innovation that allows for greater speed, greater volume of transported goods, and more comfortable travel is lauded as a step forward. This formula has also come under activist criticism, especially in the context of

climate change. The dynamic towards more energy-intensive propulsion and ever larger private cars, trucks, airplanes, freight and cruise ships has been portrayed as an evolutionary dead-end. But when oversized SUVs or pickup trucks are criticized as "dinosaurs" and the bicycle is heralded as a step forward for humankind's ascent to a timely, less energy-intensive form of propulsion, this might break with the teleology of resource-intensive vehicles, but it reproduces nonetheless a chronopolitical order of transport evolution. What is more, the bicycle's revival is relatively minor compared to its heyday in the early decades of the twentieth century, before being almost eradicated in countries following the model of Fordism and mass-automobilization.

How exactly do my emotions for the grazing horse fit into these evolutionary models of transport? What lies behind my empathy? I come to the conclusion that it derives from seeing in the horse a comrade in a fight I and many other Istanbulites should have fought, but did not: against the constant automobilization of the city that drowns it in exhaust, noise, and traffic jams, and against the senseless production of up-market housing useful only for investing excess money of the happy few, in the process displacing the lower and middle classes. Is the horse for me then a genuine alternative for the twenty-first century, as the bicycle is for climate-activists? Hardly.

Horse carts used by street fruit vendors were still a fairly common sight in Istanbul a few decades ago, but have in my subjective impression become less frequent in the constantly growing megalopolis. Horse carriages remained mostly as an object of commodified nostalgia on the car-free recreational area of the Princes Islands, transporting foreign and domestic tourists to the sights, until the metropolitan municipality banned them in 2020. In essence though, my nostalgia for the horse by the car tunnel exit and that of the tourists selfying on the carriages is perhaps not too different, as we both see in the horse a signifier of an older time and order which we do not really long for out of practicality, but for aesthetic reasons. Drawing once again on Fernando Esposito's work, I find my stance to be reminiscent of Eric Hobsbawm's, who sympathized with historical "primitive rebels," but nonetheless judged them as outdated and considered a more modern form of resistance to be necessary.[6]

But what about modern periods and milieus where a wide range of transport possibilities, both energy-intensive and low-energy, steam-powered and muscle-powered, speedy and andante, inhabited the same space? Would contemporary observers also find no other framework

than to rank them on an evolutionary ladder? Or could they more easily accommodate these different speeds without resorting to the "denial of coevalness?" Heike Weber considers such protracted technical transition periods a "polichrony," the contemporaneity of technologies of different age.[7] A good field to investigate polichrony seems to be the Eastern Mediterranean roughly between 1830 and 1930. While camels, ox carts, but also horse-drawn trams and steam-propelled boats and trains might have disappeared by today and sailing and rowing boats, donkeys, and horses have become marginalized, this was a slow process, unfolding over several generations. A prolonged transition between the appearance of steam-propelled and later oil- and electricity-based modes of transport and the disappearance of older forms of mobility is characteristic of this time, which makes it hard to imagine that contemporaries saw in their epoch nothing more than a transitional phase for mobility.

3. The Steamship Revolution in Eastern Mediterranean Transport

To gauge attitudes among the men and women of letters of the time, let us begin with the coming of energy-intensive transport to the region. The *Swift* is acclaimed to be the first steam-propelled vessel to arrive in Constantinople. A passenger, Charles MacFarlane, describes its arrival in 1827 –

> "The combination of a violent contrary wind and a rapid current in a narrow strait was admirably calculated to give the Turks an advantageous idea of steam. Immense crowds gathered on the shores of the promontory on which Constantinople stands to gaze in astonishment as we passed, for this was the first steam-boat seen in these parts. The evidence of their senses told them that the wind was blowing hard from the Black Sea – that the current was running with its eternal violence, yet they saw the ship rapidly advancing. Several parties threw up their arms and hailed us, whilst others on horseback cantering along the beach kept up with us to learn in what this miracle should end. At some batteries along the coast as we were afterwards informed, we were well-nigh receiving less agreeable signs of wonder, – the cannoniers, in their ignorance, had conceived the vessel must be some extraordinary brulot, and had proposed firing into us."[8]

This depiction of steam-propelled transport technology arriving in the Eastern Mediterranean's capital thus follows a rather predictable narrative of

West European condescension and Orientalism. State-of-the-art technology seems intrinsic to the West's claim to superiority. By contrast, the Easterners react with superstition and ignorance, but also with admiration. This set the tone for the Orientalist narrative on transport technology in the East for decades to come, even though within a few years, steamers would become a ubiquitous sight in the Eastern Mediterranean ports, operating on a regular, often weekly basis to Marseilles or Trieste.[9] According to this narrative, Western transport innovations were interpreted as binary opposites to an Orient frozen in time, devoid of inherent progress, or even movement, as several more quotes in the course of this article will show.

Eastern European or Mediterranean men of letters reacted in two different ways to this Orientalist trope: a handful rejected the supposedly superior technology outright, while others accepted and propagated it, embracing the supremacist discourse in the process. We will first concentrate on the former, and then turn to the latter.

4. What Have the Railways Ever Done for Us? Why Liberation Must Come at a Snail's Pace

Even in the West and North of Europe, regions where supposedly the population embraced and benefited from the industrialization process, not all shared MacFarlane's simple equation of steam propulsion and social progress. Public intellectuals willing to lend their voice to opponents of new technologies include George Gordon Lord Byron, who had expressed sympathy for the Luddites, a movement that destroyed modern production lines in order to conserve more labour-intensive manufacturing.[10] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe likewise sympathized with laborers attempting to save jobs in the epoch of machine-driven rationalization and pauperism.[11] But can we find similar cases among intellectuals to the East of the continent?

Due to the nigh-absence of heavy industry in the East, discussions often centred on the railways. One famous early case was that of Lev Tolstoi and his dislike of trains, apparently provoked, among other reasons, by his motion sickness when using them. He wrote in 1857 that "the railroad is to travel as a whore is to love." [12] But Tolstoi's aversion seems to have been based mainly on sensory and aesthetic grounds. While the railway figures allegorically, and as a stage, in *Anna Karenina*, he does not spell out its implications for social change.[13]

Among those born on Ottoman soil, possibly the most eloquent opponent of so-called modern forms of transport was the primary school teacher, poet, and revolutionary Hristo Botev. Writing in the mid-1870s, he opposed the establishment of railways on political grounds. A railway in a capitalist society would always lead to more exploitation of the lower classes, he observed. Therefore, he suggested to postpone its establishment until after a future socialist revolution:

> "Look at all the civilized countries of Europe, listen to those cries and sufferings that are heard behind the official screens of human progress [...] A living example of this is England, in which, with all its machines and railways, the majority of the people are slaves and servants of the privileged classes [...] First of all, we ask: are the railways useful for us? To this question we answer emphatically that they are not. As a discovery that shortens time and space and serves to rapidly exchange products and human services, and as an improvement that replaces the physical strength of man and animals, the railways would be useful to every nation [...] But because the railroads are made only by governments (whose treatment of peoples is akin to that of bandits towards civilians), and by certain private thieves and bandits, and because they serve only their interests, they are harmful to every nation [...]"[14]

Botev warned that the ongoing Europeanization process of the Ottoman Empire would have devastating social effects. Traditional manufacturers could not hope to compete if their region was easily accessible for imports and exports. As a result, the region would be reduced to an exporter of raw materials to Western and Northern Europe and be forced to re-import the final products, thus reducing its economic role to that of the banana republics of Latin America. Many later socialist thinkers, and especially those more in tune with the Marxist position that technological progress is inevitable and ultimately positive for social liberation, would find such ideas in stark contrast to their techno-optimism, culminating in posters depicting Vladimir I. Lenin and other leaders of the Soviet communists in conjunction with a dynamically portrayed locomotive that symbolizes the progress of socialism.[15] Botev however was not alone among leftist national revolutionaries and critical thinkers to reject modern infrastructure outright due to its social repercussions. He stands out as an antecedent of Mohandas K. Gandhi, who famously declared: "Railways accentuate the evil nature of man: Bad men fulfil their evil designs with greater rapidity [...] Good travels at a snail's pace – it can, therefore, have little to do with the railways."[16]

5. Ottoman Techno-Optimism on the Way to Civilization and Prosperity

However, Botev's (and Gandhi's) techno-skepticism was not echoed by more mainstream members of Ottoman society. This can best be described by comparing Russian and Ottoman writers and their reactions when visiting the ultimate display of technical progress of the time, the world exhibitions. Visiting the World Exhibition of 1862 in London famously inspired Fyodor Dostoevsky to denounce the belief in progress:[17]

> "You feel that something final has been accomplished here, accomplished and concluded. It is some kind of biblical image, something out of Babylon, a kind of prophecy from the Apocalypse, being fulfilled before your very eyes. You feel that a great deal of eternal spiritual resistance and denial is needed so as not to submit, not to succumb to the impression, not to worship fact and idolize Baal, in other words not to accept as your ideal that which already exists."[18]

By contrast, Ottoman travelogues demonstrate no sign of similar musings. Ahmed Midhat, when visiting the world exhibition of 1899, does not turn to fundamental critique such as Dostoyevsky's, but sees the expo as "a Social Darwinist yardstick for measuring Europe's progress and the Ottomans' standing compared to it."[19] This comes as little surprise, as Ahmed Midhat had begun his writing career as a propagandist for the Ottoman Empire's leading "infrastructure governor,"[20] Midhat Pasha, claiming to "provide advice to the people on their way to civilization and prosperity"[21] and admonishing them that "the deterioration of roads is a disaster for the individuals and their property."[22] In 1899, the Egyptians at the same exhibition as Ahmed Midhat were likewise only disturbed by the depiction of their homeland vis-à-vis the rest of the world.[23] Earlier Ottoman visitors to world fairs had not been critical either.[24] The techno-optimist attitude embracing the West is best summarized by Ahmet Cevat:

> "The word Westernization has in our language taken on the permanent meaning to transfer the West's social and economic life as much as possible to the East, i.e., to make the East engage in science, technology, and industry just like the West, to revitalize it by means of universities, factories, parks (large municipal gardens), operas, big observatories, in short to save society from indifference and immobility by orienting it towards knowledge and the arts."[25]

Alexander Kiossev explains the fact that many Southeast European spokespersons of national development were uncritical of the process of technical change in general as a "self-colonizing" attitude, resulting in the constant need to admonish one's compatriots to strive to meet the international standards of the time.[26] This is because the modernizing paradigm, as it had been formulated by Europeans vis-à-vis the peoples of the Mediterranean basin, had not ruled out that people from the East or beyond Europe could someday be accepted as equals. However, this acceptance was from the beginning based on performance and was competitive. Not all peoples were expected to make the grade.[27] Accordingly, those who strove for recognition had to undertake decisive measures to overcome their "immobility."

6. Assessing the Gap: Fin-de-Siècle Multispeed Istanbul

Let us now turn more closely to the object of study, the wide range of modes of transport in Eastern Mediterranean port cities 1830-1930. The most extensive overview of Istanbul local transport was undertaken by Ernest Giraud in 1896. As head of the one-man-show of the French Chamber of Commerce at Constantinople, Giraud published a monthly business bulletin nominally informing French investors about the Ottoman market, but often would lose himself in detailed amateur sociologic observations. His extensive overview of local transport for the greater part reads rather as a matter-of-fact assessment and does not demonstrate the arrogant attitude of MacFarlane; nonetheless, the Istanbul resident cannot resist giving a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" for several types of vehicles. He meticulously lists the two suburban railway lines, the *Tünel* (to which we will turn in more detail shortly), the different steamer companies offering services to the suburbs (the *Şirket-i Hayriye* steamers he found recommendable, the *Mahsusiye* ones and others less so) and the rather considerable network of horse-drawn tramway lines, which he considered slow, expensive, uncomfortable, and dirty. For more intimacy, or if one left the grid of tramway rails, there were horse carriages for rent (or of course in private ownership).

However, Giraud does not stop with these modes of transport which would have been familiar to a France-based readership, but gives a detailed description of others. He considers these either as complementary or as an insufficient competition to the steam- and horsepower-propelled vehicles.

The proper *kayık*s (rowing boats), for example, he found complementary to steamers, but saw no point in the *kayık*s *bazaars*. While middle-class passengers used the scheduled steamer ferries, those who needed to travel economically would face lengthy waits for one of them to fill up, then spend 30 to 60 minutes being bounced and splashed by the waves in order to save a few *metalik*s in comparison with the comfortable steamer passage. As far as land transport was concerned, he conceded the necessity of some less elegant, but sturdier vehicles for the outer districts, where the condition of the roads did not allow for an elegant horse carriage. These included the more robust *talika*s or *voitures de muhacirs*, literally refugee carriages, as these were associated with Muslims who had fled the separatist Christian states in Southeast Europe, especially following the Turco-Russian War of 1877-1878. They were still common at the time of Giraud's writing, two decades later, and stood in contrast to the more refined carriages used on the quays; they were characteristic especially of the less well-off faubourgs with their more difficult roads. The country roads, such as the one down to the popular picnic excursion area of Kağıthane on the upper Golden Horn, still needed to be served by oxen carts. Downtown, the widening, straightening, and more reliable paving of roads which had progressed since the 1840s had led to carriages having become a widespread and fast mode of transport. Prior to the road widening program, upper-class men had had to proceed through town on horseback or donkey. For women of high social status, the sedan chair (locally called *portantine*), carried by two or more men, had been the solution to navigate the dirty, wet, and uneven pavements of the streets. Giraud claimed that the sedan chair had almost completely disappeared. However, women still occasionally made use of them in order to protect a particularly elegant dress, such as those for balls, from street dirt. Bicycles had made their appearance despite the bad state of the pavement.[28] Giraud's panorama, while not free of a latent teleologic narrative, ultimately investigates the various modes of transport for local practicality; he asks whether they are the right vehicles in the right place, rather than within the matrix of a supposedly superior Europe. This ultimately was the attitude many locals shared. They asked the same question as Botev: "Are the railways (or trams or ox-carts) useful for us?" However, they excluded the global context and long-term consequences the revolutionary stressed, and focused on the more down-to-earth aspects.

7. Slumming It: Foreign Upper-Class Residents Explore Urban Transport

Giraud's assessment seems plausibly representative; we can imagine the middle-class steamer passengers pulling up their noses passing a *kayık* when commuting between Asia's Kadıköy and the European Karaköy and the same bourgeois grudgingly getting onto an ox cart for their weekend outing to the suburbs, as there was nothing better. But at least two of his assessments are challenged by Alka Nestorova, the Zagreb-born wife of a Bulgarian diplomat. In the letters to her parents from the years 1907-1909, she narrates her experiences with local transport while accompanying her husband on his post as diplomat to the Bulgarian legation in Istanbul. Even 12 years after Giraud had predicted the imminent extinction of the sedan chair, Nestorova makes the experience of riding such an exotic vehicle. As the very steep and cobblestoned streets of Pera were iced over on New Year's Eve, she and her husband, Minčo Nestorov, decided it was too risky to proceed to the New Year's reception at the Russian Embassy by carriage. To still be able to go, they hired two sedan chairs and their carriers. It becomes obvious from her description though that this business was past its prime. The rich decorations of the chair were in tatters, the roof replaced by paper and her carriers made the impression of behaving rather uncouthly.[29] However, sedan chairs still catered to a niche of transport needs due to the terrain and bad pavement.

Nestorova also presents the steamers in less favorable light. While they might have been state of the art in the 1840s when they were introduced, they were apparently no longer so in 1908. On one occasion, she speaks of "the funny old-fashioned paddle steamer" and on another of a "small run-down boat on wheels. Boats like these are the only transportation available to the nearby harbors."[30] After her excursion to Üsküdar on such a boat, she feels adventurous enough to slum it even more and ride back on a *kayık*. The *kayık* serves here as a source of nostalgia and adventure. As Nestorova describes her trip,

"I was drawn to them because they reminded me of all those wonderful gondola trips on the Canale Grande! […] And so there we were in the kayak of very questionable cleanliness and even less comfort.

But, as soon as we departed, a strong wind picked up and the sky filled with clouds. The waves were getting higher and swinging our kayak just to spite me. Our behatted heads were one moment at sea level, the next above it. Minčo held onto his brand-new authentic Viennese "žirardec" hat

more and more intrepidly, while I clutched my "Florentine hat," hitched with a long hair needle, with both my hands.

I do not know how it happened, but it was very sudden: Like a flying dragon, my Florentine hat with its needle and a tuft of my hair soared into the air. Then – out of a sense of marital solidarity, I suppose – Minčo's Viennese "žirardec" took off as well and then fell together with my hat into the Sea of Marmara. Hence my dream to visit another continent ended in a tragicomic finale.

We arrived home ragged and wet. I was prepared to look at it from the humorous side, and my husband from every other side."[31]

Istanbul's traffic infrastructure and available modes of transport thus seemed to a mid-term resident of higher social status and of Habsburg origin sometimes threatening, sometimes a source of annoyance, and sometimes one of amusement. No matter which perspective prevailed, the whole range of possibilities seems outdated. She uses the sedan chair out of necessity, but looks down on the whole range of maritime transport. Her "denial of coevalness" is mixed with nostalgia, but of a condescending kind.

8. The *Tünel* as Signifier of Hiatus

But the occasional bad weather in Istanbul winters and the nostalgia of *kayık* passengers are not enough to explain why different speeds coexisted. The "long hiatus" of modes of transport infrastructure in Eastern Mediterranean cities is best illustrated by another example. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality today considerably advertises one peculiar mode of transport infrastructure: the so-called *Tünel*. An originally steam-powered underground funicular railway, it was created in 1875 by the engineer Eugène Henri Gavand and a company based on English capital. It alleviates the passage between two (especially in the nineteenth century) important parts of the city by linking the Galata waterfront and banking district to uptown Pera and its glamour zone around the embassies. The funicular helped to overcome the steep incline and 60 meters difference in altitude between the two, thus relieving residents of the necessity to trudge uphill on a sweaty ten to fifteen minute walk.[32] The municipality proudly advertises this underground line as the second underground metro in Europe and the world after London.[33] My superficial look into the history of metropolitan rail lines seems to confirm this boast,

as similar underground funiculars in steep downtown areas only appeared a few years later in Lyon, and much later in Naples. However, if one takes the municipality boast at its word, Istanbul's metro network is also the slowest to develop in the world. Gavand drew up ambitious plans to cover the city with a metro system worthy of what was at the time the seventh largest city in Europe, projecting a mostly underground line from the old city across the Golden Horn through the new center of the town up to the palace area of Beşiktaş. Already in the 1860s, a suburban line had been projected onwards to the northern village of Büyükdere.[34] However, no other metropolitan rail opened for 114 years, between the 573 meter *tünel* line from 1875 until 1989. Only after the turn of the millennium did Istanbul's metro network reach a length one would expect of a modern megalopolis generating the largest GDP between at least Rome and Dubai (2024: 242 km of metro lines).[35] The lines across the Golden Horn and to the northern Bosporus suburbs projected under sultans Abdülaziz (1861-1876) and Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) were realized in 2014 and 2010/11 respectively.

Thus, Istanbul had at an early stage an example of pioneering transport infrastructure long before many other comparable large cities in Europe. Unlike in London though, this example only spread to become an important mode of transport, providing a rough coverage of main commuter routes, a century and a half later. We learn from this example that the city was not a lethargic medieval agglomeration where business as usual ruled over the centuries. It was possible to access capital, know-how, and organization and combine them to produce tangible results. However, for reasons beyond the scope of this article, this constellation was only rarely reached during the late Ottoman and early republican period.[36] The ready availability of capital, entrepreneurial spirit, engineering skills, political will, municipal planning, construction materials, laborers, and their coordination was only achieved at particular moments, and often did not resurface for long spells.

If ignorant Istanbulites had actually considered shooting down the first steamship and others continued stubbornly to ride rowing boats instead of steamers, should we not assume that there was some anti-progress sentiment, vaguely reminiscent of my empathy towards the horse at the car tunnel exit? One urban legend is the fatwa against the *Tünel*. According to this story which is recounted endlessly, the highest theological authority in the empire, the Şeyhülislam, had decreed that "whoever travels in the tunnel and whoever operates the wagons will commit a sin and will be

guilty of illicit gain" or that "human beings are not to enter the underworld before death." Therefore, for a prolonged period, the *Tünel* was only used for animal transport. Only under intense administrative pressure did the theologian issue a new expertise revoking the old one.[37]

This framing fits conveniently into the scheme of transport teleology as described in the introduction. Progress and a better life come with great engineering feats. The reason for the hiatus, why such feats do not immediately conquer the underdeveloped world, is the Orientals' superstitions and backwardness. However, to date, no documentation of such a theological verdict has surfaced in the archives. Vahdettin Engin, who has researched the history of this iconic mode of Istanbul public transport, refutes the fatwa's existence outright. In the nineteenth century division of labour of the Ottoman bureaucracy, the Şeyhülislam was not heard on issues considered to be within the responsibility of the ministry of public works. Engin believes that the urban legend derives from the fact that the original *Tünel* vehicle had an outdoor platform actually used for the transport of animals. As the Taksim Square roughly 2 kilometres beyond the upper station at the time was still an open field used as pasture and all roads leading there were excessively steep, taking sheep to their pasture by metro was not uncommon.[38] We find therefore that the fatwa is a construct of later generations, who projected their binaries of engineering-driven progress versus religious ignorance onto a period that did not actually experience such a conflict. Nonetheless, the actual situation behind the urban legend, the sheep taking the downtown metro to their pasture, hint at another historical instance of "contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" in our eyes.

Even though this particular opposition against a new technology can be debunked as a myth, it is important to recall that scepticism towards new technologies is not something necessarily irrational. Grand-scale infrastructure implementation, especially if underground, is something beyond our personal observation and we must by necessity formulate a more or less well-informed guess as to its trustworthiness until today. One example: opened in 2013, a commuter railway intended to connect the Asian and European suburban railway networks passes underneath the sea in Istanbul. In fact, even this project was on the drawing board in the 19th century, but was only realized in the 21st. Especially around the time of its inauguration, many Istanbulites had reservations about using the line, as they found the prospect of being in a tunnel at the bottom of the sea threatening. In support of their point of view, they referred to a

number of public statements by engineers, trade unionists, and opposition politicians who claimed that errors occurred in the tunnel's construction, that there is continuously water seeping in through cracks, that the material is not durable enough, etc.[39] With mostly unproblematic operations in the decade since, scepticism has dwindled, but not disappeared.

9. The Electric Tram and the Masses

Istanbul's infrastructural mix as described by Giraud is to different degrees representative of many Eastern Mediterranean ports. Steamers and rowing boats, trams and horses, suburban railway and ox-carts coexisted in many places. Only the *Tünel* remained unique in the Ottoman port cities. In the more southerly Izmir, we find only two major differences to Istanbul: camels, not mules or horses, were the main beasts of burden, and instead of an underground *Tünel*, an outdoor elevator was built in 1907 to overcome a particularly steep incline between different neighbourhoods.

But rather than focusing primarily on rather isolated modes of high-tech transport, we can better gauge public opinion by looking at a more widespread vehicle of the time. While metros did not spread beyond the original half-kilometre in East Mediterranean cities during the initial century of rail transport, tramways did. Introduced originally in the 1860s and drawn by horses, they saw electrification in the decades just before or just after the turn of the century. They were the ubiquitous mode of transport in the major port cities.

To begin with, we can once again locate a condescending remark by a Westerner. Visiting Istanbul not long after the introduction of equestrian tram services, Edmondo de Amicis writes,

> "In another street, entirely Turkish and silent, you are suddenly startled by the sound of a horn and the stamping of horses' feet; turning to see what it means, you find it difficult to believe your eyes when a large car rolls gayly into sight over tracks which up to that moment you had not noticed, filled with Turks and Europeans, with its officials in uniform and its printed tariff of fares, for all the world like a tramway in Vienna or Paris. The effect of such an apparition, seen in one of these streets, is not to be described; it is like a burlesque or some huge joke, and you laugh aloud as you watch it disappear, as though you have never seen anything of the kind before. With the omnibus the life and the movement of Europe seem to vanish, and you find yourself back in Asia."[40]

De Amicis' "LOL" clearly fits the "denial of coevalness." The tram is dismissed on no other grounds than that it appears out of place in a quiet residential street of the old city. This is reminiscent of a common trope among European visitors who had a bifurcated view of Istanbul. While everything that was considered Oriental – mosques, palaces, or baths – was associated with Istanbul *intra muros*, the embassies, department stores, and churches were associated with the faubourg of Galata-Pera across the Golden Horn. In fact, the city never knew such a clear-cut opposition. While Galata-Pera as a whole offered much modern glamour (but also squalor, usually passed over in silence), the train station and telegraph office lay in the old city, and banks, department stores, and the bustling port lay on both sides of the Golden Horn.[41]

How did locals see their tramways and their spreading to various parts of the city? The novelist Hüseyn Rahmi observed that there was a factual divide between the two halves of the city, but framed it rather as an injustice by the tramway company. While the better trams were reserved for Galata-Pera, Istanbul *intra muros* was served by worn, dirty coaches drawn by horses near starvation who could not perform satisfactorily.[42] By contrast, in Pera, carnival performers used a mock-up of a local tram to perform a parody of local high society and its aspirants, with women fanning themselves and male passengers smoking expensive cigars.[43] This shows that already by the late nineteenth century, locals saw the Pera tramway passengers as representative of local society (just as Lev Tolstoi had used the train to symbolically represent society in *Anna Karenina*).

However, the introduction of tram services was not only accompanied by Western condescension, and carnivalesque travesties. For locals, more essential issues were at stake. Growing up in early twentieth century Salonica, Anna Vourou recalls in a later interview that her mother, a woman who had been born before the advent of trams, was afraid for her daughter having to commute by tram to school. The horse-drawn tram was electrified sometime around 1909. Her mother considered the electric tram too fast and dangerous.[44] Thanks to On Barak's study on Alexandria, we know that her sentiment was echoed by many residents of Eastern Mediterranean cities. In fact, trams invaded the streets and presented a serious threat to the life and health of people especially in crowded downtown districts. On an average day in the first decade of the twentieth century, an Alexandrine newspaper would list three serious traffic accidents with loss of life or limbs and any number between one and three would involve a tram. According to Barak, the accidents manifest two

opposing attitudes towards the new mode of transportation introduced in 1897 (apparently, he refers to electric, horseless trams here). On the one hand, the tram companies had ordered their drivers not to stop under any circumstances and to counter any obstacles simply by blowing the horn. Failure to do so would result in a fine. This idea of "time is money" and the expectation of a reliable schedule for passengers collided in the literal sense of the word with the expectation of the majority of the population that traffic in the street would be a practice of negotiation. Those who were inert or moving at a slow speed believed that those wishing to move fast should ensure not to endanger them. According to Barak this widespread assumption can be traced both in popular assumptions and at the official level. When a tram mercilessly charged into a carriage whose horses had slid and fallen and the next tram charged into the crowd that had gathered, pedestrians punished the tram drivers with a beating. Courts ruling on cases of accidents between trams and pedestrians or passengers unanimously considered it the duty of the tram drivers to avert accidents.[45]

10. The Camel Strikes Back: Defending the Aydın Caravan Route

So much for the acceptance of the so-called modern modes of transport, such as trains, trams, and underground funiculars. What of the ox-carts and other vehicles with a longer history? Occasionally, they were not only an object of nostalgia, a cheap competition for the nineteenth century modes of transportation, a necessary means to deal with streets that were inadequate for the modern forms of transportation, or a last resort for those fearing acceleration. An early twentieth century guidebook for travellers in Izmir, the busiest port in the Eastern Mediterranean, suggests a visit to the so-called Caravan Bridge, where, despite the two downtown railway termini, endless numbers of camels brought the agricultural and handicraft products of Anatolia into town for export to the world market. Although numerous travelogues describe this as a scene out of *1001 Nights*, these camels were far from innocent folklore to please the eyes of the tourists.[46] They were the most serious capitalist challenge to steam-powered modes of transport. The camel, not a native of the northern ports of Istanbul and Salonica, but nigh-omnipresent in Izmir's trade, managed to compete successfully in the freight transport sector for over half a century.

The Smyrna-Aydın Railway was the first line to begin construction in Anatolia in the 1850s. It was conceived as a feeder for the already considerable export of West Anatolian agricultural products through the Izmir port to the world market. As mid-nineteenth century technology and the capital invested was limited, the line avoided costly tunnels and bridges and made the most of the natural terrain. This consideration, as well as the location of major inland markets and lowland agricultural production sites, made it follow the same route as time-established caravan routes transporting the agricultural produce until then. The London-based company had obviously not given this competition much thought, believing in the natural supremacy of progress as sketched above. However, the camels proved not to be a pushover. The first section of the line was opened in December 1860 from Smyrna to Torbalı.[47] After a minor extension in 1861, the line reached Ayasoluk, near the ancient site of Ephesus, in September 1862. In a pompous ceremony involving the governor general (*vali*) and countless other officials, the company representatives had to admit that while passenger traffic was satisfactory, they were losing the struggle for freight against the camels. The company's local chairman Hyde Clark spoke of "a severe and costly competition with the Camel drivers". The general manager Mr. Fergusson appealed in his speech to the caravan organizers to cooperate with the line, but also urged the authorities to put pressure on them.

"An old Camel driver the other day came to him and kissed his hand and thanked him for the benefits the Railway had conferred on him and his class saying, 'I came the other day with six Camel loads of Figs to Kos Bounar for which I received 35 Piastre a Quintal from Aidin to Smyrna, and I found you took them from Kos Bounar for 5 Piastres. Well today is my 6th journey to Kos Bounar and I return with 200 Camel loads, you therefore see I have done all I can to induce my friends to come to the Railway.' [...] what he had related to them regarding the Camel driver, evidently showed that in a short while they would be able to win over the Devajees to the Railway, as it was obviously to them greatly to their advantage to work in conjunction with the Railway, he therefore (though taking all interests into consideration) was perfectly justified in asking H. E. and the whole of the Turkish authorities present to endeavour to render the Company all the assistance in their power to procure such a traffic to the Railway as will render it remunerative to the Government and the shareholders. He was confident much good would accrue if official orders were given to the Mudirs and Chiefs of all the Villages to persuade the Camel owners to work to the Railway."[48]

Despite the elegant anecdote, the company was obviously losing the fight and, faced by nervous investors wanting to see a return on their shares, it now clamoured for government intervention into the transport market. Shortly after, the directors had to accept that intermodal humpback and rail transport proved unattractive: "the evils of a break in the transport are assigned as the sufficient and certain cause of the continued employment of the camels, added to the comparative shortness of the distance after the camels traversed the worst part of the journey over the mountain pass."[49]

Believers in modernization theory will consider such troubles a mere temporary setback on the path of progress, and from the vantage point of today they might be right. However, in the more than 65-year lifespan of the Ottoman Empire after the inauguration at Ayasoluk, the situation did not change much. As late as the eve of World War I, camels managed to still compete with the railways. As the London-based stock company of the Oriental Carpet Manufacturers had concentrated the export of Anatolian carpets in its hands and had pushed the previously dominant Uşaklıgil family out of business, the Uşaklıgils retaliated by challenging the monopoly of the Smyrna-Aydın Railway. A huge concentration of caravan traffic by camel along that route allowed the family to undercut the rail freight prices and take a large share of the traffic into its own hands.[50] The most astonishing aspect of this situation is that the camels' success is not due to superstition, as insinuated in the legend about the fatwa on the *Tünel*, nor to a Luddite-style resistance by a marginalized workforce, to the lack of a more sophisticated infrastructure, or to aesthetic nostalgic reasons. Caravans managed to hold their share of the market in a fiercely competitive situation and against huge capital interests, because speed was not essential for the freight business, and the camels were apparently able to compete with the rather limited capacity of the railway. It is the foreign-based company that finally appeals to the state to intervene and obstruct the fair competition.

A similar story of interest-based resistance against infrastructural innovation can be told about the so-called camels with only two legs, two hooves, and one hump, as the porters and manual labourers in the port were condescendingly described by Giraud.[51] The port facilities were decisively modernized in Izmir in the 1870s and in Salonica and Istanbul in the 1890s. They now made direct unloading from ship to the quays possible, but in the process threatened the existence of boatmen operating the lighter boats. Likewise, the railways on the quays in Salonica and Izmir, designed to transport goods between ships and train stations, were

a serious competition for the porters. As these workers' interests coincided with those of many businessmen who opposed the stiff new tariffs imposed by the new port authorities, and as porters and lighter boatmen were organized in tightly controlled guilds, they were in a position to take collective action against the imposed reorganization of port activities. In Constantinople it delayed the full introduction of modern port technology for several years. When the port facilities in Galata started operations in 1894, lightermen prevented a steamer from docking directly on the quays. In 1895, when a further section of the quays was inaugurated, they set the floating docks that were to replace their lighters adrift. The French company operating the port had to submit to the guilds' Luddite resistance, and for several months, Constantinople saw the spectacle of lighters unloading ships in front of an unused port infrastructure built to more quickly and efficiently complete the process. While the port company succeeded in gradually suppressing the guilds' monopoly, the conflict violently resurfaced in the short summer of Ottoman labour radicalism following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.[52]

11. Perceived Modernization Backlog on the Eve of the Revolution

How did late nineteenth or early twentieth century urban residents look to the future? Was there a sense that the peculiar state of their region, the coexistence of muscle-, steam-, and later electric-powered modes of transportation would come to an end? How was this constellation related to other parts of the world? Two sources indicate that some anxiety existed over the course infrastructure development would take in the final days of Abdülhamid and thereafter. In 1907, J. Angel, a correspondent of *Journal de Salonique* (or more likely his pseudonym), took a slow tour of the Balkan railway network. The first city he arrived in just beyond the Ottoman border was Niš. While this is a mid-size town few travelers usually deem worthy of much mention, Angel is suitably impressed. He learns that a power plant and grid is in place and that as of January 1st, 1908 (a month after the time of writing), Niš will be illuminated by electric light. Angel expresses the hope that Salonica would follow suit, but admits to his readers that this was unlikely. To make matters worse, his host, the head of the Niš municipality and supposedly a very rich and esteemed local citizen, graciously takes him around town in his private automobile,

and asks Angel how many cars existed in Salonica. Too ashamed to admit the truth, Angel lies and claims there were "a great number."[53] The fact that the star of Southeast Europe, Salonica, is outdone both in the fields of electrification and automobilization by a Balkan provincial town in Serbia that in former times would have looked up to the region's leading port city is communicated to the readership with rhetorical emphasis. British-ruled Alexandria had by 1905 already 56 cars disturbing the tranquillity of the streets, Salonica's rival Smyrna saw its first car in that same year and also made the experience of electricity in 1905.[54] One can read Angel's statement as a veiled criticism of Abdülhamid's policies, but more significantly, it reflects the anxiety in Eastern Mediterranean society that the Ottoman realm was falling behind its peers, i.e. the independent former provinces, when it came to being prepared for the challenges of the twentieth century.

Echoing Angel's feeling of outdatedness, Alma Nestorova sums up her thoughts on Constantinople's infrastructure and urban development, only a few weeks after Angel's article, in a letter to her mother.

> "It seems like everything fell asleep in this town – there is little construction and what has been built is so tasteless that it spoils the uniqueness of the Orient. […] The most troubling flaw of the city is its lack of electric illumination, an electric tram and, in all, a lack of any modern comfort.
>
> It is terrible when one must deal with these paraffin lamps. […] You can experience such adventures with paraffin lamps in all homes, whether the modest ones or the house of the grand vizier. Unless they have replaced the lamps with candles. God only knows how many thousands of candles burn in Yildiz Palace.
>
> It is also hard not having a telephone because the distances are great. After the death of Abdul-Hamid, Carigrad will lose its current design. The dogs will vanish and skyscrapers will show off their hollow Americanized domes. Thank God that this will not happen here very soon. Although no one knows for sure, we all feel that these poor dogs will meet their end. There are more dogs in Carigrad than fezzes. Just imagine how hard it is for me to even contemplate it, especially the visible modernization of the town.
>
> But, it cannot be avoided – that's it. It's inevitable […]"[55]

In this case, Nestorova expresses a sentiment that was not only the arrogant look of a foreign observer, but one widely felt in pre-World War I Eastern Mediterranean society. An expression from German neoliberal media speak, "Modernisierungsstau" (modernization backlog) is the best way

to describe how contemporaries believed they were losing ground in the global competition for progress. It is perhaps to relieve this anxiety and to gain legitimacy in the process that after the establishment of popular government in 1908, we find a flurry of measures to catch up with the backlog. The Baghdad Railway project, which had been dormant for years, was revived and construction continued. Electricity served Salonica as of 1908 and the imperial capital as of 1914. In Istanbul at the same time, a new steel bridge was built from the old city to the Galata peninsula, making continuous tram lines and their electrification possible. The street dogs were seized and deported to an uninhabited isle to starve. Following the Balkan Wars, the feeling of insufficient modernization gathered new momentum, but now shifted to military matters, questions of disciplining the individual, and suppressing potential national/ethnic enemies.[56]

12. Aggressive Modernity: The Interwar Period

After the series of wars that devastated the region until 1923, public intellectuals were taking a more aggressive stance on infrastructural matters. While according to On Barak the prewar Alexandrine public had unequivocally condemned the tram for the accidents it was involved in, a caricature from 1923 Istanbul clearly chooses the other side to blame. It shows an electric tram driven by a uniformed vatman with fez and moustache. He gesticulates, as his tram has come to a halt due to a horse stalling on the tracks, apparently out of fright of the tramway's bright electric light. The horse is hitched to a "voiture de muhacirs," one of the aforementioned refugee carts. The carriage is about to break apart due to the imbalance caused by the horse. The driver is dressed in wide baggy pants, his shirt half open and a kerchief wrapped around his fez – all signs of his rural origins. To make matters worse, a car and a more orderly horse carriage are also stalled by the horse's panic. The caricature unequivocally "denies coevalness," marking the "voiture de muhacirs" as unfit for the center of a modern city, unable to survive an almost Darwinian struggle for space on the downtown streets.[57] Likewise for Alexandria, On Barak finds that for the first time an accident was blamed on the victim's inattentiveness in 1931, after a car had run over a pedestrian.[58]

Photographic depictions are another instance where we can notice the change. Pre-war postcards of the so-called modern areas of Istanbul had still honestly documented the "contemporaneity of the

non-contemporaneous," such as the countless homeless dogs even in the most elegant parts of the town. Photographs from 1923 onward however, often attempt to depict the city's modernity by showing the many tram cars in succession without any element that could spoil this image of progress. Iconic photos were taken at tramline junctions, preferably, it seems, at the upper end of *Tünel* on Grande Rue de Péra or at Harbiye, an upper-class residential neighborhood beyond Taksim Square and also location of the Military Academy. Both seemed at least at first glance reminiscent of the hustle and bustle expected of notable cities in the interwar period.

Thus the tramway, originally considered an intruder into time-honored usages of the street space, as of the interwar period begins to be seen as the unequivocal harbinger of modernity. Possible conflicts the tramway might find itself in are now seen to be caused by the backwardness of the others.

13. Conclusion

The long hiatus in the transition from muscle to steam, oil, and electric propulsion of local transport in the Eastern Mediterranean resulted in a number of different attitudes. Foreign observers often stuck to the Orientalizing, bifurcated vision of Ottoman urban space, although in reality, the cities manifested both highly modern and established modes of transport. The elites of late Ottoman port city society lauded the coming of modern transport, hoping this would mean a little step towards acceptance by Western observers. Few opposed the coming of new forms of transport on principial grounds, hoping that the revolution would bring conditions turning accelerated transport into a means of liberation, rather than exploitation. The average locals however looked at the new means of transport with a much more down-to-earth sense of rational choice: they expressed acceptance where the new transport proved beneficial, and resisted where it endangered the urbanites' security and health, livelihood, or their uses of public space. In such cases, the time-proven forms of transport were more resilient than the outsiders and elites had imagined. Only in the twentieth century, the feeling of modernization backlog radicalized the elitist sentiment and its symbolic and practical violence against the older forms of moving around the city.

Endnotes

1 List 2008; M. Weber 1999; Marx and Engels 2010.
2 Esposito and Becker 2023, 19.
3 Esposito 2023, 33-34.
4 Graeber and Wengrow 2021.
5 Béaur 2017.
6 Esposito 2023, 31-32.
7 H. Weber 2019.
8 MacFarlane 1829, 490, 491; see also Müller-Wiener 1994, 70, 71.
9 For more on the impact of steamships on port city society see Fuhrmann 2020, especially 49-62.
10 Byron 1816.
11 Goethe 1821.
12 Jahn 1981.
13 Ibid.
14 Botev 1875.
15 Kiossev 2023.
16 Gandhi 1910.
17 Mishra 2015.
18 Fyodor Dostoevsky, quoted from Hudspith 2004, 51; see also Mishra 2015 and 2017.
19 Findley 1998, 30-31, 38.
20 Riedler 2024.
21 Herzog 2012, 644.
22 *Tuna/Dunav* 11/23 Jan. 1867, quoted from Petrov 2006,134.
23 Mitchell 1991, Chapter 1.
24 Wagner 2016.
25 Ahmet Cevat (Eren), quoted from Tüccarzade 1997, 58.
26 Kiossev 1995.
27 Fuhrmann 2020, especially 37-48.
28 *Revue commerciale du Levant* 108 (March 1896), 143-151.
29 Nestoroff 2015, 44-46.
30 Nestoroff 2015, 51, 59.
31 Nestoroff 2015, 60.
32 Çelik 1986, 96-98.
33 *Istanbul Tarih,* http://www.istanbultarih.com/dunyanin-ikinci-metrosu-210.html
34 Çelik 1986, 98, 99; Carl Humann to his parents, 26 Jan. 1864, in Schulte 1971, 23, 24.
35 Skyscrapercity Forum: Istanbul Metro Developments, Post 2005, https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/ İstanbul-metro-developments-news.650193/page-101?post_id=187907019#post-187907019

[36]   Fuhrmann manuscript.

[37]   See for example http://www.istanbullite.com/istanbulwanderer/tunelthesubway.html

[38]   Engin 2000.

[39]   See for example Istanbul Chamber of Engineers (İnşaat Mühendisleri Odası), "Marmaray'da tehlike mi var? Şube Başkanımız Cemal Gökçe`nin 25 Temmuz 2014 tarihli Şok Gazetesi`nde yayımlanan haberi," 25 July 2014, https://istanbul.imo.org.tr/TR,55582/marmarayda-tehlike-mi-var.html; Odatv, "Marmaray'da hayati tehlike," 16 August 2013, https://www.odatv.com/guncel/marmarayda-hayati-tehlike-42432.

[40]   Edmondo de Amicis, quoted in Çelik 1986, 94.

[41]   Fuhrmann 2020, 89, 90.

[42]   Çelik 1986, 94.

[43]   Ibid.

[44]   Anna Vourou, "Interview, Thessaloniki 1985", in Rillig 1985, 62.

[45]   Barak 2009, 196-200.

[46]   Baedeker 1905, 287. Already in 1850, the number of camels carrying freight into the city is claimed to have reached 5000; Cobb 2018, 161, 162.

[47]   http://www.trainsofturkey.com/w/pmwiki.php/History/ORC

[48]   *Smyrna Mail*, 23 Sept. 1862. Ayasoluk = later renamed Selçuk; Kos Bounar (Kuzpınar) = railway head before the inauguration at Ayasoluk; Aydın to Kuzpınar 63.7 km, Kuzpınar to Smyrna: 66.8 km; devajee (devacı) = camel driver; H.E. = the person addressed is the governor general, Mehmed Reşid Paşa; mudir (müdür) = official.

[49]   Cobb 2018, 102.

[50]   Mansel 2010, 192.

[51]   *Revue commerciale du Levant* 109 (April 1896), 116.

[52]   The conflict is described in detail in Quataert 1983, 95–120, and can also be traced in the issues of *Revue commerciale du Levant* 1895-1908. While the resistance of the porters and boatmen in Smyrna and Salonica certainly played a role, it has not received detailed analysis; see Quataert 2002, 194–197; Frangakis-Syrett 2001, 31, 32; Federal Archives – Military Archives, Freiburg i.Br. (BA-MA) 40/565, 274 (black numbers): Philipp Goeben to Mediterranean Division, Military Political Report, Smyrna Christmas 1913 (written Piraeus 9 Jan 1914).

[53]   J. Angel, "Sur les railways", in *Journal de Salonique*, 2 Dec 1907.

[54]   Barak 2009, 199; Gürsoy 1993, 113; The claim in Mansel, 2010, 173, that electricity already existed in the city since 1888 can be considered a mistake.

[55]   Nestoroff 2015, 56, 57. "that's it" = Lat. *punctum pausa* (in the original; footnote by the letter editor). Yıldız Palace = Abdülhamid's residence; Carigrad = Istanbul. Besides Abdülhamid's fear of the use of electricity for violent political action and his concern for its potential to create urban fires,

another possible factor in the late establishment of appropriate infrastructure was the lobbying of gas suppliers intent to protect their business.
56   Ginio 2016.
57   MacArthur-Seal and Tongo 2023.
58   Barak 2009, 196-200.

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THE IDEA OF UKRAINE'S ALLEGED "EAST-WEST" DIVIDE IN THE WESTERN EXPERT, MEDIA AND SCHOLARLY DISCOURSE

Petro Kuzyk

Abstract

The present article addresses the problem of representation of Ukrainian societal differences and cleavages in the Western public discourse. More specifically, the paper discusses the idea of Ukraine's alleged "East-West" divide in North American and partly also European expert, media and academic discourse from the early 1990s until the present. The analysis in this article consists of identifying the idea of Ukraine's divide in this discourse, tracing its transformation over time and, finally, following its development into some more disguised forms in the context of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. The study has concluded that the idea of Ukrainian regional and cultural differences in the Western discourse has been living a "life of its own." That is, the differences in perception and representation, for the most part, do not correlate with the actual situation in Ukrainian society since the country's acquisition of independence. The stereotypic interpretations of these differences by Western political commentators, pundits and researchers often exaggerate the problem of Ukraine's "East-West" cleavage with Russian myths and misconceptions about Ukraine and its society being partly internalised in their discourse.

Keywords: "East-West" divide, Ukraine, Western public discourse, regional and cultural cleavages, stereotype, Russian aggression.

1. Introduction

For more than three decades of its state independence Ukraine has been widely perceived as a country split between some Eastern and Western parts. In the West, no less than in other corners of the world, the conviction of a profoundly divided Ukraine has evolved into something of a prevailing wisdom. However, increasing empirical evidence, reflected in a growing

scholarship on this issue, suggests that the concept of Ukraine's societal divide along an East-West line is problematic (Haran & Yakovlyev, 2017, Hrytsak, 2015, 2024, Kulyk, 2018, Kuzio, 2017, 2020, 2022, Kuzyk, 2019, Onuch & Hale, 2023, Riabchuk, 2015, Schmid & Myshlovska, 2019, Shevel, 2023, Zhurzhenko, 2015).

The new in-depth research of both former and recent political developments in Ukraine, as well as the dynamics of cultural and political identifications in Ukrainian society, do not quite support this conventional idea. Thus, while some national election results and political crises in Ukraine indeed displayed an "East-West" polarization pattern, the division either played a trivial role or was entirely absent from other important political processes and contests. That Ukraine has an integrated political community is confirmed by the results of numerous sociological surveys, which testify to a diminishing relevance of political polarisation over once divisive issues, similarly high levels of patriotism throughout the country and a tangibly increased integration of the country's political and cultural space (IKDIF, 2018, 2023, 2024, KIIS, 2014, 2024, Rating, 2016, 2024, Razumkov Centre, 2024).

Moreover, the Ukrainian nation's united response and extraordinary resilience vis-à-vis the Kremlin's aggression since 2014 and especially the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of the country present by far the most conclusive proof of Ukraine's vibrant and cohesive society. It goes without saying that no country would be able to effectively challenge the direct all-out military attack of a much more powerful and resourceful enemy, such as Russia, for a considerable time if the former was split and hence weak and apathetic.

The incongruity between the idea of a divided Ukraine in the Western public discourse and the reality "on the ground" in Ukrainian society is a puzzling analytic dilemma requiring careful consideration. Answering the questions of how the international stereotype of Ukraine's regional and cultural cleavages developed, where and when it diverged from what can be regarded as the "actual" social facts about Ukrainian domestic differences, why the exaggerated interpretations of these domestic differences turned out to be so persuasive and what were the factors contributing to their popularity would certainly be of great theoretical and practical value.

The present article's overall objective is not as ambitious. This study does not intend to answer all of the complex questions mentioned above. Instead, it focuses on a rather limited but no less important dimension of

the problem. This paper attempts to analyse the prevalent idea of Ukraine's "East-West" societal cleavage as articulated in North American and, to some extent, also in European expert, scholarly and media discourse. More specifically, this study aims to identify the idea in this discourse since the early 1990s, trace this idea's transformation over time and, finally, follow its development into some more disguised forms in the context of the ongoing Russian aggression.

While doing so, I will focus on what I will call the "conventional" or "stereotypic" version of the alleged "East-West" divide in this discourse. Whereas there surely were (and are) other, more accurate, interpretations of Ukraine's societal differences produced by the Western expert, media and academic communities, the stereotypic idea of Ukraine's "East-West" cleavage still prevailed in their discourses.[1] Consequently, this study's chosen subject and goal have determined a specific emphasis on the sources analysed in the present article. For the most part, I will analyse widely circulated and/or authoritative texts and speeches bearing and developing the stereotyped idea of the Ukrainian societal divide. For the sake of the feasibility of this project, I will mainly concentrate on the English-language sources, especially those that originated in the US – whose influential expert, academic, and media communities perhaps have been primarily responsible for the birth and dissemination of the dominant approach to Ukraine's societal differences in the West.

At the same time, this study does not wish to ignore existing societal differences and cleavages in Ukraine altogether. Like many other modern societies Ukraine remains regionally, culturally and politically diverse, which includes the differences existing between its Western and Eastern regions. Rather, the paper seeks to demonstrate that the conventional idea of the "East-West" divide present in the Western public discourse has often been arbitrary and exaggerated and that the established stereotype of divided Ukraine does not really reflect the scale, intensity and political meaning of the existing regional and cultural differences.

The analysis in this article proceeds as follows. The first section examines the shaping of the stereotype of divided Ukraine which coincided with the period of Ukraine's acquisition of state independence and its early years of state sovereignty. This section covers the first attempts of Western (mainly English-speaking) political commentators and pundits to make sense of the Ukrainian societal differences in the context of the political and economic turmoil in Ukraine. It also considers the special

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role of Samuel Huntington's concept of a "cleft country" in reinforcing the conventional approach to Ukraine's cultural and regional differences.

Section two of this paper will investigate the Western media, expert and academic discourse during some key political contestations in Ukraine's recent history – the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan – as well as during the Russian aggression against Ukraine between 2014 and 2021. The analysis in this part of the paper will focus on a discursive relation between interpretations of the two Maidans and the conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, on the one hand, and the stereotypic idea of divided Ukraine, on the other hand. It will be argued that many Western observers falsely regarded these events as markers of the Ukrainian "divide," which in turn distorted the representation of the pro-democratic Maidan revolutions and the Russian intervention in the Crimea and Donbas in their discourse.

The last part of this article will attempt to follow the shifts taking place in the Western discourse since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It will consider the changes that the all-out war has had on the narratives of Ukraine's regional and cultural differences. It will be argued that the previous tone of the expert and media discourse in this regard has been now mitigated. However, the stereotypic idea and a general approach to Ukraine's societal differences have not entirely withered away and are still present in different forms.

2. The birth of the stereotype: Huntington's "cleft country" and its legacy

When it comes to determining the roots of the widely shared idea of Ukraine's "East-West" divide in the Western scholarly, expert and media discourse, no intellectual source appears to be more influential in shaping this conventional view than Samuel Huntington's portrayal of and prognosis about Ukraine's societal cleavages.

On Huntington's account, Ukraine was a graphic example of a "cleft country". In his 1993 article, he mentioned the country in the context of his argument about civilizational fault lines replacing past political and ideological boundaries "as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed" in the world. (Huntington, 1993, p.29) Huntington drew the lines on his map of civilisations in Europe so that, in most cases, the alleged boundaries ran between European countries, which were assigned to Western Christianity, Orthodox civilisation and Islam, respectively. However, the

case of Ukraine was used to illustrate the civilizational fault line cutting *through* the territory of the Ukrainian state itself by "separating the more Catholic western Ukraine from Orthodox Eastern Ukraine" (Huntington, 1993, p.30).

In his 1996 book, Huntington mentioned Ukraine several times and discussed the case of Ukraine in a separate paragraph entitled "Ukraine: A Cleft Country." In this way, he underscored the characteristic of Ukraine as an emblematic example of a country internally divided by two different civilizational entities. According to one of Huntington's scenarios for Ukraine, the "east-west split" could generate the country's disintegration "along its fault line into two separate entities," with either the eastern part merging with Russia or the western Ukraine seceding from "a Ukraine that was drawing closer and closer to Russia." (Huntington, 1996, p.167).

Additionally, Huntington reiterated several traditional russocentric claims. At one point, he agreed that Ukraine belonged to the Russian so-called "near abroad"[2] or, in other words, a close neighbourhood consisting of Russia's special "sphere of influence". He also emphasised that Crimea had utterly belonged to Russia before its 1954 transfer to Soviet Ukraine – in this way, failing to mention its centuries-long Crimean-Tatar past both before and after the peninsula's annexation by the Russian Empire in 1783 (Lutsevych, 2021).

Obviously, Huntington was not the first to come up with the suggestion of a divided Ukraine. When he referred to the example of Ukraine as a case of a "cleft country" to support his argument about the "clash of civilisations", the idea of a somehow divided Ukraine was already circulating in the political, media and intellectual discourses in North America and Western Europe.

The perceptions and ideas which later became the core of the international stereotype of Ukraine's "East-West divide" had started to appear in the Western discourse from the very beginning of Ukraine's independence movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At first, mentions of Ukraine's cultural and regional differences were rather balanced and cursory. Accounts on the political developments in the still Soviet Ukraine, such as the report by Bill Keller (1990), as a rule, stated the differences between "the relentlessly Russified Eastern Ukraine" and "the rambunctious western part of the republic, where independence is a popular notion," stopping short of any far-reaching generalisations.

A distinct thread in the stories and analyses of Western political commentators underscoring Ukraine's "East-West" differences started

to develop in parallel. Such accounts typically exaggerated the scope and potential of the regional rifts and focused on potential security risks associated with them. Significant attention was dedicated to an issue defined by one commentator as "the most pressing nuclear proliferation problem" and particularly the "risk of nuclear weapons becoming involved in internal conflict" (Jencks, 1990). In the spirit of the times, the supposed dangers originating from within political communities were assumed to be much more essential than the conventional external threats to specific countries, regions or even the international society in general. Accordingly, as one of such accounts suggested, "[t]he main threat to Ukraine is not war with Russia but separatism among Ukraine's indigenous Russians." (Nuclear Backsliding, 1992).

As a rule, the latter type of report on Ukraine was accompanied by quite loose interpretations of Ukrainian history, which were creatively used to support the author's arguments. These brief historical excursions produced simplified and often factually incorrect versions of a Ukrainian past tailored to suit their stories. To some extent this was caused by a relative shortage of reliable sources on both past and contemporary Ukraine at that time. Yet another reason for the apparent misconceptions about Ukraine drew from a general lack of interest in and ignorance about Ukraine. At least in the 1990s, Ukraine and its people were essentially a *terra incognita* for many in the West. Andrew Wilson's (2000) characterisation of Ukraine as an 'unexpected nation' and Jack Matlock's (2000) notion of a 'nowhere nation' reflected how the general Western expert and media community perceived Ukraine on their surprised encounters with the European country with a population of around 50 million and a territory larger than that of France.

An article published by Celestine Bohlen (1991) in *The New York Times* was a good example of such inaccurate interpretations of facts. Bohlen wrote her report on the eve of a crucial 1 December referendum in 1991, when the Ukrainian society overwhelmingly supported the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, which eventually decided the fate of the Soviet Union. Evidently excited to find out that one possible version of the meaning of the ethnonym "Ukraine" derived from a word which translated as "border," Bohlen used it as a metaphor to support her dubious historical and political claims:

"Literally, Ukraine means borderland, which is appropriate given its position straddling Europe's two halves, its split between two religions –

Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic – and a history that has repeatedly put Ukrainians at the mercy of other peoples' territorial ambitions." (Bohlen, 1991)

Also, Bohlen argued that "[f]or much of the modern era, the Ukraine itself was split in half" and, while calling Russians and Ukrainians "two competing brothers," stated that "the two peoples continued to share a common fate" for the most part of their history (Bohlen, 1991).

The text of the article contained several widely circulated myths and misconceptions. For one thing, Ukraine was far from being divided in half for a significant time of its history: the borders of the Ukrainian lands, also when under foreign rule, were constantly moving. The reason the author stated the opposite was obvious: the painted picture of a "borderland" supposedly split into roughly two equal parts today needed to be supported by "evidence" of a similar divide in the past. The mentioning of the religious divide between the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic denominations clearly missed the point in this context too. By 1839 the Russian Empire liquidated all but one Ukrainian Uniate dioceses on its newly annexed territories on the right bank of the Dnipro river (Grabowski 1989). As a result, the religious and related cultural and political influence of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church was largely limited to the Halychyna (or Eastern Galicia) region remaining under Austrian rule. This amounted to less than 50 thousand sq. km (Arkusha & Mudryi, 2006) – or about 8% of the territory of independent Ukraine – stretching within three out of eight present-day oblasts of Western Ukraine.

The claim about a shared fate of Ukraine and Russia was a flawed interpretation of their relations as well. Such a reading of the Russian-Ukrainian encounters throughout modern history was clearly inspired by the Soviet and Russian propaganda myth depicting them as an amiable relationship of free but united and closely related "siblings". This misinterpretation of history was absolutely distorting as it ignored centuries of Russian colonisation, oppression and assimilation of Ukraine. Calling these horrible practices representative of Ukraine's destiny was incorrect and cynical. Anastasiia Kudlenko put this as follows: "Ukraine has long been presented as an integral part of the Russian world through 'common' history and religion, despite Ukrainians and Russians having radically different experiences of these shared times as colonized and colonizers respectively." (Kudlenko, 2023, 518).

The way the Western and Eastern parts of Ukraine – the two subjects of the alleged Ukrainian divide – started to be outlined in this discourse is worth noting in particular. The factually incorrect characteristic of Western Ukraine as overwhelmingly Greek-Catholic was complemented with its even more sticky label – that of an extremely nationalist region. In contrast, the Eastern and Southern parts of the country were usually portrayed as utterly pro-Russian and having little or nothing to do with Ukrainian identity and nationhood whatsoever[3].

"Ukrainians are rediscovering the deep division in their own nation: the western Ukraine, largely Greek Catholic, is a bastion of Ukrainian nationalism," reported Serge Schmemann (1991), a Moscow correspondent for the Associated Press. Eastern Ukraine, continued Schmemann, "including the Don coal basin, is more Russified and has close economic ties to Russia [while the south – the Crimean Peninsula and Odessa – has only tenuous Ukrainian roots." Such reporting shaped a clear discursive dichotomy of the "nationalist West" vs "pro-Russian East" which moved from commentary to commentary and text to text to become a commonplace characteristic of contemporary Ukraine's cultural and political differences.

The economically harsh and politically tense and chaotic early years of Ukrainian independence were not helpful in settling down differences and rifts in Ukrainian society. Neither did they soothe these differences' representation in the respective Western discourse. The year 1994 was one of the key points of Ukraine's independence history in many respects. That year, the country went through two important election campaigns: the early parliamentary and presidential elections, which were called to reload the government in a moment of mounting political tensions. The political crisis was caused by a dire economic situation Ukraine found itself in at the early stage of its transition to the market economy and people's frustration with the government's incompetent handling of this transition.

The 1994 elections turned out to be even more important for the way Ukraine was represented in the Western media and expert discourse. Deliberations about these elections in this discourse acted as an important link in the chain of events that convinced many political commentators, experts and researchers in the West that Ukrainian society was fragmented. To be fair to these commentaries, regional differences did surface in these elections. Political and ideological preferences of the Halychyna, together with the capital Kyiv, expressly contrasted with those of Southern and Eastern Ukraine, with the Central and Northern regions rather choosing

a middle ground. The three Western oblasts elected deputies with strong pro-independence and anti-Russian views. In contrast, the industrial East, which was also the most hardly hit by the ongoing economic crisis, turned increasingly nostalgic of the Soviet times. The rest of the country stayed rather undecided between the two regional poles (Solchanyk, 2001).

The presidential contest taking place in June and July of the same year was particularly polarizing. The two leading presidential candidates had their electoral bases in the Western and Eastern parts of the country, respectively, and ran on tickets claiming to represent two divergent trajectories for the country's development. The incumbent candidate, Leonid Kravchuk, formerly a Communist Party high-ranking bureaucrat, then was associated with a strong pro-independence stance mostly favoured in Western Ukraine. His challenger, a former "red director" from Dnipropetrovsk Leonid Kuchma, was a clear pick of the industrial East who campaigned on a rather pro-Russian but also pro-reform ticket (Haran & Maiboroda, 2000).

All in all, both the 1994 parliamentary and presidential campaigns were peaceful, free and democratic. Kuchma eventually won the presidential contest. As a result, unlike many other former Soviet republics, including Russia, Ukraine went through its first transfer of power in its independence history in an orderly and democratic manner.

Yet, in the West, these events were received differently. In an evident manifestation of its tradition of "Orientalism" towards Ukraine and its society (Ryabchuk, 2023, Kuzio, 2020, Chapter 3), the main emphasis in the discourse of the political, security and media community was on the threats and risks these elections were thought to be precipitating.

The expectations were extremely grim and alarmist. Western journalists and political observers spot what British correspondent Tony Barber unequivocally defined as "a clear rift, expressed through a democratic vote, between the nationalist west and the Russian-leaning east and south." (Barber, 1994a). Moreover, often writing on Ukraine while stationed in Moscow[4], these commentators contemplated the possibility of the country immersing into a bloody domestic conflict. Some, like Misha Glenny, evoked the prospect of the return of the "demons of Yugoslavia" (Glenny, 1994). The possibility of enhancing national cohesion, on the other hand, was regarded as a nearly impossible task in these accounts: "The histories and traditions of both eastern and western Ukraine are so different that the creation of a democratic, independent Ukraine involves unifying two countries" (Glenny, 1994).

Moreover, the danger of the country splitting into two parts as a result of a violent civic conflict was actively discussed and even anticipated. According to Barber, "the vote widened ethnic, regional and ideological fault lines in Ukraine and raised the biggest question mark yet over the republic's ability to avoid conflict." (Barber, 1994b). "The election results highlight the deepening split between eastern and western Ukraine, heightening fears among diplomats that Ukraine may split, with the eastern part and the Crimean Peninsula in the south realigning with Russia," assumed another American correspondent (Erlanger, 1994b).

These worries were, overall, shared by Western diplomats and political advisors. The views of Ian Brzezinski, son of Zbigniew Brzezinski and foreign policy expert who also served in the US Defence Department and was a one-time advisor to the Ukrainian government, were one such example. While observing the 1994 presidential election, Brzezinski concluded that it "has reflected, even crystallized, the split between Europeanized Slavs in western Ukraine and the Russo-Slav vision of what Ukraine should be." (Cited in Erlanger, 1994a).

Nevertheless, it was the security community that played a pivotal role in fostering the idea of a divided Ukraine. It set a doom-laden tone of the public discourse assessing the future developments in Ukraine more broadly too. Possibly alarmed by increasing instances of political violence in other former Soviet republics at that time, security experts and plain security services representatives used their authority to voice a stark warning regarding an ostensibly imminent domestic conflict in Ukraine.

On the eve of the polarising elections, a CIA report predicting ethnic strife in Ukraine potentially leading to the disintegration of the country was leaked to the press. In January 1994, in a survey of the world's hotspots, the Director of the CIA James Woolsey highlighted "political and ethnic tensions that could fragment Ukraine." Above all, a simmering secession movement in Crimea was named as the possible cause, where the ethnic Russian majority's "clamour for unification with Russia threatens to fragment the fledgling republic." (Weiner, 1994)

The future course of events in Ukraine proved that this gloomy prognosis in the security experts' discourse had been mistaken. Moreover, it is doubtful that the voiced scenario of Ukraine's fragmentation was well-founded at all. If ethnic separatism was really at stake, then Crimea would have been the only part of Ukraine where it potentially stood a chance of succeeding. This far southern region was the only Ukrainian territory where a population of ethnic Russian descent was in the majority.

Crimea's territory is 27 thousand sq. km., amounting to less than 5 per cent of Ukraine's territory. And even there the separatist aspirations during the first half of the 1990s were largely confined to parts of the local political elites. In any case, these aspirations failed to evolve into a tangible secession movement and soon withered away (Dawson, 1997).

It is, therefore, clear that the picture of a divided Ukraine had already been there in the public discourse before Huntington and his "Clash of Civilizations". And yet, there are weighty reasons to assume that it was the author of the influential and catchy thesis of "cleft country" who cemented this view of Ukraine. Huntington elevated the alleged characteristics of the Ukrainian polity and society to the status of its fundamental distinctiveness.

The sheer circulation and prominence of Huntington's theory reached out to audiences far beyond the Academy, stirring hot debates on its key points among scholars, policymakers, commentators and wider circles of the public around the globe, and contributed to the embedding of the stereotype of a divided Ukraine. Surely, many Westerners remained unconvinced by the general thesis of Huntington's civilizational theory[5]. The same cannot be said about his portrayal of Ukrainian society and its past and future, which was rather uncritically accepted. His account of Ukrainian domestic cleavages, assessment of the state of societal unity and grim predictions about the country's future had a profound impact on a general perception of Ukraine in the West for years to come.

For students of Ukraine, Huntington proposed a framework for looking into Ukrainian societal differences that were difficult to ignore or break free from. By all accounts, Huntington's story was a shallow and controversial interpretation of Ukraine's cultural and regional differences (Goble, 2016). However, in a state of general ignorance about what Ukraine really was, his writings on the country and its society were enough to root this narrative deep in the consciousness of the elites and all those in the West who happened to hear anything about the country. Huntington's characteristics of Ukraine featured in intellectual and political debates on the country. The simple and captivating account of Ukrainian regional and cultural cleavages, as well as the controversy surrounding the general "clash of civilizations" thesis, cemented the radical variant of the idea of the Ukrainian divide – that of a 'cleft country', an international image that has haunted Ukraine ever since.

At a minimum, Huntington's account was used as an important point of reference for discussing and deciding on a whole range of issues related to Ukraine's demography and culture, domestic and foreign policies,

economic development or the country's potential joining of international alliances. As Raymond Taras (2023) points out, Samuel Huntington's theorems were "exhumed" every time a hint at a binary "East-West" political contestation occurred in Ukraine. What is worse, however, Huntington's arbitrary views about Ukrainian cleavages and their meaning were often uncritically adopted as the only possible explanation for any conflicts arising in or connected with Ukraine. "His prognosis that nations would return to their historical and cultural roots included a corollary that assigned an exceptional place to Ukraine: nations that were divided between civilizations called 'cleft' countries were spaces most likely to engender conflict." (Taras, 2023, p.6).

3. The false markers of the "divide": the Maidan contestations and the 2014 Russian attack on Ukraine

Despite the initial warnings and grim predictions, no part of Ukraine became a site of ethnic violence or armed conflict either in 1994 or the years that followed. To the surprise and ease of many observers and policymakers in the West, the Crimea question was resolved in a peaceful and democratic way and the next national electoral contests or political crises lacked a salient polarisation following an East-West line (Fesenko, 2003). As a result, the issue of Ukraine's domestic cleavages temporarily escaped Western political and media attention.

The same could not be said about the academic and expert discourse. Ukraine and its society finally began to attract long-overdue scholarly attention. However, the Western intellectual and expert community was yet to fully come to terms with Ukrainian independence and recognise the nation's right to self-determination. Then and later research on sovereign Ukraine was apparently influenced by preconceptions and myths rooted in the internalised Russian prejudices towards Ukraine and its people (Kuzio, 2023).

As Mykola Ryabchuk points out, in the 1990s and beyond, Western nations continued to share previously accepted and normalised "Russian imperial knowledge" about Ukraine, which included the so-called "Ukraine denial" – a claim that Ukraine (or, in fact, "Little Russia") always belonged to Russia (Ryabchuk, 2024b). Galyna Kotliuk takes this argument further, suggesting that the perception of Ukraine was trapped in a "double

colonial lens" shaped by a long-standing tradition of Russian colonialism and Western Orientalism:

> "Russian colonialism has invented the image of exotic Little Russians— subhuman 'brothers' of Great Russians; the West has seen Ukrainians as underdeveloped barbarians somewhere between Russia and European civilization." (Kotliuk, 2023)

In this light, it is not difficult to see why Ukraine's domestic policies, aimed at strengthening Ukrainian identity inside the society, or attempts at following an independent foreign course prompted suspicion and accusations of extreme nationalism. Some influential texts by fresh Ukraine pundits stood out in this regard in particular. In his renowned book, Rogers Brubaker (1996) proposed a pioneering framework for understanding modern nationhood and nationalism in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, his one-sided take on the national projects in the newly independent post-Soviet societies under investigation (Ukraine included) perfectly aligned this approach with a traditional view of these non-Russian societies as marginal, backward and extremely nationalist.

At any rate, Brubaker's approach was not helpful for adequately grasping the complex essence and motives behind the nation-building processes in newly independent states like Ukraine. Brubaker failed to realise that these countries' "nationalising" policies were as nationalist as decolonising and rectificatory in nature, that is, aiming to correct the past injustices that Russia had been inflicting upon these societies. Instead, his interpretation defied the Ukrainian government's efforts at fostering the Ukrainian language and national identity, while these were, in effect, some indispensable and timely countermeasures checking the continuous pressure of Russian political, ideological and cultural expansionism. His approach overlooked the simple but important fact that the Ukrainian language and identity had been essentially erased from the public domain of Ukraine (and especially its East and South) by centuries of Russian and Soviet assimilation campaigns (Danylenko & Naienko, 2019).

David Laitin (1999), on his part, questioned the future success of the Ukrainian national project by overestimating the difference, cohesion and political power of the Russian-speaking population residing in the country's East and South. Laitin claimed that this large group of Russophones represented a distinct part of Ukrainian society, wrongly predicting the formation of a separate nationality based on the Russian-speaking

identification in Ukraine (as well as some other post-Soviet states). At least in Ukraine's case, Laitin's theory fell victim to two common mistakes. The first one was an apparent underestimation of the inclusive nature of the Ukrainian nation-building project in independent Ukraine. Perhaps, the same stereotypic view suggesting that the Ukrainian government's policies towards the Russophones were "utterly nationalistic" foiled Laitin's comprehension of how such national inclusivity helped Ukraine to relieve tensions in this area[6].

The second important shortcoming was conflating Russian speakers with the bearers of a Russian identity. At the time Laitin's book was written, the Russian-speaking Ukrainians indeed consisted of a numerous group. However, both in 1991, when an overwhelming majority of the Russophones supported Ukraine's independence along with their Ukrainian-speaking fellow citizens, and later, there were no significant grounds to believe that the Russian-speaking population formed, in the author's words, a potent "conglomerate identity" and a coherent group capable of challenging the Ukrainian national project. With time, Laitin's conception only lost any relevance for Ukraine[7].

Similarly, Anatol Lieven (1999) chose to frame his analysis of the political relationship between Russia and Ukraine using a "fraternal rivalry" concept. The conceptualisation of the message he meant to convey was plain and telling. First, it was supportive of the same old Soviet myth about Russians and Ukrainians as two "brotherly peoples" – albeit in a new setting. Second, such a framing evidently downgraded Ukraine's painful efforts aimed at bringing bilateral relations with the former metropolis on equal footing to nothing more than some "family squabbles."

Therefore, it came as no surprise that the idea of Ukraine's societal divide powerfully resurfaced in the Western media, expert and scholarly discourse in 2004. Starting from late November of that year, Ukraine was in the spotlight of international attention. Then, an attempt by the government to steal the victory from the opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko in a presidential contest was challenged by a massive civic protest in Kyiv Maidan. These events shortly came to be known as the Orange Revolution directed against the electoral fraud and growing authoritarian propensities of the government (Aslund & McFaul, 2006). The eventually triumphant democratic protest averted the country sliding down to despotism and extending Russian control over the country.

All too soon, however, the discussions of the Orange Revolution shifted away from compassionate accounts praising the Ukrainian democratic

breakthrough[8]. Instead, they focused on what was regarded as a dangerous pitfall that the Orange Revolution produced: the re-emerged "East-West" pattern of electoral geography and consolidation of the regional elites and the common public around their respective candidates, Yushchenko and Yanukovych, during the political stand-off. Eventually, the crisis was once again resolved in a peaceful way – this time by a rerun second round of the presidential election – which confirmed the victory of the democratic and pro-European candidate Yushchenko (Clem & Craumer, 2005, pp.374-375). Nevertheless, the political compromise helped Yanukovych to consolidate his constituency in the Eastern and also Southern parts of the country and, in this way, paved the path for his future rise to power in 2010.

These dramatic political developments resulted in the whole range of the former international myths and stereotypes of a divided Ukraine coming in from the cold in the media and political experts' discourse. Political observers and correspondents from various corners of Europe and North America enthusiastically picked up the theme of the resurfaced electoral and political "East-West" line, highlighting the supposed risks associated with this.

Some, like Chris Stephen from *The Guardian*, used formulations directly borrowed from Huntington. Stephen spoke of a revived "spectre of Ukraine tearing apart along old east-west fault lines" with the "Russian-speaking Christian Orthodox" East and "mostly Ukrainian speaking and Greek Catholic" West divided by "the great Dnipro river" (Stephen, 2004). Others reintroduced the chilling theme of the "nightmare of Yugoslavia" in "a deeply divided country" with a visible "East/West contrast" back into the discourse on Ukraine. "It is possible that Ukraine will succumb to an increasingly bitter dispute over political identity, language and culture between Europe-leaning western Ukrainians […] and their Russian-speaking fellow Ukrainians in the eastern industrial and coal-mining regions," stated a lengthy analysis of the Orange Revolution in *Spiegel* (Neef & Mayr, 2004).

Overall, such perceived risks and negative projections of the aftermath of the Orange Revolution for the unity of the nation became a significant part of the discourse, so much so that an assertion that the "presidential election of 2004 brought Ukraine to the brink of disintegration and civil war" found its way into the Encyclopaedia Britannica (Makuch & Yerofeyev, 2024).

This time, however, the situation was further exacerbated by Russian interference in the Ukrainian 2004 presidential election. Openly picking the side of Viktor Yanukovych in this contest, the Kremlin hoped to block Ukraine's path toward democracy and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. In the West, this move was received as an act of defiance of democracy promotion in the post-Soviet space and a rejection of the West's influence in the region in general. Consequently, from this time forth, the issue of Ukraine's alleged domestic divisions started to be seen as part of a wider dilemma of a reviving East-West geopolitical confrontation between Moscow and the collective West.

As one American expert described this at that time, "Russian President Vladimir Putin's ill-judged intervention and Western reaction have now set the country on a spiral that might turn fear into reality: Ukraine is rapidly becoming a battleground between Russia and the West." (Darden, 2004). Such flawed "internationalisation" of the question of Ukrainian regional and political differences and rifts had a negative effect on the image of Ukraine. It was clearly undermining its efforts at becoming a strong, integral and independent agent capable of sorting out its own problems.

All these judgements were echoed in the academic writing that followed. Scholarly interpretations of the nature and meaning of the Orange Revolution certainly varied. Immediately following the revolutionary events, the Orange Revolution was acclaimed for an unparalleled mass mobilisation of the pro-democratic civil society as well as for the peaceful resolution of an acute political crisis – fitting in the democratic wave of the so-called "coloured revolutions" in the region (Aslund & McFaul, 2006, Karatnycky, 2005, Kuzio, 2005, Way, 2005). A significant part of other texts and publications, on the other hand, did focus on the East-West electoral and political polarization with some accounts again reaching categorical and alarming conclusions.

Several frequently cited publications on the 2004 Maidan protests exemplified the latter take on the events. An article by the prominent Ukraine student Dominique Arel (2006) represented one kind of such reaction: Arel assumed a fundamental and lasting regional division between the Centre-West and South-East parts of the country and warned against what he envisaged as a dangerous denial of the problem on the part of Ukrainian authorities. Ivan Katchanovski (2006) characterised the Orange Revolution as just another manifestation of the strong "regional political cleavages in the post-communist Ukraine [reflecting] cultural differences that emerged as a result of distinct historical experience in

regions of Ukraine before World War II." (Katchanovski, 2006, p.528). And David Lane (2008) went as far as to unwarrantedly accuse Western "sponsored democracy promotion" for helping to organize a "revolutionary coup d'état" in Ukraine which, among other things, "led to greater division between East and West Ukraine." (Lane, 2008, p.545).

The latter attitude was also tangible among political elites in the West. The growing attention to Ukraine, generated by the Orange Revolution, did not really translate into a deeper and balanced perspective on Ukraine. Narratives of some representatives of the political class, in fact, rather solidified the stereotypical perception of Ukraine's political disputes and their sources. This was particularly noticeable in those cases when a speaker was not bound by requirements of strict political correctness. In his 2005 interview, the former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing argued that only a part of contemporary Ukraine had a "European character." In contrast, the lands on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River and in the south of Ukraine had a "Russian character." According to d'Estaing, this meant that "these lands cannot belong to the European Union unless Russia is admitted to the EU" as well. (Cited in Ryabchuk, 2024a).

So, when another massive protest began to unfold on the Kyiv Maidan nine years after the Orange Revolution – in the late autumn of 2013, the Western myths and stereotypes concerning Ukrainian societal cleavages were fully in place and ready to be employed again.

The Euromaidan was set off by a handful of youth activists in response to a government decision that threatened to curb the country's European integration. The last-minute refusal of the Ukrainian authorities to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement took place under intense pressure from the Kremlin (D'Anieri, 2019, p.264). Very soon, however, the protest evolved into a powerful nationwide Revolution of Dignity against an incredibly corrupt and repressive regime. The culmination of the Euromaidan was triggered by the security services' mass shootings of demonstrators in central Kyiv in February 2014, which prompted Yanukovych's escape to Russia and the subsequent start of the Russian military and hybrid operations against Ukraine (Shveda & Park, 2016).

In many respects, the Euromaidan resembled the Orange Revolution. Both were massive pro-democratic popular protests, with Kyiv Maidan as their epicentre. Both revolutions challenged the corrupt and authoritarian government and overall succeeded in overthrowing the regime. Just like the Orange Revolution, the Euromaidan was decisive in keeping the

country on its Europe-bound foreign course and developmental trajectory. During both the first and second Maidan revolutions, the two conflicting political camps were actively or tacitly supported by key Western powers and institutions, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand. These similarities, however, overshadowed their differences and, to some extent, played a trick on Euromaidan's international perception.

Unlike during the 2004 protest, the Revolution of Dignity did not involve a contest between two leaders and two antagonistic political forces, which mainly represented the Centre-West and South-East of the country, respectively. In 2013-2014, the anti-hero of the two Maidans, Yanukovych, was politically embodying the crooked and autocratic government rather than the Eastern and Southern regional constituencies where his authority and political appeal were already fading (Pifer & Thoburn, 2013). Not coincidentally, therefore, the protest was also able to spread to major cities of the East and South, including Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, in Eastern Ukraine and Odesa in Southern Ukraine (Onuch, 2014, pp.45-46). Conversely, the Euromaidan that eventually toppled Yanukovych's regime lacked a single leader or commanding political force but consisted of a conglomerate of political organisations and miscellaneous civic grassroots initiatives from around Ukraine.

Yet, the seal of a "cleft country" in the Western political, media and expert discourses on Ukraine affected their perception of the Euromaidan. In many reports and analyses, the democratic nature of the Revolution of Dignity was eclipsed by commentaries and stories underscoring its alleged connection to the 'traditional' East-West societal divide. Perceived in this way, the protesters' clashes with the police and armed thugs employed to defend the regime, and particularly the massacre of approximately one hundred demonstrators during the decisive phase of the Euromaidan (Shveda & Park, 2016), served as an additional 'proof' of the problem of Ukrainian 'split'. "President Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign an agreement establishing closer cooperation with the EU has resurrected deep tensions about the soul of Ukraine. […] Ukraine is often described as a divided country, but the scene in central Kiev this weekend provides an unusually striking picture of the split," reported a Moscow-based correspondent of *The Guardian* (Walker, 2013).

The Russian occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea and the start of its disguised intervention in the Donbas in 2014 encouraged even greater attention to and discussion of the role of Ukraine's cultural and regional cleavages in these violent events.

"Many politicians, experts, and journalists around the world have played into Russian propaganda, framing the war in Donbas as a civil war," notes Anastasiia Lapatina (2024). In actuality, it was not difficult to see that the conflict in Ukraine was an act of Russian aggression[9]. The Kremlin took advantage of the opportunity created by the power vacuum in Ukraine following the hasty escape of Yanukovych. In this way, Putin attempted to achieve his old dream of bringing the country fully under Moscow's control as well as annexing its Southern and Eastern regions, which he regarded to be genuinely Russian, in an old imperial tradition calling them "Novorossia."[10]

Russia used its agents and troops without insignia during both its Crimea and Donbas campaigns (Sukhankin, 2019). Yet, while Crimea was shortly fully occupied and formally annexed in a blatant breach of international law in March 2014, a different tactic was chosen in other parts of Ukraine. The Kharkiv and Odesa operations failed, which forced the Kremlin to put the "Novorossia project" on hold (Kuzio, 2019, Loiko, 2016). The infiltration of the local security forces and authorities turned out to be more successful in the two Donbas oblasts, Donetsk and Luhansk. As a result, the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic" (or "DNR" and "LNR") were formed, becoming Russia's camouflaged military bridgeheads as well as political proxies for continuous attacks on Ukraine.

Nevertheless, the camp of the supporters of the idea of Ukraine's societal split in the West came up with an alternative interpretation of these events. The Kremlin-friendly speakers and authors became particularly engaged in discursive activities persuading the Western audiences that Euromaidan was an illegal ousting of Yanukovych as the representative of Ukraine's East, that Russia was forced to annex Crimea, whereas the Donbas conflict was a separatist and civil war between the two respective parts of the country instigated by Ukrainian nationalists' threats to the Easterners.

In some instances, interpretations of these events consisted of an outright distortion of reality. This included the narratives endorsed by academicians and social scientists in particular. Thus, apart from calling the Revolution of Dignity a "coup" that led to a "civil war" in the Donbas in several of his publications, Ivan Katchanovski openly spread Russian disinformation about mass killings of demonstrators in central Kyiv in February 2014. Writing in the style of a conspiracy theorist (and slightly of a ballistic expert, too), Katchanovski (2016, 2023) argued that the murders were a false-flag operation of the demonstrators who plotted to

shoot their fellow protestors paving their way to an unlawful seizure of power in the country.

The Russian Studies scholars and Western Russia experts turned out to be among the leading transmitters of the pro-Russian narratives about the Euromaidan and Russian aggression against Ukraine. Richard Sakwa, a political scientist and renowned expert on Russia, was wary of the conventional version of the shootings in Kyiv. Apart from that, he, for instance, fully sided with the Russian account of the deaths of dozens of anti-Maidan protesters in Odesa on May 2, 2014, where the Kremlin was actually trying to orchestrate the same 'Russian Spring' operation as in Donetsk and Luhansk (Sakwa, 2015, pp.97-99). These cases were just two small episodes that Sakwa (2015) was using to support his main argument in his "Frontline Ukraine" (as well as a number of other publications). According to him, both the West and Ukrainian nationalists from the Western part of the country (which he argued were attacking an ethnic and political pluralism of the country's East) were to be blamed for what was happening in Ukraine.

Virtually all such pro-Russian accounts portrayed the alleged "East-West" societal split as the major cause of the upheavals in Ukraine. Stephen Cohen, a celebrated American Russia expert with weighty political connections who also worked as an editor for *The Nation* magazine was another example.

Cohen was known for a staunchly pro-Putin position. He was a frequent guest at the Russian propagandist Russia Today TV channel and did not shy away from spreading outright disinformation regarding Ukraine and the Russo-Ukrainian war, which he unsurprisingly called "civil war" (Kuzio, 2020, p.119). Just as many other pro-Russian experts, Cohen was keen to cite Ukraine's domestic cleavages as the key source for the Ukraine calamities. "When the current crisis began in 2013, Ukraine was one state, but it was not a single people or a united nation" argued Cohen in one of his texts on this issue. "Everything that followed, from Russia's annexation of Crimea and the spread of rebellion in southeastern Ukraine to the civil war and Kiev's 'anti-terrorist operation,' was triggered by the February coup." He concluded: "[t]he underlying causes of the crisis are Ukraine's own internal divisions, not primarily Putin's actions." (Cohen, 2014).

These resolutely pro-Russian narratives about the conflict in Ukraine did not represent a mainstream interpretation of the events. Nonetheless, these claims' presence in the public discourse widened the spectre of opinions available to both ordinary citizens and political decision-makers

in Western countries, opening a long discussion on the nature of the conflict. This contributed to the shifting of the focus of attention away from Russia and its attack on the sovereign state and softened official rhetoric towards the aggressor eroding political and military support for beleaguered Ukraine. What helped these manipulative narratives about the war in Ukraine sound more persuasive to the average public and various factions of the Western elites was that these narratives were, to a significant extent, rooted in and encouraged by the stereotypic idea of Ukraine's societal divisions. In this sense, the "seeds" fell on good "soil".

Stories by other experts and commentators writing on the situation in Ukraine or referring to it as an example for wider generalisations highlighted the alleged role of the "East-West divide" as well. The prior normalisation of the idea of a divided Ukraine in the Western public discourse influenced the assessment of the contemporary developments as well as these experts' policy proposals.

Thus, former American diplomat and statesman Henry Kissinger drew on the traditional Huntingtonian argumentation before getting to unveiling his plan for solving what he defined as the "Ukraine crisis". In one of his essays after the start of Moscow's military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, Kissinger painted the following account of Ukraine's "East-West" cleavage:

"The west [of Ukraine] is largely Catholic; the east largely Russian Orthodox. The west speaks Ukrainian; the east speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other — as has been the pattern — would lead eventually to civil war or break up." (Kissinger, 2014)

While approaching the problem from a different angle, a prominent IR scholar, Benjamin Miller, cited the situation in Ukraine as a case to support his idea of "state-to-nation imbalance" – or "a mismatch between state boundaries and national identities" – as a source of trouble and potential break up in such societies (Miller, 2014).

Even pundits with a thorough knowledge of and sympathetic towards Ukraine were sometimes drawn into following the stereotyped discourse. Thus, Steven Pifer (2015) chose to call the other side confronting Ukrainian forces in the Donbas conflict simply as "separatists". Pifer stated that Ukraine's domestic differences were quickly eroding and singled out the role of Putin's aggression for strengthening Ukrainian national identity. Then, he mentioned that "the Kremlin inspired, provided leadership for, and equipped an *armed separatist conflict*,"[11] adding that it "later sent in

regular Russian army units." (Pifer, 2015). In view of the admitted intensity and scale of Russia's implication in the Donbas conflict (let alone the Crimea campaign), it was certainly questionable whether the definition used – "separatist conflict" – really was an accurate choice of words.

Once adopted and rooted in the conventional perception of the developments in Ukraine such language was employed even in the contexts when it was apparently self-contradicting or making no sense at all. In his article for *Foreign Affairs* entitled "Ukraine's divided house still stands", Brian Milakovsky (2019) deliberated the Ukrainian government's potential choices in dealing with the parts of the Donbas "controlled by Russia and its separatist clients". When continuing to explain who was actually in charge in these territories, he came up with an oxymoron: they were administered by "separatists installed by the Kremlin." (Milakovsky, 2019).

The reality described by Milakovsky and other commentators evidently needed to be defined by different terms instead. Moscow did not only create, arm, finance, and fully control the fake Donetsk and Luhansk "republics" but handpicked and appointed local bosses and fighting commanders, many of whom were seconded there directly from Russia[12].

Most importantly, however, the stance implying a predominantly domestic nature of the conflict in Ukraine firmly made it into an everyday media discourse. Starting from late 2013, many reports on Ukraine implied that two parts of Ukraine faced each other during the Euromaidan. It was even more so the case with the conflict in the Donbas. The routine media narratives maintained that in the East Ukrainian security forces confronted some "pro-Russian" or "Russian-backed" "separatists" or "rebels" – and not Russia's collaborators or proxies.

The coverage of the war in the Donbas was influenced by its assessment as a domestic separatist conflict. "Can Ukraine avoid an East-West split and bloody civil war?" asked the title of a report on *NBC News* on the eve of the Russian aggression in 2014. (Can Ukraine avoid, 2014) "Deadly pro-Russian unrest in eastern Ukraine […] has exposed deep divisions in Ukrainian society – between the European-facing west and the Russian-facing east," argued an article on *BBC News* following the ousting of Yanukovych. (Ukraine's sharp divisions, 2014) Already in early 2015, another BBC report explaining the causes of the war in the East attributed the fighting and seizure of the Ukrainian territories there exclusively to the "pro-Russian rebels," without even mentioning the role of the Russian army and secret service either in the Donbas or the illegally annexed Crimea. (Kirby, 2015)

The routine interpretations of the situation in Ukraine between 2013 and 2022 were made through the lens of the previously shaped "East-West divide" stereotype. This was all the more disappointing due to an apparent strengthening of the Ukrainian identity and Europe-leaning orientation taking place following years of a successful nation-building process in the independent Ukraine. While this trend was discernible at least after the Orange Revolution (Kuzyk, 2011), it became truly unequivocal since the Euromaidan and the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. (Kulyk, 2016, Kuzyk, 2019, Razumkov Centre, 2024) Factors contributing to the improved societal cohesion based on Ukrainian national identity included the structural power of nation-state institutions, generational shift and growing interference and aggressiveness of Russia towards Ukraine with a simultaneous demonstration effect of the West. The regional East-West polarisation was hazy and often illusory, and to the extent that it did surface in the political landscape of the country, this line was steadily moving from west to east.[13]

The subsiding of the "East-West" polarization in Ukrainian society reached the point of no return with the Russian military incursion in Crimea and Donbas in 2014 (Haran & Yakovlev, 2017). So, contrary to its goals, the Russian aggression cemented the disappearance of the "East" as a potent political and ideological pole in Ukraine. By mid-spring 2014, the "symbolic East" shrank to a mere two regions. According to a nationwide poll conducted in April 2014, only the population of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts considered the protests on Kyiv Maidan "an armed coup d'état." Conversely, either an absolute or relative majority of the public in every other Eastern and Southern oblast (with the exception of the already occupied Crimea) defined it as a "civic protest against corruption and oppression of the Yanukovych dictatorship." (KIIS, 2014)

Ukraine's East and South turned out to be much more Ukrainian in their dominant identity and political loyalty than the commonplace "East-West divide" idea had allowed. Tatiana Zhurzhenko, a Ukrainian scholar from Kharkiv, came to the following conclusion in her reflections on this problem shortly after the start of the Russian incursion:

"Recent events have proved that there is no such entity as 'the East' or 'the South-East'. In facing the separatist threat and Russian aggression, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, Kharkiv, and other big and small cities have rediscovered their 'Ukrainianness' and are manifesting it in various ways." (Zhurzhenko, 2014)

Similar to the previous assessments of the Orange Revolution a palpable international and geopolitical factor featured in the Western public discourse on the Euromaidan and the 2014-2021 war in the Donbas. This time, this element of the discourse was even more pronounced. The supposedly divergent foreign allegiances of Ukraine's Western and Eastern regions were considered to be at the heart of the domestic contestation. Hence, the most important divide in Ukraine, argued the prominent Sovietologist and Russia expert Michael Rywkin, was between regions with a prevailing "European identification," on the one hand, and the regions with dominant "pro-Russian feelings," on the other hand. (Rywkin, 2014)

What was noteworthy about such categorical claims like those voiced by Rywkin about the "East-West" divergence on the foreign preferences and identities in Ukraine was that they indeed went well with the existing stereotype. However, one significant problem with such claims was that they did not correlate with the prevailing attitudes and identifications registered in Ukrainian society. The experts and commentators adhering to the myth of "two Ukraines" were either unaware or simply unwilling to admit that starting from 2014, the presumably firmly pro-Russian "East" has ceased to be pro-Russian.

Support for an economic union or military alliance with Russia among the Ukrainian population has steadily declined since the mid-2000s. The Russian aggression against Ukraine triggered nothing less than a collapse of the Russian foreign and security vector in the whole of Ukrainian society, including the Eastern and Southern regions. In fact, since 2014 these regions witnessed the biggest shift in the public attitudes towards Russia and Russia-controlled alliances. Their popular support in these regions truly plummeted. By July 2015, the popular support for Ukraine's potential joining of the Eurasian Economic Union in the East and South dropped to 26 per cent. This was notably less than the endorsement of the EU integration in these same parts of Ukraine. (IKDIF, 2015) What is more, between April 2012 and May 2016, the rates of support for a military alliance with Russia and other post-Soviet states dropped from 38 to 15 per cent in the East and from 31 to 12 per cent in the South (IKDIF, 2016).

The external dimension of the geopolitical component in the expert, scholarly and media discourse was no less important. In this part of the discourse, Ukraine's domestic cleavages were increasingly perceived as not just Ukraine's problem and, therefore, not up to Ukraine alone to decide. Following the start of the Russian occupation of Crimea, Kissinger suggested that Ukraine should not be accepted into NATO in order not

to annoy Russia. Instead, the Ukrainian foreign course was to liken that of neutral Finland at the time, hence serving as a bridge between Russia and the West (Kissinger, 2014). Ukrainian sovereignty and international agency were clearly not valued in these "realpolitik" calculations.

A cohort of International Relations scholars belonging to the Political Realist tradition was instrumental in promoting such kind of discourse. These scholars were convinced that Russia had been provoked by supposedly "reckless" NATO, EU, Ukrainian nationalists and some individual Western powers. Moreover, they believed that Russia had legitimate security concerns that eventually forced the Kremlin to act in Ukraine based on its strategic reckoning. In this way, they rationalised and justified the Kremlin's decision to invade a sovereign state, annex part of its territory, and fight a camouflaged war in its other regions.

One of the Realist School's most authoritative theoreticians of today, John Meirsheimer, belonged to the group of the most ardent promulgators of the pro-Russian narratives. According to Meirsheimer (2014) Ukraine's Euromaidan was a US-supported "coup" in a divided society. Arguably, this triggered an escape of the pro-Russian president and subsequent "insurrection" in Eastern Ukraine. This, in view of the EU's and NATO's "irresponsible" eastward expansions, became "the final straw" that compelled Putin to intervene. Similar to Kissinger, Mearsheimer called for converting Ukraine into a "neutral buffer between NATO and Russia."

It did not matter that, in the words of Paul D'Anieri, "realism has been poorly applied to the Ukraine case by one of its leading voices." (D'Anieri, 2016, p.501) Mearsheimer's ideas appeared to be persuasive to many – and not just inside Academia. Apart from his scholarly texts Mearsheimer's public speeches and lectures on the relations between Russia, Ukraine and the West hit millions of views on *YouTube* alone.[14]

All in all, the idea of a divided Ukraine clearly lived a life of its own. The commonplace perception of Ukraine and its social and cultural cleavages reflected in the expert, media and political discourse became all the more irrelevant over the course of time. The discourse did not match the political and social developments taking place in Ukraine. It evidently missed Ukraine's growing societal cohesion and strengthening of the Ukrainian national identity, which resulted from an overall successful nation-building process since independence. After all, by the mid-2010s, Ukraine has become the third most ethnically homogeneous country in Europe, with over 90 per cent of its population now declaring their Ukrainian ethnic identity (Identychnist hromadian, 2017, Razumkov Centre, 2024).

Contrary to the stereotypic interpretation of these events in the Western public discourse, the two Maidan revolutions that happened within roughly 10 years' time prevented Ukraine from sliding into authoritarianism and turning the country into a Russian appendage. They also became important stages in the process of shaping a strong and integrated civic nation. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine since 2014 only accelerated this evolution.

4. The idea of "East-West" divide today: a stereotype debunked?

Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 24 February 2022 has shaken the world. In the first weeks and months of the war, the Western political leaders, experts and the common public were equally surprised to find out that Ukraine was not overwhelmed by the powerful offensive of the Russian army but was able to effectively challenge the incursion. Contrary to prior expectations, Ukrainian society demonstrated extraordinary resilience and unity in its efforts to counter the Russian incursion. The failure to foresee the strength of Ukrainian resistance was described as "embarrassing for a Western think-tank and military community that had confidently predicted that the Russians would conquer Ukraine in a matter of days." (O'Brien, 2022).

The ideas about Ukraine reflected in the Western public discourse have finally met the reality. The myth of a helplessly divided and weak Ukraine, so widely circulated in the West, was among the key reasons why the country was initially regarded as standing no chance of surviving a major Russian attack. The deep-seated conviction about a prevailing pro-Russian character of the country's East and South was evidently at odds with these regions' crucial role in repelling the Russian aggression. This was the case during 2014-2021, when, for instance, the Eastern city and region of Dnipro/Dnipropetrovsk turned into an outpost of resistance to the Russian attack (Kupensky & Andriushchenko, 2022). The Dnipropetrovsk oblast also registered the biggest number of Ukrainian soldiers killed in action (Zahybli hromadiany, 2018). The same pro-Ukrainian trend was even more obvious following the Russian full-scale incursion, apparently calling the "Ukrainian divide" idea into question.

"In Moscow and among Western experts, Ukraine's Russian speakers were deemed to be inherently unreliable and likely to swing to supporting Russia if Moscow invaded the country," writes Kuzio. It was believed

that a "shock-and-awe style Russian invasion of Ukraine would exert tremendous pressure on Ukraine's regional divisions, leading to the state's fragmentation and the collapse of the Ukrainian army (as in Afghanistan)." However, this did not happen "because Ukraine was never a regionally fractured country; its Russian speakers were Ukrainian patriots, and there was never any possibility the Ukrainian army was going to disintegrate in the same manner as the Afghan army" (Kuzio, 2022). The previously unnoticed or stubbornly denied evidence of a robust Ukrainian identity held by most of the Russian-speaking population of the Eastern and Southern regions has now been fully exposed. So has the inconsistency of the well-established general interpretation of Ukraine's societal differences and cleavages that otherwise would have been regarded normal for a modern society.

All this has questioned the general belief about Ukraine being a "cleft" or "borderland" country doomed to survive only in the form of a "neutral buffer" or "bridge" between Russia and the West – if they would allow it. The Russian genocidal war against Ukraine and the latter's subsequent united response to it has indicated that the stereotypical ideas about Ukraine's social and cultural cleavages were significantly exaggerated. These led many in the West to make incorrect judgements about the level of cohesion and potential of the Ukrainian nation, and not least about the nature of the conflict dragging on its territory since 2014. Now, with all these "revelations" finally on full display, the myths and stereotypes contained in the expert, media and political discourse have been asking for their critical re-consideration.

Since early 2022, the Western media, expert and academic discourse have indeed witnessed some signs of the change taking place. In many respects, Russia's war of aggression has been an eye-opener. The tone of the expert and media talk on the Ukrainian regional and cultural differences has been mitigated, while the critical voices calling for parting with the old mantra of the Ukrainian "East-West" split (as well as other myths and misconceptions about Ukraine) have been gradually gaining momentum (Klein, 2022, Kotliuk, 2023, Kudlenko, 2023, Kuzio, 2022, 2023).

The biggest shift concerned the focus of the discourse. Now, it has been – quite naturally – redirected towards the issues relating to the Russo-Ukrainian war. The less immediate themes involved discussing the motives behind the Russian aggression and Putin's obsession with Ukraine, sources of Ukrainian resilience, etc. Separate threads of the respective

reporting and commentary were catching up on some general themes and information that had usually been missing in the pre-2022 discourse on Ukraine and its society. Ukraine was finally emerging on the mental map of the Western world as a complex but integral sovereign actor.

What the change in interpreting some key episodes of Ukraine's modern history relating to its regional and cultural cleavages could mean for the routine media discourse is exemplified by an article by David Gormezano (2024) published in *France 24*. The author produced a fairly balanced analysis of the major causes, actors, sequence of events and political context of the conflict in the Donbas since 2014. In his analysis, Gormezano considered the war as not an isolated incident but a precursor of the large-scale military invasion of Ukraine by expansionist Russia, noted an important role of the past brutal Russification of the Donbas for breeding local pro-Russian communities and demonstrated how these proxies were exploited by the Russian secret service and military going after their strategic objectives in Ukraine.

Yet, the inertia of the previous narratives has been there too. The difficulty in coming to terms with the suddenly exposed reality in and around Ukraine following the start of the all-out Russian war was apparent in many pieces of analysis and reporting. The dissonance between the previous stories of the alleged societal "split" or "civil war" and the present-day experience of the unified society fighting the aggressor was simply too big to swallow straight away.

The case of the pre-2022 war in the Donbas offered multiple examples of the inertia of the old discourse in particular. Leading global news agencies have been evidently perplexed with accommodating the former senses and discursive conventions from the years of their sticking to the myth of the "pro-Russian separatists" and "rebels" allegedly representing the chief force behind what actually was a foreign occupation of the Ukrainian territories of the Donbas and Crimea.

The clumsy efforts at integrating the former narratives into the current discourse at times ran to apparent logical absurdity. The formerly internalised narrative about the "separatists" and "internal conflict" in the Ukrainian East led to confusion caused by *Agence France-Presse*. The Agency once again bought into the Russian propaganda trick following months of intense fighting on the fronts of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war. On 3 July 2022, the *AFP* reported some tactical advances of the "Russian-backed Ukraine separatists" in the Donbas – mistakenly implying that the troops fighting there were something different from the overall

Russian forces encroaching on the Ukrainian sovereign territory. This information was subsequently disseminated by *Le Monde*, *Deutsche Welle, Barron's* as well as *Al Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya*. "What [would they report] next? [That t]he 'Ukrainian separatists' launch cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea?" mocked the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the *AFP*'s interpretation of the events (Ukraine's Foreign Ministry, 2022).

Similarly, traces of the old approach to the Ukrainian societal differences and cleavages and their political repercussions (or lack thereof) have been no stranger to the current expert and political discourse. The recent epistemological twist in the perception of these cleavages encouraged by the upfront experience of the Russo-Ukrainian war has not worked for all researchers and political commentators either.

At the very least, the change has not affected the diehards from the *Putinverstehers* camp. These scholars and pundits, on the whole, have continued blaming the West and Ukrainian radicals for the outbreak of the war and actually calling for respect for Russia's "interests" in the "fragmented" Ukraine. The previously cited Mearsheimer (2022) spoke about the ever-intensified "animosities that have fuelled the conflict in the Donbas between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian government," the "irresponsible" West supporting Ukraine's war efforts, and claimed that Moscow "did not invade Ukraine to conquer it."

In a similar way, a former career diplomat and historian who served as the last American ambassador to the USSR, Jack Matlock, has stuck to his old story once laid out in the essays with symptomatic headings: "Ukraine: the price of internal division" (Matlock, 2014) and "Ukraine: tragedy of a nation divided" (Matlock, 2021). Matlock reiterated familiar claims about Ukraine being "deeply divided along linguistic and cultural lines." According to him, this was a problem stemming from the past "haphazard assembling" of the country from parts that were not "mutually compatible" (Matlock, 2022).

The inertia of the concepts from the old discourse concerns some more mainstream intellectual circles as well. Fans of the "Clash of Civilizations" are not prepared to part with the concept of the "cleft country" as an explainer of Ukraine's troubles and to admit that Huntington got the Ukrainian case wrong. An American political analyst and columnist Ross Douthat is one such example. Douthat (2022) conceded that Huntington's "assumption that civilizational alignments would trump national ones hasn't been borne out in Putin's war, in which eastern Ukraine has resisted Russia fiercely." However, Douthat still insisted that Huntington

had accurately foreseen "internal Ukrainian divisions, the split between the Orthodox and Russian-speaking east and the more Catholic and Western-leaning west" (Douthat, 2022).

Today, the stereotypic idea of Ukraine's "East-West" divide has also been reproduced in the political and expert discourse in different contexts and forms. Thus, one of the key distinguishing features of the present-day Ukraine narratives of the discussed Kremlin-friendly expert camp is promoting some true *realpolitik* solutions for ending the war. It is noteworthy that the suggested possible compromises do not really presuppose punishing the aggressor for waging an unlawful and brutal war, attempting to annex foreign territories, and overall threatening the international order. Instead, such "compromises" essentially come down to a formula: peace at Ukraine's cost.

Implied in such proposals usually are concessions expected from Ukraine, which include yielding chunks of its sovereign territory. Helping Ukraine to make sure that it survives the war as an independent state, writes Matlock, "does not mean that Ukraine has to recover all the territory it inherited in 1991". Moreover, this would be undesirable "given all the passions aroused by the war and what preceded it (the violent change of government in 2014 that many Russians considered a coup d'etat organized by the United States), the population in some areas is likely to resist a return to Kyiv's control" (Matlock, 2022b).

"Even after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine," notes Kudlenko, "scholars defended Russia's 'legitimate security concerns' and discussed how Ukraine's choices were a threat to Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, not vice versa" (Kudlenko, 2023). Perhaps these experts and academics could not have come to a different conclusion when guided by the long-standing views of divided Ukraine as well as foreign-orchestrated "coups" and "civil war".

Unfortunately, the general line of reasoning expressed in these narratives is shared not just among the now somewhat outmoded *Putinverstehers*. The set of ideas consisting of the former consent regarding divided Ukraine, realpolitik advocacy for the Russo-Western détente and readiness to sacrifice Ukrainian interests can be found in different proportions in the mainstream expert and political discourse. These ideas have penetrated the expertise up to the top echelons of political and security apparatus in some key North-Atlantic capitals, affecting statements and views of the political leaders.

In early December 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that Russia's need for security guarantees had to be addressed by the West once Putin agreed to negotiate the end of the war in Ukraine. The statement was made in the context of American-French discussions of the future security architecture, NATO enlargement and "the deployment of weapons that could threaten Russia" (Clercq, 2022).

The legacy of the old myths and stereotypes about Ukraine surely played a role in arriving at such suggestions. Admitting such a possibility was irrational but rewarding for Putin. However, what is usually not voiced in such remarks and passages by experts and decision-makers alike is implicitly rooted in the very logic of the messages they convey. The idea clearly transpiring from these messages is that due to the limited support the West is willing to contribute, Ukraine's own supposed domestic problems, as well as Russian "comprehensible" (even if illegitimate) claims and interests in this country, Ukraine may need to give up something for the sake of the future peace settlement. And in view of the Russian appetite that "something" is no less than parts of its internal and external sovereignty.

The so-called "Korean scenario" as a possible model for ending the Russo-Ukrainian conflict that has been actively circulating in the Western discourse since the start of the full-scale invasion is another sign as to what the genuine picture of Ukraine is on the minds of Western experts and commentators. A number of recent publications contemplated the possibility of ending the war using the general approach that settled the Korean conflict in the mid-1950s (Malkasian, 2023, Rachman, 2022, Radchenko, 2023, Segura, 2023). The argumentation in support of applying such a model to Ukraine's case mainly focuses on its effectiveness in halting the hostilities at the existing contact line and turning this into an indefinite armistice. It is believed that this would save lives and prevent further destruction, as well as shield the bulk of the Ukrainian territory and population from the threat of further Russian aggression and influence.

The suggested "Korean" model for settling the conflict declares benign objectives. Yet, just as the previous approach, it presupposes Ukraine's territorial concessions for achieving peace. At the same time, it lacks some crucial international instruments and mechanisms to realistically expect the plan's successful fulfilment. Among them, a shortage of foreign troops stationed on the Ukrainian side and ready to fight to safeguard the fixed separation line should Russia breach the truce is a particularly essential circumstance in this case. To date, the political decision of the Western

countries to deploy a weighty contingent of troops to such a mission seems very unlikely.

However, it is even more noteworthy that the suggested scenario, once again, reveals the authors' tacit acknowledgement of the stereotype of the divided Ukraine. The implicit reasoning behind the "Korean scenario" draws on a proposition that the Eastern and Southern regions, parts of which are currently under Russian occupation, are significantly different from and, therefore, of lesser importance to the rest of the country. Even if the "East" is not really regarded to be representing a plain Russian proxy – as analogous to the relation of Northern Korea with China and the USSR – then, at the very least, this logic implies that it is a territory and part of the Ukrainian society culturally and politically so close to Russia that it can be easily traded for the peace and well-being of the western part. The familiar stereotypical idea of Ukraine being bitterly divided between "East" and "West" clearly lurks in the background of such proposals.

The legacy of the former perception of Ukraine's societal differences and cleavages, in fact, triggers a reversed causality in the present-day Western expert discourse on Ukraine. Yet, contrary to the explicit or implicit messages present in this discourse, the current Russian aggression against Ukraine has not been instigated or even helped by an alleged "East-West" split in the country. The inconvenient truth that this discourse is unwilling to admit is that Ukraine's domestic cleavages never represented a factor potent enough to trigger a major domestic conflict and have just been withering away over time.

In reality, the de-facto-divided Ukraine today could only emerge as a direct consequence of Russian aggression – with the physical border inflicted upon Ukraine by brutal force. It is this border or "wall" that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi referred to in his Bundestag speech in June 2024, alluding to the years when the Berlin Wall separated Germany. "You can understand us in Ukraine; you can understand why we are fighting so hard against Russia's attempts to divide Ukraine, why we are doing everything we can to make sure there is not a new wall in our country." (Ukraine: Zelenskyi, 2024).

5. Conclusion

This article has analysed the idea of an "East-West" societal divide in Ukraine as contained in the Western media, expert and scholarly

discourse. The study has outlined a general perception of Ukraine's regional and cultural differences in the West. The analysis has revealed that starting from the early 1990s, political pundits, commentators and some authoritative scholars focusing on Ukraine were able to shape a dominant stereotypic view of Ukraine's domestic cleavages. According to the established conventional interpretation, the "East-West" cleavage was posing an insurmountable problem for the unity of the Ukrainian state and society. It was believed that the alleged societal divide epitomised a key hurdle for Ukraine's development that doomed the country to the role of an unstable buffer between Russia and the West or could even lead to a catastrophic disintegration.

The idea of a divided Ukraine started to appear in the Western media and expert discourse during the tense process of the country's acquisition of the state's independence. Then, in the early 1990s, Ukraine consisted of a confused and heavily Russified post-Soviet society with vast regional and cultural differences at an early stage of nation-building. Still, these narratives were unbalanced, focused heavily on societal differences and carried a heavy imprint of the internalised Russian myths about Ukraine in the context of the Yugoslav wars and ethnic and political unrest in other parts of the former USSR. In the mid-1990s, Samuel Huntington's concept of "cleft country" applied to Ukraine in his popular theory of "Clash of Civilizations" was instrumental in turning the image of a divided Ukraine into a full-blown stereotype. His conceptualisation of Ukraine's "East-West" differences drew disproportionate attention to this case and cemented the differences' stereotypic interpretation in the expert, media and academic discourse.

The Orange Revolution in 2004 and Euromaidan in 2013-14 were important democratic breakthroughs which helped the country to stay on its course of democratic development and Euro-Atlantic integration. However, the narratives of some authoritative experts and academic backers of the stereotype of the "East-West" divide presented an alternative discursive reality. Contrary to the two Maidans' actual meaning for the forging of a civic Ukrainian nation, they were declared to have represented a formidable sign of the Ukrainian "East-West" split. The Western mainstream media discourse, overall, picked this line of argument up also when covering the Russian aggression against Ukraine between 2014 and 2021. Russia's treacherous attack and occupation of the Crimea and its military intervention in the Eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk were

portrayed as an essentially domestic conflict triggered by local pro-Russian "rebels" or "separatists."

Ukrainian society's strong and united response to the full-scale invasion of the country by the Russian Federation has brought about some important changes in the media and expert and scholarly discourse, shaking the old stereotype. The focus on Ukraine's alleged deep divisions has given way to a more sophisticated and balanced analysis of Ukrainian society and its history. However, the traces of the old discourse remain. Some of the former stereotypical perceptions of Ukrainian societal differences transformed into new forms in the wartime context. Today, the idea of the Ukrainian divide, *inter alia*, is either explicitly or implicitly reproduced in some *realpolitik* proposals for ending the Russo-Ukrainian war at the cost of Ukrainian territorial concessions and its internal and external sovereignty. Such scenarios would not have apparently been voiced so intensely had the experts not subscribed to the belief about a different and essentially pro-Russian "East".

The analysis in this article has demonstrated that the depth of Ukraine's "East-West" cleavage and its true political influence in the country were exaggerated. It is possible to state that the stereotypical idea of a deeply divided Ukraine in the Western discourse has, in effect, lived a life of its own. While one could speak about political and cultural "East-West" differences in Ukrainian society in the early periods of its independence, these were comparable with the cleavages many contemporary European societies faced. Furthermore, over the course of a successful nation-building process in independent Ukraine the significance of the cleavage has been continuously subsiding. The trend of strengthening national cohesion was noticeable before the start of the Russian military and hybrid aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and has only intensified ever since.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that followed in February 2022 and the genocidal character of the Russian war have made this change inside Ukrainian society irreversible. However, today, almost three years into the all-out Russo-Ukrainian war, Ukraine is facing the danger of a real divide imposed upon its society and territory from outside – by means of sheer brutal force. It has been concluded that once Russia is allowed to keep effective control over the occupied parts of Ukraine's East and South, such a potential demarcation line can physically separate them from the rest of the country in the future. In this way, the idea of Ukraine's "East-West" divide may indeed materialise becoming an actual border separating the integral parts of the Ukrainian nation.

Endnotes

[1]   I thank the anonymous reviewer of my paper for explicitly making this point to me.

[2]   In the book the mentioned paragraph on Ukraine was placed within a larger section entitled "Russia and Its Near Abroad." See Huntington 1996, 163-168.

[3]   It is also noteworthy that in such reports and commentaries Russian or Soviet nationalisms were never mentioned in this context, effectively associating any nationalistic views with the Halychyna or Western Ukraine more generally.

[4]   It was the time, writes Riabchuk (2023), "when anybody who spent a few years in Moscow, learnt some Russian and read Riasanovsky's antiquated Russian history textbook could boldly comment on all things Ukrainian – either in politics, history, culture, religion or language. Unintentionally, they became custodians and promotors of the empire that supposedly rested in peace in 1991 but still retained its discursive power and rhetorical dominance".

[5]   The scholarly significance of the "Clash of Civilizations" is reflected in its citation's statistics. As of September 2018, both the 1993 article and 1996 book were cited more than 36 thousand times. See Haynes, 2019.

[6]   Paul D'Anieri regarded this liberal inclusivity on the part of the Ukrainian government and political elites in the 1990s and 2000s as a rather forced measure stimulated by the large size of the Russophone minority. In his opinion, the resultant balance of power between the centre, regions and cultural minorities allowed Ukraine to avoid violence and separatism. See D'anieri, 2007.

[7]   The Russian speakers constituted a weighty proportion of Ukrainian society, which in the 1990s and 2000s nearly equaled the proportion of Ukrainophones in the country. (Panina, 2004, p.37) Included in these statistics were, for instance, many inhabitants of the capital Kyiv, the largest and mostly Russian-speaking city at that time. And yet, because of the proximity of ideological and political preferences of its citizens to those of the residents of the Halychyna, Kyiv was always allotted to the symbolic "West" on the "East-West" scheme. At the same time, the use of the Russian language for the most part did not coincide with holding of an ethnic Russian identity. The ethnic Russians represented a much smaller group in Ukraine which was furthermore steeply diminishing. This reflected the trend that Volodymyr Kulyk (2018) called the "bottom-up de-Russification".

[8]   "Why are so many west Europeans being such lemons about Ukraine's orange revolution?" rhetorically asked Timothy Garton Ash at some point of the revolutionary events in Ukraine in the late 2004. "Every day brings a

new example of some feeble, back-handed or downright hostile reaction." See Ash, 2004.

9   The accounts of the events in the Crimea and Donbas based on such understanding of reality were surely present in the Western expert and scholarly discourse as well. See, for instance, an article published shortly following the start of the Russian intervention by Roy Allison, 2014 or a comprehensive study of the motivations and ideological sources of the Russian 2014 attack on Ukraine by Taras Kuzio, 2017.

10   Putin and his close circle were fairly explicit and straightforward regarding their chauvinistic and expansionist plans towards Ukraine in general and the Crimea and large parts of the Southern and Eastern Ukraine in particular. These plans were also voiced in direct communications with fellow-leaders of the Western powers long before the start of the 2014 Crimea and Donbas campaigns. For a compilation of the eliminationist rhetoric coming from the high-ranking Russian officials and directed against Ukraine, its state, identity and culture see Apt, 2024.

11   Emphasis mine.

12   Among the Russians sent to Ukraine with the task to instigate and "manage" the conflict in the Donbas two figures with direct links to Russian secret service and ultra-nationalist oligarch Konstantin Malofeev stick out: Igor Girkin and Aleksandr Borodai. Igor Girkin (*nom de guerre* Strelkov), an FSB colonel, was a unit commander who took control of Sloviansk agglomeration in the Donetsk oblast. From May to August 2014, Strelkov was a "defence minister" of the bogus DNR "republic". He was sentenced to life in prison (in absentia) by the Dutch court for downing the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in June of the same year. Girkin-Strelkov claimed that he, together with his detachment, was "the one who pulled the trigger on the war" starting the "flywheel of the war." (Antonova & Pertsev, 2023). Aleksandr Borodai was initially involved in the operation of ceasing the Crimea and then was moved to the Donbas. There, he was appointed as the first head of the "DNR" but shortly resigned in August 2014 after Moscow found a more suitable candidate with a Ukrainian background for the post (Weselowsky, 2019).

13   The issue of the growing integration of Ukrainian society has been dealt with by the author of this paper elsewhere. See Kuzyk, 2019.

14   Just one of the *YouTube*'s videos of Meirsheirmer's many talks, "Why is Ukraine the West's fault," (Meirsheimer, 2015) attracted almost 30 million views by July 2024.

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Biographical note

Matus Adrian defended his PhD in 2022 at the European University Institute in Florence. His dissertation, turned into a book published at De Gruyter Oldenbourg in 2024, focuses on the Eastern and Central European countercultures in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In parallel with the PhD, he worked as an assistant archivist intern at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, where he processed the Kevin Devlin collection. In 2022, he was the recipient of the OSUN-Democracy Institute Postdoctoral Fellowship, and in 2023-2024, he was a Global Teaching Fellow at the ELTE University Budapest, where he taught *Breakin' the Law. Challenging the socialist state in the 20*[th] *century* and *Digital Humanities.* In parallel with his scholarly work, he is an educator within various educational institutions in Budapest.

KEVIN DEVLIN, ARCHON. THE NOTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE RADIO FREE EUROPE'S ARCHIVES [*]

Adrian-George Matus

Abstract

This article focuses on an auto-ethnographic reflection of a particular archival collection held by the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, titled Records of Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Department on Non-Ruling Communist Parties. This collection was produced during the Cold War by the Radio Free Europe Research Unit. While the vast collection of RFE Research Units focuses on the countries from the socialist bloc, this collection mapped thoroughly from 1960 until 1990 the various Communist Parties from all over the globe. At the same time, the producer, Kevin Devlin is a mysterious author with limited information about his person. By using the concept of trace and archival authorship, my study aims to understand the context of the collection's creation by focusing on the role of the archivist and the complexity of the archival workflow. This study belongs to a larger project in which I aim to understand the notion of archival authorship by using the case study of the Kevin Devlin collection.

Keywords: Kevin Devlin, Open Society Archives, archival authorship, auto-ethnography of archival workflow, archival representation

1. Introduction

My research focuses and uses as a starting point a unique collection, named *Records of Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Department*

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on Non-Ruling Communist Parties' held by the OSA Archivum Budapest (HU OSA 300-5-90, Records of Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis, 2022). Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives (OSA), based in Budapest, hold one of the most important collections on the activity of the Eastern and Central European Communist Parties. Produced in the Cold War context by the Radio Free Europe Research Unit, the vast collection focused on the post-war political, social, and economic history of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. A vast majority of the researchers that focus on Communism, the Cold War, the history of East-Central European socialist states, and human rights use this archive to expand the frontiers of academic knowledge.

Before discussing the chosen research angle, let me briefly contextualize the relevance of this collection. In 2019, this unusual set of documents was found inside the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest. Initially, when the archivists discovered this collection, it seemed to be the usual story: some materials that were left unprocessed were diligently waiting for their turn to be entered into the database. As the archive comprises 9000 linear meters of textual documents in 40 languages (OSA website, 2023), there were obvious reasons why boxes passed unnoticed in this large volume of documents.

At first glance, this collection contradicts the Open Society Archives content. The collection was spread throughout the 13 large boxes onto which the name 'Kevin Devlin' was written, a mysterious name at that point. Having only this prior information, the archival collection was provisionally named 'the Kevin Devlin collection'. The puzzle grew even more intricate when opening these boxes. While Donald and Vera Blinken's vast majority of collections focus on the activity of the Eastern and Central European Communist Parties, this collection focuses on the Communist Parties from the rest of the globe. The documents show an alternative story of the Cold War: the story seen by the Communist Parties from non-socialist countries.

While processing the documents, our knowledge of the content grew, but it also added layers of complexity to the enigma. This archival collection, which after processing resulted in 141 boxes, deals with materials collected between 1960 and 1990 by a particular office – the Communist Area Analysis Department. This unique collection consists of press clippings, reports, audience reports, Communist Party leaflets and research documents concerning Communist Parties from more than 100 countries. The main topics of this collection are the International

Communist Movement activities, the impact of the Sino-Soviet split in the countries from the Global South, the impact of the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the perestroika reforms. The documents cover virtually all the Communist Parties from non-socialist countries, and the materials are organized according to the country of origin.

As the collection was dispersed inside the archive, only in 2020 it started to be processed systematically. The series of documents immediately challenged the existing archival structure, as up to that point, it was thought that Radio Free Europe Research Analysis Department focused solely on the activity of the C.P. from the socialist states. To tackle this riddle, a novel and distinctive approach was required.

In light of this specific context, this study aims to trace the history of the creation of Kevin Devlin collection. An enigmatic aura surrounds the person who presumably created this collection. The corporate items from Radio Free Europe (accounting, HR, security) do not mention him. Despite his unique expertise in Communist Parties, information about Kevin Devlin is scarce. The Hoover Archives, where a part of the Radio Free Europe (RFE) collection is held, have more consistent information. From the Hoover Archives, we found out that Devlin worked for the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) Research Institute for 45 years. During this long period, he gathered texts, reports, press clippings in order to map the activity of the Communist Parties from non-socialist countries. He was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland and graduated from Queen's University in Belfast with a degree in English Literature. (Devlin, RFE Hoover Corporate Records, n.d.) After his graduation, he worked for 10 years for several Irish and British newspapers. In 1961, he joined the RFE. During his first two years, he worked for the Central News Room and later became an analyst for Radio Free Europe in Munich. (Devlin, RFE Hoover Corporate Records, n.d.) He published on Europe's Communist parties and was involved in various collective research projects.

One could easily argue that Devlin was a simple employee at Radio Free Europe in Munich, and his role was too insignificant to gain visibility. On the other hand, he produced one of the most extensive collections of documents inside the Research Department from Radio Free Europe. He gathered data, processed it, and used his analytic qualities to produce relevant research and publish high-quality academic papers. Yet, finding information about his work inside RFE proved difficult and did not help us understand the workflow and records creation. So far, most of the historiography of RFE has focused on the role of radio journalists and

more visible public intellectual figures. Historians gathered extensive oral history interviews and wrote substantial works on the journalists and high-rank RFE profiles (Docmentary Films of the Black Box Foundation, 1988-2006). The sources that describe the workflow inside the Radio Free Europe Research Analysis Departments are scarce and incomplete.

Thus, this study does not aim to recreate the life of Kevin Devlin. Instead, the central focus of my investigation is to understand his *trace* within the collection. The knowledge created within this collection was collective; not only Kevin Devlin created it, but also other members from the Communist Area Analysis Department, such as William McLaughlin, Robert Salloch, Joseph Kun and Rudolf Steward Rauch. In this sense, at the heart of my research stands the question: what does this collection dedicated to Communist Parties from non-socialist countries reveal about Radio Free Europe's activities?

In order to solve this conundrum, I will use several methodological approaches. On the first level, I will try to pinpoint the complex relationship between the author, archivist and the archive in unfolding and creating the meaning. Consequently, the first part will be dedicated to explaining the archival methodological tools needed to process this collection. Nonetheless, it is crucial to highlight that this study does not exclusively deal with archival methodologies. For this, I decided to do an auto-ethnography of my experience. The main reason for this tedious work is, as Bruno Latour stated wittily when working with the document making from the Conseil d'Etat, that all such elements contribute and provide meaning about the functioning of an institution:

"Why should we discuss all these sordid details, as if the ethnographer had the myopia of a paper-eating mouse or that of an ant? Because, even while we are following the slow fabrication of a file, we are not neglecting the intellectual and cognitive foundations for one moment." (Latour, 2009, p. 88)Bruno Latour pursues his ethnographic inquiries into the different value systems of modern societies. After science, technology, religion, art, it is now law that is being studied by using the same comparative ethnographic methods. The case study is the daily practice of the French supreme courts, the Conseil d'Etat, specialized in administrative law (the equivalent of the Law Lords in Great Britain

Let us expand based on this quote. By working on the archives of the French State Council (Conseil de l'Etat), he discovered that the "carton

folder held together with elastic bands" (Latour, 2009, p. 71)Bruno Latour pursues his ethnographic inquiries into the different value systems of modern societies. After science, technology, religion, art, it is now law that is being studied by using the same comparative ethnographic methods. The case study is the daily practice of the French supreme courts, the Conseil d'Etat, specialized in administrative law (the equivalent of the Law Lords in Great Britain gives meaning by organizing every institution's activities. The file transforms the colloquial complaint into elevated speech and grievances into written claims; in other words, according to Latour, it transforms reality into speech (Latour, 2009, p. 80)Bruno Latour pursues his ethnographic inquiries into the different value systems of modern societies. After science, technology, religion, art, it is now law that is being studied by using the same comparative ethnographic methods. The case study is the daily practice of the French supreme courts, the Conseil d'Etat, specialized in administrative law (the equivalent of the Law Lords in Great Britain. For Latour, archives themselves have the agency. He uses a metaphor to illustrate his point: "the files, like the king, never die…" (Latour, 2009, p. 80). This statement has many implications for the work with the Kevin Devlin collection.

For Bruno Latour, such clusters of knowledge that create documents (laboratories, research institutions) do not *explain* but *assemble* the reality. This process-oriented approach documents "actions, actors, communication, imitation and translation, networks, knowledge flows and the continual process that constructs society" (Levi & Valverde, 2008, p. 809). Bruno Latour gives equal credit to physical and discursive elements that create meaning through networks. The relationship between documents and networks constitutes reality through an assemblage (Levi & Valverde, 2008, p. 817). According to Bruno Latour, this process is called knowledge production, which is far from being objective. Instead, the process is always contingent (Levi & Valverde, 2008, p. 811).

Along with Bruno Latour's observations, we will follow the micro-stories of the fabrication of files and its transformation into knowledge. After explaining the various vector roles in (un)folding the files, I will move to this collection's multiple readers and producers. After explaining the role of the archivist and their subjective position, I aim to discuss the collection's content. I focus on unfolding changes in categorical and classificatory practices influenced by official and non-official information availability. Once having understood the epistemological context, in the

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second part, I will investigate the role of the mysterious producer of the archive: Kevin Devlin.

This part has two primary intentions. Firstly, by researching Kevin Devlin's holding, I intend to understand how the Radio Free Europe employees gathered information from official and non-official sources and how biography played a crucial role in the process of knowledge gathering. Secondly, having understood the classificatory practice and the biographies of the authors, I will present how this archival collection mirrors the changes outside the archive.

The relevance of this collection surpasses a simple archival curiosity. Instead, my argument is that the Records of Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Department on Non-Ruling Communist Parties mirror the changes that happened inside this department and around the globe. While in the 1960s, the main focus was on gathering materials about the Sino-Soviet Split, in the 1970s, the attention of the Non-Ruling Communist Parties Department shifted to punctual events, like the reforms in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union dissident Andrei Sakharov's process, the Solidarity Movement, the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the perestroika. This office followed how Communist Parties from all over the world perceived these shifts.

2. Materiality in all its (dis)honesty

Let us first discuss the materiality of the collection. We will start first by discussing the context of the archival processing within the OSA. It will tackle the main problem that the processing brought as well. The paper documents constituted the first traces that led to the enigmatic name of Kevin Devlin. On several brown large-sized boxes, the name Kevin Devlin stood written since the late 1990s. Within these boxes, folders about different countries waited to be re-arranged. This was the setting in which the Kevin Devlin collection processing started in October 2019. This was the first visible *trace* of Kevin Devlin: his name on a series of boxes.

With this common name as a label on the boxes, we inspected the content. Throughout the first weeks, we knew very little about the precise archival provenance of the boxes from the depot. The preliminary inspection proved that the documents follow the RFE protocol, meaning they were produced within the larger company. At the same time, content-wise, the collection seemed unfitting in the archives.

I used the available clues to circumvent the topic. In the 1990s, an archival company based in Germany pre-processed the documents and provided a detailed description of the content through entry logs. The documents were donated to to the Open Society Archives and stored inside its premises between the late 1990s and 2020 when Archivist Tari Örs signalled the presence of the materials. Thus, in November 2020, when the Open Society Archives initiated the project, the first task was to check the conditions of the documents.

The preliminary analysis of the documents lasted between November 2020 and March 2021. By carefully analyzing the materiality of the documents, I understood that the documents on paper were in good shape and that no document needed any physical restoration. At the same time, the content evaluation process showed another excellent news—the entry logs provided by the previous archiving company matched the content. The preliminary analysis concluded that the collection has a different focus than the rest of Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives' usual content. More specifically, the documents were grouped into countries and followed the history of the Communist Parties from non-socialist countries.

While the content was different, the documents respected the structure of other collections from the same archive. On the first level, this collection included press clippings from Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, La Libertà, and occasionally from other international newspapers. The second category of documents was daily press reports produced by Radio Free Europe's staff. Finally, the research reports, produced inside the Non-Ruling Communist Parties Department, presented a broader focus and used academic language. These three categories constitute the extensive quantity of the collection. Nevertheless, we sometimes found documents produced by the national Communist Parties (leaflets, programs, brochures). Occasionally, we found documents addressed to Kevin Devlin, like letters.

After analyzing the nature of the sources, our focus moved to create a meaningful categorization of the documents. The crux of the categorization followed the 'respect des fonds' rule. As the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives closely respected this rule, we aimed to keep the whole collection together in one place. We kept the original structure, as each document (press clipping, article, document, etc.) had a reference code consisting of two or three letters that usually referred to the country or the topic discussed.

I kept the original administrative principle of the archive to a large extent. I divided the fond into two main parts, according to the context of production. The first sub-fonds of the collection (boxes 1-122) contain the activities of the Communist Parties from the non-socialist countries. The second sub-fonds (123-141) contains the activities of the International Communist Movement. The sub-fonds International Communist Movement focuses on the impact of Maoism in Africa, South America, and South-East Asia. While the producer of the first sub-fond was Kevin Devlin, a Research Analyst, the second sub-fonds was organized by William McLaughlin and Joseph Cornelius Kun.

The original scaffolding of the archive was re-composed by referring first to the country and then to the theme under focus. The structure chosen respects the following order:

Name of the Country: issue: sub-topic, for instance
Sweden: Communist Party
Sudan: Communist Party
Italy: Communist Party
Italy: Communist Party: Socialists

On a broader level, this structure revealed an important aspect: the archive catalogue always mirrors the logic of the creators (Vladimir Lapin, Hesitations at the Door to an Archive Catalog, in Blouin & Rosenberg, 2007, p. 480). By taking into account this statement, the first reflection about the role of the archivist arose. The archive creators, in this case, were the bureaucrats from the Radio Free Europe Research Department and the researchers focusing on the given topic. Meanwhile, the information taxonomy followed the Library of Congress' classification practices (Congressional Preliminary Annual Report on RFE, 1972, p.46). While the structure of the boxes was clear, the content had significant shifts from the orthodox content of Radio Free Europe. The material content aligned with the overall archival collection; however, the meaning differed.

In order to explain the significance of this observation, we will make a slight detour and focus on the history of the archives, as it will help us understand the multiple understandings of the road from a written document to an archive. The notion of archival workflow and storage changed throughout the last decades, having significant relevance in understanding the role of the archivist and, on a broader level, the archival authorship.

2.1. What constitutes an archive?

The meaning of an archive has changed throughout societies and times. The word's etymology derives from the ancient Greek *arkheion*, which designated the house of the *arkhon*. The *arkhon* was the judge in ancient Greek city-states. In this logic, the *arkhon* needed a particular space to keep administrative documents designated for judging cases, which became the *arkheion* (in Ancient Greek meant "related to the office"). Based on the word's root, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida provided a unique interpretation, which we will shed light on in the following sections.

Until then, let us narrow down our focus on the history of archives. Until the 16th century, most archived documents reflected transactions and charters. Usually, such documents were kept within local or regional institutions, like churches or town halls. These repositories were defined as *loci publici in quibus instrumenta deponuntur* [*lat.* "public places where legal documents are deposed"] (Duchein, 1992, p. 16). The transformation of the European powers into empires required new institutions that needed to be coordinated through extensive documents (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2013, p. 16). This marked a first paradigm shift: the document received authority and authenticity not by an individual case but by belonging to a cluster or a collection. The second paradigm shift happened in the 19th century when the archival documents became a subject of central concern for legitimizing the past. Starting with the French Revolution and doubled by the increase in the quantity of administrative works, the European countries realized the need for a separation between functioning institutions and the archival repositories (Duchein, 1992, p.18). Thus, governmental documents became more prevalent than church records (Ridener, 2009, p. 26).

Thus, the accuracy and authenticity of the record is given by the institution that created, collected, stored and preserved them. Therefore, while in the early modern period the document itself received its authenticity and authority on an item level, the paradigmatic shifts changed the focus. In other words, the place where the document was kept gave or not legal force and validity (Duchein, 1992, p. 14). The documents received meaning within the collection, and from the 19th century based on the collection they belonged to and the institution they were stored in. This context gave a new role to the archives: to legitimate an institution's activity based on the authenticity of the archival record. Also, in a century dominated by positivism and the obsession for objective historical truth,

archives have become the repository of the truthful representation of past events (Ridener, 2009, pp. 24-26). While the archives were a public storage place in the Middle Ages, in the 19th century, their role changed. Instead, the archives became the main reference for all verifiable historical knowledge (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2013, p. 31).

By the late 19th century, historians were the principal users of an archive. As the positivist paradigm dominated historiography, historians were obsessed with the objective truth within the archive. Therefore, the archivists anticipated this need by reinforcing archival standards. Several guiding archival principles aimed to create an objective, rigorous classification set to ensure an "objective" access to the historians. One central principle became the norm: the principle of provenance, or *respect des fonds,* as initially named in French. This means that "all documents which come from a body, an establishment, a family, or an individual form a fonds, and must be kept together" (Duchein, 1992, p.19). This principle, doubled by the 1898 *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (known as *The Dutch Manual*) created the modern practical archival standards for creating and curating archives (Caswell, 2016). The manual's authors were three Dutch archivists: Samuel Muller, Johan A. Feith and Robert Fruin. They aimed to provide a practical framework of archival processes in which context, original order and provenance were highly valued (Horsman et al., 2003). Yet, the manual met its limits in supporting private and personal archives (Cook, 1997, pp. 21–22; Ridener, 2009, pp. 38–40).

Sir Hilary Jenkinson's *A Manual of Archive Administration* continued the Dutch Manual's archival practices. Written in 1922, Jenkinson focused both on theory and practical approaches. For him, the archives are a form of "artificial memory, paper replacements for memorization and oral transmission of evidence" (Ridener, 2009, p. 52). In this sense, archives own the custody of records, subsequently legitimising information authenticity. Again, the notion of truth is strongly related to the archive's institution. Again, this legitimizes the historian's work by referring to archival documents.

By directly challenging Sir Hilary Jenkinson's understanding of appraisal and custody, Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg published *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques.* This work, published in 1957, changed the field (Schellenberg, 1956). For the American archivist Schellenberg, appraisal means an archival process in which archival items are evaluated and professionally eliminated. The postwar context

determined this paradigmatic change. Compared to the documents produced in the Middle Ages or early modernization, the contemporary administration produced new documents exponentially each year. Thus, the question of controlling and selecting new documents became crucial for modern records (Ridener, 2009, pp. 78–79). These observations had vast implications: the archival public changed from professional historians to everyday citizens. Schellenberg saw the documents as a form of state accountability to its citizens (Schellenberg, 1956, p. 81). According to Schellenberg, two new "virtues" define the archives: research value and public accessibility.

Starting from the 1960s, four elements determined the pivotal paradigm change in contemporary archival sciences. Firstly, the context was recognized as an important element in record creation and curation (Ridener, 2009, p. 122). Secondly, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of the Scientific Revolutions* heavily impacted the field through self-observation of the archivists, awareness of the paradigmatic changes and the need to create a junction between theory and practice (Kuhn, 1996). Thirdly, the critical theory debates around the diversity of records, the archival institutions' authority, and the archivist's role created the need for new conceptual approaches within the theoretical field. Lastly, the technological impact constantly reshapes the field by opening new avenues, such as digital archiving (Ridener, 2009, pp. 122–123). All these debates solidified in the 1990s by emphasising the role of interpretation in archival appraisal.

To sum up, the archives had different meanings throughout history. Initially, the term designed the judge house in ancient Greek city-states. Subsequently, the archives were considered the repository of documents. The modern period brought significant changes: archives meant, amongst other definitions, a place of government accountability to its people. *The Dutch Manual indeed started the debates around the junction between praxis and theory, but only* Jenkinson and Schellenberg brought into debate notions such as the distinction between records and archival items, appraisal, authenticity, and standards.

In practical terms, these debates had several essential implications for the archival workflow of the Kevin Devlin Collection. First and foremost, the clusters of documents needed to be catalogued and identified according to specific sets of archival protocols (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2013, p. 19). As Open Society Archives follow the *respect des fonds* rule, this collection needed to keep all the documents within one collection. Secondly, the

value of press clippings from La Libertà, Le Monde and other newspapers is given by the cluster of gathered documents rather than the document on a unit level. Thirdly, the value of the folders was also given by the keywords, which needed to insure both the accessibility and accuracy. The fourth implication was that, in order to understand the nature of the documents, we needed to understand the administrative processes around the documents rather than the documents themselves. In a broader sphere, the plus-value of a document was given by two coordinates within the collection: the location within the file and the administrative processes that explain the document's existence.

2.2. Paradigms about archivist's role

However, there was a weak point to clarify before engaging with the administrative processes of RFE that created the documents: the archivist's subjectivity and historicity. Having established the praxis and main archival coordinates, one question still needs to be answered: what is the archivist's role in evaluating the documents? The question that arises is: to what extent is the archivist leaving their own historical trace on the document? Within the archival studies field, one of the core issues at stake for the last fifty years was how to address the archival intervention by the archivists (Ridener, 2009, pp. 130–142).

In the 19th century, the large consensus was that the archivist was passive, merely a keeper of the records and only the historian was active in creating historical knowledge (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2013, p. 141.) Jenkinson confirms this approach. For him, the role of the archivist is very specific: "a curator […] charged with the supervision of the accumulation of records in an archive" (Ridener, 2009, p. 55). In concrete terms, the archivist arranges and describes the records, maintains the collection and provides support for the public, dominated by professional historians. They need to process the documents in a given time by following a rigorous protocol established by the custodial institution. In this case, the archivist is not an interpreter, as the archive information is seen as objective (Ridener, 2009, pp. 55–56).

Schellenberg's paradigm allows the archivist more autonomy and decision-making. For the first time, the archivist is a *creator* who selects and appraises documents. To achieve this task, the archivist, as a profession, is distinct from history and library studies (Ridener, 2009, pp. 85–86). Secondly, the archivist is a mediator among multiple entities. The task of

reclassification creates a bridge between record creators and the public. In this case, the public is constituted of professional historians and regular citizens (Ridener, 2009, p. 89).

Two reasons determined the shift towards acknowledging the active role of the archivists. One lies in the broader discussions that followed Michel Foucault's reflections on archives. For Michel Foucault, archives reveal hidden social and institutional hierarchies, produce knowledge, selectively include and exclude (Foucault, 2005, 2008). While Foucault does not explicitly discuss the archivist's role, this turn highlights the archive as a social and cultural construct. Foucault's observations were continued from an anthropological perspective by James C. Scott's *Seeing Like A State*, in which he expands on the social reification done by the state through documents (Scott, 1999). Gathering, processing and sharing information about events constitutes the event in itself.

In this context, Derrida's *archival fever* concept proved invaluable. According to his seminal article *Archival Fever,* the archivist actively participates in the production of the archive (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995). Written in 1995, his article brought a paradigm shift in understanding the archivist's work (Steedman, 2001). By using or recreating a structure, the archivist is for Derrida both a consumer and a producer of knowledge:

> Archivists are analysts of texts in their examination of archives, but they are also consumers and producers of texts in maintaining and generating the knowledge base necessary for supporting archival work and study (Riter, 2015, p.389).

For Derrida, the archive represents a unique space where "law and information intersect in a result of privilege" (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, pp. 9–14). This privilege reinforces social structures by including some narratives and excluding voices of underrepresented silent people that are named ex-centric (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, pp. 9–14). According to Derrida, the archivist produces the event by selecting and appropriating knowledge. On this logic, the archive is never closed; it anticipates the future by ascribing constant meaning to the text (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, p. 68; Ketelaar, 2001, pp. 137–139).

If we were to follow Derrida's logic, as archivists who processed the collection, we intervened in creating the collection's meaning. As Brien Brothman argues, arranging an archive betrays the original intention of

the documents. The simple act of arranging the documents in a different space and re-creating an order is already an archival representation:

> finally, the most basic disruption of original order, of course, is the removal of the records from the originating site of provenance and their placement in archives. And once records are transplanted from their native homes, archival arrangements also distort original order in more subtle ways. In the first place, they become archival. (Brothmann, 1991, p.85)

This situation begs the question: How do we deal with the notion of authorship within an archive? To what extent does the *provenance* concept clearly reveal the author within an archive?

In order to solve this conundrum, Tom Nesmith's new definition of the concept of *provenance* proved its utility. For him, the provenance reflects the sociohistorical context, as it consists of "the social and technical processes of the records' inscription, transmission, contextualization, and interpretation, which accounts for its existence, characteristics, and continuing history" (Nesmith, 1999). This definition considers the record in itself and the society in which it was born. This definition also reflects the relationship between the individual and the record and between the individual and collective memory (Jennifer Douglas, "Origins and Beyond: The Ongoing Evolution of Archival Ideas about Provenance" in MacNeil & Eastwood, 2017, p. 35.)

To condense, the philosophical reflections by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida revealed the active role of the archivist as a separate entity from the records creator. The archivist's active intervention can be spotted in seemingly insignificant places: the structure and architecture of the collection and archive, the item-level description and appraisal. Considering this paradigm, this collection's structure reflected not only the activity of Kevin Devlin's Communist Area Analysis Department. On a broader scale, it reveals the logic of Radio Free Europe, an institution financed by the United States of America. It also underlines different taxonomical practices: the option chosen for this one was the classificatory practices of the Library of Congress. On a broader scheme, the archival structure reflects the Cold War context.

3. Archives try to represent reality

3.1. Controlled vocabulary

The previous part argued that the contemporary paradigms favours the archivist's active role. In a nutshell, the archivist is prone to be influenced by surrounding discourses and is embedded in a sociohistorical context. At the same time, the archivist's task differs from the historian's. The archivist needs to be aware of the paradigm shifts but at the same time, must act. Ultimately, the core of the archivist's task is to describe the content and place it for public access. If this paradigm is taken into account, the question that still needs to be answered is: How do we avoid the analysis paralysis and proceed with discernment in creating a systematic implementation?

The core of this issue was the prudent yet firm use of the keywords and controlled vocabulary. We needed to create a keyword system that would be faithful to the documents in various languages and offer quick access for the broader audience. Thus, the set of keywords or the controlled vocabulary had to adjust the two seemingly contradicting main goals. The first one was to reach the scientific community from the 21st century, while the second was to respect the original conceptualization created between the 1950s and 1990s. Thus, following the contemporary paradigm of archival studies, notably Terry Cook and Jacques Derrida, we were aware that the whole process of arranging, describing, processing, and cataloguing the collection was far from being an objective process. On the contrary, subtle archivist interventions changed the collection from when the documents arrived in Kevin Devlin's office. This opened new avenues for reflection.

That is why we needed to understand the issues covered before creating a controlled vocabulary. While we kept the original structure when working with the collection, the content description faced significant changes. The content evaluation gave us insight into the archives concerning the activities of the Communist Parties from the nonruling countries. In this context, the content evaluation offered a solid understanding of the main issues tackled by the documents. The next part of the archival processing was to create a relevant catalogue description. More specifically, this process aimed to create a metadata system and controlled vocabulary that would facilitate finding aids for the public. The main issue was properly representing the information and providing comprehensive entries for

the public. Describing an archive of this kind implied a multidisciplinary approach of history and archival sciences.

On a superficial level, this task seems simple: to create keywords and other archival architectures that can facilitate or, on the contrary, obscure the researcher's access. However, if we consider Foucault and Derrida's thoughts on archive, this issue opens several new points on a more complex level. First and foremost, language itself might enhance or limit the accessibility. While the reports were written in English, a substantial part of the collection was in German, French, Italian, Spanish, or Dutch. Also, the archivist changes the meaning by reordering and creating new keywords. The second implication is that the archivist, as demonstrated in the previous pages, actively intervenes in the archival process and has a clear agency throughout his work of reordering.

3.2. Representing realities through keywords

Having understood the context of production and considering the archive structure, the main issue was how to create a relevant vocabulary that would encompass both the original structure and facilitate the general public's access (Vladimir Lapin, Hesitations at the Door to an Archive Catalog, in Blouin & Rosenberg, 2007, p. 480). The usual way is to refer to normative documentation. In this case, the compromise was reached by referring to the Library of Congress standards and respecting the original conceptualization practised in the Central News Room Department inside Radio Free Europe. Thus, the Library of Congress Subject Headings (from here, LCSH 44) was the leading auxiliary aid in creating the file description (Library of Congress Subject Headings, 2022).

Two reasons determined the use of the LCSH 44. Firstly, the documents produced within the Radio Free Europe Research Department were sorted and classified according to this framework. The content classification of Radio Free Europe Research Department reports referred to LCSH; hence, using the same standards for the document creation meant a more accurate description. Secondly, I described the content on the file level using the LCSH 44 as it is one of the most used sources of terms for subject cataloguing in the English-speaking framework (Walch, 1994, pp. 106–107). This way, the collections and specific files might reach a wider public. After choosing the word-related framework, I needed to attribute meaning to specific files. The files focused on specific topics, primarily

related to the activity of Communist parties from non-socialist countries. Four main categories gave meaning to the collection:

Countries covered	Personalities covered	Topics covered	Creation Year

The covered countries were the first set of descriptive keywords. Broadly, the geographical references were state entities and fell into two categories. On the one hand, as previously mentioned, the country of provenience of the socialist party was a classificatory element. This meant the country the document directly covered was already contained in the file's title. For instance, the file *Italy: CP: Czechoslovakia* focused on the Italian Communist Party's reaction to events in Czechoslovakia.

On the other hand, the geographical references to countries functioned also as keywords. This set of keywords described the countries with public reactions, criticisms, appraisals, bilateral agreements, reciprocal references, inferences, and other reactions within the respective national Communist Party. The table 1 provides the detail about the countries used as keywords. The first column refers to the country covered, the second one shows the number of entries, and the third column shows the relevance when 1 is the maximum number.

Table 1. Countries used as keywords

word	count	relevance
Soviet Union	328	1
France	182	0.08
Italy	153	0.08
China	143	0.074
Czechoslovakia	98	0.088
Spain	76	0.042
Romania	66	0.05
Cuba	64	0.051
Yugoslavia	42	0.035
Poland	42	0.026

Hungary	40	0.028
Vietnam	37	0.02
Greece	34	0.023
Chile	33	0.025
United Kingdom	31	0.094
Japan	31	0.015
Finland	30	0.021
United States	29	0.088
India	25	0.012
Sweden	24	0.015
Venezuela	22	0.018
Bulgaria	21	0.017
Portugal	21	0.015
Argentina	21	0.015
Albania	20	0.019
Belgium	19	0.013
Austria	19	0.012
German Democratic Republic	18	0.082
Indonesia	18	0.014
Uruguay	18	0.012
Israel	17	0.011
Afghanistan	16	0.013
Algeria	15	0.013
Denmark	15	0.008
Bolivia	13	0.012
Palestine	13	0.011
Brazil	13	0.008
Cyprus	11	0.01
Peru	11	0.009
Ecuador	10	0.009

Iceland	10	0.009
The Netherlands	10	0.006
Sri Lanka	9	0.027
Guatemala	9	0.008
Ghana	9	0.008
Congo	9	0.008
Syria	8	0.007
Iran	8	0.006
El Salvador	7	0.021
Nicaragua	7	0.007
Paraguay	7	0.007
Sudan	7	0.006
Panama	7	0.006

A quick observation is that the Soviet Union is the most referred country in terms of occurrence. This might initially seem odd because separate files concerning the Soviet Union do not exist within this collection. However, the collection's logic provides an explanation. In Kevin Devlin's Non-Socialist Countries collection, all parties from non-socialist countries referred to the Soviet Union. The historical explanation for this consistent reference relies on the centripetal role of the Soviet Union's Communist Party in coordinating the activities of the Non-Ruling Communist Parties. Virtually all the Communist Parties referred to Moscow's decisions in relationship to many issues.

Yet, as this collection shows, they did not rigorously follow Moscow's directions in all cases. While in the interwar period, the channels of public communications were limited and the centrifugal reactions against Soviet Unions were less visible in the written press, the postwar period and the Cold War paradigm changed the situation. In parallel, media expansion also played a crucial role. The postwar world witnessed the creation of many more alternative channels of communication and public expression, and politicians swiftly reacted through media channels in a much more intense way. Therefore, Radio Free Europe heavily documented these public interventions. Moreover, the decolonization movement, doubled by the exclusion of socialist countries from Western European markets

and China's ideological expansion, created new forms of solidarity (Eric Burton, James Mark, and Steffi Marung, Developments, in Mark & Betts, 2022, p. 95).

Kevin Devlin mapped these ideological transitions in detail. These shifts might pass unobserved, but they come up to the surface during specific events: state funerals of political leaders, political interventions after specific events, and public reactions of politicians after elections. Thus, the archive meticulously maps ideological splits between various factions (for instance, Belgium Communist Party: Ideology- Marxist-Leninist, 1967 – 1989, Finland: Communist Party: Factions, 1969 – 1970, India: Communist Party: Marxism-Leninism [Communist Party of India (Marxism)], 1971 – 1987), as well as China's aim in creating an alternative ideological centre (International Communist Movement: Eastern Bloc: China) and alternative leadership within global, continental or regional Communist Parties alliances. Kevin Devlin's final aim was to understand the rise and fall of the Soviet Union within the global framework.

France and Italy were the second and third most referred countries in terms of incidence. Two points explain the significant occurrence. The first explanation resides in the records creation process. Most news clips came from newspapers from these countries (Le Monde, L'Unita). At the same time, most news correspondents were based in these countries; hence, the representation is ampler.

The second explanation is that a considerable part of the archive is dedicated to the Communist parties from the respective countries. Kevin Devlin's understanding of the global situation surpassed the national boundaries, as his focus was instead on the entanglements and larger frameworks. In some cases, the national Communist Parties heavily supported the Soviet Union's actions, while in other cases, on the contrary, they openly challenged Moscow's hegemony.

The French Communist Party stands as a particular example of this situation. Kevin Devlin's department closely scrutinized the political standpoints concerning ideological shifts and issues or the elections in France (France: Communist Party: Soviet Union, 1981- 1982). The volume of data gathered on this country is impressive. In total, 20 boxes gather information solely about the French Communist Party. The work is highly detailed: two archival boxes are dedicated solely to the French CP's internal politics, and three to internal party affairs. Based on the data gathered, Kevin Devlin wrote detailed reports about the position of France in the Soviet Union's affairs, in which he nuanced the so-called

internationalist solidarity. On one hand, within the Western CPs, the French Communist Party was one of the closest to supporting the Soviet Union's policies. One report written by the French press correspondents in 1982 revealed the strategy of Georges Marchais, the president of the French Communist Party.

> The French Party is still with the Soviets, as Marchais' list of joint targets showed. The only difference is that the Marchais party no longer automatically praises everything the Soviets do. It has even published criticism of Moscow. [...]

> He makes a show of independence by criticising the Soviets, but then glides over their breaches and mistakes for the sake of what finally looks very much like the traditional form of internationalism (FF087- EURO- Marchais and the New Internationalism, n.d.)

At the same time, France criticised the Soviet Union – especially on the issue of human rights breaches in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Yet, the criticism is always limited, as the collection shows. Georges Marchais, the leader of the French Communist Party, always claimed that such problems were "nothing in comparison to what allegedly happens in the West" (FF087- EURO- Marchais and the New Internationalism).

In other cases, Kevin Devlin focused on understanding the CPs that firmly challenged Moscow's decisions. Within this framework, a good example is Italian Communist Party. Again, the documents gathered are substantial: 31 boxes focus only on this country, from box 59 to box 90 of the collection. A particular focus for Kevin Devlin was to understand the Italian CP's reactions against the Soviet hegemony. Among many others, one document showing the complexity of analysing such interventions is *Italy:CP:Czechoslovakia* file. The research report *PCI's Firm Reaction to Prague Developments,* from 18 April 1969, is based on press clippings referring to the Italian CP's reaction to the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia:

> The Italian Communist Party's official reaction to the changes made in (or imposed on) the Czechoslovak leadership has been prompt, firm – and predictable. As the fateful plenum approached, the PCI had made its position unequivocally clear in a drumfire series of statements and articles, among which we may note Giuseppe Boffa's critical commentaries on

Soviet and foreign policies (Kevin Devlin, *EURO- PCI's Firm reaction to Prague Developments,* n.d.)

A similar explanation is why China is mentioned consistently throughout the collection. Kevin Devlin particularly scrutinized the impact of the Sino-Soviet split in the countries. China does not have a separate file; as in the case of the Soviet Union, Kevin Devlin's office mapped the influence of China in various countries, particularly from the Global South, among which the Indian Communist Parties, South African Communist Party, or Indonesian Communist Party.

Let us turn the attention to the second set of descriptive keywords: topics. The topics covered had two functions. On one hand, they constituted classificatory elements within the collection and took the role of descriptive keywords. The first function was to create sub-divisions within the same country. Let us take the case of France, to show how the documents were divided according to specific topics:

France: Communist Party: Dissidence
France: Communist Party: Doctrine
France: Communist Party: Factions
France: Communist Party: Foreign Policy
France: Communist Party: Internal Policy
France: Communist Party: Party Affairs

As in the case of countries, topics also took the role of descriptive keywords. Again, out of the prominent topics, a few had a consistent repetition, as one can see in table 2:

Table 2. Keywords to describe the archival content

Word	count	relevance
Election	141	0.279
Factionalism	117	0.84
communist party	92	0.301
Congress	89	0.217
Maoism	65	0.499
Communism	63	0.3

Euro-Communism	59	0.168
warsaw pact invasion	42	0.999
invasion of Czechoslovakia	42	0.999
soviet split	35	0.555
Revisionism	32	0.226
Stalinism	31	0.207
socialist party	30	0.412
Ideology	29	0.134
Socialism	28	0.12
Dissidence	25	0.193
north atlantic treaty Organization	24	0.571
parti socialiste	20	0.317
party of india	18	0.428
prague spring	15	0.238
italian communist party	14	0.333
israeli communist party	14	0.333
maki hamiflega hakomunistit	14	0.333
political alliance	14	0.222
political pluralism	14	0.222
vietnam war	11	0.174
foreign policy	10	0.143
european parliament	10	0.111

The reason for the topic variety resides in the constant focus on documenting multifocal issues from each national Communist Party. In some cases, Kevin Devlin's office decided to archive some topics related to local, regional, and national elections on a periodical and systematic basis. Notably, the elections in countries like Italy, West Germany, France, and Spain were under constant scrutiny, and Kevin Devlin's office regularly followed the debates on this topic. Therefore, the keyword related to *elections* is the most recurrent in terms of incidence. Also, *factionalism*, which for Devlin meant the multiple ways socialism was understood, perceived, and applied, was another constantly recurring issue. The

congresses were also closely followed by the Commmunist Area Analysis. Their focus was to understand possible influences, synergies, but also counter-reactions to the congresses by the socialist countries and those organized by the national Communist Parties.

While some events were cyclical, the office also aimed to map more punctual and unique events. Some of them were particularly received a punctual concern:

> 1. *The impact of the Sino-Soviet split.* The office followed the ideological shifts in the national parties. A particular focus is on the International Communist Movement, an institution parallel to Comintern, having as its principal ideology Maoism. As Maoism became an alternative ideological option for Communist Parties from non-ruling countries, the RFE/RL Communist Area Analysis Department closely followed it.
> 2. *The impact of the War in Vietnam.* The non-ruling Communist Party office followed the reactions of the national Communist Parties to the conflict and which sides they chose.
> 3. *Prague Spring and Invasion of Czechoslovakia.* The Prague Spring and its aftermath were turning events in the ideological evolution of many Communist Parties in Western Europe. That is why the office closely followed the impact of the Prague Spring and the Invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 for a more extended period until 1980.
> 4. *Common Market.* The department followed how Western European countries reacted to the construction of the Common Market, the forefather of the European Union.
> 5. *Euro-Communism.* In the late 1970s, euro-communism seemed to be an alternative to Moscow's ideological hegemony for a period of time. As in the case of Maoism, the office became highly interested in the ideology that openly challenged the primacy of Moscow's hegemony.
> 6. *Reforms in the socialist bloc.* The impact of the reforms in the socialist bloc was closely scrutinized.

We might wonder why some of the topics seemed to be a particular concern for Radio Free Europe. One of the most interesting cases under the scrutiny of the Communist Area Analysis Office was Euro-Communism. While the French Communist Party was loyal to the Soviet Union's policies until the late 1970s, other European Communist Parties questioned the authority of Moscow's understanding about socialism. In the 1950s, the Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti argued for a 'polycentric' view of Communism. However, this initiative was received only with limited support by the other Communist Parties. The

situation changed in the late 1960s when the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia led to widespread criticism of the Soviet version of Communism (Holmes 2009, p.14). This action had two direct implications. Some intellectuals, both in the socialist countries as well as in Western Europe, left the country. Others preferred to develop a version of Communism that would align with democratic principles. The whole process intensified in 1975 when Franco's dictatorship collapsed by creating a common platform called Euro-Communism.

It might seem odd to look retroactively, as this movement did not have the same visibility as the Prague Spring or other reformist movements. Nevertheless, Euro-Communism was a particular concern as it showed the multiple ways communism could evolve in Western countries. Discursive plurality, as well as possible ideological scenarios, were particularly central.

More than this, Radio Free Europe's broadcasting department was particularly keen on mapping Euro-Communism. The aim was to broadcast information about alternative ways of socialism that criticized the Soviet Union. Why broadcast the speeches of a Spanish or Italian politician in East Central Europe?

The corporate files held by the Hoover Archive provide us with an explanation for the strong interest in this topic. The file dedicated to Kevin Devlin's work states that Radio Free Europe directly intended to broadcast Euro-Communism information by disseminating Berlinguer or Carillo's speeches in Czech, Slovak, Polish or Romanian. Radio Free Europe was highly interested in mapping the plurality of the ideologies to emphasize to the public in Eastern and Central Europe the multiple possible ways to practice socialism. As the archival file that referred to Kevin Devlin stated about his activity:

> Eurocommunism- an indirect destabilizing factor for the regimes of the East. The RFE, which in the 1950s incited Hungarians to Revolution, today limits itself to disseminating the speeches of Berlinguer or the Spaniard Carrillo. It is a massive bombardment in Russian, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, and Polish languages, that annuls in deed the censorship and silence of the local Communist Press. A symptom of some interest can be the fact that the NATO defense College recently invited as lecturers two personages as different as Mr.Kevin Devlin, one of the executives of RFE, and the Communist journalist Giuseppe Boffa. And the remarkable thing is that the two of them did not repeat after all say things very different about Eurocommunism (Kevin Devlin, 1976)

Political figures were the third set of keywords to describe the archives. The reports that followed the press clippings closely followed the activity of the CPs leaders. The Communist Area Analysis office was aware of the futility of mapping ideologies without doubling it with a good understanding of the decision-makers. The diplomatic or personal visits were a particular focus for Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Office. Among the leaders, several names were more present within the collection, as follows:

Table 3. Keywords representing the political figures covered

word	count	relevance
Marchais, Georges	85	0.771
Castro, Fidel	54	0.997
Berlinguer, Enrico	51	0.486
Zedong, Mao	35	0.858
Mitterand, François	33	0.314
Brezhnev, Leonid	27	0.74
Pajetta, Giancarlo	24	0.229
Ceaușescu, Nicolae	20	0.607
Carrillo, Santiago	20	0.5
Thorez, Maurice	18	0.162
Togliatti, Palmiro	16	0.469
Dubček, Alexander	16	0.152
Kosygin, Alexei	15	0.471
Longo, Luigi	15	0.371
Rochet, Waldeck	15	0.143
Khruschev, Nikita	15	0.143
Guevara, Che	14	0.338
Elleinstein, Jean	14	0.133
Enlai, Zhou	11	0.235
Chirac, Jacuqes	10	0.266
Allende, Salvador	10	0.179

Tito, Joseph	9	0.19
van Geyt, Louis	8	0.508
Papandreou, Andreas	8	0.235
Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr	8	0.233
Stalin, Joseph	8	0.163
Novotný, Antonín	7	0.216
d'Eistang, Giscard	7	0.206
Sartre, Jean-Paul	7	0.183
Miyamoto, Kenji	7	0.181
Suarez, Adolfo	7	0.173
Aron, Raymond	7	0.171
Soares, Mário	7	0.17
Pelikan, Jaroslav	7	0.155
Fischer, Joschka	7	0.132
Chi mihn, Ho	6	0.381
Theodorakis,Mikis	6	0.187
Fabre, Robert	6	0.156
Caetano, Marcelo	6	0.153
Maurer, Ghoerghe	6	0.142
de Gaulle, Charles	6	0.14
Lukács, Georg	5	0.148
John Paul ii	2	0.19
Barrientos Ortuño, René	2	0.127
Ben Bella, Ahmed	2	0.127

Among the political figures, Georges Marchais, the president of the French CP from 1972 to 1994, has the highest incidence. He constantly entered the competition for the presidential elections in France. Kevin Devlin thoroughly mapped the interventions of the leader of the French CP throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Communist Area Analysis office aimed to see to what extent Marchais was thoroughly following Soviet Union's directives or not. One good indicator was the invasion of

Czechoslovakia in 1968. As Marchais emphasized, he did not criticize the invasion: "We consider that it is not for us to take up an official position when a brother Party adopts a disciplinary measure towards one of its members, even when this measure is inconvenient for us." (France: Communist Party: Soviet Union, January 1981- December 1982). On contrary, Enrico Berlinguer's public reactions were against the military invasion.

Mao's reaction concerning the Sino-Soviet split were under constant scrutiny as well. The Communist Area Analysis office gathered his reactions in many contexts, as for instance when interviewed by Japanese socialists ("Interview of Mao Tse-Tung with Japanese Socialists", Sino-Soviet Split, 1964), or in the context of the external policies following Khruschev's replacement ("Peking after Khrushchev- Part I", "Peking after Khrushchev- Part II", Sino-Soviet Split, 1964), or in the context of China's increased isolationism ("China's Growing Isolation" in Sino-Soviet Split, 1966).

Not only political leaders, but also dissidents appear within the collection on a constant basis. The Kevin Devlin's team from Communist Area Analysis Department closely followed the cases of the mathematician Leonid Plyshch (1972-1976), the human rights activist Vladimir Bukovsky, the Soviet film director and screenwriter Sergei Parajanov, the physician Youri Orlov and the physician Andrei Sakharov, among many others. As result of publishing a controversial essay on intellectual freedom in July 1968, Andrei Sakharov was contested by his fellow scientists in the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Very soon, the Western European journalists learned about the Sakharov affair and began to report it in the newspapers. Yet, the issue was apprehended in different ways by the Communist Parties from Western Europe. Some of them ignored the topic, as the French Communist Party, others supported his activity, as the Italian Communist Party or Belgian Communist Party (Matus, Felcher, *The Sakharov Case and Western Communist Parties,* 2022). By gathering the reactions of the decision-makers, but also the impact of dissident movements, the office aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of possible centrifugal movements away from Moscow.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, processing the Kevin Devlin collection opened multiple questions. This research used two main conceptual pillars to unfold them.

By referring to Bruno Latour's work on the Conseil de l'Etat, the premise is that files assemble reality, and processes create and give meaning to the content. Throughout this investigation to find out who the author of the archive was, we favoured Derrida's thoughts on archival authorship. Considering these theoretical premises, this study inspected the records creation process during the Cold War by taking the case of the archives produced by Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Department from 1960 until 1990.

Kevin Devlin was born in Ireland and moved to the United States, where he pursued a career in political science. He became in the 1960s a political analyst for the Radio Free Europe in Munich. He published on Europe's Communist parties, and he was involved in various collective research projects. Despite his unique expertise on Communist Parties, information about Kevin Devlin is scarce, even on the internet. Besides basic biographic facts, this person is an enigma. One could easily argue that Devlin was a simple employee at the Radio Free Europe in Munich, and his role was too insignificant to gain visibility. On the other hand, he produced one of the most extensive collections of documents inside the Research Department from Radio Free Europe. He gathered data, processed it, and used his analytic qualities to produce relevant research and publish high-quality academic papers.

This study argued that biography in itself plays little role in understanding the role within the archive. Instead, to spot his *trace*, two elements proved to be crucial: provenance and keywords.

In this regard, we needed to understand the rationale of the records' creation properly. The primary task of the Communist Area Analysis Department was to produce research reports on various global issues that involved the Communist Parties and other vital actors. Kevin Devlin, Joseph Cornelius Kun and William McLaughlin produced tens of reports yearly as a job duty. Thus, data gathering and knowledge production is more than merely gathering printed materials. As experts in their field, they were employed to produce relevant materials concerning the Cold War. We saw that their contribution was irreplaceable: their superiors did their best to keep them to work inside Radio Free Europe. This implies that the intellectual products they delivered were not reproducible. The reports on the activity of the Communist Parties were original and unique, not merely bureaucratic documents. Yet, the notion of authorship is different than in the case of a text written by a historian or a novelist. The critical difference relies on the notion of knowledge production.

When it comes to the topic of knowledge production in relation to archives, we saw that archives are a product of an increased interest towards printed documents, which started during the modern age. This agreement usually ends, however, on the question of the aim of this 'data appetite'. Throughout this study, we favoured Derrida's point on the matter. He aptly argued, "There is no political power without control of the archives." (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, pp. 10-11). The French philosopher explains his standing by referring to the original meaning of the concept 'archive'. In Ancient Greek, it meant 'arkheion', which designated the house where the superior magistrate, called 'arkhon' lived. The *arkhons* were the signified political citizens with the right to represent the law. As they represented the power, the *arkhons* were the documents' guardians and producers of documents. They had as function to "unify, identify, classify" in a metaphoric place where "law and singularity intersect in privilege" (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, p. 10).

The metaphor of the *arkheion* is vital for understanding the role of the collection in two ways. It clarifies the issue concerning the institutional authorship, as well as the role of the archivist in the production of knowledge. Again, the French philosopher clarifies this essential role of the *arkheion*, which is to ritualize and repeat the process of gathering information. Not the names and the keywords added, but the ritualistic gathering of information gives sense and legitimacy to the *arkheion*: "the first archivist institutes the archive as it should be, that is to say, not only in exhibiting the document, but in establishing it. He reads it, interpret it, classes it." (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, p. 38)

In this logic, the archivist's work turned from describing the documents to representing them. This process, called "archival representation", aimed to "reorder, interpret, create surrogates and design architectures for representational systems that contain those surrogates to stand in for or represent actual archival materials" (Yakel, 2002, p.2). In this regard, the new definition of provenance by Tom Nesmith proved its utility. The collection reveals, in this sense, the logic of Radio Free Europe, United States, the archive hosting this content, and the archivist's background. In this way, the archivist did not "describe" the content; rather, they "represented" the content for a new public.

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WHEN THE CIVIC BECOMES EXTREME: ACCOUNTING FOR FAR-RIGHT GROUPS' READINESS FOR ACTION IN ROMANIA*

Manuel Mireanu

Abstract

This paper begins by observing that contemporary grassroots Romanian far-right groups have a penchant for taking action, going beyond speeches and imagery and into the field of voluntary political activism. This activism is rooted in a securitizing discourse that drives far-right groups to defend themselves against perceived threats. This paper asks: *how can we empirically and theoretically account for the contemporary grassroots Romanian far-right groups' affinity for security-infused actions?* Methodologically, the research employs ethnographic tools alongside historical and discourse analysis. The 'actionism' of the Romanian far right is in tune with middle-class calls for civic engagement. It also serves as a means of supplying security in response to a perceived deficient state. This paper draws three arguments from the empirical and theoretical analysis of Romanian groups: first, far-right action seeks to legitimise violence as spectacle; second, far-right activism aims to permeate mainstream liberal politics; and third, far-right actions and events create temporary zones where fascist futures are enacted.

Keywords: Romanian politics; far-right groups; security; ethnography; political violence

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the Romanian far-right has shown that it is more than capable of acting on what it wants to see happen. The Romanian far right is increasingly engaging in practices that go beyond declarations, speeches and social media posts, from organising various rallies and trainings (Marincea, 2022) to committing isolated but worrying acts of violence against marginalised groups (Crețan and O'Brien, 2019). All this is happening in a volatile international context, where the far right has managed not only to gain political and parliamentary power (as in Austria or Italy), but also to have a constant presence in public spaces, a presence that ranges from marching against immigrants (as in Germany) to forming patrols against Roma (in Hungary) (Mireanu, 2024) or assassinating political opponents (as in Greece) (Mireanu and Gkresta, 2013). The activism of the extreme right is also a central element of the conflict in the current Russian invasion of Ukraine (Townsend, 2022).

1.1 Literature review

So far, with few exceptions (Marincea and Popovici, 2022), the scholars that research the contemporary Romanian far-right groups have focused mainly on analysing their discourse (Chiruta, 2022), symbolism (Zavatti, 2021) and ideational universe (Clark, 2020). This in itself is a praiseworthy exercise, as it allows us to sketch a comprehensive image of the narratives and the imaginary that stand behind both the rhetoric and the actions of these groups. Despite what may seem at times like an inflated concern for gathering empirical material, the value of the current research on far-right extremism is indisputable (Totok and Macovei, 2016).

However, this focus on the discursive aspects leaves a number of unanswered questions: what role does the readiness for action play in Romanian far-right politics? Is it a revolutionary role that hopes to establish (or reinstate) a particular social order? Or does it function as an exercise of civic duties and is therefore complementary rather than antagonistic to state institutions? What are the resources employed by these groups when they take actions? How do these actions relate to the mainstream public that may or may not legitimise such practices?

In my own research I focused on the various mechanisms of far-right actions, exploring instances from different European countries. I have initially researched vigilante groups, which are predominantly far right,

and which perform patrolling acts in order to defend what they see as threats to the society (Mireanu, 2015). Subsequently, I shifted my focus to individual actors that, while not affiliated to the far right, carry out, at times, similar efforts by enacting violence against marginalised groups (Mireanu, 2021). In recent years I undertook research on the phenomenon of Romanian paramilitary groups after World War I, which is a concern for a set of proto-fascist practices that stand at the very foundation of the modern Romanian state (Mireanu, 2023).

In all these studies, extremist action followed a similar pattern, whereby actions were determined and justified as means to tackle security threats. The literature on security studies shows the mechanisms of threat construction, through which societal actors articulate a danger to the community, using a friend versus enemy logic to establish the legitimacy for pursuing violent acts (Williams, 2003). Such acts are performed by paramilitary and/or vigilante groups that contest the state's monopoly on violence and derive their legitimacy from providing security in response to demands of various social groups. Scholars have underlined the similarities between the mechanisms of security and those of far-right activism – historical and contemporary (Neocleous, 2009). At the same time, these scholars have pointed out that far-right groups see the political realm as being imbued with the same logic of fear that runs through the ontology of security: the adversary is 'the enemy' that threatens 'us', and if 'we' do not take action (exclusionary violence) 'the enemy' will eliminate us (Huysmans, 2008).

On the other hand, recent ethnographic studies on vigilantism look beyond this security function. Such studies ground their analyses in an array of empirical data. This data shows how the actions of these groups are embedded in their social environment (Yonucu, 2022). These scholars talk about 'regimes of vigilance', whereby the state fosters a climate of constant alertness, in which citizens are called upon to be watchful and report on the social and political so-called enemy (Ivasiuc et al., 2022). Vigilance shows the intersection of discourses, practices, measures, materialities, technologies, images, situations etc, which is needed to construct a culture of continuous awareness towards potential threats.

When we turn our attention to the Romanian far-right groups, we can see that they rarely perform vigilante functions (i.e., responding to security demands from the population). They also do not always take heed of the state's requests to be vigil.

At the same time, these groups do employ a security discourse, whereby they see themselves and their community as being threatened by various factors (such as secularism, modernity, foreign conspirators, leftist social movements etc). Their readiness for action is constructed as a self defence mechanism against the attacks of these multiple factors. Moreover, they strive to enforce a culture of vigilance that runs parallel to the state's security efforts, which are seen as incapable or useless. This culture of vigilance seeks to defend the memory of the glorious past, the cult of national heroes, Christian values and ethnic purity.

Romanian far-right groups engage in a variety of forms of actions that range from marches, ceremonies, instances of spectacle, displays of military uniforms and upholding places of memory associated with the fascist past (Zavatti, 2021), all the way to military training camps (Totok, 2018; Marincea, 2022), martial performativities and acts of riot such as the attempts to storm the parliament (Chiruta, 2022, pp. 153 – 4). The regime of vigilance employed by the far right thus becomes itself a danger to the state's monopoly of violence and ultimately, to the democratic rule of law.

1.2 Analytical aspects and the research question

How do the far-right groups themselves account for this focus on actions? In a video-podcast published in 2023 on their website, the leader of the Cluj-based group called 'Comunitatea identitară' explains that Romanian 'nationalist' groups are too small and scattered to form a veritable political opposition. Hence, their energies must be directed towards a long-term struggle against the current corrupt system. Nihilism and scepticism are to be avoided at all costs, as are comfort and complacency. One has a duty to act. One must build and maintain character, must develop patience and must train the body and mind. Yet, above all, we are told, the 'nationalist' lifestyle is centred on Christian-Orthodox faith, which is a lived experience. He goes on: '*we shall combine education with militantism, with going in the streets to undertake actions that are necessary for the cause, our deeds will be our discourse, we will train ourselves to get used to constant effort. To us, nationalism is a belief, not only an ideology, and will be therefore lived by us as a lifestyle. We will organise community work actions, defeating any trace of laziness. We are soldiers of Romania, thus we despise comfort and love the trenches*'[1]

Leaving the far-right tropes aside for a moment, what is striking in this message is the emphasis on public engagement, involvement and

effort for others, for a community, for the nation and for the future. This emphasis resonates to a great extent with more mainstream and large-scale movements from the second half of the 2010's in Romania. The imperative to 'get in the streets' and enact societal and political change as well as the idea that one has a duty to act for the common welfare of the nation have been fuelling the engines of anti-corruption protests such as the *Rezist* movement of 2017. Consider these quotes from Ruxandra Cesereanu, a Cluj-based poet and anti-communist writer: '*The true goal of the 2107 protests was the fight against passivity.* […] *There was a palpable vitality, a spectacle that resembled a kind of communion between all those present.* […] *We observed a dose of* bonton [sic] *pragmatism among the protesters, who stopped whining, stopped lamenting on the streets.* […] *In Cluj, the protesters kept shouting to the people living in communist flats: "Wake up! Join us, for we try to awaken the entire country"*'.[2] One notices that the call for civic action against the corrupt state comes from a place of vitality, of rejecting passivity and scepticism, of positive engagement with perceived social problems.

The Romanian contemporary far right is grounding its activism on similar tropes as the ones used by the *Rezist* movement. In fact, the two movements have not been entirely separate. A number of violent incidents that have occurred in the first day of the anti-corruption protests have been blamed by the authorities on football supporters. Some of them were members in far-right groups, such as *Honor et Patria*, which has links to the leader of Romania's largest far-right group, the party AUR.[3]

Veda Popovici has argued that the Romanian middle class has been able to accommodate and facilitate fascism by including and even welcoming actors with far-right ideas in its milieus, and especially in civic movements such as the '*Rezist'* protests. Referring to the cohabitation of AUR's leader within liberal protests, Popovici argues: '*It's this kind of social dynamics and type of organizing that have actually accommodated and empowered fascism, allowing it to rise, as we can see in the present* (Marincea and Popovici, 2022).' To this, McElroy adds that Romanian neoliberalism has been able to foster fascism by endowing the local middle class with '*technological fantasies*' of '*gaining Silicon status*' – a corruption-free, technologically advanced post-socialist future (McElroy, 2024, p. 103).

In tandem with these authors, I argue that the capacity of the mainstream Romanian middle class to cohabitate with fascist practices (up to a certain point) is given by a shared belief that ethical considerations should be

translated into action. The concept of civility plays a key role here. For the middle class, part of aspiring to be as 'the West' is to be actively engaged in the life of the *polis*. It means being a proactive citizen that notices, reports and solves problems in the community, without expecting the involvement of the state. The Romanian far right taps into this modality and brings its own agenda.

I therefore argue from the premise that many of the methods used by far-right groups – civic engagement, protests, denunciations – are imbued with the same respectable, ethical and civic ethos as those of the middle class' repertoire, from which far-right groups get inspiration. However, the 'problems' that citizens are called to solve in order to preserve the welfare of the *polis* pertain to the far-right imaginary, in which threats and security play a central role.

The research question of this paper is: *how can we empirically and theoretically account for the contemporary grassroots Romanian far-right groups' affinity for security-infused actions?*

This question has two dimensions. The first is the *empirical* one, in which I will undertake two tasks: I will situate the centrality of action in Romanian far-right groups in a historical context, tying it to a paramilitary ethos that present throughout its history (Section 2); I will then present my own ethnographical findings on contemporary far-right groups (Section 3).

The second dimension is the *theoretical* one, and I will also divide it in two tasks: I will first discuss contemporary far-right action in Romania, and how it relates to the middle-class ethos shaped by neoliberalism (Section 4); subsequently, I will analyse how practices of security and discourses of threat play into far-right groups' actions (Section 5).

1.3 Methodological considerations

The research presented here aimed to be what Kathleen Blee (2007, p. 121) calls an 'internalist' study of the far right. Methodologically, it is be based on what Christian Bueger and myself (2015, p. 118) call 'proximity to practice'. In other words, rather than providing yet another take on the discourses, narratives, imagery and symbolism used by far-right groups, in this study I chose to focus on practices. I shift the focus from what the far-right groups say to what they do.

This focus is, of course, not constructed in opposition to the discursive level, since the point is not to establish a dichotomy between speech and action. Language is clearly capable of actively instantiating effects –

social actors can 'do things with words' (Austin, 1962). My purpose in this paper is rather to show how political actors are able to transform their ideological programs into corresponding activities. As such, the practices that I am interested in are not the unintentional and un-reflexive actions informed by habitus and routines that Bourdieu and others refer to. Instead, I focus on programmatic behaviour, forms of practice that are aligned with the actors' intentions, motives, preferences and interests.[4] Whether far-right groups organise rallies against their opponents, or they engage in voluntary work or in commemorative rituals, they act with purposes that are clear and transparent to them, and which have to do with furthering and accomplishing their political and social ideals. They transpose discourse into action.

The methodological tools that I found to be most applicable to study these practices come from ethnography. This toolkit contains activities such as immersion, participant observation, 'hanging out' and talking to people. I have employed them in various degrees in my research, with the objective of getting as close as possible to the groups I wanted to write about. There were, however, considerable limitations to these tools, and to the degree of proximity I was able and willing to achieve. Issues of time, safety and political affinity came into play.

I have therefore complemented my methodology with historical research. The paper contains a thorough historical analysis of Romanian far-right groups, one that is able to flesh out the continuities and innovations in terms of the practices employed by these groups. I also used internet and social media sources as a way of documenting actions and events, and also as a source of information regarding various aspects of the groups under scrutiny. Lastly, I used insights from secondary literature in order to focus on various elements of the political and social context in which these groups operate: neoliberalism, postsocialism, the ethics of the middle class, and so on.

2. A Century of Far-Right Activism and Paramilitarism

The year 1918 can be considered the starting point of the modern Romanian state. Emerging victorious after a dramatic and strenuous war, the country enlarged its territory, incorporating lands that were inhabited by Romanian speakers and that were historically considered to be part of the 'mother land'. The Romanian army became a pivotal actor in this

historical event, as the enlargement was mostly secured through military means. The new borders were the results of military campaigns against the armies of Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, Soviet Russia and Ukraine. Certainly, diplomatic discussions played a key role in preserving the territorial conquests and ensuring international recognition. Yet, the army succeeded in placing itself at the centre of the Romanian national unity process.

It is therefore safe to argue that Romanian nationalism has a pronounced martial character. Bellicose violence appears as the essential ingredient for constructing the nation-state, for eliminating foreign enemies and for maintaining internal peace. Being invested with such a primordial role, violence becomes difficult to contain within the confines of the state's institutions. Since Romanian nationalism has historically been a project embraced by most strata of the society, and since this nationalism has martial characteristics, it is not farfetched to argue that violence is easily legitimised as a method of dealing with political adversaries and as a constituent factor of the way in which the Romanian society perceives itself nationally.

This has been visible from the outset. The crown jewel of the so-called great union of 1918 was the joining of Transylvania to the Romanian territories. To this day, the foremost Romanian national holiday celebrates this act. Yet, the history around this event is marked by violence. Despite 'the union' being celebrated as a democratic assembly in which people freely voted for Transylvania to become part of Romania, history paints a far more violent picture. It is essential to note that this violence did not always emerge from the state, it was not always the violence of the army or police. Rather, it was paramilitary violence.

Paramilitary groups that functioned on their own or under the control of a temporary local authority were a common phenomenon in 1918 in Transylvania, especially after the Imperial authority of the Austro-Hungarians collapsed. The local Romanian elites sought to centralise these groups and place them under their control, in order to enforce their dominion over Transylvania. As such, these groups contributed to the imposition of Romanian authority in the province. They also facilitated the imposition and preservation of peace, in a territory that was ripe with inter-ethnic conflicts, and that was left in a state of destruction after the war (Mireanu, 2023).

The Transylvanian paramilitaries operated in the months of November and December 1918, before the Romanian army could claim full

control of the province. Their acts of violence were mostly directed against Hungarians and Jews, who were seen as potential contenders for the political and economic domination of the province. These two enemies were often conflated into a single one, namely Communism (or Bolshevism). The fear of the 'Bolshevik threat' was already discernible from the first signs of revolutionary unrest (Szász, 1999, p. 272). The communist threat was discursively constructed as one of the justifications for the use of force against any rebellious act. The label 'communist' was often more useful than 'traitor to the nation', especially as the rebels often included Romanians.

The first victims of this repression were uprising peasants, who would take advantage of the dissolution of the gendarmerie, and attack the properties of wealthy local landlords. These uprisings were quickly quenched, as the Romanian Transylvanian elite considered the peasants to be 'infected' by bolshevism (Constantinescu and Pascu, 1971, p. 299; Liveanu, 1960, pp. 528 - 30). Local republics and self-governing bodies (such as the one built by the Romanian and Hungarian miners in the Jiu valley) were also violently suppressed using paramilitary forces, as were social protests and strikes. Any alternative political vision that did not correspond to the nationalist line established by Romanian politicians was seen as being anti-national, and paying lip service to Budapest or the Soviet Union.

It would be a stretch to consider these paramilitary groups or their leaders as having clear far-right or even proto-fascist ideas, as it had been the case in Hungary (Bodó, 2019). However, one cannot conceal that their violence was motivated by discursive articulations that are closely related to what would become Romanian fascism. Beside anti-communism, these groups were animated by feelings of antipathy towards foreigners, especially Hungarians. In fact, many paramilitaries were incorporated in the Romanian army and in the spring and summer of 1919 fought against the Communist Republic of Hungary, led by Bela Kun. Romania's victory in that war is considered to this day a testimony of the country's aptness to 'defend' Europe and its civilization against bolshevism (Mireanu, 2019). Another antagonism was expressed towards the Jewish population of Transylvania, and there were numerous instances where paramilitaries opened fire against Jewish establishments and buildings (Bodó, 2019, p. 51).

The ensuing Romanian fascist groups established a link between their actions and the violence perpetrated by the Transylvanian National

Guards. The 1918 paramilitaries and their deeds became part of the origin story of the Iron Guard. One actor stands out in particular, namely the Transylvanian lawyer and politician Amos Frâncu. He led his own battalion in November 1918, and was also trying to get hold of the Romanian troops (formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian army) stationed in Vienna (Mireanu, 2020). His grandfather had also participated in paramilitary activity in Transylvania during the 19th century, when Avram Iancu led his 'legions' against the Hungarians (Voicu, 1992: 29). In 1919, he formed a nationalist group called 'the Brotherhood of the Cross' (*frăția crucii*). (Agrigoroaiei, 1977, p. 422). This group was initiated in Cluj, and it sought to fight for the Romanian nation (Onofreiu et. al., 2018, pp. 272 – 3). In the next year, Frâncu's group established a wing in Iași, where C.Z. Codreanu had been leading 'the Guard of the Nationalist Consciousness' (*garda conștiinței naționale*), a group engaged in constant violent confrontations with 'leftists' (Veiga, 1995, p. 48). Codreanu refers to Frâncu as a hero and inspiration, along with other fighters in the paramilitary National Guards of Transylvania. In 1933, Codreanu attended Frâncu's funeral in Cluj (Voicu, 1992, pp. 37 – 8)

I will not dwell on the Romanian interwar fascist activism, embodied in groups such as the National Christian Defense League or the Iron Guard, since this phenomenon has received considerate attention over the years.[5] In its classical and consolidated form, to which contemporary far-right groups tirelessly relate to, Romanian fascism developed paramilitary death squads, various forms of collective aid, training and work camps as well as various voluntary work projects (Axinia, 2025). Taking matters in their own hands against their enemies was the main propaganda tool for the Romanian interwar fascists. These groups exhibited clear traits of a 'voluntaristic [and] activist ideology' (Cârstocea, 2017, p. 193), where 'the deed' was a tool for acquiring political legitimacy. By the late 1930's, all this activist work resulted in the Legion having established a parallel state, a plethora of grassroots organizations that ran independently, without the need for support from the Romanian state (Cârstocea, 2020, p. 149).[6]

This model of practicing grassroots politics was superseded when the far right gained parliamentary and executive power in the early 1940's. The Romanian state actively began repressing far-right groups after 1944, and especially after the Soviet Union invaded the country and established a so-called communist rule. Many legionaries left the country, while others went into hiding, mostly in the mountains. Hiding from the authorities,

they self-organized in various groups, desperately trying to survive and avoid the reprisals of Romania's new self-declared antifascist government.

Thus, the mythology of the 'resistance from the mountains' was generated in the political imaginary of the far right. Certainly, not all groups and individuals hiding in the mountains shared fascist ideas. One can imagine that the zeal and lust for political revenge displayed by the Romanian socialists, through the repressive apparatus of the *Securitate*, made ideological conflations possible and probable. The Workers' Party enrolled thousands of former legionaries in and redistributed them throughout the state's administrative bodies, including the repressive ones. This gives a certain degree of plausibility to the hypothesis that state violence against illicit groups was also continuation of far-right violence, serving as a means for settling scores.

Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the interwar organization of the far right extended beyond 1945 through the practices of these groups that were hiding in the mountainous areas of the country. Apart from membership, the two threads that connect these groups to the Iron Guard are anticommunism and religious fundamentalism. The groups that ran to the mountains habitually attacked communist authorities, planned sabotaging actions and aspired to overthrow the government. As such, they were considered paramilitary organizations and repressed accordingly. The religious aspect was manifested through a belief that Christian Orthodoxy was under an unprecedented attack from the communists, and that these groups and the people that were supporting them were the defenders of faith, the guardians of Orthodoxy in a besieged Romania.

These two dimensions – anticommunism and radical Orthodox Christianity – ensured a discursive continuity of interwar fascism throughout the four decades of state socialism. The Bucharest authorities ultimately managed to wipe out any form of paramilitary organization (and to form their own groups instead). Yet some of their members survived long into the final decades of the century and continued to uphold – in more or less concealed forms – the ideas of the Romanian far right.[7] This survival was most likely made possible by Ceaușescu's right-wing turn during the 1970's. He and his entourage established a personality cult around himself (Fischer, 1981), re-legitimised a number of far-right intellectuals and introduced a radical form of nationalism[8] in Romanian politics. In the latter years, the regime also reached out to exiled legionaries in order to co-opt them in feuds against Moscow (Meurs, 1994, pp. 252 – 3; Totok and Macovei, 2016).

When the regime crumbled and the dust settled, the interwar far right emerged largely unscathed and managed to gain tremendous political ground. In the early 1990's, various far-right groups formed around former legionaries, who were now considered anti-communist heroes. Publishing houses, cultural institutions and political parties sprouted overnight, making little effort to conceal their fascist genealogies and aspirations.

However, the new Romanian far right had updated its discourse on fear and threat. If, in the first years after 1990, the Hungarian ethnic minority appeared as the main antagonist of hypernationalist articulations, it quickly became clear that the far right was constructing another 'enemy': the Roma people. Having survived centuries of slavery in pre-modern Romania, and having been subsequently deported and persecuted by the Antonescu regime of the early 1940's, the Roma population of the country has constantly faced stigmatisation, marginalisation and violence from the state and the society, including under the socialist regime.

Heavily looked down upon by right wing intellectuals such as Cioran, Eliade or Steinhardt, Roma people found themselves targeted by the first far-right political formations of the 1990's (Nicolae and Slavik, 2003). The same period witnessed various attacks of Roma rural (Foszto and Anastasoaie, 2001, pp. 358 – 9) and urban (Pavel, 1998, pp. 69 – 70)[9] communities; the perpetrators were groups of Romanians, at times in tandem with the police or aided by state authorities.

The epicentre of far-right activity against Roma people has been the western town of Timișoara. There, an urban myth regarding rich Roma clans that have acquired a number of houses in the downtown area has taken hold of the local imaginary. A number of far-right actors have mobilised in what they see as a struggle to resist the spread of Roma 'clans' in Timișoara. In 2008, a newly emerged far-right group called '*Noua Dreaptă'* (the New Right, established in 1999) organised the first 'March against the real estate mafia'. The 'real estate mafia' was a euphemism for what the group considered to be illicit Roma groups. The rally took place every year until 2015, and it featured a series of far-right symbols and slogans, most of which contained racial slurs and calls to violence against Roma people.[10] The march also served as a meeting point and a reference to other groups from the radical right scene.

One such group, which participated alongside Noua Dreaptă in the march from its first editions, was also established in 2008 in Timișoara. This group, the Autonomous Nationalists, has been arguably the most radical of its kind, until its dissolution in 2013. Utilizing imagery that referenced

directly to Nazi Germany, the group, clad in black and with concealed faces, engaged in various actions in the town.[11] Their program openly advocated 'national socialism' as a political alternative to capitalism. In the following years, it sprouted branches in other Romanian towns. Apart from a virulent discourse against Roma people[12], the group openly supported the remembrance and commemoration of interwar legionaries (Totok, 2013). It became notorious in 2013, when it posted a text in the form of an advertisement that offered a sum of money to Roma women who would prove that they have sterilised themselves. This provoked public outrage, and the Romanian authorities cracked down on the group (Fati, 2013). At the time of writing, their blog is, however, still available online.

Noua Dreaptă is still an active group, participating in actions in 2024, as I will show in the next section. Throughout the 2010's, the group became known for its radical practices that went beyond speeches and online posts. According to researchers, Noua Dreaptă has been '*performing charitable actions for some elderly Romanians living in the countryside, while at the same time developing a reputation for cruelty towards the Roma over the past decade.*' (Crețan and O'Brien, 2019, p. 839). It has also been involved in violent acts against the Hungarian minority, as well as against the LGBTQ community. The latter group, in particular the annual Pride March, have become favourite targets of the Noua Dreaptă, as well as a converging point for numerous far-right groups that have constructed this community as their newest enemy. The Romanian far-right groups articulate this antagonism as a way of dealing with a complex threat, which includes what they consider to be attacks on the traditional family, the Orthodox church, on the Romanian nation, on human nature etc. The LGBTQ community is seen by these groups as embodying a number of vilified elements, such as sexual liberation, feminism, Western influence, gender politics, abortions and so on.

The involvement of far-right groups in attacks against this community have been more acute especially after 2020, when the Pride started to be held in other cities apart from Bucharest. I consider these attacks to be the main form of violence perpetrated by far-right groups in Romania at the moment. For this reason, the next chapter will provide an empirical account based on my observations during actions taken against the Pride march, as well as other convergent practices of the Romanian far right-groups.

3. Contemporary Far-Right Groups

3.1 The 'Meeting for the Family' in Cluj

It is a hot summer day in Cluj Napoca, in June 2024[13], and the Pride Parade has just ended in the main square of the town (*Piața Unirii*), which is also considered the Hungarian civic centre, due to the 14th century gothic catholic cathedral that dominates the space.[14] Just a few meters away, the Romanian state built an orthodox cathedral in the years following the 1918 unification, in an attempt to shift the urban focus away from the Hungarian church. Yet despite a century of various attempts to re-signify this square as the Romanian centre of Cluj, it remains an ambiguous urban space, surrounded by traffic and being of secondary symbolic importance at best. It is, however, in this space, in the square between the cathedral and the statue of Avram Iancu, himself a predecessor of the Romanian paramilitary phenomenon, that the local far-right groups organise each year a counter-protest to the Pride Parade.

I have attended several of these protests over the years, since their beginning in 2017 (the same year that the first Pride was allowed in Cluj). I have always managed to blend in and keep a low profile in order to observe the groups, speeches and actions from a close distance. Despite its display of civility and the high presence of police and gendarmes, one rarely gets a feeling of safety during these events. In contrast to the carnivalesque and colourful atmosphere of the Pride, the counter-protests have a gloomy countenance, as most people are dressed in black and the only colours that seem to be allowed are the red-yellow-blue of the national flag. As a matter of fact, the very first such event was marked by a violent incident: local actress and activist Oana Mardare showed up at the counter protest wearing a white t-shirt with one of the Pride slogans ('*say it straight*'); at the moment in which the speaker on stage claimed that the Pride Parade had been 'obscene', Mardare shouted that it was not true. She was immediately heckled from the stage and by the crowd by men dressed in black who claimed that it was a 'provocation', and then dragged out of the protest by gendarmes, and subsequently fined for her presence there.

My own intervention two years later was much more cautious and subtle. I designed a colourful sticker with an explicit message against the far-right groups. I printed it in a large format (half of an A4 page), which made it quite visible, but also more difficult to post. I went to the square in front of the cathedral one hour before the protest was announced, while

the square was still empty, and posted several of these stickers on various surfaces in the square, trying my best to go unnoticed. I then left and returned during the protest to find all of the stickers removed or torn off.

Returning to the summer of 2024, I was again present in the square, this time with the explicit aim of observing the protest in a more systematic manner. I paid attention to the actors and groups that were present, to their messages and t-shirts, I listened closely to their speeches and took a copious number of photos and videos. In terms of the prevailing discourse, the themes were unaltered from the previous years: the LGBTQ community is an 'abomination', its members are 'living in sin', the Pride March is a 'provocation' and the local administration is 'morally corrupt' for allowing it to happen.

The official name of the counter demonstration was 'The Meeting for the Family'. The organisers and most of the speakers seemed to belong to the 'Comunitatea identitară' group, and there were several flags from 'Noua Dreaptă'. The banners had messages such as 'we love the family but we hate degeneracy', and 'mental illness is not love'. There were also flags with the map of greater Romania and with the logo of Comunitatea identitară. One banner had a quote from Romanian 19th century poet Mihai Eminescu, calling for a 'moral revolution' among the Romanian people. Between the banners and the cathedral stood the speakers, who were addressing the crowd using a microphone. Behind them there was a large Romanian flag held horizontally by few people, including a woman who was wearing the symbols of the AUR far right political party. She seemed to be the only representative of any parliamentary political group. A group of children were allowed to play and frolic under the flag, in an image that was meant to show how the nation protects its children, who grow under its three colours. This was also constructed as a disjuncture from the rainbow flag used in the Pride March. It was also paralleled by a widely used far right sticker that shows members of the 'traditional family' hiding under a red-yellow-blue umbrella from the LGBTQ rainbow-coloured outpour. Another symbolic usage of flags was a board on the side of the protest, onto which the organizers pasted a Pride flag, in a remarkably larger format than the one actually used in the march; this flag had four concentric circles and a cross imprinted on it, in order to resemble a target – thus, protest participants were encouraged to throw darts at this flag, in a clear ritual of symbolic violence.[15]

Overall, the protest appeared as a static demonstration of far-right opposition, marked by spectacular outbursts of chanting slogans and

playing nationalist music in the loudspeakers. The only moment in which this static nature was interrupted was when the organizers suggested the crowd to gather in front of the church for a group photo. This idea disrupted the placement of the protesters, since now they all came closer to the steps of the cathedral. Somebody quickly noticed that in this situation, a group photo would include the horizontal flag, under which some children were still playing; yet the flag would now be reversed, its colours being blue-yellow-red, which seemed to upset the organizers. As such, they asked the flag-bearers to re-group so that the colours would be in the right order. The bearers slowly began rotating the flag under the scorching afternoon sun; after a couple of minutes of this choreography, somebody noticed that it would be easier to simply flip the flag – which the bearers diligently did; yet, now, the problem was that the flag was still in a skewed position in relation to the church, and therefore the group photo would still come out wrong. I was thoroughly entertained by these manoeuvres, as they showed the limits of the otherwise very strict and militaristic layout of the event.

Beyond such farcical moments, the protest was one of the biggest gatherings of far-right actors in Cluj, and as such, it brought together various subjectivities, attitudes and practices. There was no shortage of violence. One journalist who was trying to interview attendees was roughed up by one member of the Comunitatea identitară, who forced him to leave the protest while berating him: '*I don't come to your Pride, you shouldn't come to our event!*'

The same member of the far-right group got involved in another incident after the official ending of the protest. In an attempt to get a closer look at some of the participants and maybe get a chance to talk to them, I sat on the steps of the cathedral, as the crowd dispersed and only a handful of organizers were left chatting with sympathisers. The Comunitatea members were encouraging people to sign their names and phone numbers on a list in order to receive the group's newsletter. As these talks were unfolding and the square was vacated, a group of tourists made their way towards the cathedral. Among them was a child waving a small Pride flag, the same kind which the LGBTQ community was handing out during their march.

The child was quickly noticed by the Comunitatea people, and the same man who had been involved in the altercation with the journalist earlier now dashed towards him shouting '*hey, hey, where did you get that flag from?!*' As the child ran towards the cathedral and his family, the

man approached the child's mother and asked her in English where she was from. When she replied 'Netherlands', the member of Comunitatea identitară replied: '*maybe there it's normal, but here we don't tolerate this. Either you put that flag away, or you throw it in the garbage. This is a fucking church!*' Visibly frightened, the woman took the flag and hid it in her backpack, as more of the black clad organisers rushed towards the steps of the cathedral, a few meters from where I was also sitting. The scene became worrying when the man who seemed to be the child's father intervened and the situation appeared to escalate. The gendarmes stepped in and removed the far-right people, despite their protestations that the sacred space of the church was being profaned by a child carrying a Pride flag. One of the gendarmes replied: '*But what is the problem? They are the traditional family that you also claim to celebrate, right?*'

I remained by the cathedral to observe the last attendees as they left the square. To my surprise, everything was not yet over. At the very last minute, when the protest seemed completely over and the square was populated only by its usual merchants, tourists and pigeons, a man in a robe appeared. The attire resembled some Christian monastic uniform, yet it did not seem (to my untrained eye) to be an orthodox monk's clothing. The man was also wearing a colourful backpack and was carrying a bucket full of water. With great diligence he started to stroll around the square, sprinkling water on the pavement, in a gesture which I interpreted as baptising the streets. I had heard of such gestures from orthodox priests after Pride marches, yet this man was performing his ritual in the same area where the 'Meeting for the Family' had just taken place. I followed him as he continued his stroll and sprinkling through one of the city's main boulevards.

3.2 The 'March for Normalcy' in Bucharest

To my surprise, I saw the same man in the same attire three weeks later, in Bucharest, in another event that was meant as a counter protest to the Pride event – the annual 'March for Normalcy'.[16] Here, he was among a small group of priests that was leading the march. Unlike its Cluj counterpart, the Bucharest event was not a static one. The organizers prepared a 4 km walk through the city centre, from the government's headquarters to the main orthodox cathedral in the capital. In contrast to the Cluj event, this was a show of force, a gathering of hundreds of people marching and chanting through the capital's main boulevards.

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The march was organised by the far-right party Noua Dreaptă, and it hosted a plethora of other groups and individuals. I saw a small group from Comunitatea identitară, with their flags and banners, yet most of the paraphernalia consisted of ND's green flags, as well as a myriad of religious symbols. Christian orthodox representatives seemed to be in far greater numbers in Bucharest than at the protest in Cluj. The anger and violence appeared to be more dispersed among the participants, rather than emerging from the organizers. Another contrast to the Cluj event was that the Bucharest march was held a few hours before the Pride march. It was also more heavily policed.

When I arrived at the meeting point, some people were already assembled on the sidewalk, while the organizers were giving speeches. I initially watched from the other side of the boulevard, worrying that I might get into some unwanted quarrel. After a short while, however, I realised that I could use the bus stop on the side of the protest as a pretext to stand there and look around and maybe take some photos with my phone. Since people started marching quite late, I found some nerve to escape the shelter of the bus stop and walk around the fringes of the crowd. As in Cluj, it did not feel safe to get deeper among the ranks of the participants. As soon as the march began, I found my safe space along the sidewalk, as the protesters walked on one lane of the boulevard, accompanied by a number of journalists and by-walkers. I walked with them for more than one hour towards the city centre, after which fatigue got the best of my ethnographic ambitions, and I left for the other march.

The event was notable on three accounts. First, most of the objects, images and banners had Christian orthodox connotations: people held crucifixes, icons, messages containing bible quotes etc. Second, shortly after the march began, most of the attendees' attention was drawn to the presence of Senator Diana Șoșoacă, head of a small and recent far right party and former member of AUR. She was walking at the front of the cortege, surrounded by people filming her. She was also broadcasting her presence live, using her phone. Throughout the march, the politician spoke to her live and online audiences about the perils of homosexuality and the need to uphold national as well as Christian orthodox values. Third, the participants relentlessly chanted slogans throughout the entire time I accompanied them. There seemed to be a plethora of chants. Most of them revolved around the idea that homosexuality is an abominable sin, which goes against human nature, Romanian traditions and, generally, against God. I found one chant to be particularly intriguing: as we were

approaching one of the central squares (*Piața Romană*), the cortege started shouting what in English would be something along the lines of: '*Homo propaganda, go back to the Netherlands*' (where 'propaganda' rhymes with the Romanian word for the Netherlands - *Olanda*). This was particularly outlandish for me, as the Romanian national football team was about to face the Netherlands in the kick-off stage of the European Championship in a couple of days, and naturally my preference went against the West-European team; at the same time, I was about to participate in the LGBTQ pride as an ally of the queer community in the same day.

3.3 The Ultras

Not only did the Netherlands not become a haven for the Romanian queer community, but its team also defeated Romania that summer, thus serving a twofold blow to the local far right. However, Romania's presence in the final tournament of the European Football Championship marked a significant rise in the activity of far-right groups. Since the tournament began in mid-June in Germany, scores of supporters rushed to attend Romania's matches. Due to their enthusiasm, the local media was quick to celebrate the supporters as a complementary to the football team's performances. As I was watching images and footage from the games, I noticed familiar flags and symbols: maps of greater Romania, Celtic crosses, the Dacian wolf, the crossed-out hammer and sickle and many t-shirts from the Radical Entourage shop. Browsing through the latter group's social media, it became obvious to me that a consistent part of the Romanian supporters' loudness and proudness could be associated to local far right groups that went to Germany.[17]

The politicisation of football fans is a widespread phenomenon, as the stadium is a space where political dissent can be expressed and publicised (Glathe and Varga, 2018, pp. 24 – 5). At the same time, such practices of dissent escape the confines of the supporters' terraces, spilling over into, and intersecting with various social movements. The inflamed and unrestrained peculiarities of ultras' political culture resonate well with the far right's antagonistic worldview. The result is a shared imaginary of war, where the ultras see themselves as an army that defends the honour of the team, the city, the nation and of values such as tradition, Christianity, family etc.

The links between Romanian Ultras and the far right are not entirely straightforward. As Guțu (2017, p. 5) historicizes, the first ultras groups

emerged in mid-1990's, and were mainly oriented towards a specific territory, since the football teams were also more localized. At that time, the ultras engaged in violent confrontations with each other and with the police and gendarmerie. This violence let to increased state repression and control. Despite the fact that this repression never reached the intensity seen in other parts of Europe, where football hooliganism is associated with 'irrationality' and 'bestiality' (Tsoukala, 2008, p. 144), Romanian ultras have developed attitudes of resentment towards the state. The ultras display a violent aversion towards the Romanian political elite, the institutions and the state's authority. As one member of the Romanian ultras group present at the European Football Championship stated for the New York Times, the ultras intend to '*show people we need to be against the police and against the* [Romanian Football] *federation'*.[18] It is plausible that this attitude provided a fertile ground for far-right ideologies, since they both stem from entrenched feelings of disconnection between political beliefs and realities.

Romania has witnessed various incidents featuring extremist violence emerging among and from the ultras. The terraces of the leading football clubs are less a medium for supporting one's team, and more a canvas for various Fascist symbols and slogans. In 2023, a number of supporters' groups joined the 'Nationalist Bloc', an alliance of far-right groups that aims to defend European values and the traditional family (Despa and Gočanin, 2023).

I have encountered these groups sporadically at various points in time in Timișoara, Cluj and Bucharest. The encounters were accidental, usually before or after some football match, as I happened to be in their proximity. The interactions were mostly indirect, through a genuine 'sticker war' that has been taking place in these cities. The far-right ultras are pasting their stickers, most of them with ultra-nationalist, racist and homophobic messages, and antifascist activists are either taking them off or covering them with other stickers. This 'war' led to a few confrontations between far-right ultras and activists.

My observations of the far-right ultras groups became more systematic during the European Championship. In June, in Cluj, as I was watching the projection of a group match, along with more than 2000 people in the main square (*Piața Unirii*), a group of local ultras climbed a statue and started to chant nationalist slogans. To the consternation of the crowd, the group lit torches, exploded firecrackers and chanted vigorously.

During my time in Bucharest, I attended a big celebration in the centre of the city (*Piața Universității*), on the night of Romania's qualification in the knock-out stage of the European Championship (July 2024). Hundreds of people came from all corners of Bucharest to express their joy. Some ultras arrived as well, with their flags, torches and chants. A few of them even climbed one of the statues in the square, the equestrian monument of medieval ruler Mihai Viteazu, considered a national hero in Romania. The image of a member of the ultras on the marble horse, holding a torch and shouting nationalist chants is emblematic for the ways in which the cult of the past blends into the far right's practices.

3.4 The cult of the past

In November 2023, the Romanian national football team defeated the rival team from Kosovo, in a game that was interrupted for more than half an hour, due to the Romanian ultras displaying a banner saying '*Kosovo is Serbia*' and throwing torches on the field (Șancu, 2023). The message was an explicit nod to Serbian ultranationalists, with whom the Romanian far right groups have long-standing connections.

I managed to get close to an event that celebrated these links a few months later, in February 2024, when the Comunitatea identitară group organized a commemorative protest in Cluj. The event marked the death of Baba Novac, who was a Serbian mercenary in the army of the aforementioned Mihai Viteazu.

Far right groups have been historically known for their cult of the dead. Fascism is built on visions of heroism and past glory. Mark Neocleous (2005, p. 34) argues that '*the body of the dead becomes the sacred body of a dead hero, giving rise to the cult of the dead in the most literal and obvious sense: the sanctification of the dead.*' Contemporary Romanian far right groups have indeed been demanding for years that anti-Communist martyrs be sanctified. The veneration of the dead in Romanian Fascism has been researched by Raul Cârstocea, who found that the Legion's penchant for worshiping the deceased '*rendered salient an emotional notion of nationhood that resonated with the public more than the state's modernizing project*' (Cârstocea, 2020, p. 155). Paying homage at various monuments that commemorate figures of the past that the Romanian far right look up to has become a standard practice of these groups over the years.

To return to Baba Novac, he is celebrated by the Romanian far right for being an outlaw (*haiduc*), which is to say, a fighter against centralized state authority, much in the spirit of modern-day vigilantes. Additionally, Baba Novac is considered a 'defender of Christianity', having fought alongside Mihai Viteazu ('the Brave') against the Muslim Ottoman Empire in the late 16th century. Yet the issue that was most present during the commemorative event as I witnessed it seemed to be the fact that Baba Novac was executed by the Hungarian aristocracy. This detail had been written on the statue placed in the centre of Cluj, where the event was taking place. The inscription had been erased in 2013, without anybody being prosecuted for this act. This allowed the Comunitatea identitară group to claim that the Romanian authorities are complicit in a 'politically correct' effort to 'erase' Romanian memory and identity. The speakers at the event abundantly referenced this alleged complicity, as their speeches became increasingly directed against the local Hungarian minority.

In contrast to the counter-Pride events that I recounted earlier in this paper, the Baba Novac commemoration in Cluj seemed to me more ominous. Partly because it took place during the night, partly because it was attended by people dressed in black and carrying torches, my proximity to this event did not feel safe. As I was walking past the participants, trying to get a view of the banners, I was constantly looked at with suspicion. It must have been clear that I did not belong there, especially as the participants were all wearing clothing with far-right messages and images, and they all seemed to know one another. The music was a blend of menacing heavy metal and distressing lyrics, while the participants' shouting loomed intimidatingly in the cold night.

4. Neoliberalism in Romania

Since the end of the post-socialist transition period, Romania too has entered a phase of neoliberal economic and social policies. As capitalism is restructuring itself, neoliberalism appeared to be the most natural solution to the 2008 financial and economic crisis. As head of the government, the Romanian president imposed neoliberal solutions in 2009, through the end of the welfare state, social policies and public spending in Romania. Subsequent governments have furthered this project ever since.

As Cornel Ban argues, the Romanian neoliberal aspirations were modelled on the interwar conservatism and on the Orthodox Church's

anti-modernism (Ban, 2014, p. 175, footnote 14). In such circumstances, Romanian neoliberalism became an ethical project, mostly concerned with the re-integration of the country in the civilized West. As Atanasoski and McElroy (2018, p. 282) frame it, '*such aspirations of Western becoming* […] [impose] *a continual need for Romanians to prove they have moved beyond their backward socialist past.*'

Indeed, the ethical project of neoliberalism was constructed and articulated in an explicit tension with Romania's communist past, represented by the so-called Social Democrats. The apex of this tension was reached in early 2017, when the demonized Social Democrat party passed a controversial bill that sparked outrage in all political corners. Tens of thousands took to the streets, and soon the anti-corruption '*Rezist*' protests became the hallmark of the neo-liberal axiological and cultural project (Crimethinc.com 2017). At the heart of this project was the new middle class with its demands for upholding its values.

The Romanian middle class has been seen as an essential condition for the establishment of a stable market economy and a functional capitalist system (Crăciun 2017, p. 4). The first Romanian middle class consisted of former communist cadres who managed to convert to entrepreneurial activities in the 1990s (Stoica 2004, p. 271). In subsequent years, however, having a 'communist past' began to be seen as a serious drawback for any managerial position (Simionca 2012, p. 143). This past was seen as an array of behaviours, mind-sets, beliefs and attitudes that were in stark contradiction to the direction in which the country should go.

As in other parts of the Eastern Europe, the sprouting Romanian middle class became ideologically involved in building and supporting the neoliberal order (Buchovski 2008, p. 49). Presently, those who identify as belonging to the new Romanian middle class tend to do so relationally, in contrast, on the one hand, to an upper class characterized by privilege, excess and doubtful morality, and on the other hand (and primarily), with the lower class that is characterized by laziness, lack of education, failure and incapacity to adapt to society (Crăciun 2017, p. 7). Against all of these traits, the new middle class posits a programmatic aspiration towards doing things properly and more ethical than they have been done before. Romania is witnessing the rapid '*empowering of the middle class, which uses the discourse of honesty and* anti-corruption […] *in order to take the low strata of society out of political fight'* (Mitev 2017). Ethics becomes a crucial part of self-identification with the middle class.

Simultaneously, ethics places the middle-class ethos within a 'civic perspective'. This is able to generate a political project for the middle class, in which active interventions in public matters, street protests, petitions and publicly made demands become tools for disseminating its values. The apex of this came during the protests of 2017, when '*middle class virtuousness, grounded in an ethics of personal responsibility, manifested not only through calls to civic engagement and support for technocratic anti-politics, but also through demands for moral and physical cleanliness*' (Deoancă 2017, p. 3).

This 'moral cleanliness' is a crucial stake of civic participation in matters of public order and security. In order to assert its superiority and defend its privileges, the Romanian middle class uses morality. Romania is seen as a corrupt society in need of rehabilitation. The Communist past serves as the 'Other' of the neoliberal present, and this otherness is constructed as '*not only economically untenable but morally wrong*' (Simionca 2012, p. 138). Thus, if the values of the Romanian middle class are to succeed in replacing the anachronistic 'communist' ones, the latter need to be criticized on every occasion. Within such a perspective it is no wonder that the middle class in Romania endorses various moral panics ignited by the media and the police.

In their practices, the grassroots far right groups from Romania amplify this intersection between anti-communism and morality. In their discourses, they state more explicitly than any other political force that communism is evil, impure and monstrous, it goes against human nature and it is therefore at the root of the current societal degeneracy. A large part of their current imagery is based on practices of resistance and fight against communism. The 'fallen heroes' are mostly people who have been repressed during the socialist regime, and who the far-right groups now consider to be 'martyrs'. Commemorative marches, monuments, remembrance literature, flags and symbols are all mobilized to empower a discourse of intense opposition and moral loathing towards communism.

Yet, as Popescu and Vesalon (2023) tirelessly argue, the trope of communism that these far-right groups relate to is an empty signifier. This is especially the case if one notices the absence in Romania of any political force that explicitly identifies itself as 'communist' or adheres to 'communist' values. However, it is crucial to underline the fact that despite this absence, the construction of communism as a political enemy in Romania in the 2010's and 2020's functions as a tool of acquiring political, electoral and symbolic capital. Popescu and Vesalon (2023, p.

155) claim that '*political actors condemning communism gain a privileged moral position which is then converted into political capital*'.

A number of ultraconservative intellectuals and far right political figures have tapped in the anti-communist discourse, extracting legitimacy and public credentials from it. At an intellectual level, they insert themselves in a genealogy that dates back to the interwar period, when various philosophers, writers, economists and sociologists embraced far right ideas from an anti-communist standpoint (Bejan, 2019, p. 216). The discursive novelty of the contemporary artisans of far-right ideologies is the addition of 'neo-Marxism' and of 'gender ideology' as societal dangers to be fought. If the former is seen as the contemporary articulation and ideological update of communism, the latter is a more innovative addition to the far-right repertoire.

The term 'gender ideology' is an umbrella under which Romanian far right groups lump together a plethora of tropes such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia. Generally perceived as a threat to the 'traditional family', what these groups see as being gender ideology is a blend of feminism queer theory, and 'political correctness'. Groups such as Comunitatea identitară are vocally opposing sexual education being included in the schools' curricula, on the grounds that it will foster homosexuality and 'sexual degeneracy'. There is also fierce opposition towards teaching 'gender studies' and feminism. Thus, Romanian far right groups '*target* […] *any feminist-emancipatory perspectives in society*' (Popescu and Vesalon, 2023, p. 162).

5. Supplying Security

To return to the research question, this paper is concerned with the far right's affinity for actions that are imbued with security meanings and articulations. After the above empirical and theoretical reflections, I am in a position to argue here that security occupies a central spot in the actions of the Romanian far right. This centrality is given by the fact that these groups perceive the state as being deficient in providing insurances that various threats could be tackled. In this way, far right groups take it upon themselves to perform and provide security. Through their array of activities that range from physical training and martial arts to protests and violence against political enemies, Romanian far right groups actively engage in tackling what they see as dangers. They see themselves as

defenders of Christian values, European civilisation, local traditions and Romanian nationhood. This chapter will elaborate these ideas, by providing wider theoretical arguments related to global phenomena.

I will begin with the 'deficient state' argument. At first sight, it would appear that far right activism germinates on a field left fallow by the retreat of the state and by its incapacity or unwillingness to fully engage social and political issues. While discursively, the Romanian radical right refers to the state as being contaminated by a corrupt political elite (Popescu and Vesalon, 2023, p. 158; Marincea, forthcoming), the actions of these groups enlist a type of violence that is meant to supplement the state's lack of reaction. Indeed, it is precisely because the state does little or nothing to address the spread of 'gender propaganda' in the public space or to curb the moral corruption of society, that far right groups feel compelled to step in and take matters in their own hands.[19] The main area in which the state is perceived as doing too little is in terms of providing security. This is translated in the lack of protection, justice and safety that should come from the competent authorities of the state.

On a more general level, the contemporary neo-liberal policies entail the withdrawal of the state from certain segments of service provision, including security (Eick, 2006). During the current stage of globalization, this withdrawal is seen as a solution to the destabilizing forces of the global markets. States choose the strategy of cutting back on spending in key sectors, in order to create incentives for direct investment. This leads to the privatization and outsourcing of security to private agents such as security companies (Goldstein, 2003, p. 23). This in turn leads to an unequal supply of security, based on the ability to acquire services. Gated communities, the mushrooming of private security and military companies – these are all aspects of this phenomenon (Low, 2017). Complementary, the withdrawal of the state generates a discourse of self-reliance, in which the idea of 'community' becomes essential. As such, neighbourhood patrols and the self-provision of security services at the local levels replace the role of the police (Eick, 2006). At the same time, the state also assumes a neutral role, unable to interfere in the different conflicts within the society and thus insulated from any responsibility (Sundar 2010, p. 114).

The withdrawal of the state is causing severe imbalances in some parts of the world. Outsourcing security means that large numbers of people are left prey to organized crime and local bandits. This leads to a generalized climate of insecurity, in which every day is fraught with threats and risks (Donmez, 2008). For those people which cannot afford to buy

security from private actors, such generalized fear is a daily reminder of the disappearance of the state. Such people may sometimes organize in vigilante groups, or can actively support and legitimize groups of vigilantes (Mireanu, 2015). Unlike security companies, these groups may protect poor or marginalized people in the absence of remuneration.

The destruction of large identities creates a vertical polarization within the society. The polarization separates the elites from the rest of the society, creating a cosmopolitan globalized group at the top and an indigenized and localized group at the bottom. This localisation is an attempt to find roots in a de-nationalized state, and it can lead to ultranationalist and pro-racist movements. The common denominator of all these local movements is the belief in the value of the collective, in community and communitarianism. As such, it overlaps with fundamentalism and generates violent exclusionary practices. These localised groups perceive themselves as being in a conflict with the globalised and cosmopolitan state.[20]

How do far right groups fit into this? Security underlines the far-right political project by positing the existence of an enemy that needs to be eliminated through violence. During the Nazi regimes, the state officials used the logic of security in order to legitimize numerous acts of exclusion that led to the 'final act of extermination'. (Neocleous, 2011, p. 190)

Far-right beliefs are formed and upheld at the societal level, and they are spread throughout society, in a relative autonomy from the state's direct intervention or indoctrination (Inglehart, 1990, pp. 272 – 3). These beliefs generate more or less coherent societal demands for action against various forms of discontent: the eroding importance of national identity and its related forms of affiliation, the eroding economic and social protection guaranteed by the welfare state, growing multiculturalism, increased poverty and unemployment and so on (Norris, 2005, pp 132 – 4).[21]

Far-right articulations of dangers aim to provide security to a community that feels threatened and that demands security. Far-right actions are the exceptional side of an existential discourse articulated by far right groups and based on various fears. These groups are there to 'rescue' society from a common enemy, against which the state is either helpless, or in complicity with. They exploit deeply rooted fears that they are able to articulate and unify in a single ideology.

The practices of the far-right groups show that security they offer has an exclusionary and oppressive character. Through far-right ideology, security is practiced as a brutal mechanism of rejecting categories of

people which are vulnerable and in need of security themselves, such as illegal immigrants, Roma people and asylum seekers.

A far-right version of security articulates its public as a homogenous group that is equivalent to 'the nation'. This articulation is vital for the support of far right groups. This support comes from the security demands of actors that could otherwise not easily transpose their fears into action. These fears are deeply rooted in the society, and they usually take the form of racism, which is appropriated by the far-right security discourse.

Far-right security is inherently and explicitly exclusionary, violent and discriminatory, with straightforward racist and homophobic overtones. Such articulations can be seen as providing security to a community that feels threatened and that demands security. Throughout Europe, paramilitary far right groups such the Golden Dawn have claimed to 'rescue' society from a common enemy, against which the state is either helpless, or in complicity with (Mireanu and Gkresta, 2013). They exploited deeply rooted fears, which they were able to articulate and unify in a single ideology. The far-right groups do not address the entire population, but only those people that can resonate with their far-right politics, and whose support the groups are able to use to legitimise its actions, precisely because of this resonance. The security articulations of these groups are rooted in deep-seated perceptions of fear and insecurity that come from everyday interactions and routines at the societal level (Ochs, 2011).

6. Conclusions

I have started this paper by observing that contemporary grassroots Romanian far right groups have a penchant for taking action, for going beyond speeches and imagery and into the field of voluntary political activism. I have also observed that these actions function by mechanisms of security, whereby political activism is articulated as a response to perceptions of threat and dangers. Simultaneously, the 'actionism' of the Romanian far right is in tune with middle class calls for civic engagement.

Bearing all this in mind, I asked how we can account for this penchant for action if action is grounded in security and roused by civility. I identified two aspects of this question, one empirical and one theoretical. After the empirical parts outlined the main groups, events and actions that I focus on, the theoretical part was also split in two: on the one hand, I looked at

how Romanian neoliberalism fosters an ethic of civic involvement onto which the far right constructs its scaffolding for its actions; and on the other hand, I outlined the mechanism of far right security supply in the context of global neoliberal policies.

At this stage I will pull the threads together, in order to delineate some concluding arguments about the far-right groups' willingness to act.

The first outcome of the analysis relates to violence. I have shown how the Romanian far right has performed political violence throughout its history, and continues to do so presently. Groups with far right ideologies employ violence against their enemies and also among themselves. However, it is clear that in a liberal democracy, few practices are more frowned upon than political violence. Therefore, today's far right groups have learned to camouflage violence as spectacle. Events such as the rally for the family, with its flags and paraphernalia, or the impressive pyrotechnics of the Ultras, serve to couch the brutality of violence under the illusory glamour of the spectacle. Spectacular events move people, impress a certain range of emotions and create images of a new reality. In this respect, the spectacle engenders the social and symbolic capital through which these groups legitimate violence. Engaging in various actions catalyses the spectacle in ways in which purely discursive politics could never do.

The second outcome relates to outreach. I have insisted on the concatenation between far right groups and middle class ethics because it signals a way through which extremism permeates liberal politics. By being engaged in actions and by labelling this engagement as 'civic acts', far right groups show that they aspire to have a voice in the mainstream political battleground. It shows that they want to participate in widespread political and social debates – such as anti-corruption, or education; and, conversely, that they want their themes to become mainstream – such as racism and homophobia, the defence of the traditional family, or worshipping anti-communist martyrs. The strategy works, as the Romanian public opinion appears at times to be quite accommodating to various far right practices and discourses.

Finally, the third outcome of my research is concerned with the future. Through their ability and willingness to engage in actions, Romanian far right groups uphold a culture based on feelings of duty, positivity, enthusiasm and determination. In the context of a generalised feeling of anxiety brought by the insecurities of daily life, this culture of activism fosters a sense of community and belonging. However, I take a step forward

and argue that through their activities, these groups create temporary zones of revolt against the state and other political enemies. Far right events and actions are spectacular moments that temporarily instate a set of conditions that align with certain ideas about how things should and could be. These events have their own hierarchies, symbols, acoustic and visual elements that create a specific landscape. Unlike the spectacle, this landscape is concave – bent inward toward the group members, who are the main recipients of this milieu. There is a strong sense of who belongs at the event and who does not. The activities in which these groups engage in – such as commemorating heroes or participating in rallies – bring members together in shared activities and in a shared lifestyle, in which the utopia is lived now, in the present. In short, far right actions temporarily create Fascist futures.

On an ending note, the rise of far right activism brings unease to any democratically-oriented political subjectivity. Each step taken by far right groups away from passivity, from speeches and literature and towards actions in the streets and institutions is one additional source of concern. Ignoring these actions, diminishing their importance, or subsuming them under the aegis of 'civil engagement' only adds to the far right's encroachment on daily politics and life. This paper has been meant as a contribution to understanding contemporary far right activism, its history, sources, motivations and mechanisms. Such an understanding is of utmost importance if fascism is to stay not in the future that its current proponents are envisioning through their activism, but in the dustbin of history, where it belongs.

Endnotes

1   Video by Comunitatea identitară, titled 'Pentru Camarazi Capitolul 7 – Lupta continuă! Timpul istoric și timpul individual', available at https://comunitateaidentitara.com/pentru-camarazi-capitolul-7-lupta-continua-timpul-istoric-si-timpul-individual/. The quote starts at timestamp 21:40.

2   The first two quotes are found already translated here: https://ruxandracesereanu.wordpress.com/2019/09/09/from-piata-universitatii-to-rezist/; the following two quotes are translated by me and can be found here: https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/piata-universitatii-piata-victoriei-631394.html

3   The source for this information is Stoica, 2018. More on the connections between football supporters and far right groups in Chapter 2 of this paper. For *Honor et Patria*'s links to AUR, see Marincea, forthcoming.

4   This view is inspired by what Emirbayer and Mische (1998, pp. 983 – 4) have called '*the projective dimension of agency*', whereby social actors are capable to generate new avenues for action based on an engagement with future plans and objectives.

5   For an introduction, see Weber 1964. See also Zavatti, 2021

6   It is noteworthy that the Romanian state emulated some of the Legion's practices, establishing its own structures for nationalist education, such as the so-called Country's Sentinel – *Straja Țării* (Radu, 2011; Cârstocea, 2017, p. 190).

7   This phenomenon is thoroughly documented by Totok and Macovei (2016)

8   There is no room here to fully discuss the intersection between communism and nationalism, two seemingly divergent ideologies. Van Meurs (1994, p. 234) talks about '*the nationalist corruption of communist ideology*', whereas Verdery (1991, p. 119) talks about '*reinserting the national past*' into socialist thought and practice. I am more inclined, along with Popovici (2016), towards an interpretation that sees socialism as having tweaked nationalism into a discourse intended to serve social and political emancipation. My own analysis of nationalism during communism as being influenced by interwar social-democrat ideas is in the unpublished research '*The Historiography of the Romanian-Hungarian War of 1919 during Romania's Communist Regime: Between Nationalism and Social-Democracy*', available at https://www.academia.edu/42289487/The_Historiography_of_the_Romanian_Hungarian_War_of_1919_during_Romanias_Communist_Regime_Between_Nationalism_and_Social_Democracy

9   Interestingly, Dan Pavel considers that the first Romanian government after the 1989 Revolution 'leads the crusade' on nationalism, and 'attempts to substitute racial ideology for Marxist class ideology' (1998, p. 72).

[10] For more details on this rally, see Crețan and O'Brien (2019, p. 843). Also my short analysis, in Romanian, available at: https://casisocialeacum.ro/archives/7197/despre-mafia-imobiliara-din-timisoara/

[11] Some photos of their posters in Timișoara can be seen here https://na-db.blogspot.com/

[12] https://natm88.blogspot.com/p/programul-nationalistilor-autonomi_88.html

[13] This chapter is mostly based on my field notes as a participant observer in the winter and summer of 2024, in Cluj and Bucharest.

[14] It is worth mentioning that in the first three editions of the march, the local Cluj administration did not allow it to happen anywhere near the city centre, as opposed to the far-right counter demonstration, which has always taken place in the Avram Iancu square.

[15] https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=869942531846696&set=pcb.869943871846562

[16] He can be seen in this video, recorded on the day of the march: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BTAZuYgpqk

[17] For a report on other national far-right groups present at the European Football Championship in the summer of 2024, see https://www.sportspolitika.news/p/euro-football-extremist-far-right-politics

[18] https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/26/world/europe/euros-ultras-hungary-carpathian-brigade.html

[19] The state, in this respect, should be conceived of as a social relation that crystallizes the balance of the dominant forces in a society (Jessop, 1990, p. 256). Hence, rather than being only a set of administrative institutions that govern through technocratic governmentalities, the state can be thought to incorporate the hegemonic discourses, practices and groups within a society (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

[20] This paragraph draws from Friedman , 2003, p. 25

[21] It is worth noting that the economic factors are not the only sources of far-right discontent. There is a consistent body of scholarship, now largely discarded, that focuses on psychological factors, such as an authoritarian personality, cognitive rigidity, repression of emotions and so on. The classical references are 'The Authoritarian Personality', by T. Adorno et. al., and 'Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia', by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (as well as Foucault's 'Preface' to this book). For a synthesis, I use Michi Ebata, 'Right-Wing Extremism: In Search of a Definition', in 'The Extreme Right. Freedom and Security at Risk', edited by Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, Harper Collins, 1997, pp. 22 – 4

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ILO'S MULTILATERALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM DILEMMAS OF THE EARLY 1920S: A LOOK AT ROMANIA'S TRIPARTITE DELEGATIONS

Dan-Alexandru Săvoaia

Abstract

This article addresses some of the dilemmas that arose from Romania's status as a founding member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It analyses the Romanian governmental elites' accommodation of the tripartite approach in the larger context of the multilateral diplomacy enshrined in the Peace Treaties following the First World War. In this sense, the article addresses issues of governmentality and representation by looking at the Romanian elites from the angle of structuration (A. Giddens). In an attempt to fill a gap between different strands of historiographies, it builds on the accounts of a historian who was a part of the discussions concerning labour issues at the Paris Peace Conference, while also bringing into the spotlight previously unpublished archival material from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Keywords: social reform, multilateral diplomacy, Greater Romania, International Labor Organization, tripartism

1. Introduction

Although the history of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is easily overlooked outside circles dealing with the history of international institutions and organisations, especially when seen through the prism of the League of Nations' failure, the history of the organisation and the people who were part of its events and mechanisms can be fascinating for exploring not only mentalities of the era, but also for interrogating the nature of the social structures intended to be represented. In spite of an increasingly rich historiography on the subject at international level[1], the development of analyses concerning international-national interaction,

especially in the Romanian case, is still pending. The starting points for fresh research forays in new interpretive palettes are, on the one hand, the agricultural sector, as the dominant tonality of interwar economic structures, and the working class, on the other hand, as the identity construct that has experienced numerous abuses and justifications both in Romanian post-war political practice and especially in the light of Romanian historiographical discourse from 1948 until 1989.

Tripartism[2] heralded a wider participation in drafting international conventions and recommendations, but also encouraged transfer of knowledge for law-making and their subsequent implementation at national level, through appropriation of aspects from other national cases, requiring adaptation to local realities. In all these respects, the participation of experts, whether from professional fields, law, economics, and even diplomatic circles, were faced with such tasks, requiring a concentrated effort. As such, my article looks at tripartism as means to reflect on the concept of representation, since Romania's interaction with the ILO can be seen as part of a larger project of a state-building process in the context of post-imperial realities. But in order to do so, we must first try to consider the complex and particular social structure and historical context from which these actors emerged, as well as the background of those who would be called to speak on behalf of one professional category or another, thus revealing a relevant image of the economic and social structures of the period.

2. ILO's precursors and the labour issue during and after the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

The public character of multilateral diplomacy promoted by the American side, and materialized, in the case of the ILO, through the tripartite structure of both the permanent body set up in 1919 and the annual international meetings (that continue to this day), was not necessarily unforeseen at the time. The reformist trade union activists, politicians and statesmen of the victorious powers who met in Paris to deal with labour issues were brought together by the fears generated by the Bolshevik revolution, and also by the common ideas and experiences they had acquired as participants, members or delegates in various forms of international collaboration since the end of the 19th century. One such example is the International Association for Labour Law (IALL), created in 1900, which served as an

epistemic community[3], bringing together leading figures such as Malcolm Delevingne (in charge with factory inspection in the British Home Office), Arthur Fontaine (French engineer and mine inspector) and Ernest Mahaim (Belgian law specialist and professor at the University of Liège).

After resulting from the preliminary actions of national committees in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland, the association received in 1901 the support of the Swiss government and the city of Basel, where the International Labor Office was to be set up and be headed by the economist Stefan Bauer (1865-1934). Although it initially aimed to keep track of the progress of national social legislation and to publish this data in aggregate form, the work of the organisation went much further than that, as it chose to select limited subjects and study them in depth – an approach facilitated by the 15 national sections that took shape in the following years to study the issues on the agenda, to carry out the necessary research and consultations in their own countries and finally to report the results to the general assembly[4].

It is worth noting that some governments concluded international labour treaties during this period. At bilateral level, the earliest of these was the Franco-Italian treaty of 15 April 1904, whose main negotiators, Luigi Luzzatti, the Italian Minister of Finance, and Arthur Fontaine, the French Director of Labour, were close to IALL. From a multilateral perspective, an example of the incipient attempts to apply these principles was the Berne Labour Conference (1906), which marked the beginning of a system then replicated between 1913 and 1914, interrupted by the war, and resumed especially after 1919: the organisation of a preliminary conference that laid the foundations for draft conventions which would be submitted for consultation to each government. Thus, in 1906, professional diplomats drafted the first multilateral conventions on labour relations, the first of which banned the employment of women during the night, covering some one million women in 12 industrial countries in Europe, and dealing with an important element in worker protection, namely the length of working hours[5].

Although the major trade union organisations viewed the work of the association with congeniality, the association was treated with relative reluctance, as it was perceived to be populated by middle-class reformers sympathetic to the working classes. In any case, in September 1914, the American Federation of Labour adopted in Philadelphia a resolution calling for a meeting of representatives of organized trade unions from

different countries in connection with the forthcoming Peace Conference. Reaffirmed in San Francisco in 1915 and in Baltimore in 1916, it was forwarded to all the main trade union organisations, and was followed in the same year by the Inter-Allied Conference of Trade Unions, which met in Leeds on July 5th 1916, and which was equally resolute in its demands, reiterating the hope that the Peace Treaties would draw a minimum of guarantees for the working classes beyond any danger from external competition[6]. Similar resolutions were adopted at successive workers' congresses in 1917 and 1918, both in the Allied countries and in those of the neutral and Central Powers, thus signalling that the organized trade union movement had come to regard the advancement of labour legislation as a method for organizing peace.

According to James Shotwell, the Commission on Labour Legislation at the Paris Peace Conference was called upon to do pioneer work, to draw up plans for an organisation unparalleled in the history of politics up to that time, which, without interfering in the sphere of government of sovereign states, had nevertheless to serve in coordinating world public opinion on matters of common concern, through draft treaties and recommendations, and to sketch up a program of reform which would secure higher standards of social justice throughout the world[7].

At the proposition of President Woodrow Wilson, on January 25th 1919 a special commission was appointed, composed of two representatives from each of the five great powers – the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan – and five representatives chosen by the other powers represented at the Peace Conference, which decided that their representation should consist of two representatives from Belgium and one each from Cuba, Poland and Czechoslovakia. They were entrusted to "examine labour conditions from the international point of view, to consider the international means necessary to secure common action on problems affecting labour conditions, and to recommend the form of a permanent agency to carry on this investigation and analysis in cooperation with and under the direction of the League of Nations". Commission members included Samuel Gompèrs, the president of the American Federation of Labor, and trade unionist Léon Jouhaux, who was the secretary-general of the French General Confederation of Labour. Moreover, the head of the British delegation, George N. Barnes, was a former trade union leader[8].

In order to find a solution to the fundamental problem of reconciling trade union demands with the practical possibilities of the time, the

commission took as a basis for discussion a comprehensive plan for an international labour organisation presented by the British delegation and whose principal authors were two future directors of the ILO: Harold B. Butler and Edward Phelan. The main features of the British plan were the direct representation of employers' and workers' organisations in the official international body and the provision that this organisation would adopt conventions or treaties which member states would be obliged to submit to their parliaments for adoption or rejection within a set time limit[9].

At the time of the Peace Conference, few people knew, apart from those who were actually in charge of this task, what the Commission on International Labour Law was all about. Initially, the work of the commission was to organize 18 meetings between 1 and 18 February, finalizing the first reading of the British draft (presented as a basis for discussion). After a period during which the governments were informed of the preliminary results, 17 further meetings were organized between 10 and 24 March, aiming at a second reading and the negotiation of various amendments[10]. By presenting its final report (drafted by H. Butler) in front of the Plenary Peace Conference, the Commission on International Labour Legislation hoped to attract the attention of the Versailles diplomats, government leaders, and the world press. By early April 1919, however, the negotiators' attention was focused almost exclusively on political issues, such as territorial reorganizations, and they paid little attention to an international social agreement.

Eventually, the ILO Constitution was adopted, after much preliminary work, at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, as Part XIII of the Peace Treaties signed by the Allied Powers at Versailles with Germany (June 28th 1919), at St. Germain-en-Laye with Austria, at Neuilly with Bulgaria and at the Trianon Palace with Hungary. The inclusion of the section on labour in each of these documents reflected the belief that universal peace could only be established if based on social justice.

In the autumn of the same year, between October 29th and November 29th, the first session of the International Labour Conference was held in the Pan American Building in Washington, USA, following Woodrow Wilson's acceptance of the invitation extended as early as April 1919 during the Peace Conference. On this occasion, the constitutional ideas and mechanisms for achieving the aspirations embodied in Part XIII of the Treaties were put to their first practical test. The organizing committee decided to draw up a provisional list of the principal industrial States, classified according to the level of industrial development, the motive

power employed, the length of railways per thousand square miles, and the level of foreign trade. As a result, the committee proposed that the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Japan and Switzerland to be considered as the eight countries of major industrial importance. Within the same framework, the first session of the Administrative Council elected by the Conference appointed Albert Thomas as the first Director of the Bureau, who in turn appointed Harold Butler as his deputy and Edward Phelan as Head of the Diplomatic Division, figures who would come to shape the organisation's fortunes in the years that followed.

3. The labour issue and Romanian aspects

While the Labour Commission of the Peace conference was negotiating the framing of labour terms for the Peace Treaties, such aspects were not on the radar of Romanian prime-minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu, whose reluctance towards the new type of diplomacy was observed by other attendees[11]. Seeking to obtain the international recognition of the union acts of 1918, his main priorities revolved around the Romanian-Hungarian disputes, the oil resources and the minority question. In general terms, aspects of labour relations had previously only been marginal in the Romanian political arena, and when they did come forward, they usually tended to be treated in the same paternalistic take as in previous periods.

In this sense, the discussion on the tripartite framework accommodation in the period, while animated by a governmentality (M. Foucault) lens, has to take into account both the larger process of democratization Romania was undergoing at the time. Nevertheless, in the same spirit of promises to improve living conditions made by the French and British governments in the context of the First World War, King Ferdinand I also made various commitments after the events of February 1917, but also for the morale of those fighting on the front. Projected in the spring-summer of 1917 and legislated in 1918 and 1921, universal male suffrage and agrarian reform that would favour peasant land ownership were perceptions of fundamental transformations for millions of citizens. Moreover, the Declaration of Alba Iulia of December 1st 1918, which enshrined the unification of Transylvania with Romania, highlighted, among other things, that the industrial workers would be guaranteed the same rights

and benefits that were legislated in the most advanced industrial states in the West.

> "It is a remarkable fact, however, that the problems of wage earners and craftsmen were still confused for some time, which may be explained on the one hand by the relics of a still recent past, and on the other by the progressive prolétarisation of the artisans" [12]

The above quotation is extracted from a 1928 material devoted to Romania, as a part of a larger project of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation aimed at studying the national legislation relating to trade unions and administrative practice, as well as actual positions of trade unions in various countries. In a bit over 40 pages, the material signed by Romanian jurist George Z. Strat[13] gives a nuanced account of the history of guilds and the trade union movement in Romania, their legal status at the time, along with several timeless insights into the limits and opportunities of trade union action in mid 1920s Romania. It also stands as a clear representation of the context and the dilemmas that foreshadowed Romania's status as a founding member of the ILO in 1919 and its subsequent participation in the annual conferences.

Any discussion about the prospect of a labour question in post-First World War Romania must take into account that it dwarfs in dimension when compared to the agrarian one[14], which remained a large societal and economical issue to be addressed by the political elites. Nevertheless, it transpires as a topic that arises as a result of two major pressure strands, which need a certain delineation.

On the one side, there were the revolutionary views, diffused in nature, but highly problematic when crises occurred (such as strikes), as these were often instrumentalized in crystallizations of maximal requests that would transpire as antinomic views towards the newly established Romanian State and its rulership. In this sense, the Romanian socialist political sphere remained divided, the articulation and the nationalisation of the social question further reflecting the tensions between revolutionary aims and reformist practices[15]. Despite the transformation process which some socialists had undergone since the end of the 19th century, steering from staunch internationalists to increasingly seeing themselves as „the better nationalists"[16], the maximalist factions perceived the post-1918 Romanian state as an imperialist project and did little to consolidate their position in the power circles, but rather sought a complete overthrow.

In the new democratised milieu, the 7 representatives elected in the Romanian Parliament in November 1919 or the 20 that came about in the new round of elections organised in March 1920[17], which could both count as signs of a growing electorate, failed to significantly contribute towards a party consolidation for Romanian socialists. This was further entangled by Marshall Alexandru Averescu' installation as prime minister on March 13th 1920, replacing Al. Vaida Voievod, who was tasked to take all the necessary measures to quell the revolutionary impetus and to „restore the order", signalling once more the anti-Bolshevism as a mantra of day-to-day politics[18].

On the other side, there were the provisions of Part XIII of the Paris Peace Treaties, which called for a new era in the international sphere for setting labour relations, based on a common understanding; an era to be established from that moment forward, not only between governmental representatives, or various individual initiatives, but in a way which would bring at the same table employers and employees delegates too. Both these strands hinted towards the need of a standard setting and a delineation of rights and duties based on constant negotiations and accords, which would not be limited to the national level, but would have a strong international dimension, since their interdependency could not be overlooked.

In the context of the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, Take Ionescu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time, in an explanatory statement in the Romanian Senate portrayed the 41 articles of Part XIII (art. 387- 428) as follows:

"This regulates labour as uniformly as possible; it specifies how the relations between workers and employers are to be regulated by the permanent organisation of the General Conference of Labour and the BIM, how representatives of labour and employers are to be included in their composition; how, finally, the whole and great problem of labour shall be settled as uniformly as possible in all countries, and therefore in our own, so that universal harmony between these two classes may be brought about. (…) Once our country has accepted all these measures, by signing the treaty on July 7, 1919, it has thereby resolved in principle the fate of the workers in our country, their actual legal organisation, to follow as soon as possible. This confirms once more that all the concern of the Western states, in agreement with our governments, is due to the most humane settlement of these great problems, and that the deliberate and subversive speculations in the East are only taking advantage, without any

chance of success, of the ignorance of an equal labour regime to which the Romanian government has adhered for more than eight months"[19].

Although my research does not focus on voices that postulated social reform along various socialist lines, which were divided between „reformists" and „revolutionaries" labels that are difficult to discern, I do not mean to overlook their input in promoting and maintaining in the public sphere issues that asked for solutions, especially in the context of Romania's state-building process. Rather, I am referring to what was proposed as a topic for discussion within the sphere of the ILO and the way these matters were perceived by the Romanian political elites.

Since even having a clear definition of the *worker* proved difficult in the period, I am looking at the interaction between Romania and the ILO not so much through the prism of an attempt to quantify the impact of international labour standards, but rather through that of a reflection on Romanian society, starting from the way the elites perceived the issue of labour relations. Although it has both a generalising and reductive meaning, we refer to the category of elites insofar as their position or training involves being actors within an *establishment* which is alive, understood through the logic of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory and the interdependent relationship between agency, actors and group recognition[20].

Building on the idea of structuration, it is necessary to recall two major legislative novelties that Romania witnessed in the period, namely the Law regulating collective labour disputes (1920)[21], that introduced the practice of conciliation and arbitration, which, as Gr. Trancu-Iași recalled in one of his courses a few years later, "from a practical point of view, in light of the circumstances in which the country found itself at that time, we were obliged, under the threat of anarchy taking over our entire economic life, to initiate these laws and to guarantee first of all the freedom of labour"[22], and the Trade Union Act of 1921[23], which was designed to put trade union action on a legalistic footing, so that these organisations became, at least in theory, recognisable to the government in power as possible partners in the relationship between the state and the people.

According to Treaty of Versailles provisions, although governmental delegates at the annual International Labour Conferences did not enjoy plenipotentiary status, which would legally bind their own government, they participated as members of an assembly similar to a parliament, and their signatures (or votes)[24] bore a moral weight on their own government's

actions. As such, our research highlights the provisions of Art. 399 of the Versailles Treaty, which stipulated that each government attending the Conference had to cover the expenses for its four delegates and their technical advisers, a theme that became a recurring one over the years in the Romanian case.

As for the delegates of the most representative professional organisations (Art. 389), interwar jurist Marco Barasch[25] assessed that this aspect was introduced to stimulate the development of professional organisations where they did not exist, the expected presence of delegates at the annual conferences becoming in itself a contribution to the overall organisational effort[26]. Our research is thus animated by the attempt to explore the causalities of an image outlined by Romanian historian Alexandru-Murad Mironov concerning interwar Romania, who has previously assessed that in the period in question, the labour regime was not modified by social pressure, but rather by political initiative, ideology of the government in power or by the personality of the incumbent at the Ministry of Labour[27].

4. The long road towards a full Romanian tripartite delegation (1919-1924)

In preparation for the participation at the First International Labour Conference, to be organized in Washington in October 1919, the Director of the Romanian Central Social Insurance House, Alexandru V. Gâdei, inquired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whether Romania had ratified the two Berne Conventions of 1906 on white phosphorus in the matches industry[28] and on the night work by women, also asking for clarification on the Berne Convention of 1913 on the protection of young workers and their night work[29]. The request is not surprising, since, on multiple accounts, even from the late 19th century, Romania had been invited to participate in various international reunions concerning industrial work regulation, work accidents, insurance and other similar arrangements. While some were individual initiatives and others had governmental backing, they were all declined most of the time by the Romanian part, the conference proceedings being occasionally observed from afar.

Back to the Washington Conference, the invitation from August 20th 1919 was addressed by the American President to the Head of the Romanian Council of Ministers, Ion I. C. Brătianu, and was dispatched through the American Legation to Bucharest. Although initially the Ministry

of Industry and Commerce announced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it would not send a delegate to represent the Romanian government at the Conference[30], Constantin Orghidan, chief engineer and sub-director of the special service of the CFR workshops[31], was informed by the Romanian Legation in Washington on October 15th 1919 of his appointment as a delegate to this event[32]. He was to be accompanied by commercial attaché Gr. Mihăescu, with whom he was now to attend both the Atlantic City Trade Congress[33] on October 22nd and the Washington Labour Conference on November 29th [34].

Orghidan's situation seems uncertain in the archival documents, as he had already been delegated by the Romanian War Ministry to the United States, in New York. Afterwards, when he subsequently tried to obtain reimbursement for his travel expenses from the Ministry of Industry, the latter did not seem to recognize his status as a delegate[35]. In his attempt, Orghidan emphasised that his work on the labour issue had not been in vain, since thanks to his involvement and that of Gr. Mihăescu, Romania became "the only country in Europe that has the right, if it wants to work more than 8 hours a day for 3 years after July 1st 1921"[36]. In this regard, Gr. Trancu-Iași, in his course at the Superior School of State Sciences from a few years later, detailed that the argument of the Romanian side in this matter was based on the destruction suffered by the country during the war and the need for economic recovery[37].

Nevertheless, Romania took account of all the 6 conventions adopted at the 1919 Conference. As a follow-up on these, in view of the inquiry made by the Dutch Legation in Bucharest, based on Art. 405 of Versailles Treaty, regarding the ways in which Romania was to legislate the spirit of the Washington Conventions[38], the Ministry of Labour answered that the conventions in question were to be submitted for ratification by the legislatures within the prescribed time limit, while on the question of the recommendations adopted "we shall endeavour, taking into account the economic and social conditions, to transform them into positive provisions by means of ministerial decisions"[39]. In this regard, in the explanatory memorandum attached to the ratification by the Romanian Parliament of the results of the Washington Conference, Grigore Trancu-Iași, the first Minister of Labour, examined each convention individually, (erroneously) boasting that Romania was the first state to ratify the Washington Convention, thanks to his involvement[40].

After the first Conference in November 1919, the next one to follow was devoted to Maritime Affairs and was scheduled to begin on June 15th

1920. In this context, Albert Thomas insisted towards the Romanian side to communicate him in due time the names of those who would make up the delegation[41]. The documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also reveal his concern for the filling of the questionnaire attached to the provisional conference programme. As part of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Commission for the Application of Treaties addressed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, announcing that it was "absolutely necessary to set up a special delegation composed of delegates from the Ministry of Public Works and Labour, together with a delegate of the shipowners and personnel embarked on merchant ships under the Romanian flag in the ports, to study the questions concerning the organisation of work, in order to be able to formulate informed answers" to the questionnaire received from the ILO director. In this regard, interventions were made with the ministers and also with the Prefectures of Brăila and Covurlui counties[42].

The constitution of the delegation was achieved by mobilising resources from the newly established Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the prefectures in the territory. One of the first names to be drawn was Emil Enescu, an engineer and director of the Romanian Shipping Company, who had been elected for this purpose by the shipowners of the port of Brăila in the office of the captaincy. As for the sailors' delegate, the same captaincy informed Bucharest that no one had been elected, in the absence of a direct order from the workers' union central office in Bucharest[43]. In any case, the delegates elected in Brăila were to meet later in Bucharest with those still to be named from the other Romanian port cities (Galați and Constanța)[44], who "in addition to special knowledge of the resolution of this important problem, should also know French in order to participate usefully in the work of the Conference"[45].

Eventually, according to documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian delegation to Genoa was to be formed by the following delegated or elected members: Commander Ionescu-Zaharia, recommended by the Ministry of Labour, Commander Adam Jijie[46], delegate of the Seamen's Union, Captain Emil Enescu, elected by the shipowners, Captain Ioan Semenescu, delegate of the Ministry of Public Works, two delegates of the seamen (Simon Novak and a mechanic named Nedelcu), together with mechanic Filip, also from the Ministry of Public Works, but the final decision was up to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs[47]. However, of the 7 appointed, only 5 made it in the notification to the Romanian Legation in Rome concerning the conference delegation[48]. Furthermore, the members had some problems on their way to Genoa,

since their route was cut short due to flooding and the suspension of rail transport. Mysteriously, the final number of delegates that made it to the event came down to 4[49].

In any case, a memo of the Board of Directors of the General Seamen's Union, which arrived belatedly at the Treaties Commission, records the proceedings of a special meeting that took place on May 14th 1920 and chaired by Commander Adam Jijie, at which the questionnaire provided by the Ministry of Labour had been discussed in agreement with Engineer Commander Enescu, the shipowners' representative, and I. Semenescu, captain under-inspector. According to the document, it had been decided to adhere without restrictions to the convention on the limitation of seafarers' working hours to 8 hours a day, while various comments were made on the topics of the conference. We do not know whether those agreed upon were taken up to Genoa by those who formed the final delegation to the event, but the report itself was filed at the Foreign Ministry's central office. Nonetheless, the criteria used for selecting the members of the delegations were bound to stir discontent, according to internal correspondence of the Ministry of Labour[50].

The proceedings of the Genoa Conference concluded with three Conventions on the admission of children to maritime labour, placement of seafarers and unemployment benefits in the event of loss or shipwreck, on which the Ministry of Labour commented[51]: "we will present a bill for the ratification of some of them, after first seeing what actions other States are taking, since so far only a few have decided to ratify them". While the Ministry of Communications came out in favour of the application of the three conventions, the recommendations, since they did not have a binding status, were considered to be contrary to the agreements of the Barcelona Conference[52], where the General Convention for the Freedom of Inland Waterway Transport had been established, and to the principles upheld by the Romanian State at the Danube Statute Conferences[53]. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour, following consultations with various maritime organisations, took a more reserved position, deciding in favour for the ratification of only one convention, that on the minimum age for the admission of children to maritime labour; since the opinions on the other two were divided, they were to be submitted to the ministerial committees responsible for drawing up a draft labour code[54] for consideration, and the committees would then act on their opinion when drawing up the preliminary draft labour code, taking into account the recommendations

adopted in Genoa, "in so far as their provisions are applicable in our country"[55].

While in the case of maritime issues the question of representation found its adaptation, as it focused on three port cities in Romania, the issue of a general workers representation at national level remained a thorny one. In a reply to an inquiry on Art. 412[56] concerning the nomination of delegates for a potential commission of inquiry to the ILO Governing Body, the Romanian Ministry of Labour proposed that employers' interests be represented by Ștefan Cerkez, industrialist, president of the General Union of Romania Industrialists (UGIR) and sociologist Dimitrie Gusti as a "neutral element". As for the employees' representative, it was noted that their appointment could not be made as

> "…we could not yet make a decision, because their central professional organisation in the Old Kingdom (the General Commission of Trade Unions) refused, for principle reasons, any discussion on this matter. We are, however, awaiting the response of the central professional organisation of workers in Transylvania, which we suspect will be favourable to this collaboration (…) according to our information, a General Congress of Trade Union Organisations from the whole of the Kingdom will soon be held and we have every reason to hope that the new governing bodies will look with sympathy and confidence on the work built on the provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty concerning Labour"[57].

A year later, in Geneva, in the context of the Third International Labour Conference, which focused, among other things, on the adaptation to the agricultural sector of the Washington resolutions on hours of work, the Labour Minister concluded in the questionnaire sent by the ILO that "we are of the opinion that it should be left to each country to draw up the questionnaire according to local conditions and needs. In a country of small peasant owners, such as ours, where agricultural work is generally done by members of the same family, it is almost impossible to arrange working hours"[58].

The structure of the delegation, as shown in the correspondence between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, remained minimal:

> "…due to financial difficulties, the Ministry of Labour is obliged to abandon the sending of a delegation as it would have wished. If, however, you consider that, from the point of view of the application of the Treaty of

Versailles, our country should have a delegate, then the Ministry consents to Mr Demetre Iancovici's appointment, who is also Romania's technical delegate to the League of Nations"[59].

From this position, the government delegate stated during the event that agricultural concerns were Romania's first priorities:

"…we hope to extract from Romanian soil the necessary means and possibilities for increasing our economic development and the increasingly visible, stronger consolidation of our social order – but this effort cannot be the act of a single country and that is why we are following with close attention the international discussion of the problem in all its extent. Romania has put forward the reasons why it believes that it is not opportune to consider limiting the duration of work in agriculture… It does not have a wage-earning class and it is also of the opinion that in the present state of precariousness in which the world economy finds itself, collective effort is not superfluous to attempt an increase in world agricultural production, the only factor to uplift states and peoples"[60].

In 1922, in the context of the International Labour Conference, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen[61] was appointed to represent the Romanian government, and also received the approval to participate in a preliminary conference with delegates of the countries that formed the Little Entente, in order to discuss the issues to be dealt with at the Conference[62], and approach them in similar vein[63].

The Romanian delegation at the Geneva Conference that year comprised of governmental delegates only, whose expenses had been approved by the Council of Ministers. This repeating pattern became a concern for the ILO director, and his dissatisfaction reached the ears of other Romanians involved in the activities of the League of Nations. Thus, in a telegram from the Romanian Legation in Paris from 11 October 1922, Elena Văcărescu[64] wrote: "Please arrange for two official Romanian delegates to be sent to the ILO Congress, which will be of the utmost importance for our country. The decisions taken will have a serious impact on the future of the labour organisations. We cannot remain aloof from the debates. Two other delegates need to be appointed, one by the workers, the other by the employers"[65].

The attitude of the Romanian government also sparked protests from the employees' organisation. As such, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed that Romulus Dan, from Chernivtsi, had published a letter in the

Austrian newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung* from 7 December 1921, bearing the title 'Das Internationale Arbeitsamt und Rumänien', in which he protested for not having been included in the delegation, despite prior approval from the Ministry of Labour to his nomination by the trade union organisation[66]. The message was in line with the complaints made by Belgian and Italian workers' delegates to the 1921 session of the International Conference about incomplete delegations (including Romania's), a situation which repeated itself in 1922 despite the protests. From the discussions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, although it was initially envisaged to send delegates of employers and employees, it was finally decided against, "for governmental reasons"[67].

That year, as part of the conference, N. Petrescu-Comnen, also deputy and member of the Labour Legislation Commission back in Romania, while responding to what he considered to be „the malicious remarks of detractors", who were presenting Romania as a country of the reactionary, suggested to the Office to distribute its attention among the various countries „in a slightly more equitable manner, not focusing solely on their territorial or industrial importance, but also taking into account the concern they show for the working class, the efforts they make to improve the lot of workers, and the rise in their feelings of justice and social solidarity"[68].

In the same vein, Franciszek Sokal, a Polish governmental delegate, echoing the views of N. Petrescu-Comnen, along with those of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and Czechoslovakia, with which he had come to an agreement concerning the general comments on the work of the organisation, argued that the ILO had to continue its efforts in obtaining the ratification of the conventions which were passed, but also keep an eye on the obstacles in the way of ratification, and do all in its power to assist in removing them. Also, his solution with a look into the future focused on the need to increase the moral authority of the organisation in such a way as to put pressure on the governments to ratify the conference decisions, keeping a focus on the public opinion which was to be influenced, since it should not be permissible for one minister or under-secretary to impede ratification[69].

In 1923, the same N. Petrescu-Comnen, also Minister Plenipotentiary in Bern by then, announced to Bucharest that he had been elected by the representatives of the Little Entente at the Labour Conference as President of the three delegations[70] following a meeting which took place before the annual event. Seconded by I. Setlacec[71] as technical adviser, N. Petrescu-Comnen was asked to explain the systematic lack of Romanian

workers' and employers' delegates, an action seen as being contrary to the Versailles Treaty provisions. In a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he stated that of the 500,000 workers in Romania, only 60,000 were organized, and that these were divided into many camps, a situation confirmed, in his views, by the fact that in August 1922, in Cluj, there was a big rumble between these groups, and as a result, election would have been contested, adding in his discourse that "the government could have camouflaged a pseudo (representative) but such a procedure, practiced by others, repelled them. Our liberalism could not have been suspected, proof of which is the considerable number of ratifications of conventions and the importance of labour, which constitute an enormous advance in universal labour legislation"[72].

The year 1924 was one of transformations; following the efforts of the only Romanian official at the ILO, Arnold Stocker[73], to promote the work of the organisation within the country, the visit of the Romanian King to the ILO headquarters took place in May, and a similar gesture followed, as Director A. Thomas visited Romania in November – all of these heralding a significant improvement in Romania's relationship with the ILO. There were, however, also prospects of possible challenges, as the deferment obtained in 1919 was now to reach its expiration date, signalling the need for a law introducing the 8-hour working day.

Despite positive approaches, in the period leading to the annual Labour Conference of 1924, N. Petrescu-Comnen informed the Romanian Foreign Minister, I. G. Duca, that the ILO had learned that Romania, for the fourth time, was to send only government delegates to the event scheduled for June. Having been reminded in a friendly and discreet manner that the workers' delegates, led by Leon Jouhaux and Mertens, were prepared to make a vigorous demand for Romania not be admitted to the Conference, Comnen assessed the circumstance as a serious one, stressing the need for the Foreign Ministry to make the necessary interventions to the Ministry of Labour to send a full delegation and to avoid "exposing ourselves to the inconvenience of not being received at the Conference"[74].

One way or another, at the 1924 Conference Romania joined Argentine, Cuba, Greece, South Africa, as countries with complete tripartite delegations for the first time[75], receiving the praise of Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office[76]. With this occasion, N. Petrescu-Comnen was appointed chairman and rapporteur for the credentials committee of the conference, which meant that now had insight into controversies and matters concerning the

representativity of those partaking the event. From this position he had to handle, among other things, the protests against the composition of the Italians workers delegation, in a problem which was not necessarily new, having occurred also one year prior. Although the committee sought to resolve the matter under the principle of *res judiciata*, the workers group decided to vote against the validation of the credentials of the Italian workers representative[77].

Moreover, the question of representation proved to be much broader, other countries facing difficulties of other kinds than those of Romania's. Representation didn't prove to be an easy task, since there were quite a few protests, from the *Confederazione generale del Lavoro* against the Italian workers delegate, from *Odborowe Zdruzoni Ceskoslovensko of Prague* (Federation of Czechoslovak Trade Unions) and from the *Ceskoslovensko Obec Dolnicka* of Prague (Union of Czechoslovak Workers) against the Czechoslovak Workers delegate (nominated by the Christian Trade Unions from Brno)[78]. While the Italian case raised disputes revolving around the defining aspects a most representative organisation, the Czechoslovak one expanded on membership numbers, economic power (assets) or the productive capacity of trade union organisations as criteria for representativity.

At the same time, Comnen's activity in the committee reveals greater issues about conference delegations. As for the incomplete delegations (which was the case for 16 countries), at committee's request, representatives of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Portugal and Uruguay invoked the precarious financial situation of their countries, which, according to their statement, did not allow them to incur the somewhat heavy expense involved in sending a complete delegation to Geneva[79]. Moreover, representatives of Albania, China, Lithuania, Siam and Uruguay pointed out that their incomplete delegations were due to a lack of employers' and workers' organisation within the meaning of Part XIII of the Versailles Treaty, while the Norwegian government explained their decision of not sending their workers' delegate due to the distrust, and even hostility of the workers associations towards the organisation. At the same time, in an even more striking account, the Estonian delegate pointed out the uselessness for small countries to send a too large delegation, given the preponderant influence wielded by the great Powers in the Conference and especially in the work of the Committees.

As such, at the proposal of the credentials committee, the Secretary-General of the Conference was requested to address an urgent

appeal to all the member governments, highlighting the inconveniences resulting from incomplete delegations and requesting them to be good enough to make every effort to carry out the obligations assumed as signatories of the Treaty of Versailles. These aspects were also called to attention by the Romanian workers delegate, Ioan Flueraș and the employers' delegate, Constantin R. Mircea, representing the General Union of Romanian Industrialists, who gave a lengthy account of his experience at the 1924 Conference in the official bulletin of the union complaining about the lack of previous representation, and stressing the dangers posed by labour laws adopted without prior consultation[80]. A similar tone had been taken by UGIR even before the 1924 Conference; a confidential memo addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed for more involvement from the part of the government in the international aspects of labour legislation[81].

Photo 1. Romanian delegation at the International Labor Conference, Geneva, 1925. 1 – Ioan Flueraș, 2 – Isabela Sadoveanu, 3 – Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, 4 – Constantin R. Mircea, 5 – I. Setlacec, 6 – Arnold Stocker, 7 – M. Enescu. Source: ILO Historical Archives, Geneva

However, the support for this tripartite format proved to be inconsequential and subject to politicalist notes, the full format of the Romanian delegation being achieved again in 1925, but temporarily abandoned in 1926, when the episode was further complicated by poor communication between ministries[82]. From the perspective of the Romanian government, tripartism brough even further challenges, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was no longer the sole channel of communication with international organisms. This was hardly a new problem in 1926, the issue being raised in internal ministerial notes four years prior, according to a report addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which stated that the adhesion to the Washington conventions and recommendations had been done "directly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, without the knowledge of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was not informed until later, following the request addressed by the latter"[83]. Back to the situation in 1926, Gr. Trancu-Iași, the Minister of Labour, justified that the delegation could not be complete due to the general elections that were in progress in the country, to N. Petrescu-Conmen's embarrassment at the conference, who served again as the government delegate at the event, but who was not informed of the situation, the message of the Romanian Minister of Labour having been transmitted directly to the International Labour Conference, and not through the Legation in Bern, as it had been done previously[84].

5. Conclusions

Initially, Romanian governments had failed to send complete tripartite delegations at the annual labour conferences, citing unfavourable financial situation, or fragmentation of labour organisations. These attitudes were hardly singular, as similar takes were shared by other states too. As Albert Thomas highlighted in his 1924 report as director of the ILO, the system of conferences faced the member states' anxiety *vis-à-vis* their unimpaired national sovereignty combined with their competition in the economic sphere, which brought delicate political topics to be dealt with. The experience of forming tripartite delegations in the first half of the 1920s reveals a fracture in views: on the one hand, the economic dimension and the competition on the global market were seen as main drivers for some, on the other hand, the need for an equal states' participation in ratifying international conventions and recommendations was perceived

as paramount. In between these, the governments were in a delicate position of formulating guarantees (through laws) for both employers and the employees, while also seeking their own administrative coherence.

In the Romanian case, Gr. Trancu-Iaşi[85], the first Ministry of Labour, promoted the ILO conventions and their ratification at national level, at the expense of consulting other parties, which was justified, like in other state cases, on the absence of representative organisation or insufficient funds required to cover the expenses of the delegations. The representation of the Romanian professional milieus however came slowly (for first time in 1924), a decision which owed some credit, at least in part, to the external and recurrent pressure from the ILO officials, but also to growing protests from employers and employees' representatives.

Endnotes

[1]   The initial works of James T. Shotwell; Anthony Alcock; George Alexander Johnston; more recently: Isabelle Lespinet-Moret, Vincent Viet, *L'Organisation internationale du travail. Origine, développement, avenir,* (Presses Universitaires des Rennes, 2007); Sandrine Kott, 'Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period'. In *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jasmien van Daele, et. al, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010): 173–95; Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946).* (De Gruyter, 2020); Guy Fiti Sinclair, *To Reform the World: International Organizations and The making of Modern States*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dorothea Hoehtker, 'L'OIT, les normes et l'histoire', *Revue internationale de droit économique* t. XXXIII, no. 4 (2019): 477–500; Daniel Maul. *The International Labour Organization: 100 Years of Global Social Policy.* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2019).

[2]   The interaction of government, employers and workers representatives as equal partners in finding solutions to issues of common concern.

[3]   Jasmine Van Daele, "Engineering social peace. Networks, ideas and the founding of the International Labour Organisation", *International Review of Social History* 50, (2005): 436.

[4]   Sandrine Kott, "From Transnational Reformist Network to International Organization. The International Association for Labour Legislation and the International Labour Organization, 1900–1930s", in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere, Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s,* eds. Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, Jakob Vogel (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 239-241.

[5]   The other convention covered the ban of using white phosphorus in match industry. Ernest Mahaim, "The historical and social importance of international labor legislation"*, in *The origins of the International Labor Organization,* ed. James Shotwell, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 3-18.

[6]   Mahaim, "The historical", 18.

[7]   Shotwell, "Introduction", XX.

[8]   International Labour Office, "The Commission on International Labour Legislation", *Official Bulletin,* Vol.1 (Apr. 1919-Aug. 1920): 1-345, Geneva, ILO, 1923.

[9]   International Labour Office, "The Commission", 1-345.

[10] Edward J. Phelan, "The commission on international labour legislation", in *Introduction*, ed. James Shotwell, in *The origins of the International Labor*

Organization, ed. James Shotwell, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 127-198.

11   See Harold Nicholson, *Peacemaking 1919,* first published in 1933, for example.

12   International Labour Organization, "Freedom of association", *Official Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 31, Geneva (1928): 365-405.

13   Born on Nov. 4, 1894, jurist George Z. Strat was a graduate in Law at the University of Iași (1919) and obtained his PhD in political science and economy from *Université de Paris* in 1923 with the thesis *Le rôle du consommateur dans l'économie moderne.*

14   Constantin Iodachi, "The agrarian question in Romania, 1744–1921", in *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History,* eds. John R. Lampe, Ulf Brunnbauer (Routledge, 2020), 35-41; also, for a long-term perspective on the structure of the Romanian labour force see Bogdan Murgescu, "Agriculture and landownership in the economic history of twentieth-Century Romania", in *Property in East Central Europe. Notions, Institutions and Practices of Landownership in the Twentieth Century,* eds. Hannes Siegrist and Dietmar Müller (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 50.

15   Especially the third part of Cătălin Cotoi's book, *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2020) and mainly the second part of Adi Dohotaru's book, *Socialiștii. O moștenire (1835-1921)* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2019).

16   Anca Maria Mândru, "Nationalism as a national danger? Early Romanian socialists and the paradoxes of the national question (1880–1914)", *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 43:2, (2015): 319-336, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2014.973389.

17   Bogdan Murgesu, Andrei Florin Sora (coord.), *România Mare votează. Alegerile parlamentare din 1919 „la firul ierbii"*, (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 371-390.

18   In august 1919, the Romainan Army occupied Budapest and quashed Béla Kun's Bolshevik's project for Hungary.

19   "Monitorul Oficial", Dezbaterile Senatului, August 22, 1920, 617-618.

20   Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (California: University of California Press, 1984).

21   "Monitorul Oficial", September 5, 1920, 4239-4242.

22   Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească și cooperatistă* (București, 1928), 37.

23   "Monitorul Oficial", May 26, 1921, 1419-1425.

24   Marco Barasch, *Legislația internațională a muncii* (București, 1929), 63.

25   Romanian jurist with significant contributions to labour law in Romania in the period.

26 Barasch, *Legislația internațională*, 63.

27 Alexandru-Murad Mironov, "Grigore Trancu-Iași și 'protecția muncii naționale'. Politica socială interbelică între naționalism și combaterea șomajului" in *Revista Transilvania*, no. 10-11 (2014), p. 64-72.

28 This issue was also addressed in a recommendation of the Washington Conference, which Romania had ratified, thus committing itself to adhere to the 1906 Convention. See the Note of Ministry of Labour to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth MAS), no. 8501 from June 18, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth AMAE).

29 A. V. Gâdei's note to MAS, July 7, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

30 Letter from MAS, September 17, 1919, see also Telegram, Ministry of Industry and Commerce to Romania's Legation in Washington, no. 65276, December 29, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

31 Mentioned in other documents as chairman of the Romanian technical committee in the USA. Romania's Washington Legation's note to MAS, no. 2744.6, December 2, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

32 Romania's Washington Legation's note to C. Orghidan, no. 2886.13, October 15, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

33 The International Trade Conference in Atlantic City (1919) decided to establish the International Chamber of Commerce, an institution founded in 1920, based in Paris, with the aim of encouraging trade, investment and the free market economy.

34 Telegram for Romania's Washington Legation, October 11, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

35 C. Orghidan's report to the Minister of Industry, January 15, 1920, New York, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

36 Art. 13 of the First Convention adopted by the ILO in 1919 on the application of the principle of the 8-hours day or of the 48-hours week stipulates: „In the application of this Convention to Rumania the date at which its provisions shall be brought into operation in accordance with Article 19 may be extended to not later than 1 July 1924". C. Orghidan note to MAS, no. 191230, May 28, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

37 Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească,* 22.

38 Letter no. 927 to MAS, October 12, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

39 Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 9080, November 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

40 "Monitorul Oficial", May 17, 1921. Romania was in fact the second country after Greece to register with ILO the ratification of the 7 Conventions adopted

at the Washington Conference. Greece did it on November 19, 1920, unlike Romania, which did so on June 13, 1921. See also International Labour Office, *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference,* Fifth session 22-29 October, Geneva, (1923), 360-372.

[41] Albert Thomas' letter to MAS, February 26, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[42] Letter no. 172, April 30, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[43] Letter no. 202, May 8, 1920 and the copy of Telegram no. 1150, addressed to Eftimie Antonescu, General Commissioner for the Application of Treaties, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[44] Copy of Telegram no.174, May 2, 1920, addressed to Constanța county prefect, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[45] Copy of Telegrams no. 167, 168, April 30, 1920 addressed to Brăila and Covurlui prefects, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[46] Later, in the context of discussions about the settlement of expenses for participation in the event, Commander Adam Jijie is mentioned as a participant on behalf of the Navy, the Romanian Ministry of War being indicated as responsible for covering the financial aspects. Ministry of Communication to MAS, no. 09197, November 1, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[47] Letter of the Comission for the application of treaties to MAS no. 264, June 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[48] MAS Telegram to Romanian Legation in Rome, June 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[49] Commander Jijie's telegram to MAS, June 14, 1920 and encrypted telegram no. 12911, June 14, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE. The final delegation was comprised of Ivan Semenescu, Captain in the Naval Reserve, commander in the Romanian Navigating Service, Emil Enescu, Commander in the Naval Reserve, Director of "Navigația Română" company Brăila, Adam Jijie, Commander in the Naval Reserve, Engineer, President of the General Union of Seamen of Romania, and Simeon Novac, Chief Engineer, Vice-President of the General Union of Seamen of Romania. League of Nations, *International Labour Conference, Second Session,* 15th June – 10th July, 1920, Genoa, Geneva, International Labour Office (1920): XXXIV.

[50] Initially tasked with gathering all sailors formations in the country for them to appoint their delegate, Captain Constantin Tonegaru wrote to the Ministry: "I heard later that a commission left for Genoa, whose members did not have the express delegation of all Romanian sailors, but only of a small circle, which, as I read in the newspapers, displeased most Romanian sailors, who, as I heard, protested telegraphically at the Genoa Conference against these delegates". Address of Captain Constantin Tonegaru, lawyer of the Romanian

Maritime Service to the General Directorate of Labour, September 6, 1920, f. 44, file 148, Ministry of Labour - Studies and international relations office fund, Romanian National Central Historical Archives (ANIC).

[51] Letter of the Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 27770, March 2, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[52] The International Conference on Communications and Traffic, organised by the League of Nations between March 10 and April 20, 1921.

[53] Letter by Ministry of Communication to MAS, no. 3941, March 3, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[54] It should be noted that during this period, the enactment of labour legislation sought to be approached either holistically, through a Labour Code, in the liberal vision, a project which failed in both 1923 and 1925, or in a phased, adaptive manner, in the national peasants' version.

[55] Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 0265, April 6, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[56] According to art. 411 of the Treaty of Versailles, any of the member states was entitled to file a complaint with the International Labour Office if it was not satisfied by the way other members were securing the effective observance of any convention. As such, according to art. 412, each of the member states had to nominate three persons of industrial experience, of whom one had to be a representative of employers, one a representative of workers, and one a person of independent standing, to form together a panel from which the members of the Commission of Enquiry could be drawn.

[57] Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 2251, July 20, 1920, file 14M2, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[58] Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească,* 26.

[59] Dumitru Iancovici, specialist in law, author of the paper *Reforma agrară* (Brăila, 1888), 87, Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 121790, October 18, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[60] Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească,* 26-27.

[61] Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen was a jurist with a doctorate in law, economics and finance from Paris, and had experience as a judge and lawyer. Although he officially entered the diplomatic service in 1923, he was entrusted with diplomatic missions as early as the fall of 1919, in Hungary. For a more comprehensive take on his diplomatic career see Adrian Vițalaru, *Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen: diplomat* (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2014).

[62] Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 849, October 13 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[63] Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 844, October 12, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

[64] An exponent of the feminist movement in Romania, involved in the period in various League of Nations associations.

65 Telegram of the Romanian Legation in Paris, October 11, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

66 Note of the Romanian Legation in Vienna to MAS no. 3926, December 16, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

67 Report submitted at MAS with no. 57559, November 7, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

68 International Labour Office, *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference*, Fourth session, (Geneva, 1922), 98.

69 International Labour Office, *Records*, 137-139.

70 Telegram by the Romanian Legation in Geneva, no. 34, October, 22 1923, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

71 Director general at the Ministry of Labour, also a jurist by profession.

72 Telegram by the Romanian Legation in Geneva, no. 42, October, 29 1923, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

73 For a detailed account of Arnold Stocker's activity at the ILO please see my recent contribution: "A liaison for social reform in 1920s Romania: Arnold V. Stocker" in Stefano Gallo (ed.), *Networks of labour. International officers and formal networks in the history of the International Labour Organization*, (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2024), 53-72.

74 Note by Romanian Legation at Bern to MAS, no. 1082 May 14, 1924, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.

75 The 1924 Romanian workers' delegation was led by Ion Flueraș, president of the Council of Romanian Workers' Unions, accompanied by technical advisors Romulus Dan and Ioan Mirescu.

76 See "Brief report by Mr. Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, on the credentials of the Delegates and Advisers nominated to take part", in *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference*, International Labour Office, Sixth session, (Geneva, 1924): 503-510.

77 International Labour Office, "Records of proceedings 1924", 253.

78 First Report of the Credentials committee, in International Labour Office, "Brief report", 510-512.

79 International Labour Office, "Brief report", 512-513.

80 C. R. Mircea, "Raportul inginerului C. R. Mircea, directorul general al U.G.I.R. asupra Lucrărilor Conferinței", in *Buletinul Uniunei Generale a Industriașilor din România*, year III, no. 9 (September 1924): 444-541.

81 UGIR's memo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania (I. Gh. Duca) November 14, 1924, Problema 240 – Congrese, Box 38, Congresul internațional pentru protecția legală a muncitorilor, Praga, 1924, AMAE.

82 Art. 397 of the Versailles Treaty also enabled the Departments responsible for studying and resolving labour issues to communicate directly with the ILO.

83   Report from February 20, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri
      Fund, AMAE.
84   Geneva telegram no. 98, June 3, 1926, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri
      Fund, AMAE.
85   Member of the ephemeral Labour Party (1919).

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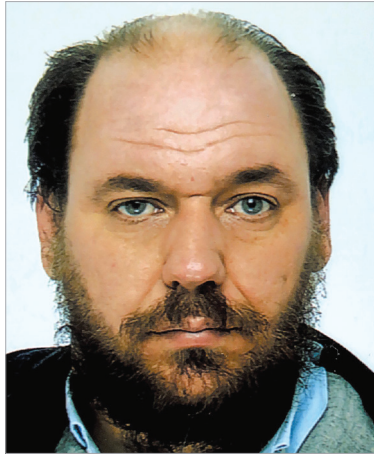
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PROTECTING THE PATRON, DEFLECTING THE BLAME. THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT AND THE DEATH OF ROMANOS DIOGENES IN THE *CHRONOGRAPHIA* OF MICHAEL PSELLOS*

Roman Shliakhtin

Abstract

The article investigates the portrayal of the Battle of Manzikert (1071) in the *Chronographia* by Michael Psellos. The main aim of the final part of the Chronographia was to remove the blame for the internal crisis in the eleventh-century Byzantium from Michael Psellos and his patron, emperor Michael VII Doukas. To reach this aim, Psellos constructed a "rhetoric of veracity" based on repetitions, breaks of internal chronology, omissions, a single Classical allusion and switches from first-person to third-person narrator in the key moments of the story. The resultant narrative allowed Psellos to claim a position in the internal Byzantine debate about Manzikert and identify Romanos IV Diogenes as single culprit for the major military defeat,

Keywords: Michael Psellos, Byzantium, Battle of Manzikert, Romanos Diogenes, narratology

The clash which the scholarship now calls the Battle of Manzikert took place on 26 August 1071 in the vicinity of the city of Malazgirt (Türkiye) between the emperor of Byzantium, Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068–1071), and the sultan of the Great Seljuks, Alp Arslan (r. 1062–1072).[1] The Byzantine army was defeated with some of its generals captured, some wounded, and some fleeing from the field. Some contemporaries blamed Romanos's general, Andronikos Doukas, for commencing the retreat from the battlefield, while others held Emperor Romanos Diogenes responsible. According to both Byzantine and non-Byzantine sources, Romanos Diogenes fought bravely on the field, but in the end he was defeated, captured alive, recognized and brought in front of the victor, Sultan Alp Arslan I.

The victory was a major symbolic achievement for the Great Seljuks, who had migrated from the steppes of present-day Turkmenistan just one generation before. The triumphant sultan Alp Arslan sent the good tidings to the Caliph of Baghdad. He humiliated the defeated emperor and then, to the surprise of many, made a political pact with him, allowing Romanos Diogenes to return home with some of his entourage as a Seljuk ally (Beihammer, 2017, pp. 155–160). The circumstances in Constantinople did not allow Romanos to regain his throne. As soon as the news of his defeat reached the capital, the courtiers installed his wife, Eudokia, and her son, Michael VII Doukas, (r. 1071–1078) as legitimate rulers. Romanos tried to secure Eudokia's support but failed. Michael Doukas then exiled his mother to a monastery and Romanos found himself branded as a rebel. Subsequently, Doukai's army defeated Romanos twice (Theotokis, 2024, pp. 165–174; Cheynet, 1970). After the second defeat, he surrendered to Andronikos Doukas and agreed to become a monk. On the way to Constantinople, he was cruelly blinded by an inexperienced torturer and died on the island of Proti near Constantinople in October 1072 (Vryonis, 2003). His victorious opponent, Alp Arslan did not outlive him, dying in the same year. The next ten years saw a massive migration of the semi-pastoralist Turks to Anatolia, turning it into "Tourkia," or the land of the Turks as Crusaders would call it some twenty years later.

The battle of Manzikert remains a focal point in many narratives about Byzantine-Seljuk relations, with a major study calling the battle "a supreme disgrace" for the Eastern Roman Empire (Vryonis, 1970, p. 102). Whether the battle was indeed a disgrace remains an open question. Recent generations of Byzantine military historians have expressed skepticism about the totality of the military failure and its role in Seljuk

migration (Cheynet, 1980, pp. 424–426). Most recent monograph attempts to reconstruct the event in some detail and switch focus from the person of the emperor to the situation on the battlefield, which was problematic for both sides (Theotokis, 2024, in particular pp. 140-160).

The present article is an analysis of the description of the events connected with the battle of Manzikert in a contemporary historical narrative, the *Chronographia* created by Michael Psellos (b. 1018 – d. after 1078), one of Romanos' advisers who played a central role in many of the events he recounts. This is important, as the sections in *Chronographia* addressing Manzikert were written in 1072-1073, very soon after the battle was over. The *terminus post quem* was the death of a mercenary, Crepin (Crispinos: PBW, c. Robert, 101; Psellos, 2014, p. 280). The article focuses on the literary devices that Psellos used in the seventh book of the Chronographia. For the sake of analysis, the narrative of Psellos is divided into three parts - description of the events before the battle (1069-1071), description of the battle itself (1071) and the description of the events after the battle and before the death of Diogenes (1071-1072). Methodologically, I use narratology as the main set of instruments to analyze Psellos. A few technical terms I used are borrowed from a work of Mieke Bal (Bal, 2009). In addition to this, article benefits from occasional comparison of factoids present or absent in Psellos with factoids present not only in Byzantine sources, but a major Turko-Arabic narrative about Manzikert created by Ibn al-Athir in some hundred years after the events.

1. The source and the author: Psellos and his works

Prominent courtier and rhetorician Michael Psellos was born in Constantinople around 1018. He attended a standard course of grammar taught by prominent poet John Mauropus, in which he excelled. At the beginning of his career, Psellos worked as a judge in the imperial provinces. Upon his return to Constantinople in the 1040s, Psellos became an imperial secretary and rapidly advanced through the court ranks, gaining a status of importance under the reign of Constantine Monomakhos (r. 1042–1055). At the end of the reign of the latter, Psellos left the court but soon returned and regained his high standing. For the next thirty years, he enjoyed a prominent position at the court and became one of the chief advisors to both Michael VI (r. 1055–1057) and Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057–1059). After Isaac abdicated the throne following

his advice, Psellos shifted his allegiances to the powerful family of the Doukai. He served as an advisor to Constantine Doukas (r. 1059–1068) and had a complex relationship with Romanos Diogenes (r. 1068–1071), the Byzantine emperor who suffered defeat at Manzikert. He maintained cordial relations with Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071–1078), while simultaneously serving as the "Philosopher-in-Chief" and an acclaimed teacher. His influence conveniently peaked between 1071–1078, when he played a crucial role at the court; the position attracted considerable criticism associated with the emperor's rule. Psellos' contemporary (and possibly his student), Michael Attaleiates, had a particular grudge against the philosopher-in-chief and later wrote a work which is more often than not in direct polemic with the *Chronographia* (Krallis, 2006, pp. 175-180).

The exact date of Psellos' death is uncertain: some scholars place it at the end of the 1070s, others suggest the 1080s (Kaldellis, 2011). Indirect evidence includes Attaleiates writing in 1080 (date confirmed), who criticized one particularly well-educated advisor to the Doukai—quite likely Psellos—for orchestrating the blinding of Romanos. The absence of the advisor's name in this passage may indicate that Psellos was still alive when Attaleiates finished his *Historia* in 1081. Frederick Lauritzen correlates the time of his death with the disappearance of Eastern Anatolian magnates from court (Lauritzen 2007). Psellos's absence in the narratives of Nikephoros Bryennios and Anna Komnene also suggests 1081, the time of the Komnenian revolution, as the year by which Psellos was either dead or had left the Byzantine political landscape for good. The absence of his figure in the other Byzantine narratives that deal with events of the eleventh century (Zonaras and Skylitzes Continuatus) may hint at the uneasy relations between Psellos and the Komnenian dynasty. While Skylitzes's claim that Psellos's works brought more harm than good to his readers needs further nuanced analysis, his uneasiness about Psellos in the Komnenian era is palpable. This apprehension (which did not turn into open critique until after 1081) might be connected with Psellos's literary activity before, during, and after Manzikert part of which is the *Chronographia*.

Michael Psellos's literary output prompted Jakob Lyubarskiy to call him a "great author and artist," while Stratis Papaioannou referred to him as "many Pselloi" on account of his prolific body of work (Ljubarskij, 1992; Papaioannou, 2013, p. 4). Psellos was not only famous as a philosopher and a grammar teacher but primarily as a rhetorician and a paragon of style. His speeches and letters addressed to different rulers, ranging from Constantine Monomakhos to Michael VIII Doukas, are available in critical

editions, which allow the detailed study of his methods. Consequently, Psellos has become one of the most studied Byzantine authors, alongside Procopius, Theophanes, and Niketas Choniates.

As for Psellos, the present study will not deal with the many facets of his person, focusing instead on his main historical work—the *Chronographia*—and his views on Manzikert, as expressed in his writings. The *Chronographia* was written in several installments between the 1060s and the early 1070s (Rheinsch, 2013b). The first part of the work covers the period from the death of Basil II to the rule of Isaac Komnenos, while the later parts were written right after the battle of Manzikert, in 1072–1073. As with many other works of Byzantine rhetoric, the *Chronographia* was divided into "ruling periods" by a later editor, not Psellos himself, and some scholars consider its surviving version unfinished.

Focusing on the emperors' deeds and Psellos's own actions, the *Chronographia* presents a comprehensive narrative of Byzantine history. The narrative is very personal and centers on the protagonist himself, which provides insights into details of his career. Its audience included Psellos's contemporaries such as Michael VII Doukas as well as people "at and around the imperial court" (Reinsch 2013b). His readers, thus, were expected to be aware of the events described at least to some degree, which may explain the absence of a precise date in the *Chronographia* (Jeffreys, 2017).

The claims that Psellos made in his *Chronographia* are not always easy to substantiate precisely due to the many gaps in his narrative and lack of precision about important milestones. Nevertheless, the *Chronographia* remains a unique document produced by a person who was close to the center of power in Constantinople in the 1060s and 1070s. As it is evident from the abundance of his writings, Psellos was active in many fields and communicated with many people, not focusing on one group or clan.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos presents himself as a successful opportunist, always close to the throne and always right—while those in power are portrayed weak and usually wrong. This seems to be the case not only regarding his political allegiances but also the patronage of some of his non-historical works. According to the latest scholarship, Psellos's study on the Church council was re-dedicated to *several* emperors and was a popular reading in later Byzantine years. His letters were considered exemplary pieces of rhetoric in the Komnenian era and beyond and were similarly well received. However, the *Chronographia*, albeit famous, enjoyed a mixed reputation, as reflected, for example, in the ambiguous remarks of a younger contemporary, John Skylitzes who qualified Psellos

work in the preface to his own *Synopsis of History* as an "attempt" to write history (Skylitzes, 2010, p. 1)

The reason for the work's ambiguous reception is directly connected with the Battle of Manzikert. While Psellos was absent from the battlefield, he took part in many events after the battle that led to the establishment of his pupil, Michael VII, on the throne of Byzantium. Contemporaries (e.g., Michael Attaleiates) also criticized Psellos for his role in the events, namely the blinding of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. As will be demonstrated below, the post-Manzikert portion of the *Chronographia* is effectively an early attempt to deflect blame for the cruel blinding and murder of Romanos. The fact that Psellos's name is absent in surviving sources from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries indicates that his attempt failed. There is no evidence that either Alexios I Komnenos (crowned with the support of Romanos Diogenes's sons) or his court intellectuals held Psellos in high esteem. Instead, official historiography (e.g., Zonaras) seems to have avoided the mention of the prominent philosopher altogether. In general, he was more famous as a teacher than as a historian (Littlewood, 2006, p. 15).

The situation changed in the middle of the twelfth century. Anna Komnene, for example, probably had the *Chronographia* at her disposal in her library, although no direct surviving evidence attests to this. As Stratis Papaioannou notes, the *Chronographia* survived in one manuscript, *Paris BNF gr. 1712*, made up of two parts (Papaioannou, 2013, p. 256). The first part of the manuscript contains poems and the *Chronographia*, while the second part consists of fifteenth-century works describing embassy to the leader of the Aq Qoyunlu Turkomans, Uzun Hasan (1423–1478), and the reign of Murat I (1326–1389), sultan of the Ottomans. Both works immediately follow the text of the *Chronographia* in the manuscript. This means that even the context of the physical preservation of the *Chronographia* relates to the Turks and indirectly the Manzikert. To analyze the attitude of Psellos towards the battle, I will examine the passages that precede the battle in the *Chronographia*, the description of the battle itself and, more importantly, the part describing the aftermath of the battle.

2. Before Manzikert: Psellos and Romanos as a courtier and an emperor before 1071

The analysis of the aforementioned events in the *Chronographia*, written after 1071 and the following the Doukai coup, present a deconstruction

of the panegyric. Instead of praising Romanos, Michael Psellos draws upon a vivid picture of imperial decline that began with the moment when Romanos Diogenes came to power and thought about himself as a supreme being. The main characteristic of Romanos in Psellos is his megalomania and inability to focus on singular goals. Before becoming a ruler, says Psellos, Romanos addressed him in the most servile manner (δουλοπρεπέστατα), while after seizing the throne, Romanos still respected him but did not heed his advice, and their relationship became tense (Psellos, *Chronographia* 2014, p. 267). According to Psellos, the breakdown of Romanos's relationships and his inability to seek counsel from Psellos led to the disaster of 1071.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos presents the events leading to Manzikert as a series of personal mistakes that eventually ruined his life. The description of these three campaigns (1069, 1070, and 1071) follows a certain repetitive pattern. First, Psellos expresses his objections before each campaign but the emperor pursued his own course. Then, Psellos describes the disastrous results of the campaign. The author introduces each with critique directed against Romanos. While the narrative is not a *psogos*, a speech aiming to denigrate Romanos, it is not that far from that genre, since the *Chronographia* hardly has anything pleasant to say about Romanos (on *psogos* see Krallis, 2006, p. 175). Instead, the text depicts the disastrous progress of a boastful warrior from one campaign to the next, each bigger in scale than the previous, leading to the monumental catastrophe of 1071. Each of them merits detailed analysis to reveal how Psellos constructs the Romanos's image across the narrative.

The account of the first campaign (1069) begins in the imperial council room. Psellos informs his readers that he advised the emperor against the campaign, suggesting to gather allies, attend to the army, and draw up a catalogue of the troops instead. The suggestions seem to correspond with the problems that Romanos ended up facing on his way to Manzikert, but whether Psellos had really made these recommendations is, of course, not certifiable. It is also unclear who his opponents were at the time. They probably included the future survivors of the Battle of Manzikert who were influential enough in the 1070s to deter powerful courtiers from including their names. Both Psellos and his intended audience were likely familiar with the people in question, so names are omitted, leaving modern readers guessing their positions. Michael Attaleiates, a military judge and Romanos's close associate, may have been one of them. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, Psellos's antagonists have included a Byzantine

noble from the older generation who played a role in the "troubles," such as Bryennios, the Komnenoi brothers, or even Nikephoros Botaneiates himself. Often referred to by the outdated term "military aristocracy"—although they were *stricto sensu* neither military nor aristocratic—this group of people had vested personal interest in military campaigns. They had every reason to support Romanos's cause, as their position in the army made any imperial expedition a likely opportunity for promotions and profits. Consequently, Romanos decided to take up arms and, according to Psellos, made an appearance in front of his palace in full armor, carrying a twenty-two-arms-long spear.

The description, referring to a spear of 9.8 m length that was originally designed for naval combat, is a quote from the *Iliad* (Book XV, lines 677–678). The similarity between the emperor's spear and that of Ajax is used to demonstrate Romanos's inability to choose his weapons correctly: preparing to fight the Seljuk Turks—a land-locked enemy—with a weapon intended for maritime warfare. The description may also have referred to a courtly ritual of the emperor leaving the palace to go to war, which as Attaleiates notes, could be quite intricate and lengthy. The choice of the quote is also of importance: in Homer, the spear belonged to Ajax, who was famous for his bravery but eventually lost his mind and killed himself after committing a series of atrocities. In sum, in three short phrases, Psellos is able to paint the image of a proud warrior ill-equipped for the fight awaiting him.

After the first expedition against the Turks, Romanos failed to bring back trophies (σκῦλον, i.e., "spoils" or "prey") to Constantinople. Despite the lack of trophies, the emperor managed to acquire grounds for his primary flaw, ἀλαζονεία, or boastfulness, which only grew over time and, according to Psellos, ultimately led to his defeat at Manzikert. Psellos claims to do his best to turn the emperor from his wrong way.

> "As for myself, I swear by the God whom philosophy refers, that I try to turn him from his ambitions, I knew his treacherous designs. I feared for the empress and the commonwealth lest all should be lost in revolt an disorder." (Psellos, 2014, p. 268; tr. Sewter, p. 352)

This piece of narrative is an effective precursor of following events, that happened after Manzikert, namely revolt of the defeated emperor and following disorder. Thus, Psellos provides the reader with another thing that Mieke Bal calls an anticipation. In her classification, "anticipations

serve to generate tension or produce a fatalistic vision of life" (Bal, 2009, p. 93). Bal also note that some authors introduce to the reader a series of anticipations. Psellos is the one who do it by a description of Romanos defeats in a long consequence, each time distancing himself further and further from the emperor. He stil gives to him an advice, which does not really help. According to Psellos, between the first and second expeditions, Romanos turned away from Theodora, stopped listening to his advisors (καὶ τῶν συμβούλων ἀφέμενος), and became his own teacher and counsellor, thus reversing his previous relationship with Psellos. The philosopher sought to maintain the dialogue between Romanos and Empress Theodora and reminded him of the existing diplomatic situation (τῶν συνθηκῶν ὑπεμίμνησκον)—likely referring to short-term peace treaties (συνθήκη) between Romanos and his main enemy, probably the Seljuk Turks. The question of the treaties that Romanos probably concluded after the first campaign is intriguing but, unfortunately, Psellos does not provide any details.

Although Psellos's advice was seemingly ignored, Romanos took him to the second expedition against the Turks. During this expedition, the philosopher and the emperor engaged in polemics about military tactics, and Psellos claims that Romanos was impressed by his knowledge. Psellos claimed that Romanos envied him, and once again disregarded his counsel. Despite this, Psellos claimed to keep his loyalty to the emperor. "Nobody can accuse me in any disloyalty to him nor blame me because all his plans went astray" – concludes Psellos in the finish of the short description of his expedition. (Psellos, 2014, p. 269; tr. Sewter, p. 353). According to Psellos (but not Attaleiates), the second expedition did not yield substantial results aside from a few captives and much ado. The presence of sounds in the description of the two expeditions is interesting: the clamor of the councilors' applause prompted by Romanos's appearance in full armor in the first instance is mirrored by the noise that Psellos describes as the sole outcome of his second expedition.

In Psellos's narrative, Romanos is successful on another front. He compensates for the absence of direct actions against the Seljuk Turks with his actions against Empress Theodora. After the first expedition, he suspends communication with her, and after the second expedition, he effectively imprisons her. Instead of trapping the Turks, the emperor imprisons the empress. It is notable that despite the dire military situation, Seljuk prisoners and runaways were brought to Constantinople with some regularity: in 1070, for instance, Alexios Komnenos's older brother, Isaac, brought to Romanos

Erisgen-Chrisoskoulos, a Seljuk princeling who had decided to switch sides in the conflict. Romanos did not bring many prisoners from his expedition, but instead "captured" empress Theodora in the palace.

A recurring motif in the *Chronographia* before Manzikert is the futility of Romanos's actions and his gradual transformation from a humble listener to someone who heeds only himself and brings destruction to all. Romanos who, as Psellos puts it, "wandered in Persia and Syria" and did not bring any trophies from either (Psellos, 2014, p. 275). Importantly, these wanderings are in direct contrast with the wise stasis of another warrior emperor, Isaac Komnenos, who was able to solve problems with the enemy in the East, namely with the "Parthian sultan" (Toghrul Beg of the Seljuk Turks, Alp Arslan's father) without significant effort (Psellos, 2014, p. 237). The contrast here is obvious: Isaac Komnenos succeeded by means of diplomacy, without even leaving Constantinople, while Romanos Diogenes launched one expedition after the other without much result. While Romanos, as Psellos duly notes, rejected his counsel from the very start of his reign, both Doukas and Isaac Komnenos accepted Psellos as a mentor and philosopher and both ruled (allegedly) successfullyWhile Psellos's narrative is, as usual, tend to be self-centered, certain features reveal the author's uneasiness about certain events.

In the beginning of Romanos's story, Psellos generally follows the chronological order of the events without breaking the consequence by many digressions. Psellos highlights the importance of his advice and his connection with the emperor, who hung on his every word. Psellos's counsel is present in other biographies but never to this extent. In his description of the reigns of Romanos and Eudokia, Psellos digresses from the plot five times as if to answer cues in an invisible internal dialogue, calling into his narrative eyewitnesses of the battle and claiming to know some things and not to know others, using I-statements. Mieke Bal qualifies this switch from third-person narrative to the first-person narrative as a "switch from the external narrator to a character-bound narrator" (Bal, 2009, p. 21). As Bal points our, the presence of character-bound narrator is a rhetorical device that aims to increase the veracity of the narrative. In this particular case, Psellos uses this device to highlight his loyalty to Romanos. Another way to reach the same purpose is his appeal to "God of philosophers" in the episode concerning empress Eudocia. Therefore, Psellos use a panoply of methods to enhance his position and to demonstrate his loyalty both to the emperor, empress and the community in general.

3. Psellos and Manzikert: The battle

According to a modern analysis, the campaign which ultimately led to the disaster of Manzikert, was not particularly ill-prepared. Despite many problems, Romanos managed to mobilize his followers and planned the campaign in some detail, with Attaleiates being one of the advisors behind the planning of the third, and final expedition to the east. (Krallis 2016, 179). Psellos again criticizes the advisors who gave Romanos wrong directions, saying that the "the evil councellors to whom he listened let the emperor completely astray" (Psellos, 2014, p. 270; tr. Sewter, 1953, p. 354). The word used for the bad adviser here (παραινέτης) hints at the utmost misguidung with personal gains for the people who give the bad advice. Romanos became suspicious of his Doukai allies and made many things wrong. In the description of the ill-fated expedition, Psellos points to many mistakes in planning and lack of decisive actions. He blames the emperor for his inability to reach peaces, and more importantly, to being subject of misinformation which led to the disastrous consequences.

> I was aware (though he was not) …that the sultan himself was present in person with his army. Romanos…refused to believe anyone who detected the Sultans' influence in these successes…he thought he would capture a barbarian camp without a battle. (Psellos, 2014, p. 270 ; tr. Sewter, p. 355)

The historicity of Psellos interpretation of this passage somehow problematic. A well-informed Arabic source claims, that before the battle Alp Arslan and Romanos did not have a clear idea about one another. It seems likely, the appearance of Romanos at a head of a major army in the region of lake Van was a surprise for Alp Arslan who was heading back to his domains in Iran and literally happened to be in a relative vicinity (circa 400 km) from the theater of actions (Ibn al-Athir,1864, 44). Resultantly, Alp Arslan could not mobilize his main forces and decided to attack Romanos with several thousand of mounted warriors available at the moment. This factoid contradicts opinion of Psellos about the omnipotence and well-preparedness of the Sultan, which seems to be a part of critical construction directed against Romanos. The contrast between the two is highlighted by the critique of Romanos' arrogance, switch of narrators (from third person and first person) and claims of the access to the crucial military information are all familiar. Thus, in the description of the battle Psellos enhances his previous line of critique

against Romanos, demonstrating how his wish for glory and inability to listen to the well-informed advisors led to his failure. Yet the final decision to attack the Turks lied solely on the emperor and was a result of his ignorance.

> Unfortunately for him (Romanos - R.S.), through his ignorance of military science (ἀστρατήγητον) he had scattered his forces. Some were concentrated around himself, others had been sent off to take up some other position. So instead of opposing his adversaries with the full force of his army less than half were actually involved (Psellos, 2014, p. 270 ; tr. Sewter, p. 355)

Whether the remaining contingent was really small is an open question: both the available Arabic sources and Attaleiates's later pro-Romanos narrative speak of significant troops, able to withstand the assault of Alp Arslan's army. It is noteworthy that the opposing Seljuk army was not in top form, maneuvering through unfamiliar terrain and not in contact with the enemy until the very last moment. These conditions forced Alp Arslan to first suggest a peace treaty in a genuine fashion and then rely on the advice of the current *imam* of the Hanafi school to determine when to start the battle (Ibn al Athir 1864, p. 45). Therefore, Psellos's claims about the reduced size of the remaining forces are an insufficient explanation for the military defeat. By describing the troops as "only a small part," Psellos amplifies the scale of Romanos's error, emphasizing that the boastful emperor failed to come to his senses, even in the face of a large-scale conflict.

What follows is not a description of the battle, but Psellos' analysis of the behaviour of Diogenes, which is going to happen. Instead of describing the battle, Psellos goes at length to warn his readers about wrong actions of the emperor.

> Although I cannot applaud his subsequent behaviour, it is impossible for me to censure him. The fact is, he bore the whole brunt of the danger himself. His action can be interpreted in two [272] ways. My own view represents the mean between these two extremes. On the one hand, if you regard him as a hero, courting danger and fighting courageously it is reasonable to praise him: on the other when one reflects that a general, if he conforms to the accepted rules of strategy must remain aloof from the battle-line, supervising the movements of his army and issuing the necessary orders to the men under his command, then Romanus's conduct on this occasion would appear foolhardy in the extreme, for he exposed himself to danger without a thought of the consequences (ἀλόγιστος). I myself am

more inclined to praise than to blame him for what he did. (Psellos, 2014, pp. 270-271; trans. Sewter 1953, p. 355)

The episode is a culmination of the critique that Psellos builds against Romanos IV Diogenes. Before the very battle Psellos blamed Diogenes for being ignorant, boastful, uneducated literary matters, bad with his wife and bad with his advisors. Now Psellos blamed Romanos for being strategically ignorant, and now, finally, being open to danger without any idea of consequences. Many characteristics of Romanos starts with a negative prefix ἀ-. This is hardly a complimentary image for the emperor and yet another proof of a highly biased narrative. Here Psellos again switches narrative from third person to the first person, a device he uses to boost his veracity. In this particular moment of the story, this is important since Psellos himself was not on the field. The narrator switch goes together with the pause of the narrative which Psellos uses to provide a context for the next episode, namely the decision of Romanos to fight against the Turks with the sword in hand.

However that may be, he put on the full armour of an ordinary soldier and drew a sword against his enemies. According to several of my informants, he actually killed many of them and put others to flight. Later, when his attackers recognized who he was, they surrounded him on all sides. He was wounded and fell from his horse. They seized him, of course, and the Emperor of the Romans was led away, a prisoner, to the enemy camp, and his army was scattered. Those who escaped were but a tiny fraction of the whole. Of the majority some were taken captive, the rest massacred. (Psellos, 2014, p. 271, trans. Sewter, 1953, p. 356)

The brevity of the summary of such a crucial milestone of Romanos's reign may indicate Psellos's choice to avoid describing the conflict, which was purportedly well-known to his 1070s audience. The details that he did include are also telling: Romanos appears as a warrior in armor, armed with a sword, which evokes his depiction with the enormous shield and spear before the battle. Psellos again claims to have a veritable narrative about the battle in the discourse which contained many narratives about this event. At the same time, the description is fairly short. The avoidance of battle descriptions was highly unusual for Michael Psellos: when he wants to describe a battle he does so in detail (e.g., Romanos III Argyros's failed expedition of against Aleppo or the rebellion of Tornikes), in the

vein of Theophanes or Leo the Deacon (Psellos, 2014, pp. 34–38). Yet, the description of Battle of Manzikert is reduced to a curt account of the key events for some reason.

While no surviving sources are known to directly praise the Romanos's actions, the emperor became a hero of sorts through his failures. Cheynet argues that Romanos had been viewed as a hero before the battle and kept his status long after his tragic death (Cheynet, 1980). When in 1081, ten years after Manzikert, another Byzantine general, Alexios I Komnenos, claimed the throne, his support of the Diogenoi helped solidify the new rule. Romanos Diogenes's popularity was enough for his sons to claim the throne in the 1090s. Therefore, Psellos, writing in the 1070s, had to choose his words carefully and craft an ambiguous interpretation of this key moment in his story. How accessible Psellos's text was is not known, but Romanos's behavior was certainly a subject of speculation and the emotional stakes in the discussion were high. Finally, *caesar* Andronikos Doukas is simply not in the text at all. The complete absence of Andronikos Doukas who is known to have participated in the battle, and whom eyewitnesses later connected with the early retreat of the Cappadocian division is a similarly intriguing authorial decision.

The summary of the battle is followed by a very short description of subsequent events with a focus on the capture of Romanos Diogenes. For some reason, Psellos, known to narrate events of the past at length, limits the description to a few short and abrupt phrases, creating a rhythm by several verbs and the combination of "καὶ" and "τὸ":

εἶτα δὴ ἑαλώκει· καὶ δορυάλωτος εἰς **τοὺς** πολεμίους ὁ βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων **ἀπάγεται**· καὶ **τὸ** στράτευμα **διαλύεται**· καὶ **τὸ** μὲν διαφυγὸν μέρος βραχύ τι· τῶν δὲ πλειόνων οἱ μὲν **ἑάλωσαν**· οἱ δὲ μαχαίρας ἔργον **γεγόνασιν**. (Psellos, 2014, p. 271, lines 5-9)

They seized him. the emperor of the Romans was led as a prisoner in the enemy camp. And the army dispersed and those who ran away were a small part of it. Of the majority some were captured, the others were massacred (Sewter 1953, p. 356)

As is sometimes the case in the *Iliad*, the absence of conjunctions may imply a dramatic military scene. Psellos here uses short phrases to intensify the drama and demonstrate the results of the disastrous decision of Romanos. While the other main Byzantine text on Manzikert, Attaleiates' is very personal and expresses negative emotions—both those of his own and

of his characters—in many different ways (Attaleiates, 2013, pp. 157-167; trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, 2014, pp. 287-298l); Psellos distances himself from the situation by removing himself from the scene and claiming to be neutral narrator. The scene is devoid of any emotions. This allows him to condensate suspense and demonstrate the totality of the military disaster in a very few words.

Fragmentation is another important feature in Psellos's narrative of Manzikert. Splitting the description of the battle into two parts (introduced by a special phrase) looks like a literary device, it might also be a sign of complex emotions that author experienced in connection of Manzikert. Some things are suspiciously missing: the Doukai brothers are absent from this part of the *Chronographia*. Interestingly, the name of Romanos's main opponent, Alp Arslan of the Great Seljuks is also missing. He is introduced first as "the sultan, king of the Persians or the Kurds" (ὁ σουλτὰν, ὁ τῶν Περσῶν ἢ Κούρτων βασιλεὺς) (Psellos, 2014, p. 270). A very foreign title of the Alp Arslan and it's spatial definition in the text of the *Chronographia* adds to the foreign and exotic image of this character who behaves unpredictably and (as the audience and the author knew) after the battle set Romanos free. . One reason for omitting the name may be that Psellos focuses his narrative on Byzantium and generally avoids the names of the barbaric enemy leaders who do not deserve the attention of the audience. However, another explanation seems more plausible: Psellos may have tried his best to avoid the very name of the sultan who caused him and his patron so much trouble by releasing Romanos Diogenes. This is all the more interesting because later in the 1070s (before or after writing Manzikert episode of the *Chronographia*), Psellos in person participated in the exchange of letters between Michael VII Doukas and the next sultan of the Great Seljuks, - the son of Alp Arslan, Malik Shah (r. 1072 -1092) (Gautier, 1977).

4. After the battle: Psellos and the death of Romanos in the *Chronographia*

Psellos follows the summary of the battle with the scene of the empress and her sons waiting in Constantinople for the outcome of the battle (Psellos, 2014, p. 271), which probably took place some days if not weeks after the actual event. In a rare example of nature imagery in this part of the *Chronographia*, Psellos claims that the situation after Manzikert

was similar to a wave hitting the imperial capital (Littlewood, 2006, p. 26). Psellos here consciously decided to disrupt the chronology, stating to his audience that the account of Romanos's capture should wait until later (ἀναμεινάτω) (Psellos, 2014, pp. 271–272). The introduction of the events is impersonal, recounted using phrases without subjects, which makes the text a serious challenge for modern language translators. The absence of subjects depersonalizes the narrative: the events are happening as if on their own, without anyone's agency. While the tense is formally present, time remains undefined, as found in many other places in the *Chronographia*. This is further accentuated by the previously discussed fact that many characters go unnamed and impossible to identify.

In the scene after the battle, three horsemen are shown to arrive in Constantinople, bringing news of the disastrous defeat in Asia Minor. The presence of the three riders of woe (one explicitly named ἄγγελός) evokes either the apocalypse or a fairy tale—both very rarely referenced elsewhere (Elizbarashvili, 2010, pp. 446-448). The first three horsemen are followed by another group of riders—described in the plural and using collective forms—bringing different news to the empress. Some participants of the battle claim that they had *seen* Romanos Diogenes being brought to the enemy camp, which is the first verb of perception in the whole paragraph. When the situation came to the attention of the counsellors, the empress finally asked them what to do and they together (σύμπασιν) advised the empress to take over the throne. Thus, the passage both starts and finishes with sentences that have no identifiable agents. While Psellos is known for his penchant to include himself in his own narrative—which Marc Lauxtermann, using Gerard Genette's terminology, defined as metalepsis—the episode in question contains no such self-references (Lauxtermann, 2023, p.351). Besides Psellos's absence, other members of the council are equally missing. The decision is made collectively ("taken together"), based on the similarly collective news of the group of anonymous horsemen riding into the capital.

Psellos goes on to state that he supported the idea of the empress and her son ruling together, explicitly stressing that he does not lie to his readers: "My personal opinion—I will not say a lie (οὐ γὰρ διαψεύσομαί)—was that both should act in concert" (Psellos, 2014, p. 272;). This personal claim (inserted where the narrator disrupts the spatial and temporal causality of the events) highlights the "narrative constraint"—as defined by narratologist Mieke Bal—of the *Chronographia*. While the verb διαψεύδω can certainly be found elsewhere in the *Chronographia*, this is the only

instance where Psellos uses it at face value to support the veracity of his account of the events immediately following the battle.

Psellos is not ready to acknowledge his responsibility in the *Chronographia*. Instead, he shifts the blame first to Romanos Diogenes, who lost the battle due to his poor strategy; then to the unidentified people who rushed to the palace and removed Romanos Diogenes from power; and finally to an anonymous collective of councilors who remained in Constantinople during Romanos's expedition and supported a new regime under Eudokia and her son Michael. Psellos unequivocally downplays his role in all three instances, and uses the present tense for his claim that he is not lying to corroborate his position.

The absence of personal pronouns and personal names in the passage relating the first reaction of the Constantinopolitan elite to the Battle of Manzikert is instructive, especially since Psellos is well known for his omnipresence in the narrative of the *Chronographia*. The introduction of epic elements, such as the three riders/angels of woe, and the absence of temporal definition further create the surreal impression that the events unfold by themselves, without any clear agency and without the author. The key decision to remove Romanos Diogenes from power, for example, is made by an anonymous and unanimous collective of counsellors, allegedly in complete agreement. The absence of names of Doukai brothers and Alp Arslan of the Great Seljuks in the passage describing a battle itself can be a sign of both narrative constraint and uneasiness of Psellos about the events described and/or conscious omission of moments and persons uncomfortable for Psellos and his patrons and the name of the sultan, who created for Byzantine elite a good deal of trouble.

He says that the new emperor, who was twenty-one years old at the time (and thus considered a young adult in Byzantium), listened to his advice. Psellos played a key role in advising to ban Romanos Diogenes from the state and remove him from power. He goes to great lengths to demonstrate that he was not involved in the next putsch in Constantinople that succeeded in removing the ruling empress and Romanos wife, Eudokia Makrembolkitissa from power and to the monastery. Psellos claims that he did not want to be a part of a new administration but the new emperor, Michael VII Doukas, forcefully demanded him to serve as his advisor. As a courtier, Psellos argued that he had had nothing to do with the removal of the empress from the palace . "It was decided to do it," (κυροῦται) writes Psellos, using an impersonal formula similar to his description of the removal of Romanos Diogenes from power (Psellos, 2014, p. 275).

He supports his claim by calling on God as his witness and stating that Emperor Michael had no hand in the removal of his mother either.

The story continues with a description of the military prowess of the Doukai brothers. One of them, Constantine, defeated the army gathered by Romanos in an open battle. After this, Romanos runs away and finds refuge with an Armenian noble, Khachatur (Chataturious), whom Psellos calls "a man… strictly opposed to us" (δυσμενὴς ἡμῖν τῆς προαιρέσεως) (Psellos, 2014, p. 278; trans. Sewter, 1953, p. 276). The description of this first defeat is limited to a brief sentence. Psellos either lacked information about Constantine Doukas's victory or chose to not publicize it. The question of whether Constantine achieved a total victory is left open in the *Chronographia*. Psellos writes that immediately afterwards, Michael VII and his advisors considered making peace with Romanos and sent him a benevolent letter, which is certainly not a customary way of exhibiting military power. The agency behind the letter is once again obscured by the omnipresent "we," with Psellos making clear that he did not make this decision alone; others, including the emperor's councillors, were also involved. (Psellos, 2014, p. 278).

The *Chronographia* then reports that the negotiations failed, and Michael VII sent his best forces against Romanos and Khachatur (on him see *PBW* c. 106867), under the command of *caesar* John's oldest son, Andronikos Doukas. Psellos expressed more sympathy towards him, describing him as "an amazingly tall man, generous, kindly, and extremely fair" (Psellos, 2014, p. 279; trans. Sewter, 1953, p. 362). His assistant was a Frankish mercenary named Crispinos. As noted above, thanks to Crispinos, this episode of the *Chronographia* can be dated precisely, as Psellos says that he wrote these lines on the day of Crispinos's death which happened in 1073. In a foreboding of further destiny of Romanos, Psellos also specifically mentions that the ruling emperor Michael VII ordered his troops to spare Romanos: "Meanwhile the emperor was terribly worried in case his rival should be caught by our soldiers, and either fall fighting, or having been taken alive be mutilated in some part of his body." (Psellos, 2014, p. 280; trans. Sewter 1953, p. 363).

Much like the description of events before Manzikert, Psellos makes this remark to prepare the reader for subsequent events to come, namely, the blinding and death of Romanos Diogenes, the thing that narratology would call prolepsis. This is the second warning: the audience should be ready. The expedition of Andronikos Doukas against Romanos and his Armenian allies is the reverse of Romanos's expedition against the

Turks. While Romanos was shown to have poor planning, Andronikos ran his campaign smoothly and motivated his warriors to stick to the plan. Thanks to thoughtful preparation and effective command, Andronikos and the Franks approach the enemy in secret, attack them in time, and defeat Romanos once again in the open field. The defeat is complete, and the enemy leader, Chachatur, is captured alive, stripped naked to be humiliated, and brought before the victorious Andronikos Doukas.

Romanos's capture after the siege is similar to the scene at Manzikert, except it is even more degrading; in this instance Romanos is betrayed by his own soldiers who effectively hand him over to the enemy. Andronikos Doukas also responds to the capture of his opponent similarly to the unnamed "King of Persians and Courtians": "Instead of receiving him in a high-handed, arrogant fashion, he actually sympathized with the prisoner. He shook hands and invited him to his own tent. Finally, he asked him to be his guest at the table, where a magnificent banquet was prepared," (Psellos, 2014, p. 283; trans. Sewter 1953, p. 365). This parallelism and the reference to a banquet is not coincidental—as Psellos himself notes earlier: history repeats itself.

This scene demonstrates that the Doukai were merciful with their defeated enemy, as opposed to Romanos's arrogance. Albeit somewhat tenuous, the combination of two words (σκηνη and τραπεζα) may suggest another parallelism with the scene in which another emperor, Constantine Monomachos, is threatened by murder by the hands of a false friend (Psellos, 2014, p. 164). If, however, this is not the case, the scene of Romanos's submission can be interpreted as Psellos's attempt to fabricate yet another precursor of the fallen emperor's murder in the future. Concerning the Doukai brothers (the two uncles of Michael VII), Psellos's focus on Adronikos Doukas is interesting: in 1072 at least, he seems to sympathize more with Andronikos than with Constantine, who was soon removed from power. This explains both his previously mentioned absence in the Manzikert scene and his conspicuous presence in the fight and victory against Romanos Diogenes.

The blinding of the disgraced Romanos Diogenes after his capture is no doubt the culmination of the emperor's tragic story. Psellos explicitly expresses his disagreement with the blinding: "To pass on to what happened thereafter is a most disagreeable task. I am reluctant to describe a deed that should never have taken place" (Psellos, 2014, p. 283; trans. Sewter, 1953, p. 279). He also remarks that it goes against the Holy Scripture, yet he proceeds to describe what happened: he seems to

insinuate that while the blinding was unacceptable for his audience, the presence of the account is another instance of narrative constraint in his history, sharing different perspectives with the readers:

> On the one hand, the scruples of religion, as well as a natural unwillingness to inflict pain, would forbid such a deed: … the state of affairs at the time, and the possibility of sudden changes in the fortunes of both parties, proclaimed that it must be done. (Psellos, 2014, pp. 283–284; trans. Sewter 1953, p. 365)

Psellos takes care to absolve himself of all blame and interpret the cruel measure as a collective action, recommended by the group of anonymous courtiers "well-disposed" towards Emperor Michael (Psellos, 2014, p. 284; trans. Sewter 1953, p. 279). These people are then portrayed as wary of Romanos, and their apprehension prompts them to draw up a letter later sent to the person in charge of the prisoner. Psellos continues the story with the emperor's reaction, who had no desire to capture or harm Romanos. The author goes to great lengths to describe a range of emotions the emperor displayed at the news of the blinding, even stating that he wished to mourn the former emperor: "God knows I am not saying that to flatter Michael," says Psellos, once again calling upon God as a witness to his words.

Interestingly, Psellos entirely forgoes describing the blinding, a detail that is covered in other sources more favorable to Romanos (Attaleiates, 2011, pp. 177–178; trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, 2014, pp. 322–333). In his narration, the advisers are shown sending the order, and then, very abruptly, the former emperor appears already blinded, transported to the island of Proti (Buyukada) near Constantinople. This gap is significant. Considering the brevity of time between the event and the creation of the text, it can be the sign of a thorny issue that the author tried to circumvent by skipping some details, which, again, bears out the narrative constraint shaping the discourse in the *Chronographia*.

The other question concerns ethics. How did Psellos address the blinding of the emperor? Was it favorable or detrimental for him? A search for the words "take out" and "eye" in the text of the *Chronographia* yields another similar episode in which an emperor was blinded after the revolt of his relatives who put a female on the throne. The emperor in question is Michael V Kalaphates, whose removal from power and blinding in 1042 Psellos describes in detail in the earlier part of his work (Psellos,

2014, pp. 104–105). According to his account, in 1042, the people of Constantinople instigated by Empress Theodora's courtiers succeeded in removing Michael V from the throne and chased him and his chief counsellor, John Orphanotrophos, to the Hagia Sophia. Psellos, who began his career at the court as undersecretary, was in fact at the Hagia Sophia at that time and acted as an important intermediary between the two factions, communicating with the emperor (Lauritzen, 2009).

As in 1071, the earlier episode features unnamed people who decide to blind Michael V and communicate the order in a letter. And much like in 1071, Psellos himself is in the center of the events. In both instances, members of the elite took pity on the people destined to be blinded. Finally, in both cases, Psellos expresses his disgust with the procedure. The difference lies in the details and in the author's motivation. In 1042, Psellos meticulously describes the procedure of the blinding and goes to lengths to explain how disgusting and humiliating the procedure is (Psellos, 2014, pp. 105-106). Despite the similarities, the 1071 episode goes the opposite way:

> As for Diogenes, he in his blindness was brought to the monastery which he himself had founded on the island of Proti and there he died not long afterwards. His reign had lasted less than four years. Michael was now again the undisputed ruler of the Empire. (Psellos, 2014, p. 284; tr. Sewter, p. 366)

Psellos justifies the act but completely omits the tragic description of the cruel process present in some other Byzantine and even later non-Byzantine sources (Anetsi, 2014, p. 193). Here once again Psellos omits the possible reasons for the death, namely the consequences of badly organized blinding (for blinding see Vryonis 2003). In her reference book of narratology, Mieke Bal labels this missing as an *anachrony*, and mentions that the omitted events are sometimes important for the author (Bal, 2009, p. 91). In the case of Psellos, his own writing testifies to the missing events: he did send to Romanos Diogenes' a letter trying to console him after the blinding. The interpretations of this consolations vary (Pietsch-Braounou, 2010)

What follows is a thing that Mieke Bal would call a summary: Psellos introduces a phrase about the length of the reign of Diogenes, thus connecting him with other rulers and then concludes, that "Michael was now undisputed ruler of the Empire" (Psellos, 2014, p. 284; tr. Sewter, p. 366). The absence of such statements in the end of the other chapters of

the *Chronographia* demonstrates, again, that the description of Romanos is an exceptional one. One can hypothesize that this very reign and the problems it caused stimulated Psellos to create (or at least to finish) his major historical work. At the very least, repetitions, many changes of actors, anachronies and most importantly and many omissions allow one to conclude that the reign of Romanos in the *Chronographia is* one of the climaxes of the later part of the story. The author, Michael Psellos, clearly manipulates the narrative following his political aims.

5. The battle and the philosopher

As noted above, the narrative of the *Chronographia* up to the battle of Manzikert is an interesting example of the deconstruction of a panegyric. In the *Chronographia* Psellos, who had supported Romanos in the early 1070s and wrote at least one panegyric for him, changed allegiance and depicted the emperor as a man stumbling from one mistake to the next. In the passage leading up to the battle scene, Psellos uses Homeric allusions to portray Romanos as a *miles gloriosus*, armed with a disproportionately big shield and lance to assert his masculinity, yet unable to achieve significant results. The description paints Romanos as a failure who could never achieve his goals. Contrary to other contemporaries, especially Michael Attaleiates and later John Skylitzes, who highlight the emperor's bravery in his attempts to repeal the Turks, Psellos's Romanos is a man who never attained victory but still celebrated his triumph. His actions *outside* the palace are in stark contrast with those *within*: Romanos offends Empress Theodora and ignores the counsel of the people who want to help him. The enumeration of Romanos's three failures works as a precursor of Manzikert, a kind of *prolepsis* preparing the reader for the imminent disaster.

The description of the battle is a culmination of emperors' personal failure. Psellos accepts here a mantle of expert and claims to understand all the bad decisions that Romanos took at Manzikert. The emperor is not able to command the army properly and is devoid of military talent (ἀστρατήγητον), which leads him to a bad result. In a wish to behave recklessly, Romanos loses the ability to judge the consequences of his actions (ἀλόγιστος). Psellos claims neutrality in the discussion of emperors' behavior during the battle, that received compliments from the other contemporaries, but limits the description to a few phrases. The episode is

also interesting for the omission of the name of the main opponent (sultan Alp Arslan of the Great Seljuks) and the discussion about the possible defection of Doukai. The first omission might be a wish of Psellos to remove from the history the enemy ruler who caused so much trouble, the second is understandable, since Psellos wrote the Chronographia during the rule of Doukai and had no interest to criticize his patrons.

While describing the aftermath of Manzikert, Psellos positioned himself as a powerful and sensible player in the Byzantine game of thrones. It is Psellos who restores order after the battle, effectively returns the Doukai to the throne and establishes Michael VII Doukas as the sole ruler. It is Psellos who organizes the defense against the "waves" of attack threatening Constantinople from all sides. And it is Psellos who selects and supports the right leaders to face the rebellious Romanos—quite possibly being the one responsible for Romanos' demise too. At the crucial turning point of his narrative, the description of Romanos' death, Psellos writes about "the conditions" that prompted the fateful decision, thus distancing both himself and his patron Michael VII Doukas from the violent end of the political struggle.The episode of blinding of Romanos is shortened to a few phrases and seems, in this moment of the narrative, a logical end of Romanos career.

Psellos deploys a number of methods to enhance his credibility. Besides constant repetitions, which are rather typical for Psellos (see Littlewood, 2006, p.15), he uses frequent narrative switches from third person-narrator to first-person narrator, at least one classical reference (the spear from the Iliad), calls upon God as a witness twice. The story of the battle of Manzikert is notable for the omission of some factoids, absence of any signifier of emotions and the lack of images of nature and classical allusions that are present in other parts of the Chronographia in some abundance (see Littlewood, 2006). To add credibility, Psellos asserts that he does not not lie to his audience. All thus aims to enhance the negative image of Romanos, blame him for the events before, during and after Manzikert and to defend Psellos and his patrons, the Doukai, the attempt solidified by many literary devices that all aim to produce a thing that Mieke Bal called a "rhetoric of veracity" (Bal, 2009, p. 24). Psellos constructs a psogos, a discourse that attacks Romanos and claims that Romanos was dangerous for the empire itself. This rhetoric of veracity was necessary since other versions of the same story were present in the discourse and had a ready audience.

When Romanos was defeated and Psellos and Doukai took over the power, at least some people were not happy with these events. Many did adapt to the new regime, but buried their hostility for at least a short while (Krallis, 2016, p. 190). Writing after 1079, former military judge of Romanos Diogenes and an eyewitness to Manzikert, Michael Attaleiates, set out to write the story of his age and Romanos's military campaigns (Krallis, 2016; Vratimos, 2017). Being servant of many emperors himself, Attaleiates (writing after the Doukai were removed from power) contained the following philippic against Michael VII Doukas and the people who blinded Romanos.

> What do you have to say, oh emperor, oh you and those who crafted this unholy decision with you? The eyes of a man who had done no wrong [Romanos Diogenes - R.S.] but risked his life for the welfare of the Romans and who had fought with a powerful army against the most warlike nations when he could have waited it all out in the palace without any danger and shrugged off the toils and horrors of the military life? (Attaleiates, 2011, p. 176; trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, 2014, p. 319).

This accusation was probably an integral part of the prevailing political discourse as early as the 1070s. To answer the critics, Psellos crafted his tale about the proud emperor, the battle he failed to win, the empress in distress, and the young prince and his clever courtier who outwitted them all. We may never know whether his literary effort earned him any peace, but it is evident that he disappeared from public life soon after finishing the *Chronographia*. His version of Manzikert story did gain some attention, but not much attention: the next generations of Byzantine historians, including Skylitzes and Vryennios preferred Attaleiates' version of the events even in altered state. In the twelfth century Psellos was famous mostly as a teacher and rhetorician, and not so much as a historian. One can wonder if the Byzantine literati had some problems with bias of the *Chronographia*. Psellos' wits and critique against an emperor who like war much more than peace found a ready audience much later, among the modernist literati of Western Europe in the nineteenth century - but this is a subject of another article.

Endnotes

[1] The name seems to be a later designation. Neither the Byzantines nor their non-Byzantine contemporaries called it the Battle of Manzikert. Instead, they either refer to it as "that battle", or in some cases, "the expedition to Khliat" (e.g. Ibn al Athir, 1864, p. 44).

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THE TRAIL OF SUFFERING AND HOPE. ROMANIAN REFUGEES DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF COMMUNISM

Lucian Vasile

Abstract

My research will examine the flow of Romanians that, from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, fled the country. In the first part of my paper I will discuss on the one hand the terms that I will use throughout my research and, on the other, I will challenge the previous categorizations of Romanian political refugees, advancing a new demarcation within the group, underlining the differences between those who fled in the first years of the Cold War and those who fled the country later on. In the second half of the study, I will dwell on the reasons why people fled in the late 40s to early 50s, on the preparations required, the methods they used and the places of interment they chose, not overseeing the deep human dramas each and every one faced. Some crawled through barbed wire. Others swam the treacherous Danube. A few hid in the ships that departed the ports. The daring ones seized planes and flew beyond the Iron Curtain. All of them hoped to escape Communist Romania. Those who succeeded faced the harshness of being a political refugee.

Keywords: Romanian exile, political refugees, Cold War, Communism

1. Introduction

The end of the Second World War left Romania in the USSR's sphere of influence. The change of alliance in August 1944 led not just to the fast occupation of the territory by the Red Army (and thus the acknowledgement of the eastern provinces, previously ceded in the summer of 1940), but also to the legal re-entry of the Communist Party of Romania, a minor political entity with very little popularity in the Romanian society. Having the massive and the direct support of Moskow, the communists in Romania launched a rapid political takeover and, after the three governments of August 1944 – February 1945 led by generals Sănătescu and Rădescu,

at the 6th of March 1945, managed to install the first pro-communist government, led by Petru Groza, a former bourgeois who understood which way the wind was blowing. Shortly after that, the new authorities started a purge of administration and other key institutions like Police, Army and Secret Services, removing any person viewed as undesirable (a label that covered not just those who worked for the fascist regime of Ion Antonescu, but basically anyone with anti-communist views) and replacing them with new and loyal employees. Faced with the quick rise of the far-left, the democratic opposition tried to conduct an active campaign, but the major figure that led the institutional opposition to communism in 1945 was young King Michael, who started a "royal strike", a move that had a large popular support. The failure of the act of resistance represented the first sign that the Romanian Communist Pary enjoyed a strong grip of power. However, the Romanian society, at that moment having deep anti-soviet/Russian, conservative and religious feelings, was convinced that the future elections would eventually lead to the communists' removal from power and then the country would return to democracy and a stable connection to the West. The intimidation of the democratic opposition, marked by arrests and violences, and, mostly, the forgery of parliamentary elections from 19 November 1946 caused a shock in the Romanian society, which started to realize that Communism may not be a short and temporary setback, but a consolidating regime that will lead the country to another totalitarian political experience. The final blows to the country's political and constitutional establishment were dealt in 1947: firstly, key members of the National Peasants Party (the main opposition party) were arrested in July, while trying to flee the country by airplanes (in the so called Tămădău Affair), and immediately after the party itself was banned and the leadership arrested and convicted (after a show-trial) to heavy sentences (Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache, the two leaders of the party, were to die in political prisons). Meanwhile, the old part of the National Liberal-Party ceased its activity (while the "young group" was governing together with the communists) and the social-democrats were either absorbed in the new Workers Party (February 1948) or forced to abandon their activity, while their leaders were also imprisoned. The epilogue of the forced communization of Romania was the abdication of King Mihai I on December the 30th of 1947, followed a few days later by the departure of the royal family, and subsequently the establishment of the Romanian People's Republic. All in all, at the end of 1947, the communists held all the power in Romania.

On the other hand, the Romanian society was still, as a whole, profoundly repugnant to the communist ideas, and that led the authorities to unleash a vast political repression against any form (real or imaginary) of opposition or any individual who by his/her belonging to a social group considered undesirable in the society-to-be or who, due to his/her political activity from the interwar period represented punishable elements in the eyes of the new power. Confronted with a sudden and radical change of the society, people had different approaches. Some tried to resist, by setting up clandestine organizations or by joining the armed resistance groups from the mountains that were waiting, like the vast majority of their fellow countrymen, for a new war, between the West and the East, that will inevitably conclude with the victory over Communism. Many others resigned themselves to the unpleasant political context, just trying to survive and adapt.

And a small part fled the country. Among them, extremely few (but they did exist) had the chance of a legal departure from the country. Many others were forced to find ways to cross the border clandestinely. Out of those who had no other choice but to take this deadly risky gamble, a significant number crossed the land border to Hungary or Yugoslavia, evading the sentries and patrols, crawling through the gaps made in the barbed wire or desperately running while bullets were flying all around. Others plunged into Danube's cold and treacherous waters, swimming quietly towards a shore where they hoped to find their salvation, dodging the vedettes patrolling the river. Those who had the opportunity hid in the ships that departed from river or, especially, maritime ports. The most courageous ones hijacked planes and headed them to Turkey, Greece or Yugoslavia, flying under the high risk of being caught up by the fighter planes of Romania or other socialist countries.

Some were caught by Romanian border guards or by Securitate. Other managed to reach the other side of the frontier. Even though I will refer briefly to those from the first category as well, my paper will focus mostly on those who managed to cross the border. Because those refugees didn't simply pop up on the other side of the Iron Curtain. They were actually the survivors of a traumatic experience that never received the deserved interest from the Romanian historiography. Crossing the Romanian border was not the whole drama, but it was just the first stage from a long trail of suffering endured while crossing the border, being incarcerated in refugee or labor camps and finally getting into the western world. It was often an unexpectedly long and difficult journey, marked by uncertainties and

dangers, in which what mostly kept them going was the hope of reaching the other side of the Iron Curtain.

Therefore, the thesis of the present paper is that there was a constant and distinct flow of political refugees from Romania in the first years of the Cold War, people that, by *choosing freedom*[1], went through a traumatic experience until they managed to reach the non-communist part of Europe. After presenting the political and institutional context in Romania starting with the second half of the 1940s, I will further analyze the terminology applicable to those who fled the country and explain why I prefer the term "refugee" instead of "exiled" or "emigrant". Then I will challenge the conventional divisions of those who constituted the Romanian exile during the communist period, advocating for a new demarcation based on statistical analysis of data compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thus, I will emphasize why political refugees from the first years of the Cold War represent a separate category in addition to those who fled later on. Having set this, in the second part of the paper, I will present and analyze the preparations of the escapes, the routes and the chosen approaches, the places of interment and, briefly, what happened to them immediately after reaching the other side of the Iron Curtain.

In terms of sources, the research is based on the interviews and volumes of memoirs of those who managed to cross the border and reached the other side of the Iron Curtain, on reports created by Western institutions, such as Radio Free Europe, CIA, Arolsen and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but also on the sources created by the Bucharest authorities: files from the Securitate archive created for the follow-up of those who fled the country or for those who were brought (by force or willingly) from exile to Romania in the 1950s and also databases from the 60s and 70s. The documents will be discussed in their historical context and will also be related with various articles published in recent years by historians and scholars in social sciences. From a methodological point of view, I will incline to a mixed approach, trying to identify patterns and general lines of understanding of the historical phenomenon while giving a considerable attention to individual cases. That's because many of the biographies evade the general patterns, thus making it hard, if not impossible, to fit them into certain templates of understanding, and underlining the complexity of human decisions in the context of historical turmoil, uncertainty and danger.

2. Defining terms and analyzing patterns

When speaking of those who left communist (or on-the-way-to-Communism) Romania in the first years of the Cold War, the most used term is "exiled". One of the prominent leaders of the last phase of the Romanian exile, the liberal politician Dinu Zamfirescu, who left the country in 1975, being "bought" by his brother-in-law from France, advanced a terminological differentiation between the people who left, legally or clandestinely, communist Romania, settling on the other side of the Iron Curtain. According to him, the *exiled* is

"that person who has left his country of origin for political reasons, *i.e.* fear of persecution or in protest against the political regime in his country, and who, settled in another state, continues to have political concerns or, in the case of the Romanian exile, to demonstrate against the regime in Romania." (Zamfirescu, 2013: 7)

Adjacent to it is the *emigrant*, that person who

"has left his country, settling permanently or temporarily in another country, forced by more general, social-economic circumstances, and who, in his new residence, has no other concern than professional one and integration into the new society." (*ibid.*)

It is a view shared by other historians of the Romanian exile like Andreea Iustina Opriș (Corobca, 2020: 997) or, with some differences, Ion Calafeteanu. The latter considers the exiled to be the person forced to leave the country as a "forced and imposed option, the alternative being the loss of freedom or even life", but who is not settled with the break from his native country and regards the exile as a limited time of suffering and hardships until the inevitable return when the political regime that had caused the break would be removed. It is a view somehow similar to Monica Lovinescu's who considered that "the exiled is the person who cannot return to the country from which he had departed without endangering his freedom" (Calafeteanu, 2000: 24). Moreover, Lovinescu considered that the exiled should regard this time as a "bracket to his existence" (Lovinescu, 1999: 49). However, those definitions may not be flexible enough, as there are cases that evade the pattens, showcasing their fitting limits. For example, Ion Antonovici, a sculptor who, after a period

in which he joined the Legionary Movement, abandoned his far-right adhesion and joined the National-Peasant Party. Fleeing the country in 1947 or 1948, fearing an imminent arrest, Antonovici initially stayed in Paris, getting involved in various anti-communist propaganda actions, but in 1951 he withdrew from any activity against the Bucharest regime and emigrated to Canada, where he settled with his wife, integrating into Canadian society (ACNSAS, 329902 a: 540-541). Therefore, using the definitions given by Zamfirescu, Antonovici may be regarded both as an exiled (he left for the fear of political repression and, for a short period of time, manifested against the communist regime in Bucharest) and an emigrant (once crossing the Atlantic Ocean he gave up any political activity, focusing solely on social and economic integration). On the one hand, his experience also matches the definition given by Lovinescu, because in the case of a potential return to Romania, his freedom could have been put into question, while on the other hand, by his commitment to enlist in the new society, he did not regard the time spent on the other side of the Iron Curtain as a simple pause in his life.

Therefore, those definitions, though useful in portraying certain perspectives of those who decided to cross the border and to escape the communist state of Romania, are not sufficient enough to cover the diversity and the complexity of the cases. I would rather refer to the Romanians who fled the country in the first years of the Cold War as refugees, using the definition given by one of the main international institutions that dealt with this category of people, according to which "refugees are persons dislocated by war or persecution, in search of asylum and livelihood" (Holborn, 1956: 8). In order to reach a deeper understanding of refugees, I will go with the definition stated by G.J. van Heuven Goedhart in his report published in the early 1950s. As a High Commissioner for Refugees, he was tasked in May 1951 by the United Nations to compile a report regarding the vast number of people who found themselves, by different reasons, living outside their countries in the first years of the Cold War. In finding a proper definition to label those people, he starts from the core principles: (1) the refugee status is the result of "events arising out of the relations between a State and persons or categories of persons who are either nationals of that State or resident in its territory" (Vernant, 1951: 3) and (2) the person must find himself/herself outside the State of his/her citizenship. Therefore, as van Heuven Goedhart states, a refugee is "essentially someone without a home, someone who has been cast adrift; he is a helpless casualty, the spiritually diminished, pathetic and innocent

victim of events for which he cannot be held responsible" (Vernant, 1951: 3). It is not only a much more inclusive term, but it also includes "an element of emotion" (Vernant, 1951: 3), a layer of empathy which I consider necessary in order to deeply understand the traumatic experiences that covered the whole process of preparations made in order to leave the country, crossing the borders, travelling through other states, being incarcerated in refugee camps or prisons and eventually, reaching the other side of the Iron Curtain. Taking into consideration that most of the general framework of the process was triggered and fueled by the radical political transformations that Romania faced in the late 40s and early 50s, I will refer to these persons as political refugees.

Dividing those who left Romania and constituted the Romanian exile during Communism into specific groups was something that preoccupied both members of the exile and researchers in social sciences. Maybe the most popular is the one suggested by Neagu Djuvara, a former diplomat who left the country in 1944 and settled in France at the beginning of the Cold War, becoming an important voice of the community, both by helping the new comers and by joining active resistance organizations against the regime in Bucharest (Vasile, 2022: 456-570). In his memoirs, published after his return to post-communist Romania, Djuvara considered that initially the political refugees were divided into three groups. Firstly, the diplomats that left the country legally, but after the changes of the political regime, refused to return (Djuvara, 2002: 29-31). This group included both diplomats like Viorel Tilea, the former ambassador to London, who assumed this status when Romania left the alliance with western powers and joined the Axis in 1940, and other employes of various diplomatic offices that left the country in 1945 and 1946 and refused to return to a fully controlled communist state. The second group was represented by the members of the Iron Guard that departed after the failed January 1941 Rebellion, when general Ion Antonescu removed them from power and unleashed a general repression against his former ally. And the third and most numerous consisted of the people who fled the country after the first pro-communist government was installed, whether they were actual victims of political persecution or people who simply didn't want to live in a totalitarian regime and thus, like many other Eastern Europeans, had chosen freedom. It should be pointed out that in his analysis, Djuvara takes as a reference the year 1948, but his approach is somehow implicitly extended to all the political refugees that formed the Romanian exile during Communism (Opriș, 2020: 997-999). His

perspective is shared by Ion Calafeteanu, who goes even more into details and divides the first category into the diplomats gathered around Tilea, who rejected Antonescu's regime, and the group called "tătărăscienii" (named after Gheorghe Tătărăscu, Groza's minister for external affairs and the one who decided to send abroad a newly hired generation of political personnel, mostly with anti-communist views). Moreover, Calafeteanu takes the credit for outlining the group of soldiers and officers captured by the Germans in the last months of the war, after Romania joined the Allies, and who, after being released from PoW camps, refused to repatriate. However, in this category, even though not mentioned by Calafeteanu, are also included those who fled the country together with the withdrawing German troops or, as were the cases of Ion V. Emilian and general Platon Chirnoagă, deserted into enemy lines (Calafeteanu, 2000: 27-28). Even more interesting, because no analysis takes them into consideration, is the group of the few hundred military personnel that had been sent to the Reich for military education and were caught there by the sudden change of alliances and, thus, in the impossibility to return to the country (and many decided to stay in West Germany after the end of the war).

3. A different approach on the Romanian political refugees

All the above analyses are valid and showcase the diversity of the Romanian exile during Communism, that was far from being a monolith built in opposition to the communist regime. As a matter of fact, even if the diplomats who in the autumn of 1940 decided to remain in exile and the Green Shirts who fled the country in January 1941 were separated by just a few months in their break-up and had the same common enemy (Antonescu's regime), they did it for different reasons and the relations between them were antagonistic. Moreover, the members of the Iron Guard who were in exile after 1948 (regardless of whether they fled after the Rebellion or in the post-war years) were not accepted in the Romanian National Committee that was established in 1949 as a sort of government-in-exile under the legal authority of King Michael I.

Yet those divisions belong rather to the first phase of the Romanian exile, because, just as the communist regime can be divided into two distinct stages that, despite some obvious continuities, have significant differences, the Romanian exile mirrors a similar demarcation. On the one hand, there are those who fled the country in the first part of the communist

regime, mostly in the years of the establishment of the regime led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and those who left the country during the time of Nicolae Ceaușescu. My thesis is that this is the main separation line of the Romanian political refugees during Communism, and all the groups suggested by Djuvara or Calafeteanu are actually sub-divisions of the first category. To demonstrate it, I processed the data compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and published in *Au ales libertatea*, a volume edited by Dumitru Dobre and Veronica Nanu. The biographical notes represent a vast historical resource very useful for understanding the Romanian exile by mentioning details of the refugees like name, birth date, birth place, gender, profession, year of departure and the country where they settled. Unfortunately, other details like studies, social origin or political affiliation are missing. However, the data is sufficient enough for a statistic analysis that showcases the clear separation of political refugees in the general framework of Romanian exile. The analysis below is based on 800 entries (out of a total of 7434) from letters A, B, C, E, I, L, M, N, S and Z.

Thus, analyzing the moment when people left Romania and remained outside the zone of Soviet influence, there are two major waves (beside the first one, which is not caused by the installment of communism, but by the war): one between 1946 and 1949, extended maybe to 1952, and a second one between 1968 to 1970, with a prologue starting from 1965 (Fig. 1).
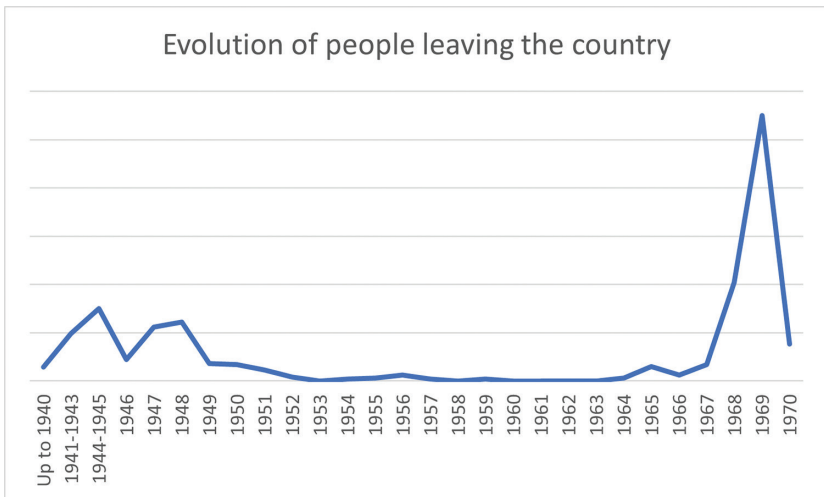

FIG. 1

It must be clearly stressed out that the records made by Securitate used in these statistics go up to 1971, so they do not include the situation from the early 70s to late 80s. These two decades recorded a relatively low level of successful attempts, many people being arrested or shot on the border[2], with the significant exception of the last years of Ceaușescu's regime when, due to, on the one hand, the rapid downfall of the living standards and the increasing paranoia of the leader, and on other hand, to the change in the Hungarian authorities' attitude regarding Romanian refugees, a sudden and high rise of refugees was recorded, but those are not to be discussed in this paper[3]. The first wave, of 1946-1952, was the direct consequence of Communism's installment: people fleeing the country fearing for their lives, chased by Securitate (some even arrested or incarcerated briefly). There are people opposing the new regime installed in Bucharest with the support of the Red Army, people who are involved in clandestine organizations and who, after being revealed, have no other option but to flee the country and reach the safety of the other side of the Iron Curtain. They are also former members of the democratic parties who, with the elimination of political pluralism, found themselves in a dangerous situation, risking an imminent arrest. Thus, the only option is leaving the country. The political turmoil is the same reason that triggered the decision to flee the country for those who, beside the political preferences, couldn't continue working in their fields. It is the case of the officers that are removed from the Army or the former pilots who are forbidden to climb into the cockpit of an airplane. Or of those who were not able to practice their profession according to their will, like lawyers, journalists or architects that found themselves dangerously limited in their domains. Moreover, once they reach the free world, most of them get engaged in different political, cultural propaganda or even clandestine actions against the communist regime. Thus, in the first years of the Cold War, different organizations appeared in the Romanian exile that not only represent forms of political coagulation, but also professional ones, as alternatives to those established in the country. For example, in the late 40s many associations of Romanian students, journalists, medics, lawyers etc. are set up and next to them there are the cultural ones, like the Freiburg Library or Carol I Cultural Foundation, and the political ones like the Romanian National Committee and the League of Free Romania. And actions go as far as forming organizations fighting directly the communist regime, such as the Intelligence Service of the Romanian Military in Exile, an intelligence structure led by former officers from the Royal Romanian

Army, or the Association of Ex-Combatants, which aimed to bring together all the former soldiers, having the aim to create an army corps in North Africa that would come into action in the event of a war between the Americans and the Soviets.

Although the majority of those who fled the country in this first stage did it as a stance against the installment of the communist regime, not all of them fit into this pattern, showing once again the complexity of the phenomenon of refugees in the first years of the Cold War. For example, D. Alexandrescu (b. 1929) stole a large sum of money from his workplace and, in 1947, in order to escape the consequences of his crime ran to Yugoslavia, and later to a western state (Dobre, 2015: 16). It is the same case for I. Andreescu (b. 1918) who, for the same reason, took the same decision and route a few months later, in 1948 (ACNSAS, 500902: 1). Basically, both of them, for non-political reasons, took the same path as the political refugees and, once reaching the other side of the Iron Curtain, were perceived as exiled Romanians, not only by the other Romanians, but also by the communist authorities in Bucharest. Another case that slips out of the standard template of political refugee, but was regarded as such from both sides of the Iron Curtain, was a border guard, D.M., who in 1951, after hearing that his fiancée got married with someone else, got drunk and, being intoxicated, didn't realize that he crossed the border. When he acknowledged that he is on the Yugoslav territory it was too late to return to the border post where his absence was already noticed and he would have faced the consequence of desertion or even charges of treason. Therefore, he had no other choice but to try to start a new life as a refugee, hoping to reach a western state, a goal he eventually managed to achieve. Maybe the most intriguing example is the one of another young border guard, Mihai Mandache, who, in 1952, decided to become a monk in one of the monasteries in Athos, Greece. Instead of waiting to end his military service and to enlist in one of the Romanian Orthodox Church's monasteries and later to apply for a transfer, via the Church's connections, to a monastery in the Holly Mountain, Mandache decided to reach his goal as fast and direct as possible, a decision that put him in conflict with the regime. Although his action was not politically motivated, he fled the country, reaching Greece, where he was labelled as a political refugee and received the proper legal treatment (Opriș, 2016: 65). All these specific cases were obviously influenced by the political context, but the main reason that determined them to run away was not political.

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It should not be believed that between 1952 and 1965 the phenomenon of political refugees from Romania ceased to exist. There continued to be successful cases of border crossings that eventually ended up on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but their number has dropped dramatically due to a combination of factors. By far the most important was that the border security had been considerably strengthened. Firstly, the Romanian-Hungarian border was extensively fortified, the number of patrols and checkpoints increased substantially, and the barriers became more difficult to cross: barbed wire, land freed from any obstacle and tillage for detecting tracks on the ground. Even so, the situation on the Hungarian border (the gate towards Austria) was no match for what was done by the Romanian communist authorities at the border with Yugoslavia, after the Tito-Stalin split from June 1948. The border zone was almost transformed into a war zone, with heavy deployment of troops and equipment, and enforced by a massive control of the movement of the local people (Drăghia, 2014: 243-260). The strictness went up to severe measures like forced relocation to the Bărăgan plain for tens of thousands of people who lived near the border, because the regime simply did not trust the locals. On the other hand, those who were in danger of becoming direct victims of the repression either already fled or were incarcerated in prisons or labor camps. And last but not least, the guides who were willing, for a considerable fee, to smuggle people from the country, methods very popular in the late 40s, had disappeared from the *market*, being either captured and arrested or killed at the border or they simply gave up this extremely dangerous job. This does not mean that attempts of clandestine border crossings no longer existed, and the significant number of political prisoners arrested at the border (so-called *frontieriști*) are concrete proof of these attempts[4]. Moreover, *frontieriști* represented a special, dynamic and protesting group within the prison space in communist Romania – the most important act of collective rebellion in a Romanian political prison, the 1956 Gherla revolt, was the action of those men.

The second wave, from the beginning of Ceaușescu's regime, is the direct consequence of the loosening of control over society and the opening towards Western countries, in a debatable distancing from Moscow. If until then the borders were sealed off and the possibilities of getting out the country severely limited, at the end of the 60s, Romanians were able to travel again, within certain limits, for tourist purposes or to see their families in other countries, usually on the other side of the Iron Curtain. And a significant part of those who left the country never returned

to communist Romania, a phenomenon best illustrated by jokes such as "what is a Romanian quartet of musicians? A philharmonic after a tour in the West".

Unlike those who fled during the first years of the Cold War, those from the second wave generally do not aim, once they have reached the other side of the Iron Curtain, to get involved into actions against the Bucharest regime, but rather to integrate as quickly as possible into the new societies. They have social and economic goals, as opposed to the predominantly political ones so common among the first wave of refugees. This discrepancy causes astonishment and even consternation among the old refugees still active in the propaganda against the Bucharest regime. That is why, from the beginning of the 70s, articles and brochures begin to appear in which they try to convince the new commers of the necessity, and even the obligation, of a fight against Communism, and one of the clearest examples is the book *Letters to the New Refugees*, published by Faust Brădescu in Madrid, in 1974, that summed up articles previously published in the *Carpații* newspaper. According to Brădescu,

"They cannot be considered exiles in the positive sense of the word those who have nested somewhere and mind their own private affairs. Nor those who do not show, in any way, their disapproval of the situation in the country and the communist regime there. […] The exiles are the soldiers of this invisible army, who stand forever on the barricades of the national struggle for liberation. Young or old, old exiles or new comers, they have no rest in the activity they carry out. Each one, with the means at his disposal, does his duty without reluctance and without fear." […]

"The exiles are therefore the bearers of these flamethrowers and the souls ready for sacrifice to save the nation. Only these are the real exiles, because only they believe in victory and fight to destroy the regime that has nested in the country and pushed them on the path of exile." (Brădescu, 1974: 11)

The differences between the two groups of political refugees are also noticeable in other characteristics, not just in when they left the country or their attitude beyond the Iron Curtain. The average age of those who fled in the first stage is 28 and four months, which can be explained by the fact that the crossings were mostly clandestine, involving considerable physical effort and a huge risk of being shot or arrested. In fact, the peak of this period is in 1948, when the average age reaches 30 and three months, a change explainable by the fact that then it became clear that the political

struggle is impossible from the country and the only alternative is from exile, so a series of politicians or people with professional experience and political connections choose to flee communist Romania. On the other hand, in the second stage the average age exceeds 36 and three months, being especially people who had started a professional career and who understood better the limitations of a totalitarian state or people who had started a family and wanted a better future for their children.
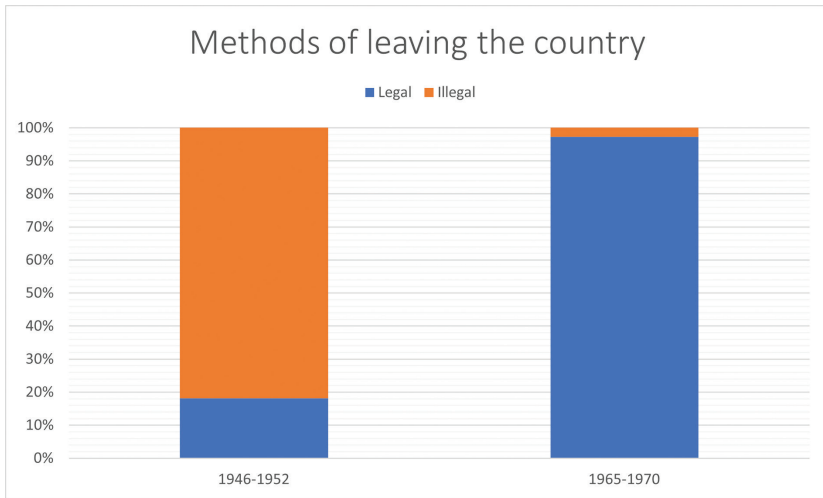

FIG. 2

But, most importantly, there are people who had the opportunity to legally leave the country (Fig. 2). Political refugees from the second half of the 60s left the country legally (as tourists or to visit their relatives in countries beyond the Iron Curtain) in an overwhelming percentage of 97.3%, clandestine crossings being thus the exceptions. It is radically different from what happened at the beginning of Communism, when, in order to get out of the country, 81.9% of refugees took the risk of a clandestine border crossing, facing all the dangers of the action and the hardships of refugee camps. It might seem strange, however, that there were still 18.1% people who legally left an increasingly closed country. From a chronological point of view, the first is the group of students who left the country in the fall of 1947 as scholarship recipients of the French state (as was the case with Monica Lovinescu) or of the Italian state, on the

Catholic path (such as the future Greek-Catholic priest Vasile Bărbat). In the same period (1946-1947) there was also the channel of those who left legally to Czechoslovakia (also a state in the sphere of Soviet influence, but from which it was still easier to get out to the West than from other Eastern European countries).

One of the most consistent was the group of diplomats who legally left Romania as representatives of the state, but who, as a result of the political changes in Bucharest, gave up their jobs (either through resignation or were dismissed), and did not want to return, preferring to remain in exile. Of these the vast majority are the so-called *tătărăscieni* mention above. However, there were even loyal communist diplomats who decided to change the sides and to assume the status of a political refugee. Such an interesting example was Teodor Andreescu, an old communist from the interwar period (when the party was banned and the actions of its members severely punished), who became the press attaché of the Romanian Embassy in Paris in 1947 and moved a few months later as *chargé d'affaires* for the diplomatic mission in Hague. Three years later, in 1950, he quitted his job, and then applied for and eventually received the status of a political refugee in the Netherlands. The reasons behind his apparently unexpected decision emerge from the lines of an explanatory letter send to Ana Pauker, the Ministry of External Affairs. Andreescu reiterates his ideological commitment, but he implies that he fears that he might at any time be labeled as outside of the official line and thus fall victim to widespread repression. As had happened, only two years before, with Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, arrested and then liquidated by his old comrades, a case he explicitly mentions in his letter to Pauker. In other words, Teodor Andreescu remains a communist, but he prefers to be a communist in a capitalistic and democratic country (ACNSAS, 291295: 148-165). And he is not the only representative of the regime that somehow prefers the other side of the Iron Curtain. In 1949, two Securitate officers from the Criminal Investigations Department in Oradea, Ilie Rada and Toma Elekes, embarked on a plane to Bucharest, but instead of heading to the capital, they landed in Yugoslavia, together with a significant part of the archive of the regional Securitate Department. Eventually, they continued their journey west, settling in France (Vasile, 2022: 470-476). Members of the Romanian delegation to World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Berlin, fled to the West, like doctor Epstein (Dobre, 2015: 327). Or Vasile Dumitru, another officer of Securitate, who, after taking part in a cross organized in 1954 by the leftist newspaper *L'Humanité*, refused to

return to Romania, becoming one more member of the Romanian Exile (*Le Monde*, 2015). It is not a hemorrhage of the communist system that may affect it, but it is a phenomenon to reckon.

Similar in terms of numbers were the sailors, who legally boarded ships departing from the sea ports of Constanța or the river ports of Galați or Giurgiu and who, once disembarked, simply refused to return on the Romanian-flagged vessel. This is how Romanian political refugees are registered as "fleeing" from Romania directly to countries such as Denmark, Cyprus, Egypt or Great Britain. And, last but not least, we must also mention those who left Romania with a legal passport obtained either through external pressure, usually members or descendants of families from Western countries, or through influential people from the power circles of the communist regime. An eloquent example of the second pattern is Constanța Olariu (Magoș), a true bourgeois, who received the passport directly from Teohari Georgescu in 1948, as a favor for the treatment that the newly installed Minister of Internal Affairs had received during the war from the engineer Dumitru Magoș, the woman's husband, who had run a factory in Târgu-Jiu where the political prisoners from the camp on the outskirts of the town also worked, including Georgescu (Vasile, 2020: 55-58).
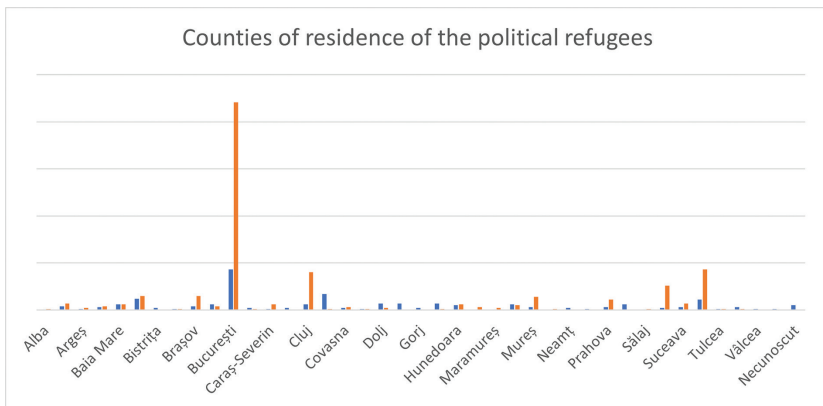

FIG 3 (Blue represents the first wave, while orange the second one)

The discrepancy between the two waves of political refugees is also underlined by the counties of residence of those who managed to flee the country and crossed the Iron Curtain (Fig. 3). In the period 1946-1952,

as the opposition to Communism was generalized in the Romanian society, those who fled were from every county, there being a fairly even distribution of those who chose freedom. There is, of course, a peak of 23 percent in Bucharest, explained both by the high percentage of inhabitants in the capital (almost 1.1 million inhabitants out of less than 16 million people in the country), but also by the significantly higher mobility than in the rural areas or even among other cities. Moreover, values above the average are recorded in Constanța, Bihor or Timiș, where there were ports or were border regions. Instead, in the first years of the Ceaușescu regime, the situation is much more polarized. Almost half (more precisely 49%) of those who left Romania and remained in exile had lived in the capital city until that moment. Urban mobility and cultural and professional openness in the capital are determining factors in this significant weight increasing. If in most counties the values are very low, significant percentages are still recorded in Timiș (10%), Cluj (9%), Sibiu (6%), followed by Bihor, Brașov and Mureș each one with 3 precent. They are all regions with noticeable ethnic minorities, German or Hungarian, people who wanted either to live in a free society or to be reunited with their families. Another factor that prompted those changes in mobility was the social status. In the first stage, there were people from all sort of backgrounds: from officers, lawyers and politicians to peasants, turners and tailors. In contrast, most of the refugees of the late 60s were specialized personnel, like medical doctors, engineers, architects. People who were acutely aware of the differences in professional development between East and West and, moreover, who could integrate much more easily in the labor market of another state.

I left for the end two particular discrepancies between the two waves of refugees. One was the country of final destination of their journey. According to the records compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, of those who left at the end of the 60s, and about whom reasonable data was identified, the majority settled in Europe, over 63%, the preferred countries being the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, France and Sweden. Of course, the immigration policy and the local attitude towards political refugees also mattered: many people just wanted to integrate into a free society, in which they sometimes already had relatives. In contrast, among those who fled Romania in the first years and there is also reasonable data on the country in which they lived, only 50% chose Europe. The rest chose either the North American continent (26%) or, as was the situation in one in four cases, even more distant countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Senegal, Australia or New Zealand. The choice of rather

exotic destinations for a people without a tradition of emigration emerged from the fear of a possible spread of Communism. People simply wanted to go as far away as possible, where the influence of far-left ideology, in relation to Moscow, would be less likely to have an effect. Or, as Neagu Djuvara clearly stated:

"I'm not ashamed to say it: we were afraid. In the camps in Germany, Austria, Italy – and even in France – there was only one thought among the refugees: to emigrate as quickly as possible across the ocean, to the United States, to Canada, to South America, to Australia, to put the ocean between them and the Soviet wave that they thought could only be stopped by the Atlantic Ocean." (Djuvara, 2002, p. 26)

The gender of political refugees

■ Men ■ Women

42%

3%

58%

97%
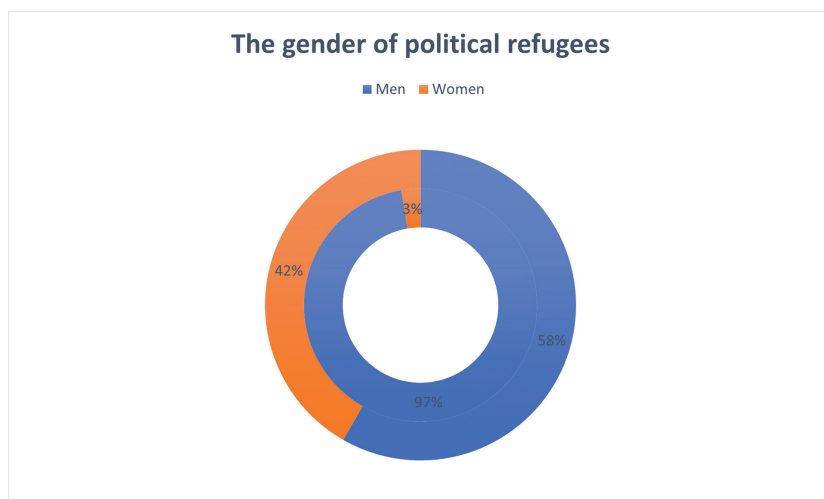
FIG 4 (The interior line represents the first wave, while the exterior one the second wave)

The last was the gender of the refugees, where the discrepancies between the two waves are even more striking (Fig. 4). During the late 60s, there is a close difference: 58,3% of the Romanian refugees are men and 41,7% are women. The explanations lie in the fact that legal departing from the country was theoretically possible to anyone and therefore both men and women applied to exit the country for tourism or for visiting relatives from other countries, and those were the methods used by most

of the new refugees. The context is almost completely different in the first years of Communism, when escaping the country was a dangerous and challenging endeavor that required training, stamina and, in some cases, a military-like approach. The situation of the Romanian political refugees somehow mirrors the situation of the anti-communist armed resistance groups in the early years of the Cold War, which were predominantly male, with women being present to a much lesser extent. But there are other reasons for this discrepancy: at that time, pilots or sailors were almost exclusively men, so women did not have physical access to these means of travel that would allow them to leave the country by hijacking a plane or by deserting a commercial or military vessel. Also, border guard troops were made up entirely of men, so women did not have this possibility of fleeing the country either. But the reason that weights the most is that of the anti-communist activity: as the men had held political, administrative or military positions, or had been part of resistance organizations directly against the regime, it was predictable that they would be the ones targeted by the Securitate, being thus forced to flee the country. Therefore, in the period 1946-1952, the gender distribution for Romanian refugees is very unbalanced: 97.4% are men and 2.6% are women.

4. The crucial preparations

Because of the huge risks, clandestine border crossing was an action that, in most cases, was preceded by a thorough preparation that took different forms, depending on the direction and the method each individual used. As crossings through Hungary or Yugoslavia (where there were both a land and a river border, represented by the Danube) were the most common and few had knowledge of the geography of the land, research of the area's topography was necessary. Thus, the acquiring of maps, already absent from the market, was essential for reducing risks and identifying portions favorable to clandestine crossings. For those who decided to swim in the waters of the Danube, training was essential: many frequented the swimming pools or lakes during the summer to improve their swimming performance, which they could then put to the test during the actual action.

Such an approach required not only physical qualities, but also the procurement of adjacent equipment: small inflatable boats or other rubber-like capsules for storing some clothes or personal belongings that were dragged with a rope by the swimmers. There were remarkable

cases in which those waterproof materials were used not to drag all sort of objects, but persons who didn't know how to swim. Such was the case of Traian Nițescu, a medical doctor and excellent swimmer, who dragged his wife through the cold waves of Danube, while the woman was hanging on two life belts (Agora Press, 2017).

Beside the preparation of the crossing itself, those planning their escape faced a difficult question regarding what to do with their savings, their furniture and other belongings. Some tried to sell as many goods from their homes as possible, trying to obtain some money that may prove useful at some point or which they hoped to be able to exchange to foreign currency (Vasile, 2017: 279). However, such an approach was dangerous, as it could raise the neighbors or relatives' suspicions, which could lead to alerting the Securitate and, eventually, the arrest for "preparatory acts for border crossing". A much safer alternative was to abandon everything, as was the case of the lawyer Nicolae Baciu, who had to give up his apartment located in an elegant building in Bucharest:

> "You should leave your apartment as it is, Victor had told me. You don't have to remove anything. The building is large and you would quickly raise suspicions if you act otherwise. It's a pity for what you're leaving here, but you'll have to get over it." (Baciu, 1991, 64)

But not all border crossings were the result of planned action. Some were simply a decision taken on the spot. For example, Gelu Belu, a former officer recently removed from the Army, was awakened one autumn night in 1947 by Silviu Crăciunaș, a guide who had just been discovered by the Securitate and had to flee the country before being captured, and instantly accepted to accompany him, thus leaving immediately, through Hungary, to Vienna. Even more improvised was the case of Iuliu Simandan and Mircea Pădurăreanu, who met each other in a bar in Arad (some 45 km away from the Hungarian border) and, after a few drinks, both decided to flee the country, succeeding a few days later (Vasile, 2022: 18). Undoubtedly more spectacular was the case of three men who represented the crew of a small boat that made tours on the Danube. The group they had taken over in August 1948 consisted of two families who had previously negotiated the clandestine passage to the Yugoslav shore, but the captain of the boat, with whom they had talked and paid for his help, had been replaced by a relative who was a devoted communist. The three men, however, considered it a chance they would never meet again

and, with the help of the passengers, managed to defeat the captain and steer the boat to the Yugoslav shore, thus fleeing the country (*Memory of Nations*, 1). Therefore, although clandestine border crossings were particularly dangerous and required extensive preparation, there were also numerous cases in which these capital decisions for someone's life were made on the spot, in some cases with tragic consequences, but also with successful results.

At least for those who managed to reach the other side of the Iron Curtain. That's because, for the families of those who succeeded, the consequences were almost every time tragic. At his last family visit before fleeing the country, Ilie Rada looked at his younger brother and all that he could say was "you have no idea what awaits you" (ACNSAS, 632268: 208), before, inexplicably for everyone else, bursting into tears. It was obvious that the repercussions would be harsher in the case of the desertion of a Securitate officer, but, in general, the families of those who fled were taken under surveillance: the letters were secretly checked and informants were recruited from the relatives or neighbors.

Regarding the routes of those who left illegally, there were three main directions: towards Turkey (where one could reach either by plane or by water), towards Hungary (and further to Vienna, the closest safe haven for the political refugees) and, the most popular from 1948 onwards, towards Yugoslavia. I shall discuss each route separately.

5. Turkey: The unlikely destination

For political refugees, Turkey was not a frequently used route, for obvious logistical reasons, but it stood out due to the spectacular actions taken by the refugees. For those fleeing to Turkey by plane, there were three imminent dangers: the first was the presence of the regime's personnel who could physically or at gunpoint prevent the hijacking of the aircraft. Approaching them in advance and possibly involving them in the secret action was a major risk that could lead to the unraveling of the conspiracy and, implicitly, the failure of the attempt. Therefore, they were either prevented, under various excuses, from boarding that particular flight, immobilized and disembarked in case of an intermediate stop, as was the case with the plane piloted by Ion Profir, that carried 10 former officers to Turkey in the fall of 1947 (Profir, 1996: 152-157), or immobilized and ending up, against their will, in exile, from where they immediately

repatriated. Their quick return did not exempt them, for sure, from possible repressions by the Securitate, as was the case, for example, with the pilot Vasile Ciobanu who on July the 25th, 1947, at gun point, was forced to divert the plane to Turkey and shortly after returned to Romania, only to be taken into investigation for the suspicion of secret ties with the Romanian exiles in Turkey and eventually being arrested in 1949 and sentenced to heavy detention (Lupu, 2015: 12). There were also cases in which the crew members who opposed the hijacking were shot, and the same group of three former soldiers can be mentioned, who, while hijacking Ciobanu's plane, killed the flight mechanic; also, there was the group that hijacked a mail plane on October the 15th, 1948, at Turnu-Măgurele, but these are isolated cases (Turturică, 2014).

The second risk was that the hijacked plane would be intercepted by Romanian, Bulgarian or Soviet fighter aircraft and shot down, but, at least so far, no such cases have been identified. A possible explanation is provided by the characteristics of the detection technique and the performance of the aircraft: until the authorities identified a possible hijacking and mobilized the fighter jets, and they reached the plane that was moving towards Turkey (the nearest non-communist country), the hijacked plane was already in international airspace or even in that controlled by NATO. Thus, a possible military action could have triggered a diplomatic scandal that would have put the Bucharest authorities in a bad light, which, after such aerial evasions, limited themselves to issuing protest notes and requesting the return of the planes.

But the main difficulty was getting the necessary fuel for such a long flight. In fact, the communist authorities were well aware that a significant part of the pilots were against Communism and that flights were a real temptation for fleeing the country, so they had severely limited the amount of fuel with which airplanes used for internal travel or for various institutions (*i.e.,* meteorological research) could take off. The measure had not only discouraged those who were thinking of fleeing the country by plane, but it would actually prove productive such in the case of 15 October 1948, when the mail plane hijacked by three young men forced landed in Bulgaria, from where the group was brought back to the country, interrogated and killed under the pretext of trying to escape again (Turturică, 2014). Any request for extra fuel could have raised suspicions and even the withdrawal of the permission to fly the plane, so obtaining the fuel had to be done carefully and under different pretexts. The interesting fact is that air escapes began as early as September 1944,

only a few weeks after entering the alliance with the Soviet Union, the first successful action of this kind being that of the fighter pilot Petre Cordescu (Gheorghe, 2023). The peak was reached in the autumn of 1947, when three favorable conditions were met: the growing appetite for fleeing the country, due to the growing political power of the communists, the existence of a sufficient number of active pilots with anti-communist views and the inability of the authorities to restrict possible attempts. From early 1948, the old pilots were replaced by new flight personnel, and the Securitate increased its ability to control the flow of air transport.

Similarly dangerous and difficult was also the other option to arrive clandestinely in Turkey: by sailing the seemingly endless Black Sea. The risk came not only from the increased security of the area and from the control exercised by the Securitate through informants recruited among fishermen who could be approached as guides by potential refugees, but also from the difficult navigation conditions that could easily lead to shipwreck. However, there have been cases of people fleeing the country and eventually arriving in Turkey. One such case was reported by the Turkish press in August 1947:

> "On the night of July, the 30th, we got into two boats, which we had spotted on the shore. We moved away, noiselessly, from the shore of Constanța. The sea was quite rough, and the waves crashing against the boats could at any moment swallow us all. But we would rather drown than fall into the hands of the communists. Our trip lasted three days and three nights. During this time four of my comrades fainted from hunger and thirst. Finally, on the 2nd of August, in the early hours of the morning, we managed to reach the Turkish shore. The coast guards, seeing the depressing condition we were in, received us very politely. The first thing they did was to nurse our sick comrades and give us food and drink. I was crying with joy. The 14 comrades were hugging and kissing each other." (Dobre, 2005: 276)

Even more spectacular is perhaps the case of the two Vasile Antemia (father and son having the same name) who by themselves and with an improvised boat finally reached the Turkish shore in 1948 (Arolsen, 1950; CNSAS, 776984: 11). The number of Romanian political refugees who reached Turkey in the first years of Communism is relatively small: some tens of people, no more than 200. Once arrived in the Turkish Republic, they were taken over by the authorities, who had a rather benevolent attitude towards the Romanian refugees, whom they interrogated and then interned in a semi-open regime camp in Istanbul. From this point,

the refugees came under the supervision of the leaders of the Romanian exile in Turkey: Petre Vasilache and Aurel Decei. They interrogated them again, trying to get social, political, economic and military information to sell to Western intelligence services, and helped them with food, clothing and accommodation. For Romanian political refugees, Turkey was just a stop on their way to the West, almost all of them leaving the country after a few weeks or months, arriving in Italy and from there to France or other destinations.

6. Hungary: the shortest route

Looking towards the West, the closest western-controlled point for any Romanian trying to run away from Communism in the late 1940s was Vienna. A direct line from the Austrian capital to the Romanian border stretches out on a bit more that 400 km. However, this line faces some major challenges: it runs through the length of Hungary and requires the crossing of two heavily guarded borders: one with Romania and one with Austria. And despite all of that, it was a line walked by hundreds, if not thousands of Romanians in the first years of the Cold War.

People took this route because it was the most practical, being the shortest way to the West. Furthermore, in the early post-war years, the border, which had changed during the War, was not so tight and well-secured, so border crossings could be accomplished with an ease that would seem unimaginable just a few years later. As the conditions seemed to be favorable and there was a demand for border crossings, the *market* reacted quite quickly and after 1945 the supply of guides also appeared, people who knew the border area, where they had local help, had established shelters in different cities inside Hungary (especially in Budapest, where, being a big city, the new faces could have gone easily unnoticed) and were willing to take risks for the right price. This is how older persons, who lacked the physical condition for other clandestine border crossing channels, were taken out of the country, persons who would play notable roles in the life of the Romanian exile. These cross-border channels were particularly flourishing in 1946-1948, being operated by both Hungarians and Hungarian-speaking Romanians. Besides, the knowledge of the Hungarian language was a real obstacle and a constant danger for those who tried, on their own, to flee the country through Hungary.

Crossing the Hungarian-Romanian border became more difficult with the increase, in 1948, of security, both on one side and on the other, a process that led, along with the Tito-Stalin split that I will discuss below, to the significant decrease in the number of political refugees coming through Hungary. This did not mean, however, that the phenomenon stopped, the Romania-Hungary-Vienna route being constantly used by the few guides that remained active after 1949, but also by the secret agents sent overland to Romania by the Western secret services. At the same time, people continued to try to cross the border to Hungary on their own: only on one summer night in 1950, 14 people were captured by the Romanian and Hungarian border guards, and another four were killed during the attempt (Vasile, 2022: 288), showing that the route was still being tested, but with tragic results. And it would remain so throughout the communist period.

7. Yugoslavia: "The land of the Green Horse"

Fleeing the country through Yugoslavia was a popular path from the very first years after the Second World War; this is partly because there was a traditional Romanian-Serbian cultural link, marked by the existence of a Serbian community in the Romanian Banat, and a significant Romanian minority in the Serbian Banat, and also because the cross-border channels of clandestine crossings had been used since the end of the 1930s by members the Iron Guard who fled King Carol II's dictatorship. However, Yugoslavia became the main route for the political refugees after the Tito-Stalin split that occurred in 1948, which nourished the hope that Yugoslavia was something other than a communist state and that, on the premise that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, the refugees would benefit from the benevolence of the authorities in Belgrade. These expectations that, once arrived on Yugoslav territory, not only would they not be returned to the Romanian state, but it would facilitate their way to the West, were also reinforced by the propaganda carried by Radio Belgrade or other media channels of the regime led by Tito, as well as by a self-perpetuating illusion among Romanians who wanted to flee and still needed to pin their hopes on something. On the other side, as a political refugee described the situation in 1951, "in Romania it was nothing but fear; here there is a drop of hope" (Baciu, 1991: 132).

But before reaching that drop of hope, it was the biggest test: crossing the border. Romania and Yugoslavia shared both a terrestrial border and a fluvial one, and each had its challenges. Both of them became heavily fortified, after the sudden and dramatic rise in tensions between Tito and Stalin; thus, the border became "a virtual war zone" (Drăghia, 2014: 251), with armed troops in the area, having numerous military equipment and carrying out constant patrolling. At the land border, rows of barbed wire had appeared, the vegetation had been cut down for tens of meters, and the land had been leveled so that possible tracks could be easily seen. Despite all these obstacles, there were political refugees who passed through this section, often helped by local people who earned money from this dangerous activity as guides. This was the case of doctor Ion Claudian, who fled in the summer of 1950, and his situation was even more complicated, because he was sick and coughed frequently. Thus, in order not to be discovered, one of the other two in the group buried his head in the ground, so that the coughing would be muffled (Vasile, 2022: 299). Moreover, the land border has a winding path, which could be misleading: this was the case of Ilie Rada, parachuted into the country in 1953 as a spy and the only survivor of an encounter with Securitate. Arriving close to the border, he crawled to the barbed wire fence, which he jumped, and after a few tens of meters he found another fence. He skipped that one too and then found a pack of cigarettes with Romanian writing on the ground. Realizing with horror that he was still in Romania, he continued on his way to a third fence, which he jumped, and then found another pack of cigarettes, but inscribed in Cyrillic characters, which proved to him that he eventually arrived in Yugoslavia (Djuvara, 2002, 89-90).

For those who decided to cross the Danube, there were two options: by boat or swimming. There were few locals willing to risk their life and liberty to carry people in their boats, so these are rare cases; as is the situation of the boats of the Romanian border guards who crossed the demarcation line and docked on the other side, the only case identified so far is from 20 June 1950, when three officers, a border guard and two civilians came to the Yugoslav side. There are also cases that combine the two options: people who boarded transport ships and, after neutralizing or avoiding the on-board security, jumped into the water and swam the rest of the way to the Yugoslav shore. These actions succeeded at the end of the 1940s, but with the increase in the number of guards present on board and, above all, benefiting from the loyalty of the sailors on the ships, these attempts failed

in the following years, although they continued taking place all throughout the 50s[5]. The option least dependent on other factors was swimming to the Yugoslav shore. After training in the previous months, those trying to cross the Danube carefully prepared their action: they had to identify a place with vegetation as close to the shore as possible and find the right interval between two patrols of the guards. As the river water was cold, and the currents strong, people smeared their bodies with fat, put their documents and expensive objects in rubber bags that they attached to a tight belt on their body and the rest of belongings in the small rubber boat they dragged behind.

However, reaching the water was just the overcoming of the first danger: the river was constantly guarded by search lights and boats and the guards had the order to shoot immediately. Therefore, the refugees had to swim as soundless as they could. To make the matters even worse, the low temperatures, constant tension and small sand islands (that may disorientate the swimmer) could have jeopardized the attempt. Reaching the Yugoslav shore may have been a psychological relief, but there the refugees were usually confronted with a near-hypothermia status. As Petre Rosetti recalls, "when we got to the other side, we were shaking like epileptics and even after three hours we couldn't do our buttons" (Guțanu, 2018).

Not reporting in short time to the local authorities could have brought the suspicion of being a spy sent from the other side of the frontier, therefore the refugees who were not discovered by the Yugoslav guards almost always turned themselves to the mayor or the police station of the nearby village; there were rare case of small groups of refugees who continued by themselves the journey westwards (Țîcu, Boguș, 2022: 121-140). Romanian refugees were confident that they would be welcomed maybe not with open arms, but with a certain benevolence. However, the reality was different: the authorities in Belgrade were not willing to grant favors to those who fled from Romania in order not to antagonize the other communist countries in Eastern Europe and also not to fuel the Soviet-sponsored propaganda that portrayed the Tito's regime as "sold to the imperialist powers". Yet the most striking discrepancy between expectations and reality was the political stance itself: Yugoslavia was indeed in strained relations with the rest of the Eastern bloc, but it was still a communist state. And the refugees were people with anti-communist options who arrived in another communist state, that could not look at them other than as enemies of the people (CIA, 1953: 1). Therefore, the

Romanian refugees were arrested and initially assimilated to common law detainees, being interrogated in Kladova, Kikinda, Zrenjanin or in other detention centers. Here the Romanian political refugees encountered not only the shock of the discrepancy between the expectations they had towards the Yugoslav authorities and their reaction, but also the complete unpredictability of their fate that lied in the hands of the same Yugoslav regime, that eventually led to the popular statement among the refugees that Yugoslavia was "the land of the Green Horse"[6]. Even the CIA, in its reports regarding the flow of Romanian political refugees through Yugoslavia, concluded that the processing took "an arbitrary period of time" (CIA, 1953: 1) after which the people were sent to different prisons where they received different treatments.

Many of the Romanian refugees that fled to Yugoslavia in 1947-1948 were interned in Kovacița camp, situated at some 55 km away from Belgrade. The complex, dedicated exclusively to Romanians, consisted in an old two-stories building in the middle of a muddy courtyard, surrounded by a high fence with barbed wire and heavily guarded by machine-gun posts. On the ground floor were the administration offices and three detention rooms, while the first floor had six rooms, all for refugees. Each of these had an area of 20-25 square meters and was used by about 30 people (men, women and the few children who had fled with their families; the youngest was a three-year-old girl) raising the total number of inmates at around 200. Sometimes there was some freedom of movement between the rooms, and people could organize themselves: for example, on Sundays a religious service was held for the liberation of the country, the health of the refugees and of the King in exile. On the other hand, the living conditions were particularly difficult: there were no beds and everyone slept as they could, the windows were missing and there were no stoves, the food was insufficient and, last but not least, the guards were hostile and aggressive, but did not use physical violence. The camp began to empty in the fall of 1948, when groups of people were formed by those who accepted the authorities' offer to go to work in the mines of Yugoslavia. Many refused, fearing that accepting such a contract, which would have removed them from the camp, would have blocked their possibility of leaving for the West at some point.

Amidst this increase of mistrust and tension, a series of tragic events occurred. First, a young man who had boasted that he wanted to get to America was executed on the grounds that he was a spy. Shortly afterwards, a young former judge managed to escape, hiding behind a well at the time

of the evening call, and once the refugees were locked in the cells and the guard relaxed, he jumped the fence, managing after a few months to reach Austria. His success triggered other similar attempts, Baciu remembering that "the idea of an escape became such a powerful obsession that I could barely sleep" (Baciu, 1991: 146). Another successful escape led to the tightening of detention measures, which in turn caused a widespread hunger strike in the camp, prompting the Yugoslav authorities to close the Kovacița camp and disperse the inmates.

Another major point in the geography of the detention of Romanian refugees in Yugoslavia during the first years of the Cold War was the Zrenjanin camp, a former factory transformed after the war into a prison for German military personnel (mostly officers) captured in 1945, used for political refugees after their release. While Kovacița, being smaller, was intended exclusively for Romanians, at Zrenjanin they occupied only one of the three levels of the main building in the complex (another floor was entirely intended for Hungarian refugees). Although the guard was also particularly severe and the food was insufficient, there was the possibility of real medical assistance, as there was also a hospital nearby. Ingrid Fotino was a little child when her family was transferred to Zrenjanin, but the image of the place was deeply forged into in her memory:

"In the camp things were more relaxed. In the men's quarters there were tables with chessboards, where they played chess. And there were people who tried to go to the hospital. […] I really did get sick: I had a fever, the symptoms of appendicitis. They took me, put me in a cart and took me to the hospital in Zrenjanin. A small, white, clean hospital: enchanting! They took me there, put me in a very, very clean bed. Very nice doctors came to examine me. They let my mom to stay with me, while my dad was waiting outside. I'll never forget when they brought me food: there was a plate, on the plate there was some meat among other things. I hadn't eaten meat for such a long time! And my mother asked me: 'Do you think I could give a little bit of your meat to your father?'. My dad was waiting outside. I could see him through the window. He looked like a beaten hound. And there was a terrible struggle inside me. I told her: 'Yes,', but it hurt and I felt so guilty about being hurt because of that little bit of meat (weeps)." (*Memory of Nations*, 2)

Zrenjanin was closed in August 1950, after a series of conflicts between the administration and the inmates, but there were several other refugee camps like Pancevo (where the complex was shared between refugees

and former soldiers of Draža Mihailović), Jagodina, Kragujevac, Cuprija or Bitolia (close to the Greek border), but what completes the prison network through which the Romanian refugees passed are the labor camps established close to different mines. One that appears often on the routes of the Romanian refugees is the labor camp from the Mladinovatz marble quarry, where, in the two isolated barracks on top of a hill, the Romanian refugees replaced the German PoW. But even more important was the labor camp at Banovići-Tuzla, consisting of three carefully guarded buildings, which served a coal mine. The approximately 250-300 refugees (both men and women) worked alongside dozens of German prisoners in hard labor conditions and with barely enough food, as Rosetti recalls: "soup, a piece of bread, and rarely some goat meat that was miserable and stinky, but he had to eat it" (Guțanu, 2018). Initially, those interned in Banovići-Tuzla enjoyed a small degree of freedom, being allowed to leave for the city on Sundays with the obligation to return by sunset. In this way, many refugees managed to send letters and contact their relatives. However, as was the case in Mladinovatz, escapes happened which led to the tightening of the detention regime and the elimination of the small advantages enjoyed by the prisoners, but that did not stop the breakout attempts.

This is largely because there is a strong uncertainty regarding their future and how the Yugoslav authorities will relate to the refugees' situation, being even rumors that they would be returned to Romania in exchange for different goods offered by Bucharest. This unclear approach could be inferred from the way the refugees were treated: some were allowed to continue their way west, the Yugoslavs simply turning a blind eye to them, while others seemed to have been forgotten in the camps. Some were allowed to reach the western border only to be arrested, others were taken to the border and allowed to cross it. Some who escaped were caught and only brought back to the camps, others, as was the case with the students Tutoveanu and Oroveanu, who tried to escape from Tuzla in the winter of 1948-1949, were captured and executed. The most tragic was the case of those taken to the border and lured that they would be allowed to cross it, only to be executed and robbed, as happened in January 1950 with a group of 20 people that included Elena and Narcis Economu and their children Liliana and Sandu:

> "This group, with Economu family, left as they let them out of the window, the window where we were sleeping. One by one they passed through the window, the last one was a young student, who turned to my dad and

said: 'What should I do, Mr. Popa? To go, or not to go? I don't even have shoes to walk through this mud', and my father said: 'Look, I have some shoes left from a priest' […] he had one pair of shoes left and gave him the shoes and he left.

And we went to bed, as you can imagine, dreaming of Greece. They were going to eat oranges, sardines, olives, what a dream…

When we got up the next morning, it was a beautiful day and again we were thinking what they were eating that morning, how lucky they were… and the peasants came to work and told us that they were called during the night to dig a hole to bury a group of twenty or so people and they described their clothes to us and I knew it was the group that had left the night before. Finally, […] they said: 'Yes, it's true, we had to kill them because they tried to run away. ' 'But *you* got them out of here! ' 'Well, the proof that they tried to escape is that they went out the window. ' […] So, they made this montage, and everything was just lies." (AOH-ICSC, 2012)

The truth is that, in the first years of the Cold War, and especially after the Tito-Stalin split, the Yugoslav authorities really did not have a clear approach to the flow of political refugees from Romania. Only by the end of the summer of 1950, the Yugoslav regime, trying to improve its relations with the Western Powers, tackled the problem. Firstly, it recognized the existence of the Romanian political refugees, separating them from common inmates or prisoners of war, and thus giving them a new status set up by a newly created department for Romanian Refugees within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. One by one, the old camps were closed and new ones, with better conditions, were opened (yet the labor camps near the mine would continue to function throughout the 50s). Most of the refugees were allowed to continue their journey towards the West, drastically reducing the number of Romanian political refugees still in Yugoslavia, while those kept in custody were to be used propagandistically. In 1950 UDBA (the Yugoslav political police) tried to establish a pro-Tito committee of the Romanian Refugees, led firstly by a man named Stănoiu and later by Constantin Alimănișteanu, but both projects failed. The idea was resurrected two years later, in 1952, under the direct supervision of Dușan Magoșa, a Romanian-speaking Yugoslav general, who tried to convince the 70 Romanian refugees from Jagodina camp to elect a political committee to advocate for the "liberation of Romanians under Yugoslav guidance" (CIA, 1953: 2). Obviously, the attempt had little popularity; nevertheless, such a group was finally elected in July, under the leadership of Constantin

Ghinea, a former political commissar of a Romanian aviation unit who had fled to Yugoslavia a few months before. The committee was ineffective and short-lived, as the tensions between Yugoslavia and Romania scaled down very quickly after the death of Stalin and the income of new refugees had been very low since the early 50s.

8. On the other side of the Iron Curtain: the first grasp of freedom and many difficulties

Reaching the other side of the Iron Curtain was the relief moment for almost every refugee, the fulfillment of an aim for which they had abandoned their past existence, risked their life crossing the border and suffered in camps and prisons, regardless of whether it was Yugoslavia, Turkey or Hungary, or endured the hardships of other long roads to the West. Although speaking solely about Trieste, the description given by a representative of Radio Free Europe is illustrative of the feeling felt by the political refugees once they were on the much-awaited side of the boundary between East and West:

> "The first sensation any refugee has as soon as he reaches Trieste is a feeling of great relief. He immediately finds that humane treatment and freedom of speech, thought, and action which was denied to him in his own country for many years. He feels secure, protected and taken care of. […] And when he goes to town for the first time […], he finally feels like a free man, like all the others; he feels that he is no longer followed […], he can speak freely and openly express his opinions without being afraid of being arrested or confined. His eyes shine when he sees all the beautiful things displayed on the windows of all the various shops, this abundance of small and big things the existence of which he had almost forgotten under the long years of communist regime and after the many years of a life with continuous deprivations, sacrifices and terrors." (RFE, 1953: 7)

Yet the situation was a bit more complicated than the black-and-white portrayal from above. The suffering, thus much diminished, was far from over, because the refugees were basically thrown into a new and different world, having little to no resources to start a new life. Depending on the routes they have chosen to flee and the period of time in which they managed to do it, their journey on the other side of the Iron Curtain was different.

At the end of the Second World War, there were millions of refugees and displaced persons in the West that needed rapid and vast assistance. Therefore, hundreds of camps were established (in some cases in the former Nazi facilities) in the western occupied areas of both Austria and Germany, with major ones in cities like Linz or Landek. From April 1946, the majority of those camps were put under the administration of International Refugee Organization (IRO), the intergovernmental organization designed to deal with the massive waves of millions of people affected by the Second World War and its follow-up, the incipient Cold War. Although Romanian political refugees were encamped in different centers, their number was fairly low. For example, in September 1947, out of the 19430 Romanian-origin refugees that were taken care of by the IRO, 18539 were in fact Jews that were wither survivors of the Holocaust in Central Europe or people trying to emigrate from Romania to Palestine (Holborn, 1956: 358). Putting this ethnic minority aside, that leaves less than 900 people that were actual refugees due mostly to the establishing of Communism in Romania. Those hundreds of Romanian political refugees from the camps in Austria and Western Germany enjoyed a decent standard of living due to the material support given by IRO and other Western philanthropic associations and foundations, and their great degree of freedom that encouraged them to integrate in the new societies. Moreover, medical assistance was provided, as well as education for children and professional training for the adults, and the refugee could even organize themselves in distinct forms of association.

Still, what really helped them in this final stage of the process of fleeing the country was the support provided by certain individuals who were already in the West or by different organizations. In the first category there were, on the one hand, people who acted disinterestedly (most noticeable being the Greek-catholic priest Vasile Zăpârțan (CNSAS, 7747: 77) who was visiting the camps in search of Romanians in need and helped them on religious grounds everyday), and, on the other hand, there were also some who had a subtle pursuit. As the Cold War had begun, the Western secret services were particularly active and every new political refugee represented a source of new data from inside communist Romania. Thus, cells of different secret services (French, American, exiled Romanians working on their own) operated in the late 1940s in different areas where political refugees arrived, especially in the occupation zones of Austria. They needed information not only for their own agenda, but also to sell it for profit to other Western secret services that were interested. In exchange

for handing in statements or long interrogations, political refugees could receive shelter, food tickets and even free pass to other states like France.

At the same time, aid organizations also appeared, established by Romanians already living in the West. Notable roles were played by institutions such as The Romanian Relief Committee in Salzburg or the Section Roumaine du Service Sociale of the Occupational Forces in Innsbruck (Petraru, 2014: 230), but the main organization supporting the refugees was Comité d'Assistance aux Roumains, shortly and most commonly known as CAROMAN. Established in the spring of 1948 in Paris, with the great support of the French authorities, CAROMAN was the project of Nicolae Caranfil, a remarkable engineer who played a significant role in the fast urban modernization of Bucharest in the 1930s. Under his guidance, the committee provided basic material help for the new comers, like clothing, food tickets for specific restaurants and short-term accommodation, but also assistance in obtaining the legal documents for settling in France or departing for other countries. Rocked by corruption accusations, some of them being apparently true, CAROMAN had to replace its board: Caranfil was briefly replaced by Raoul Bossy until Maria Brăescu assumed the leadership (Djuvara, 2002: 42). An undeservingly downplayed role in helping the refugees was the one of different religious institutions. The most important one was the Greek-Catholic Romanian Church from rue de Ribera, in Paris, which had, beside the chapel, a dormitory and a canteen, thus becoming a hub for the Romanian refugees in their struggle to organize themselves. Other important institutions were the Orthodox Church (that similarly played an important role in keeping the community together), the Catholic Relief Fund for Romanians or other several protestant philanthropic associations (ACNSAS, 329902 b: 328). All of them provided help without asking for proof of religious affiliation, thus allowing many people to receive it, as was the case of Mihail Țanțu who, in Vienna in 1949, remembered how, for lunch pretended to be a Baptist, for dinner an Adventist and for staying overnight a Catholic (ACNSAS, 233937: 24).

While the refugee camps in Austria and West Germany had quite decent living conditions and were a rather short stop in the journey of the refugees that fled through Hungary and Austria, the camps in Italy, used mostly by those who fled through Turkey or Yugoslavia, were a bit different. The major camps were in Frascati, a suburb of Rome, and in Bagnoli, a former facility established by the Fascist regime, which operated from 1945-1946 up to the early 50s. They had been designed as process points until the refugees from

all Eastern Europe were processed for further departing, but the conditions were relatively poor thus affecting the inmates (Vasile, 2022: 409-415). But for the most refugees coming through Yugoslavia, the entrance point was inevitably San Sabba camp, a vast complex functioning near Trieste, a free territory with a particular situation in the post-war context. The main part of the complex consisted in an old building redesigned into having forty cells per floor, each room being assigned to a family or a group of 3-4 people. The living conditions were relatively good, with sufficient food and a vivid cultural life of each ethnic group of refugees, but it lacked other goods like clothes or hygiene products. Moreover, the reaction of locals was mixed: while some manifested sympathy and compassion for the refugees, others were skeptical or even hostile to the people perceived as a threat for a local job market already strangled by unemployment. The number of Romanian refugees in San-Sabba camp was low comparing to the other nationalities: according to the research conducted by RFE, in late 1953, out of 4235 refugees encamped only 229 declared themselves to be Romanian (RFE, 1953: 1).

9. Conclusions

As time passed by, all the Romanian refugees left the camps and tried to integrate in the new societies, coming to the conclusion that their exile may not be a short bracket in their existence. Most of them integrated well in the Western cities they ended up in, while a few of them refused or simply could not do that, resulting in either suicides (like Ion Profir) and unclear deaths (Djuvara, 2002: 52-56) or in repatriations to Romania after the communist regime published an almost all-forgiving decree to anyone who wanted to come back from abroad. The feeling of longing for their native country marked the rest of their lives in various degrees. Some tried to reestablish a connection with their families and even with the Romanian authorities, while others tried to preserve their identity by preserving the language and religion and passing them to their children. But for most of them, the whole process of fleeing the country was somehow a blind spot in their memory, a missing piece lost between the stage of trying to escape the communist Romania and the one fitting into the new society and starting a new life. It was actually a trauma that was rarely discussed and, eventually, a trauma never healed.

Endnotes

[1]   Expression coined by Viktor Kravcenko's book *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political File of a Soviet Official*, published in 1947.

[2]   Impressive research focused on the victims of the illegal border crossings to Yugoslavia, in the 70s and 80s, was done by Johann Steiner and Doina Magheti in their two-volume book *Mormintele tac. Relatări de la cea mai sângeroasă graniță* published at Polirom in 2009 and 2017.

[3]   An in-depth analysis was done by Roland Olah in the article "Prețul libertății. Frontieriștii condamnați pentru trecere sau tentativă de trecere ilegală a graniței de vest în anii '80" published in IICCMER's 2022 yearbook.

[4]   The failed attempts led to arrest and convictions and a useful analysis for the women that were arrested while trying to cross the border is available in Florin Soare's study "Tentatia libertății: 'frontieristele'" in Constantin Vasilescu (coord.), *Morfologia (ne)vinovăției. Alfabetul detenției în comunism*, Litera, 2023.

[5]   Relevant for this situation was the movie-like attempt of five young ethnic Germans on *Cernavodă* ship on the 6h of March 1959 discussed in my article „Spre adevărata libertate. Grupul Mihai Roth și deturnarea vasului *Cernavodă*" published in 2015 IICCMER's yearbook.

[6]   This view, quite popular among the refugees, came from a truly depreciative Balkan saying: "who has ever seen a green horse or a smart Serbian?".

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BETWEEN UKRAINIAN MODERNISM AND SOCIALIST REALISM: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF MYKHAILO DRAI-KHMARA (1889–1939)[*]

Nataliia Vusatiuk

Abstract

The article reconstructs the main periods and facts in the biography of the Ukrainian intellectual Mykhailo Drai-Khmara in the historical and cultural context of the 1910s–1930s, focusing on his poetic, critical, translation-related, and linguistic achievements. Drai-Khmara's poetic activity is analyzed from the perspective of the transformation of his individual style, which went through the stages of symbolism, neoclassicism, and socialist realism. In the field of literary history, Drai-Khmara specialized in Slavic studies, especially Croatian, Polish, Belarusian, and Ukrainian literature of the 18th–20th centuries. The scholar made a major contribution to the development of national comparative studies by analyzing works of the Ukrainian writers in the context of European literatures. The posthumous promotion and reception of his heritage in the United States of America and Europe are also described. This article provides special information on Drai-Khmara's connections to Romania, including his travel in 1913, the poem "Constanța" dedicated to it, and also the reception of his work in Romania.

Keywords: intellectual biography, Ukrainian modernism, Kyiv Neoclassicists, symbolism, socialist realism

1. Introduction

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara was a key figure in Ukrainian Slavic studies and one of the representatives of Ukrainian modernism in the 1920s. "An

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extraordinarily gifted person who rose from humble origins to a prominent position among Ukraine's intellectual elite of his era, Drai-Khmara through his life and career offers a fascinating and informative insight into Ukrainian cultural life of the early Soviet period and of Soviet cultural politics more broadly," stated Vitaly Chernetsky (2005, 25). Being a "polyhistor", a very educated man of the time, Drai-Khmara embraced a wide range of activities and interests including poetry, literary criticism, linguistics, Slavic history, journalism, writing librettos for operas and ballets, and translation. He taught at different educational and scientific institutions in Ukraine. In the 1920s and 1930s, he was a member of one of the most influential literary groups, the Kyiv Neoclassicists. Despite a fairly extensive literature on the Kyiv Neoclassicists, Drai-Khmara remains perhaps the most underestimated among the members of that formation, remaining in the shadow of Mykola Zerov and Maksym Rylskyi. To this day, there is no scholarly biography of Drai-Khmara. So far, the main sources of information about the writer's life have been articles and books of his daughter and researcher of his work Oksana Asher (Asher, 1959; Asher, 1975; Dray-Khmara Asher, 1983). Although several of Drai-Khmara's autobiographies, his diaries and part of his correspondence, as well as the NKVD archival file (Chernetsky, 2005) have been published, Drai-Khmara's biography still contains many gaps, and a lot of facts need to be verified.

The editions of Drai-Khmara's poetic and scholarly texts that have been published so far (Drai-Khmara, 1979, 2002, 2015) often require additional commentary and appropriate contextualization. The PhD dissertations defended in Ukraine by Oleh Tomchuk (Tomchuk, 2002) and Inna Rodionova (Rodionova, 2004), which focus on the "aesthetic system" and "stylistic dominants" of Drai-Khmara`s poetry, failed to analyze the history of the creation of his texts, their contexts, and intertextual connections with Ukrainian and other Slavic literatures. The recent popular biography of Drai-Khmara by Rostyslav Kolomiiets (Kolomiiets, 2022) does not meet any scientific requirements, as it is full of factual errors and conjecture.

A synthetic study of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's biography and creative work against the background of the Ukrainian cultural process of the 1920s and 1930s involves, first of all, a careful contextual analysis of the circle of Kyiv Neoclassicists to which he belonged. To establish the unknown facts of the biography and reconstruct the chronology of his life, the source study approach will be used, and the textual approach is applied to the

analysis of certain poems. The method of discourse analysis is needed to characterize the response of contemporaries to Drai-Khmara's work.

In my research, I follow the definition of intellectual biography proposed by Paul Korshin: "the term intellectual biography describes a certain style of inquiry or a quality of biographical analysis. The intellectual biographer is like the intellectual historian, but he focuses on the history of an individual's mind, thoughts, and ideas as a means toward illuminating the subject's life, personality, and character" (Korshin, 1974, 514). For biographers creating this type of narrative, it is important to convey the "intellectual milieu" of the hero (Korshin, 1974, 515). Fulfilling also the role of prosopographer, the biographer is asked to deploy "the comparative method of group biography to set off particular characteristics of his subject" (Korshin1974, 514). The last principle is important in the case of Drai-Khmara to understand his correlation, worldview and poetic coherence, or, on the contrary, his divergence from the literary group of Kyiv Neoclassicists to which he belonged.

My research, which does not claim to be exhaustive due to text limits, will include certain aspects of the four types of biography, according to Donald Walker, which form the model of intellectual biography, namely: "1) *personal biography* (information about the time and place of birth, education, family background and influences, character features and personal life of the scientist); 2) *professional* biography (position of the scientist in academic and other circles, his professional activities and relations within the scientific community); 3) *bibliographic* biography (analysis of the author's works, history of their creation, source base, research techniques and methodology, conceptual apparatus and interdisciplinary connections); 4) *situational* biography, or *biography of the milieu* (events and conditions of socio-economic and political life and epoch in which the scholar lived and worked)" (Popova, 2007, 544).

What historical events are important to record in a biography? According to Adolf Demchenko, "the material selection criteria is determined by the fact that a certain historical fact (event) is experienced by a certain personality", that is, "the center of attention should be not in the external events of the artist's life itself, but in the way they are reflected on his personality, what thoughts, dreams and experiences caused in him" (Demchenko, 2014, 57).

An intellectual biography can by no means be limited to a chronological presentation of facts from the protagonist's life. In the case of Drai-Khmara, there is a temptation to go into a list of small details and episodes of his

life, since there is still no detailed chronology of his life, and most of the facts recorded in archival sources are still unknown to the researchers. As for Drai-Khmara's ego-documents, the few autobiographies that have been found represent very concise official versions of his life record. His diary describes in detail only a short period of his life, 1924–1928. Therefore, reconstructing the sequence of events in his professional and personal life is one of the most urgent tasks for Ukrainian bibliographers.

My research paper is based on sources from several Ukrainian archives: The Department of Manuscripts and Textual Studies of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, and the Central State Archive of Public Organizations and Ukrainica. The main core consists of documents from the personal archives of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara and his daughter Oksana Asher, which were transferred from New York to the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 1989 and the early 1990s, and just recently in 2023. The available ego-documents of Drai-Khmara (diaries, notebooks, letters, questionnaires, CVs) reveal how he perceived the Ukrainian revolution 1917–1921, the 'Ukrainization' campaign etc., and also illuminate his own emotional and intellectual life, provide testimonies of the development of his poetic creativity and self-identification. Biographical information is provided also in two NKVD files of the protagonist of my research. Some important translations from the poetry by Mykhailo-Drai-Khmara into Romanian are kept in Orest Masichievici's personal archive at the Bucharest branch of the Union of Ukrainians of Romania.

2. Years of growth

Mykhailo Drai was born on October 10, 1889, into a Ukrainian-speaking peasant family with Cossack roots in the village of Mali Kanivtsi, Zolotonosha district, Poltava region (now Cherkasy region) (Extract from the metric book, 1889, f. 1r). His father was educated and worked as a scribe for some time. At the age of five, Mykhailo lost his mother, who died of typhus. He received his primary education at a school in Zolotonosha, then at the Cherkasy Gymnasium. While studying at the gymnasium, he was fond of reading Mayne Reed, Walter Scott, and Alexandre Dumas (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 463).

From 1906 to 1910, he studied at the Pavlo Galagan Collegium in Kyiv which was a prestigious private gymnasium that existed at the expense of the wealthy landowner and philanthropist Hryhorii Galagan, who founded the collegium in memory of his dead son. Talented children from poor families who did well in entrance exams in Russian, Latin, mathematics, French, and German were able to study for free. For children from poor families, it was a social elevator. A number of future prominent scholars and cultural figures graduated from the college. The language of education was Russian. At the Pavlo Galagan Collegium, under the influence of his Russian literature teacher, Drai began writing his first poems in Russian and started literary research, which were published in the Collegium Yearbook. His classmate was Pavlo Fylypovych, another future neoclassic poet.

From 1910 to 1915, Drai studied Slavistics at the Faculty of History and Philology at Kyiv University. In the summer of 1913, Drai went on a research trip abroad, collecting material for his thesis on the Croatian literature of the 18th century, entitled *Poetic work by Andrija Kačić Miošić "Sincere Conversation of the Slavic People",* in the libraries and archives of Lviv, Budapest, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Bucharest. The research paper completed under the supervision of Oleksandr Lukianenko, a specialist in comparative linguistics, was awarded a gold medal. Drai-Khmara also participated in the famous seminar on Russian philology led by Vladimir Peretz, well-known for his works on literary theory and studies of ancient Ukrainian medieval literature. Peretz, who was the founder of the so-called philological school, engaged in textual studies, was the first at the university to proclaim the importance of analyzing not only the content of a literary work but also its form. Peretz regarded Drai-Khmara as one of his followers (Peretts, 1922, 3). Awareness of Slavic studies, history, careful research of sources, maximum coverage of data, empiricism, conciseness, presentation of the history of the issue, accurate citation of documents, distinction between reliable and questionable research results, and evidence-based presentation – these are all general scientific principles of Peretz, which Drai followed in his research.

Mykhailo Drai was selected to continue at the university in preparation for a professorship. But due to Kyiv University's evacuation with the outbreak of World War I, he was transferred to St. Petersburg where he worked under the supervision of several local academics: Aleksey Shakhmatov, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Lev Shcherba, Petr Lavrov, studying the Kashubian language and Resian dialects. He also attended lectures by the Serbian linguist Aleksandar Belić and participated in the

Balkan Studies research group at the University. In the city, now called St. Petersburg, he met the Russian poets Osip Mandelstam and Alexander Blok, whose poetry he admired (Asher, 2002, 24).

According to Drai-Khmara's daughter Oksana Asher, he self-identified as a Ukrainian while studying in Petrograd:

> "In the Russian northern city, he felt like a Ukrainian and told his wife that, having embarked on this path, he would rather die than leave it. How prophetic these words were! The events of 1915–1917, the influence of that time, and meetings with interesting people made a strong impression on my father and remained in his memory for a long time. The Ukrainization of Drai-Khmara, under the influence of Vsevolod Hantsov and M. Kushnir, was an important and great event for him, which made a complete revolution in his mind. In Petrograd, he participated in an association of Ukrainian students and attended lectures on Ukrainian history. […] My father began to think and live in a new way" (Asher, 2002, 25–26).

Drai-Khmara's daughter noted two politically active Ukrainian students at St. Petersburg University: Vsevolod Hantsov, who later became a famous linguist and lexicographer and was repressed by the Soviet authorities, and Makar Kushnir, later a journalist and member of the Ukrainian parliament of the Ukrainian Central Rada.

The story of Mykhailo's change of surname is significant for understanding the path of his national self-awareness. Oksana Asher explained that her father augmented his real surname at birth, Drai, which sounded German, although it was a typical Ukrainian Cossack surname, in 1915 due to anti-German moods that prevailed in Petrograd at the outbreak of World War I (Asher, 2002, 26). There were indeed grounds for concern: subjects of German origin were interned in northern Russia, *e.g.*, the German-born student of Kyiv University and future Neoclassicist Oswald Burghardt, the Ukrainian art historian of German origin Fedor Ernst and his brother, the historian and archaeologist Mykola Ernst.

From September 1915, the documents recorded the surname Drai-Khmarov (University Rector, 1915), which means that the surname was Russified: the particle Khmarov was added to the real surname with the patronymic Russian suffix "-ov." On July 4th, 1916, Mykhailo received permission from the Russian Emperor's office to change his surname to Khmarov (Imperial Majesty's Office, 1916). During 1918–1919, Mykhailo signed as Drai-Khmarov. And finally, in 1920, in Kamianets-Podilskyi,

probably under the influence of the national milieu, he Ukrainized his surname: from now on it became Drai-Khmara[1] (Personal card, 1920).

What was Drai-Khmara's perception of the February 1917 Revolution in Russia, which destroyed the Russian monarchy? According to Oksana Asher,

> "Mykhailo Panasovych perceived the Revolution as a national and social liberation. The violence and cruelty with which the revolutionaries came to power were painful for the poet's gentle nature, but he perceived it as a transient phenomenon. Because of his democratic views, Drai-Khmara could not become a communist, but he was not against the revolution and even welcomed it. But his idealistic illusions later cost him his life" (Asher, 2002, 19).

The fact that Drai-Khmara, in a romantic impulse, welcomed the revolution, or at least watched it fascinated, is also evidenced by his poems "Under the Blue of Spring …" and "The Sacred Oriflames Burn …", which he included in the collection *Young Shoots* (Drai-Khmara, 1926, 11). His daughter, when compiling her father's collection of poems in New York (Drai-Khmara, 1964), did not include these poems, being probably afraid to damage her father's reputation as an opponent of the Soviet regime with these texts that welcomed the revolution.

3. The Kamianets-Podilskyi period

Having returned to Ukraine in 1917, Drai-Khmara lectured on Ukrainian literature at teacher training courses in various towns of Podolia. In October 1918 he accepted an invitation to become a faculty member and lecturer in Slavistics at the newly founded Kamianets-Podilskyi University in southwestern Ukraine. Here he taught the histories of Polish, Czech, Serbian and Bulgarian languages and literatures, the Old Slavonic language, and the history of Ukrainian language. He published a unique book of his lectures on Slavic studies, recorded by his students ([Drai-Khmara], 1920).

Not much is known about Drai-Khmara's political views during the Kamianets-Podilskyi period. In 1918 he was the secretary of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Federalists in Kamianets-Podilskyi (*Z universytetskoho zhyttia*, 1918). In a local newspaper, he published an article titled

"Slavic Tragedy," in which he argued for the need for Slavic peoples to unite in the face of the German threat (Drai, 1918; Drai, 1919a; Drai, 1919b). Elements of anti-German propaganda and Slavophilism could be perceived as a legacy of Russian imperial propaganda in the context of the First World War. In addition, anti-German sentiments were shared by a part of Ukrainian society that did not like the fact that Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi was totally dependent on German support during his period of rule from April to November 1918[2]. It is curious that already in the 1990s a legend was spread around Mykhailo Drai-Khmara that he was a leader of a partisan unit that fought against the Bolsheviks during the Kamianets-Podilskyi period of his life (Zapadniuk, 1997).

Drai-Khmara had a conflict with the rector of the university, Ivan Ohienko, who was also the minister of education in the Ukrainian Peoples Republic government of Symon Petliura. Years later, during an interrogation, Drai-Khmara testified:

 "I took the position that was supported by the majority of scholars of the time, namely that science is an apolitical thing. The fact that Rector Ohienko was also a minister could not but affect the fate of Kamianets University, because in Kamianets the authorities changed no less than 2–3 times during the year. In view of this and wishing to preserve the University as one of the centers of Ukrainian culture, I spoke out in the press against Ohienko" (Investigation file of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, 1933, ff. 8a–8r).

Drai-Khmara gave an interview to a local newspaper in which he complained that the rector often left the university unattended, traveling to other cities and abroad, the faculty was not replenished, and the university publishing house did not work well (Zavalniuk, 2009, 5).

The Ukrainian government, which had been forced out of Kyiv by the Bolsheviks, moved to Kamianets-Podilskyi, as well as a large number of intellectuals who supported it. Petliura's government ruled in the city in 1919–1920, but in the autumn of 1920 the Soviet power took over and finally established itself. As Drai-Khmara's wife Nina recalled many years later, most of the intellectuals who had worked in Kamianets-Podilskyi at the time were later persecuted by the Soviet authorities: "you became stigmatized by the simple fact that you were a member of the Ukrainian Kamianets-Podilskyi University, and the Bolsheviks were killing those people, not only non-partisans but also communists […]" (Drai-Khmara, undated, f. 7r).

4. The Kyiv Neoclassicists

In 1923, Drai-Khmara moved to Kyiv and plunged into the literary and scientific life which was gaining momentum. The period of the 1920s and 1930s in Ukrainian culture, when Drai-Khmara's literary and research activities were intense, is in retrospect called the "Executed Renaissance,"[3] "Red Renaissance,"[4] or "Our 1920s." The incredible growth of various branches of Ukrainian culture was due to the recent national uprising of 1917–1921 and stimulated by the Bolshevik policy of Ukrainization in the 1920s, which consisted of increasing the use and facilitating the development of the Ukrainian language, along with promoting other elements of Ukrainian culture in various spheres of public life such as education and publishing. The Executed Renaissance was characterized by the emergence of many different modernist and avantgarde literary trends (symbolism, neorealism, neo-romanticism, futurism, neoclassicism, etc.) and literary organizations discussing and competing with each other.

The period of Ukrainization ended with the period of mass Stalinist terror in the 1930s, which targeted various segments of the population, including writers. There is no exact number of repressed cultural figures and writers. According to one statistic, 259 Ukrainian writers were published in 1930, and only 36 of them were published after 1938. Of the 223 Ukrainian writers who disappeared in the USSR, 17 were shot, 8 committed suicide, 175 were arrested and sent to camps (including those who were shot and died in concentration camps), 16 went missing, and 7 died of natural causes (Lavrinenko, 1959, 12). According to another statistic, one of the biographical reference books in 1928 includes information on more than 900 writers. Twenty years later, only 51 of these were specified in the *Slovnyk ukrainskoi literatury* (Luckyj, 1990, 228).

Having moved to Kyiv, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara joined the literary organization ASPYS (1923–1924) in which the renowned scholar and critic Mykola Zerov set the tone and to which, among others, belonged also the writers and translators Oswald Burghardt and Pavlo Fylypovych (Investigation file of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, 1933, f. 20a). After the breakup of ASPYS, the "Kyiv Neoclassicists" emerged as a separate group. It was an informal alliance of poets, writers, translators, linguists, and literary scholars, that existed until the second half of the 1930s, when some of the members were persecuted by the Soviet regime. The core of the group consisted of five poets: the leader Mykola Zerov, Maksym Rylskyi, Pavlo Fylypovych, Oswald Burghardt, and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara. The

name "Kyiv Neoclassicists" was created by their opponents, but later the members of the group began to use it as a self-name. In his famous sonnet "Swans" (1928), Drai-Khmara called his fellow poets a "Fivefold Cluster" or "Cluster of Five". To be precise, the English translation does not quite capture the essence of the image, while the author talked about a bunch of grapes with five berries. That is, each grape berry represents one poet.

The Neoclassicists opposed several trends in Ukrainian literature at the same time: proletarian literature, the avant-garde, symbolism, romanticism-populist and realistic literature of the 19th century (Zerov, 2003, 355–356, 540). For Marxist critics and proletarian writers, the Neoclassicists were members of an intelligentsia that had been formed in the pre-revolutionary period, that is, an ideologically and socially hostile group.

In the 1920s, Mykola Zerov proclaimed the motto "Ad fontes" which meant "back to the sources" of the Ukrainian literature and European literatures without Russian intermediary. Zerov's order was to some extent similar to the famous cry of the Italian Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries to go back to antique (Roman, Greek) sources. The cluster orientated itself artistically towards the European tradition and devoted itself to researching and translating texts into Ukrainian. They believed that such efforts could save Ukrainian literature from the regionalism and provincialism that threatened it.

The Neoclassicists called Greco-Roman antiquity, French Parnassianism, the Pushkin Pleiad of the "Golden Age," Russian Symbolists and Acmeists, and several Ukrainian intellectual writers of the 19th century their teachers and predecessors. They were particularly close the Polish Scamander group, Paul Valery, Thomas Stearns Eliot, and in some way, Rainer Maria Rilke.

A characteristic feature of the Kyiv Neoclassicists as a literary group was their respect for tradition. Fulfilling the mission of cultural traders in the Ukrainian literary process of the first third of 20th century, the Neoclassicists opposed the hermeticism of proletarian art (Kravchenko, 1991, 207) with their own openness to the achievements of world culture. Aestheticizing the past, as literary scholars and translators, they interpreted historically and geographically distant texts. Among the various ancient periods, the priority belonged to Greco-Roman antiquity. Zerov translated Virgil's *Aeneid*, Burghardt transferred *The Song of the Nibelungs* into Ukrainian, studied *Beowulf* and *The Poetic Edda*, while Rylskyi was interested in medieval troubadour lyrics. The neoclassical writers' attraction to literatures distant in time and space was part of

their identity as creators of the "high" canon, characterized by distance from the practical, which can take the form of historical remoteness (Yampolskiy, 1998). However, the neoclassical writers were sensitive to new developments in literature, especially modernism in its various national variants. For example, they prepared an anthology of translations of French poetry of the late 19th and early 20th centuries into Ukrainian and published an anthology of Russian poetry. The European avant-garde, German Expressionism *e.g.*, was not rejected either.

The Neoclassicists were elite intellectuals who created refined poetry that was at dissonance with Soviet mass literature. The neoclassical poetry was urban, in contrast to the romantic poetry that glorified the countryside and nature. In this respect however, Drai-Khmara was an exception: his verses contain a lot of observation and feelings about nature and village life.

All the Neoclassicists were philologists and taught at universities. They represented a new type of poet: the scholar-poet, the archivist-poet. They created "literature on the basis of literature" which means that their texts were rich in allusions, reminiscences, plots, and images from antique literature and different European literatures. Accordingly, the Neoclassicists' works required an educated, intellectual reader who could decode their texts. The Kyiv Neoclassicists cultivated traditional refined poetic forms such as the sonnet, rondelles, octaves, etc. They stood for literature with high artistic ambition; they encouraged writers to study, improve their skills, and polish the form of their poetry.

Researchers usually consider Kyivan neoclassicism as one of many stylistic trends of Ukrainian modernism, as a special project within the 20th-century Ukrainian literature – "conservative modernization" (Pavlychko, 1999, 191) or "conservative modernism" (Babak & Dmitriev, 2021, 338). As for the place of neoclassicism in the system of modernism, scholars differ: some researchers note the weak integration of Ukrainian neoclassicism with modernism and deeper ties with traditional classical literature (Nalyvaiko, 2006, 328), while others characterize the work of Neoclassicists in grafting ancient forms and styles on the tree of national literature as "pure" modernism (Morenets, 2002, 228). However, most researchers agree that the Neoclassicists were "archaic innovators" for whom "the path to the real *future* was only through the *past*" (Yermolenko, 2011, 14). On the one hand, they relied on an ancient literary tradition, and on the other hand, they modernized Ukrainian literature by introducing unusual poetic sizes, themes, and images.

5. Drai-Khmara's poetic transformation

Drai-Khmara's first published poem was in Russian in 1911. Nine years later, his first poetry cycle "Young Spring" was printed in Ukrainian. During his lifetime, he managed to release only one collection of Ukrainian poetry, entitled *Prorosten [Young Shoots]* (1926). His other collections *Dewy Fields* (1924)*, The Iron Horizon* (1929), and *Sunny Marches* (1935) were never published.

The collection *Young Shoots* included poems of the pre-neoclassical period. Drai-Khmara's musically sounding verse, flickering of senses, emotionality, and sensitivity connect him with the Symbolist school. In one of the program poems, the author speaks about his impressionistic perception of the world:

My eyes embrace the world around me,
For lines and tones enchant my sight –
The strong sun's ploughshares deeply furrow
My fallow land with blades of light.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 29)

Drai-Khmara's poetic language, as well as the title of the collection *Prorosten*, has its own peculiarity: it is full of rarely used, outdated words and sometimes the author's neologisms. Drai-Khmara admitted:

I cherish words vast and full sounding,
Like honey scented, flushed with wine;
Old words, that in lost depths abounding
Were sought through ages mute in vain.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 32)

On the one hand, it is a kind of phonetic poetry, aimed at expressing the musicality of the word which is in line with symbolism. On the other hand, Drai-Khmara's renaming familiar things around him with new words is a kind of de-automation of the reader's perception and is very similar to Russian adamism as a part of acmeism which stood for a "primordial" view on the world, the "semantic rediscovery" of things, and the restoration of the adequacy of words and things (Kikhnei, 2005, 41):

Once again like the first man
I've given all the creatures names;
I've called the stars my sisters,
And the moon my brother.

(Translated by Michael M. Naydan)[5]

The Neoclassicists Oswald Burghardt and Maksym Rylskyi welcomed their colleague's lexical "collection" of rare, non-banal words, even though it semantically complicated and opaqued the text (Klen, 1943, 187; Rylskyi, 1986, 24).

Did Drai-Khmara, who was counted as one of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, actually produce neoclassical poetry? His carefully constructed phraseology and polished words, in complete harmony with the form of the poem, historical portraits of cities, which he loved – all these features of his poetry written in the 1930s lead us to see in him a Neoclassicist.

Recognizing common ideological and aesthetic principles, even if they were very generally and vaguely formulated, the Kyiv Neoclassicists themselves repeatedly doubted that there was unity among them at the level of style. "Although I came out of neoclassicism," explained Neoclassicist Oswald Burghardt, "I was not and am not a Neoclassicist. I am more of a neo-romanticist, just like Rylskyi. But can Fylypovych and Drai-Khmara be called pure Neoclassicists?" (Nyzhankivskyi, 1946, 3). Burghardt remarked in Drai-Khmara's individual style "a wavering between symbolism and acmeism, between acmeism and expressionism" (O. B., 1926, 262). Drai-Khmara testified that while the Neoclassicists Zerov and Rylskyi cultivated the classical style, he felt to be a symbolist for a long time, admiring the Russian symbolist Alexander Blok and the Ukrainian symbolist Pavlo Tychyna (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 496).

Drai-Khmara seemed to be at a crossroads of different literary movements. His poetry is a fertile field for literary critics to debate what his style was. Impressionistic landscape sketches, terrifying surrealistic dreams, and bizarre imaginist mix of images are found combined in his poetical texts.

In his diary, Drai-Khmara wrote about himself: "I have not grown into my epoch" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 339), meaning that his detachment from the contemporary moment was caused by long years of studying at the gymnasium, college, and university, "wandering in the fog of archaic philology." In the second half of the 1920s, his worldview began to change as he worked on upgrading himself and "growing into the epoch". Like his colleagues Rylskyi and Burghardt he could not completely escape the dominant Soviet trend in his poetic work. His turning to socialist realism was not sudden. "In that fifth hungry spring I fell in love…" (1924), a symbolic poem with sophisticated imagery which was to be included in the unpublished collection *Dewy Fields*, was interpreted by the writer Mykola Khvylovyi as a poet's confession that for five years he had not

understood the Bolshevik revolution, and only after accepting it his poems were "imbued with a vigorous faith in a new day" (Dziuba, 1989, 32):

In that fifth hungry spring I fell in love

With you, into the depth and highs above.

And I was blessing that cursed path of mine

Flooded by darkened crimson wine.

(Translated by Iryna Dybko, 1990, 2).

The collection *Young Shoots* (1926) ends with the poem "To the Village" (1925), in which the hero, who has lost his way in a snowstorm while searching for a village suffering from "wars, famine, pestilence," is shown "Lenin with a clear forehead" who pointed him the way. The reference to the communist leader from whom salvation comes is a mandatory initiation, a "ritual of communion with Lenin" that legitimizes the author's right to be a Soviet writer (Kharkhun, 2009, 210, 212). In a collection of her father's poems, Oksana Asher just dropped the lines about Lenin from the poem (Drai-Khmara, 1964, 70–71), apparently not wanting to "tarnish" his image.

Between 1922–1927, Drai-Khmara wrote the poem "The Turn," but on Mykola Zerov's advice, he decided not to publish it because it was "too abstract and minor" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 389) and the authorities requested the optimistic mood of contemporary literature. In a metaphorical manner, the author described his psychological problems with the perception of the bloody revolution and the cruel historical reality. The poet's difficult psychological state is evident from the very first lines:

No flood of sadness ever

Did totally surround

   As on this day,

Nor did I search so far and keenly,

   With anxious

   And impassioned

    vision

Into the sapphire misty shore

   Of dreaming shadows.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 33)

The poem "Take the Strict and Clear Path …" opened the unpublished collection *The Iron Horizon*, compiled around 1929, which, according to Drai-Khmara, "contained many revolutionary poems" and testified to his "moving towards Soviet life" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 520)[6]. The poem

used the quasi-avant-garde motif of calling for the deconstruction of the old world (Bondar, 1998, 61) typical of socialist realism: "Break the centuries-old rock of tradition, shake off the ashes of an unwilling life."

Paradoxically, in the early 1930s, Drai-Khmara was moving in two directions at the same time: in some poems he was trying to "modernize" himself in accordance with the requirements of the Communist party, while in his other poems neoclassical tendencies became very clear. The poet increasingly turns to the sonnet genre and raised historiosophical topics typical of his colleagues in the cluster of five. The writer's concept of the word changes and rationalism overcame the emotionality. If in his earlier poetry Baudelaire's synesthesia and Verlaine's musicality dominated, in the 1930s the acmeist image of the word-stone appeared. The word becomes materialized, tangible, and the writer is likened to a miner searching for minerals or a jeweler polishing precious gems. A dozen of his poetical texts written on a vacation in Sochi in 1930 are neoclassical.

6. Socialist realist poetry collection

In the late 1920s, mass arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals organized by the Soviet authorities began to take place. Kyiv Neoclassicist Maksym Rylskyi was imprisoned for several months in 1931. In the same year, another Neoclassicist, Oswald Burghardt, emigrated to Germany, feeling the threat of repression. In February 1933, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara was arrested on accusations of belonging to a counter-revolutionary organization, but due to lack of evidence he was released (Investigation file, 1933). After a three-month imprisonment, in the years 1933–1935 Drai-Khmara compiled a collection *Sunny Marches*, which was supposed to demonstrate his ideological rebirth to the authorities. The title of the collection strangely resonated with the exquisite poetry collection of the most famous Ukrainian symbolist poet Pavlo Tychyna, *Sunny Clarinets* (1918), whom Drai-Khmara greatly respected and to whom he dedicated his poem "To the Poet". However, while Tychyna's early collection was full of subtle musical polyphony, Drai-Khmara's collection sounded unambiguously political fanfare whose forced optimistic mood becomes especially apparent when comparing the texts of this collection with the earlier ones.

The collection contained a symbolic program poem, a self-confession entitled "Second Birth" (1935). During his second imprisonment, being

interrogated, the poet wrote a statement, that is a specific source in terms of the veracity of the information provided in it: "My rebirth. From 1929 to 1933 I perceived Soviet life with my mind. In 1933–35, I perceived it with both my mind and feeling. I was reborn in my work. Every new work I wrote was a victory over the old worldview. The book *Sunny Marches*, finalized by August 1935, is a document testifying that I accepted the Soviet life completely, and totally" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 521). About the impetus for his rebirth, he wrote:

> "Although I saw only the Dneprostroy, the mines and metallurgical plants of Donbas, it was enough to realize how amazingly fast the face of our land was changing under the pressure of the Bolshevik will. The successes of socialist development, the abundance of products in the country and the military might of the state convinced me of the final and irrevocable victory of the proletarian revolution. I began to write poetry in the manner of socialist realism under the influence of all these things" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 525).

Drai-Khmara's shift to socialist realism was his conscious choice after his arrest and a series of demonstrative trials of well-known Ukrainian intellectuals. It was an attempt to deceive himself and the system. Fact is that after the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 and the founding of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR, socialist realism was proclaimed the main current of Soviet literature and literary criticism. The other style trends were supplanted, their representatives were devastatingly criticized, which turned into political accusations. Writers who decided to adapt to the requirements of the new style and communist ideology, such as Maksym Rylskyi or Drai-Khmara, experienced a "breaking point" in their literary careers and personal drama (Bondar, 1998).

Socialist realism is often seen as a "a specific variant of the global modernist culture of its time" (Groys, 2000, 109). Eclectic in nature, socialist realism parasitizes on other styles (Boym, 2000, 98), incorporating realism, classicism, avant-garde, etc. The "outer shell" of socialist realism was derived from realism (economic determinism, schematism in poetry, tendency to be educational, excessive typification of characters), while "internally" it is consonant with "the most radical kind of romance that grows out of a voluntaristic worldview" (Pakharenko, 2009, 256). From romanticism, social realism borrows the struggle of the new (progressive) with the old (backward) (Boym, 2000, 98). On the other

hand, "the political power appropriated and adapted the imagination of the revolutionary avantgarde" to construct social realism (Gutkin, 1999, 151). Monumentality and heroism with the type of hero who sets his public duty above his individual interests, were adopted from classicism.

With such a "diversity" and multi-component nature of socialist realism, it was difficult for critics to determine which literary text met the requirements of the "modern socialist day" and which contained "remnants of the past." Maksym Rylskyi, the former Neoclassicist colleague who had already made his transition to a politically acceptable poet, reviewed Drai-Khamara's manuscript of *Sunny Marches*: "The book was written by a master. This can be seen from the richness of its language, from the rhythms, rhymes, from the choice of images. Thematically, the book reflects the spirit of our day: the poet is in love with struggle and the process of building, which is so characteristic of our time" (Asher, 1959, 40). The review was not entirely complimentary, as Rylskyi criticized some aspects: "Doubts arise enveloped in symbols in "Second Birth." It is probably the author's confession, his renouncement of the old poetical creation and the blessing of the new poetical development; but all this is written in such misty words and images that I am wondering if it does reach the aim which the author would like to achieve" (Asher, 1959, 43). The reviewer nevertheless concluded that Drai-Khmara's collection was worthy of publication (Rylskyi, 1935, f. 2r). However, on January 29, 1935, the Khudozhna Literatura Publishers refused to print the book without explaining the reason (Khudozhnia Literatura Publishers, 1935, 1).

Sunny Marches was supposed to begin with the same-named poem, initially titled "March of the First Cavalry" (Drai-Khmara, 1922–1935, 432), containing a glorification of Stalin, and to end with the poem "Lenin's Funeral" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1935). Drai-Khmara contributed to the creation of a pantheon of Soviet heroes by writing portraits of the Austrian socialist Koloman Wallisch, Bolshevik field commander Vasyl Bozhenko, and Soviet polar pilot-hero Sigismund Levanevsky. He praised industrialization in his poems "Donbas" and "On Khortytsia," urbanism and collectivism in "Socialist City." In the poem "October", the Soviet state is presented as a Bolshevik ship that overcomes obstacles and sails into a glorious future (Drai-Khmara, 1934).

Oksana Asher wrote about her father's attempts to adapt to Soviet conditions: "Even on the eve of his arrest, Dray-Khmara believed it possible for him to be rehabilitated in the eyes of the Soviet government. Although he was never a communist sympathizer, he did not feel himself actively

a counter-revolutionist; and if his poetry expressed ideas that were in disharmony with officially approved opinions, he still felt he had made definite efforts to remain an acceptable member of the existing society, in which it was his lot to live" (Asher, 1959, 42). Asher considered her father's attempts to write "modern" poetry unsuccessful because he could not abandon the aesthetics and "write pure propaganda" (Asher, 1959, 42).

To be precise, Drai-Khmara's post-neoclassical collection was not purely social realist, the utilitarian function did not completely replace the aesthetic one in his texts, and public discourse did not fully remove private discourse (Bondar, 1998, 62). The last collection included several clearly localized biographical "Kyiv" texts of the "old" neoclassical type, for example, "Winter's Tale" and "Symphony". The poem "Thomas More" is a typical neoclassical example of 'literature based on literature', taking the famous "Utopia" as a starting point.

7. The Romanian topic in the travel poem "Constanța"

Drai-Khamara's collection *Sunny Marches* includes a poem entitled "Constanța", one of the last works written by Drai-Khmara in freedom, a week before his second arrest[7]. It is an autobiographical unrhymed poetic text in the genre of travel notes, but written in iambic pentameter. The author retrospectively describes his research trip from Zagreb to Romania in the summer of 1913 during which he collected materials for his graduation thesis on the 18th-century Croatian writer Andrija Kačić Miošić. The author traveled along the Danube from Beograd to Orșova, then by train to Bucharest and Constanța, where he had had to wait for a ship to Odesa for a week. Not having caught the ship to Odesa, he took a train to Galați where he crossed the Danube and ended up in Reni.

This is perhaps the first time that Constanța, the prominent harbour city known as Tomis in Greco-Roman antiquity, figures in Ukrainian literature. The author describes his stay in the city and everyday life in more detail: how he buys coffee "thick and black as pitch", with a glass of water that costed "cinci bani". He uses some Romanian words to express the local environment. When he feels very sad and lonely, he visits Ovid's monument. In Constanța, the poet also met a sailor from Russia who participated in the uprising on the Potemkin ship. The sailor's story is a separate insert in the narrative. The story turned to ideological themes, condemning the Russian Empire as "the country of slavery and

wild tyranny" which is quite expected, since the poem was intended for a socialist realist collection.

8. Translations and literary studies

Translation was a part of the neoclassical aesthetic program, because it enriched the recipient literature, providing it with forms and styles that it may not have had of its own. Globally, from the point of view of the Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian translations had a "nation-building essence" (Strikha, 2020, 248). During the period of the Executed Renaissance, Ukrainian translations were actively used by Ukrainian readers and "became another argument for their consumers in favor of the completeness of the Ukrainian literature and the Ukrainian nation" (Strikha, 2020, 249).

Drai-Khmara was a polyglot, like his other Kyiv colleagues, mastering nineteen languages – Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, Polish, Kashubian, Romanian, Czech, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Old Slavonic, Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, French, German, Italian, Finnish, English. Most of his translations were not published during his lifetime, and several dozens of them still remain only in manuscript.

Drai-Khmara's translations of French poetry are the most numerous. For the anthology of new French poetry, which was compiled by Kyiv Neoclassicists in the 1930s and was never published, he translated Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, etc. Moreover, he translated the runes of the Finnish epic poem Kalevala and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

In literary studies, Drai-Khmara focused on the history of literature, rarely acting as a critic and conducting mostly academic research of literary phenomena remote in time. Each of the Kyiv Neoclassicists worked on his own favorite field. Oswald Burghardt, for example, specialized in Western European literature, in particular German, English, and American, Maksym Rylsky in Polish, and Mykola Zerov in Ukrainian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Drai-Khmara's expertise was in Slavic studies. His first major literary research, which he wrote at Kyiv University, was dedicated to the Croatian writer Andrija Kačić Miošić.

As a cultural transmitter, Drai-Khmara introduced the modern poetry of Belarus to Ukrainian readers, including the so-called revival poets Maxim Bahdanovich and Yanka Kupala. He published a preface to the

works of the prominent Polish modernist and member of *Young Poland* Kazimierz Tetmajer.

Neoclassicists often explored authors with whom they felt in tune "beyond the borders of time and nation" (Fylypovych 1991, 94) – "Kulturträger", anticologists, formalists. For example, Drai-Khmara presents Maxim Bahdanovich as a Belarusian Neoclassicist. He describes him as "a conscious master of words, not a poet 'by the grace of God'" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 258), who has perfect knowledge of Greek and Latin, is fascinated by Baudelaire and Heredia, and has introduced new forms, including sonnets, Western European themes and motifs into Belarusian poetry.

The achievement of Drai-Khmara and other Kyiv Neoclassicists was that they revised and reformed the old realistic-romantic literary canon of the 19th century. The old canon was monocentric, built around the figure of the national romantic poet Taras Shevchenko. The Neoclassicists created an alternative polycentric canon, which was remarkable from a gender point of view, as one of the top writers in it became a female modernist, Lesia Ukrainka, highly regarded by the Kyiv Neoclassicists as their forerunner.

From the point of view of methodology, Drai-Khmara's literary studies are remarkable for their "intellectual eclecticism". He applied Peretz's philological analysis, biographical, comparative, and historical approaches, and used elements of formalist immanent research and sociological-Marxist method. Drai-Khmara is considered to be one of the founders of Ukrainian comparative studies.

Kyiv Neoclassicists considered texts of the Ukrainian writers in the context of European literatures. For example, Drai-Khmara found out how Lesia Ukrainka transformed and adapted the Serbian plot about the mythical magic woman *villa* in her own poem and searched for South Slavic folklore sources of Taras Shevchenko's poetry. However, the study of borrowed motifs and plots was never the neoclassicist's goal in itself: "I am not studying motifs as such, but the whole literary work", noticed Drai-Khmara in his diary (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 382).

As was typical for the epoch, the search for genetic and contact connections and sources of transfers of plots and images predominated in Drai-Khmara's studies, while much less attention was paid to typological similarities. The scholar emphasized that it is important not only to trace the transfer, but also to find out how the material received was transformed (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 229). Drai-Khmara's comparativist approach can be

defined as a combination of historicized and immanent approaches with the first dominating.

Drai-Khmara was the only one in Ukraine who responded to the first congress of Slavic philologists held in Prague in 1929, which is considered to be the emergence of Czech structuralism. He reviewed an article by structuralist and former formalist Roman Jakobson "Über die heutigen Voraussetzungen der russischen Slavistik". Jacobson's article became the push for Drai-Khmara's expression of his own program of Ukrainian Slavic studies. While Jacobson talked about theoretical problems, the Kyiv scholar offered a very practical plan. First, he proposed to create a commission at the Academy of Sciences to study the culture and socioeconomic life of the Slavic peoples. Secondly, he argued about the need to draw up a plan for publishing Slavic translated fiction. Thirdly, he considered it necessary to establish contacts between Ukrainian writers and scholars, and their counterparts in the Western Slavic realm, and to organize trips to research Western Slavic countries. However, Drai-Khmara not only adapted Jacobson's ideas to the needs of Ukrainian Slavic studies, but also revised them from the standpoint of subjectivity (Babak & Dmitriev, 2021, 397–407). If Jakobson's idea was to use the achievements of the formal method developed in Russia to study other Slavic literatures, Drai-Khmara, speaking on behalf of one of these other literatures, proposed to turn it from an object of application of this method into a subject. That is, he said that Ukrainian comparativists should apply the structural (functional) method to the study of Western and Southern Slavic literatures, which were not enough examined from the point of view of Ukrainian Slavistics.

It was a common Soviet practice for scholars to be sent to give public lectures to educate workers, villagers, and teachers. After going on a trip to Zaporizhzhia, Stalino (now Donetsk), and Makiivka in the summer of 1930, lecturing workers at mines and factories, Drai-Khmara wrote two articles on the problem of Ukrainization in accordance with the official party line, *i.e.* "Why Should the Proletarian Donbas Be Ukrainianized?" and "Ukrainian Culture – to the Masses".

The policy of Ukrainization, implemented by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine first in 1923, provided state support for the Ukrainian language and the expansion of its use (Shkandrij, 1992, 16). According to Myroslav Shkandriy, "the greatest successes of the Ukrainization policy were in the spread of literacy, in the establishment of an educational system, and in the creation of a large number of publications and publishing houses to serve the needs of a Ukrainian

reading public. It was far less successful, however, in its attempts to Ukrainize industrial workers and trade unions, government institutions and the party" (Shkandrij, 1992, 17). Ukrainization as a part of the USSR's policy of "indigenization" was "aimed at neutralizing the national liberation aspirations of the Ukrainian people to strengthen Bolshevik power in the Ukrainian Republic" by drawing to its side the Ukrainian masses who supported national slogans during the 1917–1921 liberation struggle (Bondarchuk & Danylenko). It was a temporary concession to the Ukrainian people, followed by a period of "tightening the screws" – Stalin's repressions in the second half of the 1930s.

Drai-Khmara's publicist article "Why Should the Donbas Proletarian Be Ukrainianized?" raised the problem of the functioning of the international (Russian) and national (Ukrainian) languages in Ukraine. The author argues that since the USSR established the dictatorship of the proletariat, "the proletariat should take the most active part in the creation of Ukrainian socialist culture." In the Donbas, workers who are Russian by nationality should be Ukrainianized, and Russian-speaking Ukrainians should be de-Russified, "which means they should be cleansed of those Russian layers that have stuck to them during the long Russification practice of the tsarist governments" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 330). Drai-Khmara states that the Ukrainian language is not so poor compared to Russian, which "sucked blood from colonial peoples" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 331–332). He believed that the issue of introducing an international language was not urgent, and instead called for the study of national languages, *i.e.*, Ukrainian in Ukraine. In the article "Ukrainian Culture – to the Masses," Drai-Khmara stated that Ukrainization covered various segments of the population, not only in the countryside but also in the city: engineers, doctors, lawyers, and civil servants. Ukrainization contributed to the unprecedented development of Ukrainian art, the emergence of a large number of writers and literary groups (Drai-Khmara, 1930a).

Despite the bravura tone of these newspaper pieces, Drai-Khmara was well aware that the official authorities would continue to impose the Russian language in Ukraine. An entry of Drai-Khmara's diary on April 8th, 1927, in which he shared his impressions of a language incident with Maxim Gorky, is indicative in this regard (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 380): The editor of the Ukrainian publishing house *Knyhospilka*, Oleksa Slisarenko, asked Maxim Gorky, the leading Russian writer and a transmitter of Communist party ideology, for permission to translate and publish his novel *Mother* into Ukrainian. Gorky, who advocated the "universal"

Russian language, wrote Slisarenko a letter in response, in which he denied the need to translate the novel into Ukrainian, dismissively called the Ukrainian language a dialect, and accused the defenders of the Ukrainian language of oppressing Russians (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 380).

Drai-Khmara called Gorky's statement "an example of real, authentic, unqualified chauvinism, yet at the same time we Ukrainians are accused of chauvinism, only because we are Ukrainians" (Asher, 1959, 23). On the efforts of Russians to give Russian the status of a "world language," Drai-Khmara added:

"According to Gorky, the Ukrainians must build together with the Russians the Tower of Babel (because what is this if not the Tower of Babel, this world language?), must renounce their own language and their own culture, created by a nation of forty million during a millennium. All this is only to prevent any obstacle to own 'brothers'! No, it is precisely the immortal (Russian) chauvinism of the old regime which prevents people from reaching mutual understanding and not what the Ukrainians are doing or rather, have already accomplished – transforming the 'dialect' into a language" (Asher, 1959, 23).

Drai-Khmara was forced by circumstances to resort to the sociological method, often called Marxist, supported by the authorities since the late 1920s. In the context of methodological and theoretical pluralism, the sociological method, which partially continued the traditions of the historical school, was one of the most widespread approaches of Ukrainian literary studies along with the formal method.

For a long time, Soviet literary criticism used the terms "sociological approach," "Marxist approach," and "Marxist-Leninist" as synonyms, which is not entirely correct, since the sociological approach in Ukrainian literary criticism appeared long before the Soviet era, had its roots in the 19th century, and had its adherents, such as Mykhailo Drahomanov, Ivan Franko and others. In the early 1930s, with the establishment of the dominance of Marxist-Leninist criticism, the only "scientific" method was declared to be Marxist-Leninist (Biletskyi, 1966, 53), which is essentially an artificial construct, supposed to meet the demands of the Soviet society for a new philological toolkit that would allow maneuvering between science and communist ideology.

Examples of sociological analysis have been interspersed in Drai-Khmara's texts since the 1920s, but their number increased in the

1930s. For example, the researcher demonstrated how Liubov Yanovska's realistic prose described the lives of two social strata – "oppressed, enslaved people" and the intelligentsia (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 296). He looked at the writings of the Belarusian revivalist poet Yanka Kupala, loyal to the Soviet government mainly through the prism of his "socialist position" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 281).

In some cases, Drai-Khmara's generally "neutral" literary-critical texts contained tendentious insertions, endings, Marxist clichéd formulations whose appearance in the structure of the texts was not due to the logic of the plot but was dictated by the author's desire to demonstrate his commitment to the dominant discourse at least in such a "mechanical" way. For example, an insightful and thorough article "The Artistic Path of Kazimierz Tetmajer" ends with unexpected conclusions that "almost all of Tetmajer's texts are inspired by the reactionary ideology of the petty bourgeois, an apologist for private property," so his work is "not in tune with our epoch" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 280).

Starting in the late 1920s, the Kyiv Neoclassicists did not stay away from the genres of self-justification and self-defense. They practiced the genre of remorse and self-criticism, popular in Marxist-Leninist criticism (Kharkhun, 2009, 115), in the form of open letters to the editorial boards of periodicals. The popularity of open letters and public declarations can be explained, on the one hand, by the situation of the public literary discussion, and, on the other hand, by the socialization of the creative process, which was typical of totalitarian culture in general, when the criticized author had to comment on his own work in a nonliterary way, rejecting the accusations of critics who gave his work a political rather than a literary assessment. Drai-Khmara wrote two slightly different open letters to the newspaper *Proletarska Pravda* and the almanac *Literaturnyi Yarmarok*, in which he justified himself for the sonnet "Swans".

In the newspaper *Reconstructor*, published by the Kyiv Agricultural Institute where Drai-Khmara taught, he was criticized for his "political indifference, detachment from life, and unpreparedness for lectures" (*Sotsfak povynen pereity vid rozmov do roboty*, 1930, 2), which was seen as "sabotage" of socialist development. In the article with the remarkable title "In the Case of Self-Criticism," Drai-Khmara denied his political indifference and argued that the course of lectures he gave was "so elementary that a professor having many years of experience does not need to prepare for it" (Drai-Khmara, 1930b, 4).

9. Academic positions and linguistic studies

The Kyiv Neoclassicists, including Drai-Khmara, belonged to the academic elite of Ukraine at the time. Having moved to Kyiv from Kamianets-Podilskyi, Drai-Khmara held leading positions in many scientific and educational institutions (Chernetsky, 2005, 27–29). He taught Ukrainian at the Kamenev Higher United Military School, Ukrainian studies as a non-staff professor at the Kyiv Medical Institute, Ukrainian language and literature at the Kyiv Agricultural Institute.

As well as other Kyiv Neoclassicists, Drai-Khmara made a huge contribution to the development of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences founded in 1918 by the government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi. During the 1920s and 1930s, he worked at the academic commission for completing the Dictionary of Living Ukrainian Language and at the Commission for Researching the History of the Ukrainian Language. He was a researcher of the Kyiv Chair of Linguistics where he led a seminar on Polish and Czech languages and literatures, a staff researcher of the Institute of Linguistics where he headed the Slavic department, and a full member of the Historical-Literary Society at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences where he delivered several research reports.

Drai-Khmara's main academic positions were related to linguistics. Nevertheless, very few of his linguistic articles have survived in comparison to his work on the history of literature. Among his lost research papers was "The Romanian Element in the Vocabulary of Kukuly Village, Olhopol District" (1923).

Only one linguistic research paper has been published, "Fragments of a 14th-Century Mena Parchment Aprakos", in which, using paleographic and linguistic analysis, the scholar determined the time and place of writing of an ancient document found in the 1890s in the basement of a church near Minsk. The article was published in a volume co-edited by Drai-Khmara together with the prominent historian, philologist and orientalist Ahatanhel Krymskyi, *Collection of the Commission for Research of the History of the Ukrainian Language* (Drai-Kmara, 1931). Vasyl Simovych, the only critical reviewer of this work, noted its "outdated St. Petersburg method" and attributed it to the "early period" of the author's linguistic studies (Simovych, 1937, 336).

Drai-Khmara himself wrote a devastating review of Polish language textbooks by Arasimowicz and Fedorow for the journal *On the Linguistic Front*. Drai-Khmara used the "method of exposure, attack and scourging"

aimed at identifying ideological enemies (Kharkhun, 2009, 113). The reviewer argued that "the book by Arasimowicz and Fedorov is imbued with tendencies hostile to the interests of the proletariat and has nothing to do with the principles of Marxist-Leninist science" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1932, 1). Disputing the definitions of language given by the textbook authors and appealing to Marx and Engels, Drai-Khmara argues that "language is one of the manifestations of class unity, that it is an instrument of class struggle, in the conditions of the Soviet Union – an instrument of socialist development" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1932, 2).

10. Response to Drai-Khmara's work

Analyzing articles on Drai-Khmara's poetry and literary criticism in newspapers and magazines, one can reconstruct the critical discourse around him and trace how it was changing over the years.

Drai-Khmara's poetry collection *Prorosten* (*Young Shoots*) received the greatest response from critics, but only a narrow circle of friends reacted positively to the book. The main accusation against Drai-Khmara was that his book was completely out of date, because it did not reflect the Soviet reality and social problems: "Imagine that you are forced to eat steep, steep millet porridge cooked the day before yesterday: it is not tasty, it is bitter, it is hard to turn the tongue in your mouth. You will feel exactly the same way reading Drai-Khmara's book of poems *Young Shoots*," wrote one of the Marxist critics (Khutorian, 1926, 4). Another critic commented: "as a contemporary poet, Drai-Khmara is not alive", "[his collection] is timeless in its content" (Dovhan, 1926, 121). Readers also accused Drai-Khmara of rarely using free verses, which, in their opinion, were more suitable for modern poetry than, for instance, polished boring iambics (Dovhan, 1926, 122).

Marxist readers did not like the poet's rarely used, outdated, unclear vocabulary: "The entire collection gives the impression of a museum of rarities that hasn't been heated for several years: it's cold, not everything is clear, though sometimes interesting" (Dovhan, 1926, 122). In addition, the Neoclassicist was accused of having a pessimistic vision of the countryside and not describing progress in villages (Lakyza, 1926, 49; Dolengo, 1925, 71; Dolenho, 1926, 7). Drai-Khmara commented on the accusation in a letter to his friend, the writer Ivan Dniprovskyi:

"There is neither a tractor, nor electricity, nor a country correspondent, nor pioneers in my poetry, but to tell the truth, I have not seen these things in the village and I cannot force my imagination to describe what is probably 1% of the country life […]. But my 'sad' (as you say) worldview does not coincide with the official optimistic one, and that's why I am not modern. However, I am not the only one […]. There must be some objective reasons that make everyone sad" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 409).

The most striking episode in a series of attacks on Drai-Khmara was a case with the publication of his controversial sonnet "Swans" (1928). Drai-Khmara released his sonnet at the time when the Neoclassicists were heavily attacked for their position in the literary debates and their work was often considered irrelevant and counterrevolutionary.

The neoclassical sonnet described swans that swam on a lake, but when the ice began to bind the surface, they broke it with their wings. The sonnet ended with tercets, which critics interpreted as an allegory of the five Kyiv Neoclassicists who disagreed with Soviet policies that restricted their freedom:

O Five unconquered, though the cold be long,
No snow can muffle your triumphant song
Which breaks the ice of small despairs and fears:

Rise, swans, and higher to bright Lyra homing
Pierce through the night of servitude to spheres
Where, all intense, the sea of life is foaming.
    (Translated by Oksana Asher, edited by Pudraic Colum, 1959, 35)

In this sonnet, Marxist critics saw "a hidden reactionary idea under the label of 'pure art'". The poem was interpreted as "the attacks of a class enemy who is rising up against the proletariat, whom we must beat" (Kovalenko, 1930, 107–108). The poet was obliged to write two open letters. He explained that he had written his poem under the influence of Mallarmé's sonnet about a swan, which he had translated into Ukrainian, and that by the cluster of five he meant the French unanimist poets of the "Abbey group", the founders of the Abbaye de Créteil, whose poetry he translated a lot. Yet, the draft of his sonnet contained a dedication: "Dedicated to my comrades," and a special ironic interlude-commentary included in the almanac where the sonnet was published indicated that it was still about the Kyivan poets.

In addition to the Marxist critics' responses, there were also more serious resolutions issued by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine concerning the Kyiv Neoclassicists. The June 1926 resolution of the Politburo Plenum on the Results of Ukrainization commented on the slogan of orientation toward Europe as an attempt to guide Ukraine's economy toward capitalist development and "separation from the fortress of the international revolution, the capital of the USSR – Moscow" (Lejtes & Jašek, 1986, 300–301). In the Politburo resolution on the Party's Policy in the Field of Ukrainian Literature from June 1927, the Neoclassicists were mentioned as Ukrainian bourgeois writers whose work reflected anti-proletarian tendencies (*Polityka partii v spravi Ukrainskoi khudozhnoi literatury*, 1927).

If in the 1920s the criticism of Drai-Khmara was directed against his poetic texts, in the early 1930s it increasingly took the form of political accusations against the poet's personality. Usually, political repression of writers and literary critics was preceded by a flood of devastating attacks in the media. On April 27th, 1933, *The Pravda* newspaper in Moscow published an article about the Institute of Linguistics of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, in which Drai-Khmara was called a bourgeois nationalist and member of a group of Ukrainian linguists who were engaged in anti-Soviet activities (Levin, 1933, 4).

11. Imprisonment in the Gulag

Drai-Khmara was arrested three times. The first arrest took place in 1933. The second one took place on September 5th, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 484). Drai-Khmara was involved in the same case as the Neoclassicists Zerov and Fylypovych. The three Neoclassicists were accused of participating in a counter-revolutionary nationalist organization which was a typical accusation for representatives of various strata of the population during Stalin's repressions. Drai-Khmara pleaded not guilty, and his case was separated. He was sentenced to five years in concentration camps and served his sentence on the Kolyma in the northeastern part of Siberia. Drai-Khmara was kept in at least ten concentration camps being constantly transferred from place to place. In detention, he worked as a gold miner, at a logging site, and in mines.

While in a labor camp, Drai-Khmara wrote two poems in November 1936, apparently "Combine Workers' Song" and "Stakhanovets," which

he performed at a concert in front of other prisoners (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 428)[8]. In one of the letters to his family, he sent his new Russian-language poem "The Constitution," dedicated to the 1936 newly established USSR Constitution, which in a veiled way glorified "a simple and modest man in a gray overcoat," *i.e.*, Stalin, who was compared to Moses with the Tablets of the Covenant on Mount Sinai (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 430). In a letter to his wife on June 18th, 1938, Drai-Khmara reported that he was writing a message to Stalin about himself in Alexandrian verse (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 459). It was apparently the last poem by Drai-Khmara, that did not survive.

Already in the camp, the former Neoclassicist was re-arrested on a fabricated case on April 22nd, 1938. Once more he was accused of belonging to an anti-Soviet organization, and sentenced to 10 years. On October 25th, 1939, the Kyiv registry office notified Drai-Khmara's wife of his death, which had occurred on January 19th of the same year, but did not specify the place or cause of death (Asher, 2002, 32). According to the archive of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Magadan Regional Executive Committee, Drai-Khmara died of heart failure in the medical center of Ustye Tayozhnaya (Hrab, 1991; Dolot, 1992, 134). An unofficial doubtful version spread by one of the prisoners has it that, during a mass execution of every fifth prisoner, Drai-Khmara took the young man's place, thereby saving his life (Vasylevskyi, 1989). The poet was rehabilitated on November 28th, 1989 as a victim of political repressions during the 1930s–1940s (Gamzin, 1990).

Drai-Khmara's burial place had long remained unknown to his family. In 1990 the search for the grave was undertaken by Tamara Sergeyeva, a history teacher at a Magadan school, who organized the Memorial Search Association "Poisk". Having lodged requests to the Department of Internal Affairs of the Magadan Regional Executive Committee for Drai-Khama's death and burial records, Sergeyeva made several expeditions to the village of Laryukovaya in Magadan Region. Interviewing local residents and former prisoners, she found the prisoners' cemetery and identified grave number three, where Drai-Khmara assumedly was buried (Sergeyeva, 1990–1991).

12. Rescuing the archive

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's archive was saved by his wife Nina and daughter Oksana after his arrest. In July 1937 they were exiled to the city of Belebey

in Bashkiria. After her husband's death, Nina was allowed to return to Kyiv. During the Second World War and the German occupation of Kyiv, first the daughter and then the wife left for Prague, from there on to Lichtenhaag, Munich, Hanover, Brussels, Watermael-Boitsfort. Finally, they emigrated to New York.

The writer's and scholar's personal archive has not been preserved in full, since some manuscripts have been lost. During the second arrest and search, Drai-Khmara's translation of the first part and half of the second part of *The Divine Comedy* by Dante was confiscated, and its fate is still unknown. The translation was not listed in the protocol of the confiscated items (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 485). The poet's wife suspected that the translation had been promised to someone supported by the authorities, hinting at Maksym Rylskyi who knew about the text and was very interested in it (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 30). The version that Drai-Khmara's translation could have come to his Neoclassicist colleague seems plausible to the contemporary scholar Maksym Strikha: he cites lines from Dante's poem in Ukrainian which Rylsky, who did not know Italian, used as the epigraph of one of his poems (1939) as possible evidence (Strikha, 2020, 208–209).

Moreover, during Drai-Khmara's arrest, his library of 373 books, correspondence and photos were seized. By the NKVD's decision all the books were burned (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 553). Luckily, the diary and notebook with poetry were hidden by Drai-Khmara's wife Nina.

Exiled in Belebey and threatened with arrest, Nina Drai-Khmara gave her husband's manuscripts to her roommate for safekeeping. Some translations of French poetry which were written on cigarette paper, among them probably *Don Juan in Hell* by Baudelaire and several poems by Jean Richepin, were smoked by the roommate's husband. According to Nina's testimony, she burned her husband's last few letters from imprisonment, in which he described his suffering (Zhulynskyi 1990, 185). The libretto for the ballet *The Prince Lutonia* and some chapters of the opera libretto *Forest Song* are also lost.

13. Promotion of Drai-Khmara's work in the USA and Europe

The greatest contribution to the popularization of Drai-Khmara's work was made by his daughter Oksana Drai-Khmara Asher (1923–2018), a talented pianist, literary critic, and poet. She was a researcher of her father's work and translator of his poetry into English. She compiled and

edited his poems (Drai-Khmara, 1964), letters (Dray-Khmara Asher, 1983), and literary criticism (Drai-Khmara, 1979) in Ukrainian and English in New York.

After emigrating to the USA, Oksana Drai-Khmara graduated from Columbia University in 1956 with a MA degree for her thesis *Mykhaylo Dray-Khmara: Ukrainian Poet in the Soviet Union*, which was published as a monograph in English (1959) with a foreword by Padraic Colum, a famous Irish poet, novelist, one of the leading figures of the Irish Literary Revival, and friend of James Joyce. While Colum was writing the foreword, he published his own novel, *The Flyjng Swans* (1957). As Asher stated, the title was inspired by Drai-Khmara's poetry (Asher, ca. 2003, 3). The novel has got a dedication "To the memory of James Joyce and James Stephens, Friends of each other and Friends of mine," which is also a certain allusion to the dedication to "To my friends" in Drai-Khmara's poem "Swans". Colum edited Asher's English translation of the sonnet "Swans" published in her monograph.

In 1967, Oksana Drai-Khmara Asher defended her dissertation *Dray-Khmara and the Ukrainian 'Neoclassical' School* at the Sorbonne in Paris. It was the first PhD thesis in Ukrainian studies at the Sorbonne and was published in Canada in 1975 (Asher 1975). While living in Paris and working on her doctorate, Oksana Asher met two of the French poets of the former "Abbaye de Créteil", Charles Vildrac and Jules Romain, whose poetry her father had translated in the 1920s and 1930s in Soviet Ukraine and to whom he appealed when defending his sonnet against the attacks of Marxist critics. Oksana Asher corresponded with both Vildrac and Romain (Romain & Vildrac, 1966–1967) discussing her dissertation. Vildrac translated the sonnet "Swans" into French from a word-for-word line-by-line translation made from the Ukrainian language by Oksana Asher and published it in the Paris literary journal *Le Cerf-Volant* (Draj-Khmara, 1967). He also edited some verses from the poem *Turn*[9]. Vildrac recommended his friend, the French poet Christian Bernard, who translated some other poems of Drai-Khmara into French, which Asher used in her thesis.

In New York, Oksana edited and published the first posthumous collection of her father's poetry in Ukrainian (Drai-Khmara, 1964). However, there are many questions about her editorial work. For instance, she did not republish such poems as "Lenin's Funeral" and "October". The poem originally titled "The Socialist City" was renamed "The City of the Future". In addition, the editor removed lines that glorified the Soviet

building of a new society and the course of the party from a number of poems. These cases can be regarded as an editorial censorship aimed at preserving her father's reputation as a victim of the Stalinist regime, who even in his poetry did not cooperate with the communists and was not contaminated by social realism. In fact, Drai-Khmara's poetic texts of the 1930s contain many social realist images and ideologically charged pro-Communist statements that could have been perceived negatively by the Ukrainian diaspora readers.

Oksana Asher included about a dozen poems or fragments of Drai-Khmara's poetry translated into English in her monograph about her father (Asher, 1959). Several of her translations, along with those of Michael Naydan, were included in the bilingual anthology of Ukrainian poetry of the twentieth century *A Hundred Years of Youth* (Luchuk & Naydan 2000). The collection *The Ukrainian Poets 1189–1962*, published in Toronto, contains two translations of Drai-Khmara by Constantine-Henry Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell into English (Andrusyshen & Kirkconnell, 1963, 366–367)[10]. Oksana Asher's archive contains a selection of translations of Drai-Khmara's poems by Iryna Dybko (Dybko, 1990).

Besides the above-mentioned translations of Drai-Khmara's poetry into English and French, some of his poems have also been translated into German (Burghardt, 1947; Deržawin, 1948; Koch, 1955; Kottmeier, 1957), Polish (Draj-Chmara, 1983), Russian (Drai-Khmara, 1959), Hungarian (Karig, 1971), and Romanian. The last ones will be discussed in more detail later.

Drai-Khmara's letters from the Gulag and fragments of his diary in French translation were published by his son-in-law, Oksana Drai-Khmara's first husband, Ihor Ševčenko, a famous historian and Byzantinist, and later one of the founders of the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, under the pseudonym Ivan Tcherniatynskyj on the pages of the Belgian journal *Le Flambeau* in 1948 (Tcherniatynskyj, 1948a; Tcherniatynskyj, 1948b). Drai-Khmara's letters from Kolyma were translated into English by Oksana Asher (1983). An English translation of Drai-Khmara's NKVD files has been recently published by Vitaly Chernetsky (2005).

14. Drai-Khmara's Reception in Romania

The cultural agent who introduced the works of the Kyiv Neoclassicists to Romanian readers was the Jewish-Romanian-Hungarian literary scholar, translator, and active member of the Ukrainian community in Romania professor Magdalena Laszlo-Kuțiuk (1928–2010), who taught Ukrainian literature at the University of Bucharest from1955 to 1983. Based on a special course *Romanian-Ukrainian literary relations in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century*, she published a textbook in Romanian (Laszlo-Kuțiuk 1974; Yantsos 2022). As a researcher, Laszlo-Kuțiuk also focused on the poetics of Ukrainian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries and socionics.

In another book in Ukrainian, based on her lectures *Ukrainian Soviet Literature* delivered over 15 years at the Department of Slavic Languages of the Bucharest university (1975), Laszlo-Kuțiuk reviews the works of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, elaborates on Drai-Khmara's biography and poetry. She considered Drai-Khmara's style to be complex, a multicomponent marked by the influence of symbolism (Laszlo-Kutsiuk, 1975, 43–44). His poetry is full of passion, and unlike Zerov's poems, it is more intimate and immediate. At the same time, the scholar argues that "M. Drai-Khmara's poems are typical for neoclassical poets in their focus on historical and exotic topics, and the cult of skillfully crafted form." (Laszlo-Kutsiuk, 1975, 45).

In the essay included in the Ukrainian-language anthology *Ukrainian Poetry of the Twentieth Century*, published in Bucharest, Laszlo-Kuțiuk explained the evolution of Drai-Khmara's poetic style from the symbolism of the early period to the rationalistic poetics of the period of convergence with the neoclassical group, and then to the neo-romanticism of the late period, when "under the influence of strong emotional turmoil, the classical balance is disturbed, a cry of pain and romantic patheticism breaks through, and the need to encrypt the thought forces him to use suggestion and symbol" (Laszlo-Kuțiuk, 1976, 71). She evaluates Drai-Khmara's neo-romantic works of the late period as the best. In the rest of her books on Ukrainian literature, published in Ukrainian, she often referred to Drai-Khmara's literary studies and cited them, most of all on Lesia Ukrainka.

In 1983 Laszlo-Kuțiuk compiled and edited the third volume of the anthology *Simbolismul European* (European Symbolism), published in Bucharest. In a section of the anthology devoted to Ukrainian symbolism,

Laszlo-Kuțiuk wrote a short essay on Drai-Khmara (László-Kuțiuk, 1983, 220). The researcher explained that she included him in the anthology of symbolism because, despite the formal perfection typical for Neoclassicists and common topics on history, he cultivated poetry of the neo-romantic and symbolic type. The most important things for him were a rare and colorful word, an emotional reaction, intuitive perception, and extraordinary sensitivity, not common to neoclassicism as such (László-Kuțiuk, 1983, 220).

Laszlo-Kuțiuk's essay provided an introduction to the Romanian translations of three of Drai-Khmara's poems. Ștefan Tcaciuc translated the sonnet "Swans" into Romanian, Orest Masichievici did so with "Victoria Regia" and "The Second Birth". The choice of these translators was not accidental, as both were key figures in Ukrainian-Romanian literary relationships.

Orest Masichievici (1911–1980) was a Ukrainian public and political figure, poet, writer, translator, journalist, born in the village of Nepolokivtsi in Northern Bukovina, graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Chernivtsi. During World War II, he moved to Romania. Masichievici spoke several languages, translated from Romanian into Ukrainian and vice versa (Nytchenko 1996, 92). He was a prisoner of the Gulag; after his release in 1955 he returned to Timișoara, moved to Sinai, and died in Buftea (Chub 1993, 76). In his own poetic work, to a certain extent, he was a follower of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, in particular Maksym Rylskyi, and cultivated the sonnet and rondel (Vasylyk 2004, 56–57, 92–93). In his early lyrics, he also tended to the neo-romantic "literature of action" of the Prague school, but eventually evolved "to the strict classical forms of the emigration period" and "transparency of the poetic image" (Vasylyk 2004, 92–93). In addition to the above-mentioned, two translations from Drai-Khmara into Romanian for the anthology *Simbolismul European*, Masichievici prepared another one "Once again like the first man…", the handwritten drafts of which are kept in his personal archive at the Bucharest branch of the Union of Ukrainians of Romania (Drai-Hmara, 1922).

The second translator, Ștefan Tcaciuc (1936–2005), was a Ukrainian poet and public figure in Romania, the first head of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, and a deputy of the Romanian parliament. He was born in the village of Dănila in Suceava County, studied engineering at the Faculty of Electronics and Telecommunications of the Bucharest Polytechnic Institute, worked for the Romanian railways, and at the same time was

engaged in literary work, compiling a three-volume anthology of Ukrainian poetry in Romanian in 1995 (Antofiychuk, 2016; Prosalova, 2012, 429).

15. Conclusions

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's biography is indicative of the processes that took place in Ukrainian culture in the 1910s–1930s. He was a typical representative of the Ukrainian intellectual elite, who was intensively involved in various areas of culture in the context of the national revival or the so-called Executed Renaissance which ended with Stalin's repressions.

Drai-Khmara was a multi-talented personality with a wide range of activities, as it was typical for all members of the neoclassical group. His large-scale personality does not fit within a single paradigm. Drai-Khmara's poetry is characterized by polystylism, and his scientific research is characterized by methodological pluralism. While Drai-Khmara's worldview and aesthetic beliefs absolutely correlate with those of his fellow Neoclassicists, in terms of style he is a "problematic" Neoclassicist – "a Neoclassicist almost without neoclassicism." Throughout his life, Drai-Khmara's individual poetic style transformed from symbolism to neoclassicism and then to socialist realism. His individual scholarly toolkit was formed at the intersection of the theoretical suggestions of the cultural-historical school, philological, biographical, sociological approaches, and comparative studies.

Drai-Khmara, like his contemporaries, was a personality from the turn of the century: born in the Russian Empire, he experienced several revolutions, the Ukrainian national liberation struggle, the establishment of Bolshevik authorities, Ukrainization, and the repressions of the 1930s. Drai-Khmara's personal positioning was often framed as "I do not belong to my era," which did not prevent him from making accurate observations about cultural and political processes in the country. At the same time, in his poetry he attempted to adapt himself to the "bloody era" and strived to face moral dilemmas related to that. He declared his absolute apolitical position like the other Kyiv Neoclassicists in the 1920s–1930s, although in 1918 he belonged to the Ukrainian Socialist-Federalist Party.

A discourse analysis of readers' responses to Drai-Khmara's poetry demonstrates that the closer to the 1930s, the more the interpretations of his work became ideologized, the object of criticism was not poetry but the figure of its creator, his conformity to Soviet ideology. Drai-Khmara,

like other Kyiv Neoclassicists, faced the problem of the lack of an adequate reader and the breakdown of communication. The implicit reader of his poetry radically differed from the tastes of the real mass readers produced by the Soviet society.

The situation with the history of the reception of Drai-Khmara's work is unique in that the main promoter, publisher, researcher, and translator of his texts for a long time has been his daughter Oksana Asher, who to a certain extent "monopolized" the literary discourse around her father. For decades, Asher's statements have been undoubtedly cited by other researchers, and Drai-Khmara's poetic texts prepared for publication by his daughter have long been considered canonical, although many cases of editorial censorship can be witnessed.

The Romanian theme in Drai-Khmara's early linguistic studies and in his later travel poem "Constanța" (1935), as well as the translations of his poetry into Romanian and the interpretations of his work in Romania make Drai-Khmara an important and still overlooked case for the study of Romanian-Ukrainian cultural relations. In Romania, Drai-Khmara's poetry was popularized by the literary scholar Magdalena Laszlo-Kuțiuk. Several of his poems have been translated into Romanian thanks to Orest Masichievici and Ștefan Tcaciuc.

To summarize the reception of Drai-Khmara abroad, it should be noted that despite translations into different European languages, English and French books about his life and literary path, he remained a figure of interest mainly for the Ukrainian readers in the diaspora without gaining fame outside the Ukrainian community. In Ukraine, starting with the Khrushchev Thaw of the 1960s, he gradually entered the Ukrainian literary canon. Although his work is currently studied in Ukrainian schools and universities, a large part of his original poetry, translations, correspondence, and articles remains unpublished.

The fact that the NKVD investigation during Drai-Khmara's second arrest failed to extract a confession of anti-Soviet crimes from him and that he, in his own words, did not slander any of his acquaintances, created an aura around him of an indomitable fighter against the totalitarian system and a victim of political repression, although in fact, in both his poetic and journalistic texts, he tried to interact with the authorities and official ideology. The figure of Drai-Khmara, whose biography still has many gaps and unclear moments, is very amenable to myth-making. One can mention both the myth of his participation in a partisan unit and the myth of his death, *i.e.*, his nonconformism is always mythologized.

Endnotes

[1] *Khmara* means *cloud* in Ukrainian.

[2] I would like to thank Volodymyr Barov for drawing my attention to the possible reasons for Drai-Khmara's anti-German attitudes.

[3] The metaphor of the "Executed Renaissance" was first suggested by the Polish publicist Jerzy Giedroyc in 1958 as the title for the anthology of the Ukrainian literature of 1917–1933, which was edited by Yurii Lavrinenko. This very popular metaphor is criticized by literary scholars nowadays (Krupa, 2017).

[4] The name "Red Renaissance" was first used by some Ukrainian critics in 1925, but it did not become widespread at that time.

[5] Naydan's translation (Luchuk & Naydan, 2000, 169) does not reproduce the rhyming verses.

[6] Although contemporary literary historians doubt the existence of the collection (Tsymbal, 2015, 101–102), Drai-Khmara testified in the materials of the investigation that he prepared the collection in 1929, read it to Zerov in the fall of the same year, and that the manuscript was reviewed internally by the Literatura I Mystetstvo Publishers in 1931 (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 520, 528; Investigation file, 1933, f. 23r).

[7] The notebook with Drai-Khmara's poems contains a handwritten draft with corrections, dated August 14–20, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 1922–1935, f. 224a–226r), and a separate final typewritten draft on tracing paper, dated August 30, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 1935, August 30).

[8] The fate of these two texts is unknown.

[9] Vildrac's translations were also published in the anthology: (Cadot, 2004, 630–636).

[10] A fragment of the sonnet "Swans" was also translated by Danylo Struk (Struk, 1964, 6).

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A GODMOTHER OF RUSSIAN ÉMIGRÉ RIGHT-WING TERRORISM: ELIZAVETA SHABELSKAYA-BORK'S *SATANISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY* (1911)

Edward Waysband

Abstract

In my research, I analyze how the turn-of-the-century mixture of antisemitism and esoteric interests provided a blueprint for Russian émigré right-wing terrorist activities in 1920s. My case study is Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork's novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* (1911) – an enthusiastic reactualization of this novel's material in the twenty-first century points to a line of continuity from its ideological utilization in 1920s and 1930s to Russian post-communist right-wing fundamentalist circles, drawing inspiration from the nationalist antisemitic discourse of the previous century. As a point of departure, I research the ideological, political, and terrorist cooperation between Russian right-wing émigrés and right-wing Germans after World War I, in particular, the organization "Aufbau" (Reconstruction). Further, I contextualize the influence that *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* had on Russian émigré right-wing representatives, in particular on its author's godson, Petr Shabelsky-Bork. I analyze ideological foundations of the novel, paying particular attention to its central theme of the Jewish-Masonic clandestine religion of satanism. Shabelskaya-Bork's ideological foundations can be defined thus as a blend of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, virulent antisemitism, and the fin-de-siècle ambivalent fascination with non-traditional religious practices.

Keywords: right-wing terrorism, conspiratorial writing, esoterism, antisemitism.

In my research, I analyze how the turn-of-the-century mixture of antisemitism and esoteric interests provided a blueprint for Russian émigré right-wing terrorist activities in the 1920s. As a case study, in this article I examine Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork's novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* (1911) – an enthusiastic reactualization of this novel's material in the twenty-first century points to a line of continuity from its ideological utilization in the 1920s and 1930s to Russian post-communist right-wing fundamentalist circles, drawing inspiration from the nationalist antisemitic discourse of the previous century.

In his book, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism*, Michael Kellogg has analyzed Russian right-wing sources of Nazi ideology. Kellogg has convincingly shown that early National Socialism was based on a synthesis of German and Russian right-radical trends and ideologies. In tracing this process, Kellogg pays special attention to the Russian-German organization "Aufbau: Wirtschafts-politische Vereinigung für den Osten" (Reconstruction: Economic-Political Organization for the East). "Aufbau" was a Munich-based conspiratorial, right-extremist group that opposed the Entente, the Weimar Republic, Jewry, and Bolshevism. It was formed around 1919 and partly financed by Henry Ford. The leading figures of this organization were – first – Baltic Germans, who had been a privileged national-cultural group in tsarist Russia, and – second – Russian émigré rightist radicals. Among representatives of the first group were Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, a close associate of Adolf Hitler in the Nazi Party, killed during the Beer Hall Putsch, and Alfred Rosenberg – the author of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930) and the head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories during the Second World War. Key figures of the second group of "Aufbau's" leaders included Vasilii Biskupskii, Fedor Vinberg, Petr Shabelsky-Bork, and Sergei Taboritsky. I shall write about some of them in more detail later. The main contribution of this Russian group to the formation of Nazi ideology was the introduction of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the concept of Judeo-Bolshevism as one of the forms of the nefarious Judeo-Masonic conspiracy.[1] "Aufbau" aimed at overthrowing the governments in Germany and in Soviet Russia and replacing them with authoritarian extreme right-wing regimes.

Kellogg and other cultural historians have discussed the ideological foundations of the "Aufbau" leaders in various degrees of detail but primarily from the perspective of those leaders' unquestionable belief in the authenticity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (see Laqueur, 1965,

pp. 51–53; Kellogg, 2005, p. 66).[2] Researchers, however, have paid less attention to other sources that contributed to the firm belief of the White Russians, and by extension their German associates, in an international Jewish conspiracy striving for world rule. One such under-researched source that deserves special attention is the novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* by Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork (1855–1917), first serialized in 1911 in the Moscow ultra-nationalist journal *Kolokol* (The Bell) and then published as a book in 1912.

In contrast to the international dissemination and notorious international influence of *The Protocols of Zion* until our days,[3] the novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* has remained so far only in the Russian political and cultural domain. This novel, however, and its author exerted a significant influence on Russian leaders of "Aufbau" and possibly on its German Baltic representatives, who later made a significant contribution to elaborating the tenets of National Socialism. The novelty of this work in comparison to its ideological counterpart, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is its emphasis on the esoteric dimension of the Jewish conspiracy, in particular regarding its connection with the purported religion of satanism. I shall discuss these aspects of the novel later.

First, I shall elaborate on Russian "Aufbau" members' terrorist activities, which were directed against Russian and German liberal leaders. In these undertakings, "Aufbau" collaborated with "Organization C," an ultra-nationalist terrorist union based in Munich and headed by Hermann Ehrhardt, who in the early 1920s competed with Hitler for leadership of German ultra-nationalists (see Kellogg, 2005, p. 170). "Aufbau" and "Organization C" colluded in the assassination of Walther Rathenau, the foreign minister of Weimar Germany. Russian representatives of "Aufbau" plotted also to assassinate Pavel Miliukov, a leader of the Constitutional Democratic party (Cadets), which had been a major liberal party in Russia, known for its support of Jewish emancipation. In fact, the party's right-wing adversaries maintained that it was a Jewish party (see Rogger, 1986, p. 20). On March 28th, 1922, after Miliukov's lecture in Berlin, Petr Shabelsky-Bork fired at him. Miliukov's party colleague Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov knocked the gun out of Shabelsky-Bork's hand. Then another assailant, Sergei Taboritsky killed Nabokov, while Miliukov was unharmed. Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov was the father of the famous Russian-American writer Vladimir Nabokov. Shabelsky-Bork and Taboritsky were arrested and received long-term prison sentences (12 and 14 years respectively). They were, however, freed after five years for good

behavior. When Hitler took power, they both received positions in the Department of the Affairs of the Russian emigration (see Zubarev, 2007, pp. 127–129; Obatnin, 2022, pp. 164–169).

Although Petr Shabelsky-Bork had the same surname as Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork, the author of *Satanists of the Twentieth Century*, they were not relatives. Petr Shabelsky-Bork was born in 1893 as Petr Popov. Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork was his godmother. Petr Shabelsky-Bork contended that Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork adopted him as her child, but this was not true. He officially took her surname only after her death, when he was already living in Germany (see Zubarev, 2007, p. 126). It was a symbolic act of self-adoption by which Petr Shabelsky-Bork manifested his spiritual kinship with Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork and her ideas.[4] Another member of "Aufbau," Fedor Vinberg, the former colonel and equerry of Nicholas II's court, an active member of the far-right movement in pre-revolutionary Russia, in his book *In captivity of "monkeys." (Notes of a "counter-revolutionary") (V pleny u "obez'ian" [Zapiski "kontrrevoliutsionera"])*, based on his diary notes written in the Peter and Paul Fortress, as well as in the Kresy prison in revolutionary Petrograd, notes that in the prison he shared the cell with Petr Popov. According to Vinberg, Popov told him about the strong influence on him of his godmother Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork (Vinberg, 1918, pp. 36–37).

Who, then, was this woman who was the godmother and spiritual stepmother of Petr Shabelsky-Bork? She was born in the Kharkiv region of the Russian empire in 1855. She led an adventurous life of an unsuccessful actress, journalist, writer, and entrepreneur. She forged checks to solve her financial problems. Rumors say that Shabelskaya was not imprisoned because she was an agent of the secret police. She was married to the psychiatrist Aleksei Bork, who, from 1896, cured her of alcoholism and drug addiction, mainly by hypnosis. The theme of hypnosis played a prominent role afterwards in her novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century*. Bork participated in the establishment of the rightist nationalist party "The Union of the Russian People," the most important of the ultra-nationalist Black-Hundreds political organizations in the Russian Empire between 1905–1917.[5] With a police department subsidy, Shabelskaya-Bork edited the Black-Hundreds newspaper *Svoboda i poriadok* (Liberty and Order), publishing numerous antisemitic articles there. Apart from this newspaper, Shabelskaya-Bork and her husband published in a number of right-wing, antisemitic periodicals of the 1910s (*Kolokol, Strela*, and *Russkoe znamia*). She likewise inundated high-ranking officials of the internal affairs ministry

with her letters on how to save Russia from domestic and foreign enemies. In 1909, she asked to be provided with a gun, claiming that her right-wing views made her a target of the revolutionary terror. According to the police report, she was provided with a gun and five bullets (see Makarova, 2007; Zubarev, 2007).

After Taboritsky and Petr Shabelsky-Bork's terrorist attack, the famous Russian writer and columnist Alexander Amfiteatrov, who did not know them personally but knew well the latter's assumed mother and father in the 1890s, tried to explain their "son's" actions by his "harsh heredity" [*tiazhkaia nasledstvennost'*] in the eponymous article published in the Russian émigré newspaper *Za svobody* in 1922. This article provides a biographical and psychological background for Shabelskaya-Bork's conspiratorial writing. According to Amfiteatrov, the tragedy of her life was that despite her fascination with theater and eagerness to become an actress, "mother nature laughed at her, depriving her of theatrical talent […]. But the very consciousness of her remarkable personality armed her, like a true tragic loser, with enormous ambition" – she dreamed of European fame, of the Russian Sarah Bernhardt (Amfiteatrov, 2004, p. 66). A writer whose numerous works display a penchant for naturalism, Amfiteatrov employs the paradigm of degeneration to explicate "hereditary" features of Petr Shabelsky-Bork's actions. Along with Shabelskaya's "remarkable personality," "[h]ysteria, morphine and port wine made her one of the wildest women that Russian intelligent society has ever produced, with all the deplorable abundance of unbalanced people in it. Even in Dostoevsky's harsh gallery of women there was no such bizarre and *dangerous* figure" (ibid., p. 68; the italics are Amfiteatrov's).[6] Mentioning Aleksei Bork's riotous lifestyle[7] and the heavy toll of his work in a psychiatric hospital on his mental stability, Amfiteatrov concludes:

> Those were the parents of Shabelsky-Bork, the murderer of V. D. Nabokov. He was born when they were already at an advanced age. His mother was hysterical, almost clinically unstable. His father was a neuropath and a "medium." His mother was an alcoholic and a morphine addict. His father was a "champagnolic." His mother's life was a continuous chain of violent excesses that repeatedly slipped along the edge of criminal activity. His father's life was a heavy melancholic fog, saturated in addition by constant toxic and contagious communication with the mentally ill. What other fruit can be expected from such a union, except for a sullen and dangerous degenerate, whose debauched will depends least of all on himself, and the inevitable hereditary imbalance represents the most convenient field for

processing by any clever schemer who is willing to use this diseased will for his criminal purposes, directing it on the path of excesses – scandals, violence, a murder? (Amfiteatrov, 2004, p. 72).

Amfiteatrov thus builds up a consistent narrative based on naturalistic assumptions that deterministically deprive Shabelsky-Bork of free will, making him a passive agent of biological, hereditary forces. The vocabulary used, that descends directly from medicine, might be partly seen as a protective mechanism on the part of the Russian post-revolutionary emigration to de-politicize the international terrorist activities of some of its members.[8] Amfiteatrov likewise discusses through the lens of psychopathology the possible influence of Shabelskaya-Bork's virulent antisemitism evident in her writing on her "son"'s extremist views and activities:

> The absurdity of delusional visions and words, as if taken from a journal published in a psychiatric intensive care unit. The persecution mania is in full swing. It is written by a woman suffering from a hallucination in whom morphine has completely paralyzed the work of the detention centers [in the brain], and who, in struggle with the relentlessly besieging ghosts, is exhausted from despair and *bloodthirstily* attacks them. (*ibid.*, p. 75; italics are Amfiteatrov's)

This pathologizing of Shabelskaya-Bork's antisemitic conspiratorial writing anticipates in a way Norman Cohn's examination of antisemitism as a case study of "collective psychopathology." In the 1969 edition of his *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, he writes that "the drive to exterminate the Jews sprang from demonological superstitions inherited from the Middle Ages"; embodied likewise in the modern myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy, this drive is "a matter of unconscious negative projections, *i.e.*, of the mental mechanism by which human beings read into the behaviour of others the anarchic tendencies which they fear to recognize in themselves" (Cohn, 1969, p. 15, 256). Cohn admits that his idea about projecting on the Jews one's repressed death wishes as on a hated father-figure draws upon Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (*ibid.* 257). Yet, the influence of *The Protocols* and (to a lesser extent) Shabelskaya-Bork's writing goes beyond individual idiosyncrasies, however bizarre they were. The explanatory power of Amfiteatrov's and

Cohn's clinical approach seems, thus, insufficient, if not inadequate, when we deal with large-scale sociopsychological phenomena such as antisemitic conspiratorial thinking and its influence on various extremist and violent activities. Characteristically, both authors eventually dropped their initial straightforward clinical and biological assumptions, even if prompted by different motives. In the 1981 edition of his book, Cohn omits "Conclusion: A case-study in collective psychopathology" of his 1969 and 1970 editions, which provided the psychoanalytical reading of *The Protocols*, explaining that, "given the increasing sophistication of psychoanalytical thinking, [his] interpretation now appears somewhat primitive" (Cohn, 1981, p. 11). In the concluding, "P.S.," section of his article, Amfiteatrov writes that it had already been sent out when one of his acquaintances expressed doubt, based on mere chronological comparisons, about Amfiteatrov's belief that Shabelsky-Bork was the "natural" son of Shabelskaya-Bork. Amfiteatrov understands that in this case his naturalistic explication of Petr Shabelsky-Bork's hereditary "degeneration" does not hold:

> If this doubt is justified, then, of course, the part of my article that assumes Petr Shabelsky-Bork's *psychophysiological* inheritance from Elizaveta Shabelskaya and Dr. Bork is invalid. I believe it is unfortunate for the future protection of the criminal: after all, in this case he loses an important mitigating circumstance. Yet, the second part of my article about the *political* heredity, *i.e.*, about the indoctrination of the upbringing and environment in which this madman developed and carried out his readiness to monarchical terror, does not lose its significance at all from the transformation of a natural son into an adopted one. (Amfiteatrov, 2004, p. 77–78; italics are Amfiteatrov's)

As we know now, Petr Shabelsky-Bork was neither "natural," nor "adopted," but Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork's "self-adopted" son after her death. In this case, Amfiteatrov's switch from the "hereditary" to "adoptive family" explanatory framework does not hold either. Yet, he is right speaking of "the *political* heredity" – Shabelskaya-Bork's political views became instrumental for the "Aufbau's" leaders, and found its symbolic expression in Petr Popov's act of self-adoption. Such "heredity" goes beyond the psychopathological approach and demands broader interdisciplinary analysis of the antisemitic conspiratorial thinking in Russia and in the West in the modern era, as well as how this "false consciousness" was translated into radical activism in the age of mass

politics. As Peter Worsley has shown in his classical investigation of "cargo" cults, it is conceptually and methodologically inappropriate to consider them in terms of "abnormal psychology" (Worsley, 1957, p. 242). "Absurd as they may seem when considered as rational solutions," they appear less absurd if considered as an attempt to grasp new social conditions and relations by traditional explanatory means prevalent in a given culture (*ibid.*, pp. 243–244). Russia's accelerated modernization starting from Alexander II's "Great reforms" created a fertile soil for various frustrated social elements to see Jews as malicious agents of modernity that undermine traditional social institutions and values (see Laqueur 1965, pp. 44–45; Kenez, 1992, pp. 309–310; Goldin, 2010).

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In 1911, Aleksei Bork published his only theoretical work, the brochure *The International Judeo-Masonic Intrigue* (*Mezhdunarodnaia zhidomasonskaia intriga*). The title of this book summarizes its content. Along with *The Protocols of Zion*, this brochure seems to be one of the ideological foundations of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century*. The plot of the novel is very simple. The extremely talented Russian actress, Olga Belskaya, easily succeeds in conquering the German stage. Olga's image must be seen as the wishful projection of a failed actress, Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork.[9] Olga Belskaya attracts the attention of the Freemasons, Lord Jenner and Lord Javid Moore, who come from England and conspire to recruit Olga, with her beauty and talent, for their malicious purposes. Olga, however, does not give in to their various crafty traps, mainly because she naturally fears and is disgusted by Jews, who are widely represented among Freemasons. Her friend, a German professor, explains to her who Masons really are. In his book *The History of the Order of Templars*, he maintains that Freemasonry is merely a cover for the criminal activities of Jews seeking world domination.

The English background of the key representatives of the Judeo-Masonic clandestine society in the novel fits with England's particular role in the Russian conspiratorial imagination, as a country that actively conspired against Russia, starting from the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish war and exacerbating at the turn of the century (see Sergeev, 2011; Dolinin, 2019). Shabelskaya-Bork and other "fighters" against the Judeo-Masonic intrigue were convinced that it served as a hidden incentive behind England's anti-Russian politics. The phrase "'fatal' Englishmen," repeatedly used in

the novel, therefore, euphemistically hints at the "real" nature of these apparently respectful noblemen. The reader may wonder what motivates these high ranking Judeo-Masons to pursue the unknown Russian actress. The answer may be found in Sergei Nilus' book *The Great within the Small and Antichrist, an Imminent Political Possibility. Notes of an Orthodox Believer* (*Velikoe v malom i Antikhrist, kak blizkaia politicheskaia vozmozhnost'. Zapiski pravoslavnogo*).[10] Nilus argues that Jewish Masons are especially keen to recruit young, beautiful women to use them for luring the important cadre into their "Jewish Masons'" net (see Nilus, 1911, p. 544). Shabelskaya-Bork puts this belief into action. This is only one example of her dramatization of *The Protocols* and of its auxiliary literature such as Nilus'. Further on, we shall see other examples.

The fact that *The Protocols* has become the most popular and influential antisemitic text up to the present is commonly related to its easy explanations of the challenges of modernity. Steven J. Zipperstein has likewise suggested that this repetitive, long-winded text which, nevertheless, can be summarized in one phrase (the Judeo-Masonic intrigue to achieve world dominance) is not so simplistic. Its *ur*-text, Maurice Joly's *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* that was plagiarized by the writers of *The Protocols* developed an elaborate and convincing argument about the possibility of the future totalitarian state. This argument is embedded likewise in *The Protocols*, thus responding to the modern fear of totalitarianism, shared by people on all political spectrums. In addition, *The Protocols*' resilience lies in its discursive mode – in contrast to other antisemitic tractates popular in their times, such as H. S. Chamberlein's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, *The Protocols* employs a first-person point of view of a presumed Elder who "reveals" his and his kin's malicious plans. This "personal," direct speech endows *The Protocols* with an additional degree of credibility (see Zipperstein, 2020). While the unknown speaker in *The Protocols* addresses an unidentified audience in an unknown location, Shabelskaya-Bork personalizes and historically contextualizes her "elders of Zion." Just as in *The Protocols*, she also endows them with a first-person point of view, so that they readily and verbosely share with one another their nefarious plans. Moreover, while *Satanists*' omniscient narrator usually renders only Belskaya's inner thoughts, she (the narrator) can also enter the consciousness of Judeo-Masonic conspirators, going, thus, much deeper than *The Protocols* in revealing their manipulations.

In the central chapter of the novel, "The great Sanhedrin of our time," the meeting place of Jewish Masons serves as an objective correlative of their psyche and as a metaphor of their conspiratorial activities. In the chapter, the acceptance of Prinz Arnulf into Freemasonry is depicted as a seemingly respectable trap for naïve souls who are not aware of its cover-up function. The event takes place in the building in Berlin. While on the first, main floor of the building the ceremony takes place, at the same time in the basement of this building the meeting of the "Sanhedrin" secretly occurs, so that some members of both organizations can easily move from one floor to another. Their maneuvers embody the functioning of conspiratorial thinking, as the honorable member of the official Freemasonry society with its ostensible humanitarian aims moves downstairs and transforms into a member of a clandestine Jewish society for world domination.

One of its members mentions that in six years, in 1902, the Jewish Messiah is supposed to be born (Shabelskaya, 1912, p. 42). The meeting thus takes place around 1896. One of the widespread interpretations of *The Protocols* connects it to the first congress of Zionists in Basel in 1897. Shabelskaya-Bork probably also tries to tie he meeting of the "Sanhedrin" to the congress or to its preparations. Indeed, in her description of the meeting of the clandestine Jewish leadership in this chapter, malicious Jews quote *The Protocols* close to the text. Thus, Lord Javid Moore delivers a report about their "recent achievements," *i.e.*, "the enslavement of the world press, which is almost entirely in our hands, so that at any moment we can not only 'lead' the so-called public opinion of any state, but even force entire nations to look at [things] with our thoughts" (Shabelskaya, 1912, p. 35). In the second protocol, the Elder similarly says that the press "is in our hands" (Nilus, 1911, p. 405). Then in his report Lord Javid Moore summarizes several other topics of *The Protocols* (see Dudakov, 1993, p. 183): the destruction and corruption of school and higher education; the destruction of the French monarchy; the destruction of the institution of marriage; "the enticement of the contemptible gentile women on the fatal road of the notorious 'equality,'" so that they "reject being wives and mothers for the sake of becoming bad officials or mediocre scientists" (Shabelskaya, 1912, p. 35–36). In his article "Harsh heredity," Amfiteatrov wonders how Shabelskaya-Bork, "a domineering and pronounced feminist in her private life, blandly and sentimentally glorified in her articles the idyll of the German bourgeois family, with the ideal of the three 'K' of Emperor Wilhelm II – '*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*'" (Amfiteatrov, 2004,

p. 73). One would doubt calling her a "feminist" in her private life. It seems that, just as with her chauvinistic biases, she internalized gender prejudices of her time and negatively projected them onto "the notorious 'equality,'" *i.e.*, feminist movement – expectedly seeing it as a part of the Judeo-Masonic intrigue.

The Protocols does not refer to a traditional set of anti-Judaic tropes about ritual murder, blood libel, etc. Joly's secular anti-absolutist impetus is embedded in *The Protocols*' vision of the imminent global totalitarian state ruled by the Jews. Throughout the twentieth (and the beginning of the twenty-first) century, *The Protocols*' various distributors and interpreters, however, have been combining its secular antisemitism with old traditional accusations against the Jews. Accordingly, having enumerated some of *The Protocols*' means for world-domination, Jewish Masons, in Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, confess that they are adepts of a clandestine religion of satanism and participate in satanic Masses during which they make human sacrifices. Just as in Nilus' writing, *The Protocols*' idea of the Jewish world dominance merges with an apocalyptic Manichean vision of human history as a struggle between two forces – Christianity and satanism. In this picture, Jews, as well as their gentile accomplices, are conscious or unconscious adherents of the latter. As they cannot lure Olga into their nest, Jews-satanists start to take revenge on her. Only the help of the German emperor, a sincere fan of Olga's theatrical talents, rescues her from the Jews-satanists' intrigues.[11] While this fictional Russian-German cooperation against a satanist Judeo-Masonic conspiracy did not add to the novel's popularity during WWI, it might be seen as prophetic by Shabelskaya-Bork's "godchildren" from "Aufbau."

In order to prove that satanic sects are active in contemporary Europe, Olga refers to Joris-Karl Huysmans' 1891 novel, *Là-Bas (Down There)*. Indeed, the main protagonist of this decadent novel, the writer Durtal, starts researching the life of Baron Gilles de Rais, who lived in the fifteenth century and was accused by the Inquisition of satanism and the serial killing of children. Durtal likewise is interested in modern forms of satanism. Ultimately, he attends the Black Mass organized by the malicious satanist, the defrocked clergyman Dokr (see Huysmans, 1972, pp. 242–249). Dokr is based on the image of a real man, Stanislas De Guaita, a mystic and active member of the Rosicrucian Order. The heroine of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel and Shabelskaya-Bork herself, perhaps intentionally in the latter case, take at face value Huysmans's description of satanic practices in contemporary France and claim this as evidence of the

spread of satanism over modern Europe. Shabelskaya-Bork's ideological foundations can be defined thus as a mixture of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, virulent antisemitism, and the fin-de-siècle ambivalent fascination with non-traditional religious practices.

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In the discussed chapter about the meeting of the satanic leaders, under transparent disguise or with their own names, Shabelskaya-Bork introduces her contemporaries among these satanic leaders – Jews and non-Jews, representatives of liberal organizations. By so doing, she both historicizes and personalizes *The Protocols*, just like its real authors aimed at discrediting any attempt at the "liberal" modernization of tsarist Russia, presenting such attempts already as a literally "satanic" Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. Among the satanist characters in her other conspiratorial antisemitic novel, *The red and the white* (*Krasnye i chernye*, 1913), one meets Pavel Nikolaevich Sazikov and Naskokov (Shabelskaya, 1913, p. 96, 110), who are transparent doubles of Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov and Nabokov. As we recall, Shabelskaya-Bork's spiritual godchildren would later organize the terrorist attack on these figures. We see here, in a nutshell, an example of how anti-modern and anti-Semitic beliefs and myths provide a dynamic and destructive form of extreme political expression on a broad historical scale. Indeed, the evolution of right-wing activities follows the lines delineated by Miroslav Hroch's *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* in the dynamics of the national movements – with the reservation that we speak about their extremist right-wing variant. According to Hroch, the scholarly interest in the native cultural heritage (Phase A) is subsequently mobilized in the period of "patriotic agitation" (Phase B). Appearing at this stage, nationalist societies then stimulate the rise of a mass national movement among the population (Phase C) (Hroch, 1985, pp. 23–24). While the national movements were interested in building up the "positive" profile of their "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983), drawing on their romanticized past, the writers and journalists of the extremist right-wing flank concentrated more on the negative reflections of these "imagined communities," in our case on the Jews and Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. Russian representatives of this mindset adopted French religious antisemitism and anti-Masonry along with Chamberlain's racist doctrine, contributing with the forged *Protocols* and later with the Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy theory.

The application of this line of thought to the sociopolitical situation in Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century and its incorporation into ideological programs of right-wing movements, such as the Black Hundreds, marks the emergence of a full-fledged ultra-nationalist movement (Phase B). During the Russian Civil War (1917–1921), the Black Hundreds perception of the February and October revolutions in Russia as the result of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy was widespread among anti-Communist forces and provided an ideological impetus to the mass anti-Jewish violence in Ukraine and southern Russia (see Budnitskii, 2012, p. 187–189; Kenez, 1992, pp. 309–311).[12] The rise of a mass ultra-nationalist movement during the Russian Civil War, however, did not survive the collision with the emerging Soviet totalitarian state. In other words, the Russian ultra-nationalist agitation energized by the idea of the Jewish-Masonic(-Bolshevik) conspiracy never reached Phase C. Nevertheless, people like Shabelsky-Bork managed to transfer *The Protocols* to Germany, where its key idea about the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy was gratefully integrated into the incipient Nazi doctrine as one of the ideological underpinnings of the mass Nazi movement (Phase C). In the case of *The Protocols* and Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, the defensive, aggressive ideology of Russian identity and Orthodox fundamentalism first targets their adversaries in (semi-)literary texts and then attempts to exterminate them physically as part of their revanchist political program.

I did not find Petr Shabelsky-Bork's direct written comments on his godmother's writing, but his attitude can be reconstructed, apart from his devoted adoption of her surname, from the reaction of his closest and other associates. Her idealization among Russian members of "Aufbau" emerges in her portrait by Vinberg, based apparently on Petr Shabelsky-Bork's reminiscences: "[T]he personal charm of her outstanding mind, great knowledge and responsiveness to every grief of a noble, warm heart were combined with great literary talent and a deep, penetrating patriotic feeling of love for Russia, which filled her whole soul" (Vinberg, 1918, p. 135). This portrait of Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork stands, of course, in a striking contrast to Amfiteatrov's reminiscences quoted above. In his other book, *The Road to Cavalry* (*Krestnyi put'*), published in Munich in 1922, Vinberg discusses how a Jewish conspiracy seized power in Russia in the form of the Bolshevik revolution. Vinberg lists the most "reliable" authors who have warned humanity of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy:

In England – Houston Stewart Chamberlain; in France – *Édouard* Drumont; Paul Copin-Albancelli, Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux; in

Germany – Müller von Hausen; in Russia – Dostoevsky (in his *Writer's Diary*, he exclaimed: "The Kikes will destroy Russia"), Shabelskaya-Bork, Nilus, Shmakov, Liutostanskii, Butmi de Katzman, Vagner ("Kot-Murlyka," his novel *The Dark Path* [*Temnyi Put'*]). (Vinberg 1922, p. 223)

In a way, Vinberg enumerates the international representatives of Phase A of extreme right-wing movements. It was his and his colleagues' task to transform their tenets into extreme chauvinistic "agitation" (see Hroch, 1985, pp. 23–24).

It is worth noting the intellectual context in which Vinberg places Shabelskaya-Bork. Chamberlain was the author of the highly influential book *The Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* (*Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1899), which laid a basis for racialist antisemitic theories of Nazism (Field, 1981, pp. 440–445). Drumont was the author of the pamphlet *Jewish France* (*La France juive*, 1886) that demonized French Jewry. He was a founder of the newspaper *La Libre Parole* and of "The Antisemitic League of France" (*Ligue antisémitique de France*, 1889), which were instrumental in promoting the antisemitic discourse during the Dreyfus Affairs. Copin-Albancelli was among the founders of the anti-Masonic and antisemitic newspapers *À bas les tyrans* (*Down with tyrants*) and *La Bastille* and the author of a number of pamphlets that "exposed" the Judeo-Masonic conspiracies in the political life of France. Gougenot des Mousseaux's anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish views were strongly imbued with his anti-revolutionary Catholicism. His book *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* (*The Jew, Judaism and the Judaization of Christian peoples*, 1869) was translated by Alfred Rosenberg into German in 1921. The antisemitic editor and the founder of the "Association against the Presumption of Jewry" (Verbandgegen Überhebung des Judentumes), Ludwig Müller von Hausen was the most important *völkisch* German contact with the group of "Aufbau," in particular Vinberg, Shabelsky-Bork, and Taboritsky.

Earlier it was unknown how exactly *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* reached Germany (see Hagemeister, 1998, p. 261). Kellogg's archival research, including Gestapo documents that were preserved after World War II in Soviet archives and were declassified after the demise of the Soviet Union, made clear that it was Shabelsky-Bork who carried a copy of Sergei Nilus' *Great in the small and the Anti-Christ as an imminent political possibility. Notes of an Orthodox believer* that included *The Protocols* to Berlin and gave it to Hausen in 1919 (Kellogg, 2005, p. 65). In the same year, Hausen hired someone to translate *The Protocols* into

German and became its first non-Russian editor and publisher (under the pen name "Gottfried zur Beek") outside Russia (*ibid.*; Cohn, 1981, p. 136). The publication was accompanied by "zur Beek's" foreword, aiming at convincing the German public of *The Protocols*' authenticity. The popularity of *The Protocols* in Germany was immediate – by the end of 1920 it was reprinted four more times and its sales reached 120,000 copies (*ibid.*). According to Hausen's 1921 letter to Carl März, now preserved in a Russian archive, he believed that *The Protocols* were first drafted in Hebrew, then translated into French, and from French into Russian (Kellog, 2005: 66). It is entirely possible that Shabelsky-Bork likewise was the source of this belief.

Returning to Vinberg's list, the phrase "the Kikes will destroy Russia" was ascribed to Dostoevsky by Russian antisemites to legitimize their views, although he never wrote this phrase (see Morson, 1983, p. 311). His 1877 supplement of the *Writer's Diary* includes, however, the article "The Jewish Question," which maintains the existence of "the Kike idea" (*ideia zhidovskaia*) that governs the Jews' dangerous aspiration drive to gain power over Russia and the whole world (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 353).[13] Aleksei Shmakov's (1852–1916) writings that shared ideas of racial antisemitism served as a theoretical basis for the far-right political movements in Russia. Ippolit Liutostansky's (1835–1915) writings were notorious for repetitively accusing Jews of ritual killings of Christian children (blood libel). Georgii Butmi-de Katsman (1856–1919) was an antisemitic journalist and one of the first publishers of *The Protocols*.[14] Nikolai Vagner's (pseudonym "Kot-Murlyka," 1829–1907) novel *The Dark Path* (*Temnyi Put'*, 1881–1884; 1890) describes the world Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, anticipating *The Protocols* and Shabelskaya-Bork's novel. This list is evidence of the mixture of semi-scientific speculations and conspiratorial, virulent antisemitic writing that served as an ideological basis for the twentieth century rise of extreme right political movements. The very place of Shabelskaya-Bork among the forefathers of European and Russian antisemitism and Nazism attains both testimonial and iconic meaning. It once more testifies to the respect that the representatives of the conspiratorial "Aufbau" had for her personality and her writing. For them she was both a representative of the past but also a symbolic bridge into the present, as her godson was implementing her vision in his political and terrorist activities. Significantly, Vinberg enumerates both theoreticians and writers as if not differentiating between (pseudo-)scientific and literary modes of writing. In this conspiratorial instrumentalization of the fictitious

discourse, Vinberg actually follows in Shabelskaya-Bork's footsteps, who, as we have seen, referred to Huysmans' novel as a trustworthy source of information. Just as the Russian members of "Aufbau," other representatives of the émigré extremist circles, as we shall see, read Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, endowing it with real-life and, at the same time, prophetic meaning. This naïve epistemological approach made her novel analogous to *The Protocols* whose authenticity they, as well as their German counterparts, did not doubt.

Hausen could read Russian and read regularly the Berlin newspaper *Prizyv* (*The Call*) edited by Vinberg, Shabelsky-Bork, and Taboritsky, translating some of its publications into German. Kellogg found in Hausen's archive an article from a November 1919 edition of *Prizyv* that Hausen had translated into German (Kellogg, 2005, p. 64). Called "Satanisten des XX. Jahrhunderts" in German, the article's Russian title was identical to the title of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel. The anonymous 1919 article reported "ominous rumors" spreading in Moscow:

> People who came from Moscow report on the terrible blasphemy allegedly committed recently within the walls of the Kremlin. The so-called black Mass or liturgy of Satan was held there in the presence of Trotsky and other high-ranking Soviet leaders. Those present prayed to the god of Evil for help in defeating their enemies. Thanks to a Latvian Red Army soldier who was on guard duty in the Kremlin, this case became public and made a terrible impression in Moscow. The next day, on Trotsky's orders, the Latvian finished his earthly existence. (Anonymous, 1919, p. 2)

Kellogg does not point out that by its very title and subject-matter this article directly evokes the theme of the Jewish-satanic Mass of Shabelskaya-Bork's eponymous novel. Possibly, her very godson Petr Shabelsky-Bork authored this article, based indeed on some "ominous rumors" from Moscow or on his own imagination. However it might be, this article attests to how Shabelskaya-Bork's novel literally became a blueprint for the conflation of the pre-revolutionary antisemitic tropes and anti-Soviet sentiments. It is a task of further research to discover whether Hausen's translation was published in some German right-wing periodical and whether the theme of a satanic Judeo-Bolshevik Mass engendered by Shabelskaya-Bork found further thematizations in Germany.

In 1933, Shabelskaya-Bork's novel was serialized in the Riga ultra-right newspaper *Zavtra* (*Tomorrow*), edited by the unscrupulous journalist

Leonard Piragis (1876–1944).[15] Despite various dishonest journalistic and editorial activities (including plagiarism and forgery)[16] for which he was marginalized in the émigré journalistic world, his anti-Jewish conspiratorial convictions seem to be quite sincere. Thus, *Zavtra*'s anonymous editorial "For justice, job and bread!" ("Za spravedlivost', raboty i khleb!"), which was apparently authored by him, appeals to the Russians and Latvians to unite against the Judeo-Masonic intrigue (Anonymous 1933: 1). Piragis seemed to find, therefore, a kindred spirit in Shabelskaya-Bork. After serializing her novel in his newspaper, Piragis republished it in 1934 as a book with his introduction "Resurrected from the Buried Alive" ("Voskresshii iz zazhivo pogrebennykh") and comments signed with his usual pseudonym L. Kormchii.[17] In 1936, he likewise published a third part of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel titled *Secrets of Martinique* (*Tainy Martiniki*) that treats the famous eruption of the Mont Pelée volcano in 1902 as the manifestation of God's wrath on the "satanists"' attempt to build up their temple on the island.[18] For Piragis, *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* had a prophetic status (Kormchii, p. 1934, p. 4). In his comments, he constantly reads recent and contemporaneous Russian and European history through the prism of this novel (*ibid.* p. 65). He likewise uses the Nazi terminology of the purity of the Aryan race, thus upgrading Shabelskaya-Bork's novel to up-to-date European realities. In another comment, he upgrades the novel to the context of the Nazi takeover in 1933, presenting the latter as Germany's felicitous escape from Masonry's grip: "Germany, which was threatened with Russia's fate, first emerged from the tenacious grip of Freemasonry, as the author of the *Satanists* foresaw, but not with the help of William the II, who lost the crown because of the Freemasons" (*ibid.*, p. 215). Shabelskaya-Bork's prophesy about the strong anti-Judeo-Masonic union of German emperor and Russian right-wing forces did not come true in its time but became self-fulfilling prophecy in view of the post-revolution cooperation of Russian and German extremists.

In December 1939, Piragis, along with German repatriates, left Latvia for Germany (Abyzov, 1990, p. 298). The Russian authorities were already preparing for the annexation of the Baltic states (which occurred in the summer 1940), and Piragis, who expressed his pro-Nazi sympathies in his newspaper *Tomorrow*, might have justly been worried about his future in Soviet Latvia. Piragis, just as Amfiteatrov's son Valentin Amfiteatrov-Kadashev (see f. 8), was an active contributor to the Russian Nazi newspaper *Novoe slovo* (*A new word*) under various pseudonyms in

1935–1936. There he used to report about Jewish conspiratorial activities in Latvia and worldwide.

Shabelskaya-Bork's novel was not freely circulated in the former Soviet Union. Yet, there is evidence that it was read in some circles and even made its ambivalent way into a Russian literary canon as one of the sources for Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*. In his research on that novel, Mikhail Zolotonosov has convincingly shown that its scene of the initiation at the Satan's ball draws upon Shabelskaya-Bork's scene of the Masonic initiation that has no parallels in descriptions of Masonic organizations' rites but was rather a product of Shabelskaya-Bork's imagination (Zolotonosov, 1995, p. 79).[19]

In the re-actualization of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel in post-Soviet Russia, a prominent place belongs to the famous painter Ilya Glazunov. His collage style of painting presents a nostalgic vision of Russia's past ruined by some vague malicious forces. His reference to Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, however, clarifies the nature of these forces. In his 1997 interview he says:

> Now [Kazimierz] Waliszewski's historical novels are being republished. He is an evil Pole who hated Russia. What does he teach? The same as the Marquis de Custine… Let's better republish Shabelskaya's book *Satanists of the XX century*… In the 1920s, people were executed by shooting, for Shabelskaya's book.[20] Critics and analysts should have already studied all the lessons of the twentieth century. What processes have proved destructive for Russian statehood, economy, and culture?… (see Bondarenko, 1997, p. 147)

Evocative of Kormchii's "resurrection" of the novel "from the dead," its "promotion" by Glazunov was used as a blurb for its post-Soviet republications and has been widely cited on the internet. Apart from their post-Soviet use, Glazunov's words shed light on still under-researched ideological sources of nationalist and proto-Nazi movements of the post-WWII USSR that, in their turn, became semi-official in post-Soviet Russia. In one of the most concise investigations of such movements to date, Nikolai Mitrokhin writes about Glazunov's unique role in these circles, as he was both an officially recognized highly fashionable Soviet painter and retained the reputation of an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist (Mitrokhin, 2003, p. 207–210, 344–350).

In post-Soviet Russia, the re-publication of the 1934 edition of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, *i.e.,* the re-publication with Kormchii's proto-Nazi comments, was provided with the foreword entitled "A scroll" ("Skrizhal'") written by the extreme Russian nationalist Igor' D'iakov. In his foreword, D'iakov presents Shabelskaya-Bork's novel as a fulfilled prophecy and at the same time a warning against a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy that aims at destroying Russia (D'iakov, 2000).[21] Just as *The Protocols*, *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* can be considered as fake news *avant la lettre*, before this term became ubiquitous. If in the twentieth century, Shabelskaya-Bork's book inspired Russian émigré terrorism, it is still an open-ended question what influence it will have on today's readers. Let's live and see.

Endnotes

[1] *The Protocols* was a forgery, purporting to portray an international Jewish conspiracy for world domination. It largely plagiarized Maurice Joly's political satire *The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu* (*Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu*, 1864) that was directed against the regime of Napoleon III and did not mention the Jews. *The Protocols* was first published by Pavel Krushevan in Saint Petersburg's right-wing newspaper *Znamia* (The Banner) in 1903. Four months earlier, Krushevan was one of the key instigators of the Kishinev pogrom. In 1905 and till the revolution of 1917, *The Protocols* was republished multiple times by Sergei Nilus, a religious writer with strong antisemitic inclinations. Nilus used to republish *The Protocols* as part of his books and interpreted it as confirmation of his eschatological views, based on French anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish literature, about "the triumph of the leaders of Talmudic Israel over the world that has renounced Christ" (Nilus, 1917, p. 175). *The Protocols* was translated into major European languages around the 1920s and became an immediate international sensation (see Michelis, 2004; Hagemeister, 2008).

[2] Hitler mentions *The Protocols* in *Mein Kampf* as a trustworthy source about the nature of the Jewish people and their ultimate goals (see Kellogg, 2005, pp. 75–76).

[3] After the Second World War, in the West the *Protocols* became marginalized in the public and political domain, while reappearing in conspiracy theories. They, however, were endorsed as authentic by a number of Arab and Muslim leaders and has nowadays received a prominent place in the anti-Jewish, anti-Israeli, and anti-American discourse in the Middle East (see Lewis, 1986, pp. 199, 208–217; Webman, 2011; Rahimiyan, 2011; Marcus and Crook, 2012).

[4] A legend that Shabelskaya-Bork was Shabelsky-Bork's real mother has survived till our days and appeared in otherwise trustworthy sources (see Cohn, 1981, p. 127; Dudakov, 1993, p. 181; Zolotonosov, 1995, p. 78, Glushanok, 2000, p. 820).

[5] The Black Hundreds was a Russian ultra-nationalistic, reactionary movement in the early 20th century (see Rogger, 1986, pp. 198–199; Laqueur, 1993).

[6] Notwithstanding the sensationalist tint of Amfiteatrov's accounts, they are borne out by other sources (apart of Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork and Petr Shabelsky-Bork's kinship), including recently published archival materials. Thus, the 1902 protocol of the Police Department that gives an account of the bankruptcy of Shabelskaya's theatrical enterprise likewise mentions her "suffering from alcoholism and morphinomania" (see Zubarev, 2007, p. 122). She confesses likewise in drug addiction in her correspondence (see Makarova, 2007, p. 106).

[7] Amfiteatrov uses the neologism "champagnolic," [*shampin'olik*] coined by the psychiatrist B. V. Tomashevskii, to define Bork's addiction to champagne (Amfiteatrov, 2004, p. 71).

[8] The literary and ideological career of his own son, Vladimir Amfiteatrov-Kadeshev (1882–1942), provides a paradoxical twist to Amfiteatrov's adherence to "hereditary" thinking. A secondary modernist writer at the beginning of his literary career, in the second half of 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, he became a major contributor to the Nazi Russian newspaper *Novoe Slovo* (*A New Word*) published in Berlin in 1933–1944. Here he wrote on political and cultural issues in line with the newspaper's Nazi guidelines and in complete defiance of his father's liberal and democratic views.

[9] Gennadii Obatnin pointed out that Olga Belskaya's surname is a shortened version of Shabelskaya-Bork's (Obatnin, 2022, p. 172).

[10] This book was first published in 1903. Its later editions included *The Protocols* as a part.

[11] Shabelskaya-Bork's novel can thus be seen as a reversal of the pattern of George du Maurier's famous novel *Trilby* (1894), where the eponymous heroine is seduced, exploited, and made into a famous singer by the stereotypical malicious Jew, Svengali.

[12] Scholars estimate that in the most intensive period of the Russian Civil War (1918–1920) between 100,000 to 200,000 Jews were killed and many more wounded in Ukraine and southern Russia (see Budnitskii, 2012, p. 217; Klier and Lambroza, 1992, p. 292; Bemporad and Chopard, 2019, p. xiv).

[13] Dostoevsky's views on Jews generated two main critical traditions: the one that accuses him of antisemitism, the other that considers his attitude towards Jews as a dialectic moment in his polyphonic vision of humanity (see Vassena, 2006, p. 46).

[14] Steven Zipperstein has convincingly suggested that *The Protocols*' first publisher Pavel Krushevan and his close friend Georgii Butmi "were likely the first authors of the document" (see Zipperstein, 2020, 94). One of the key incentives for its writing was the strong international indignation upon the first news about the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, which confirmed to Krushevan and Butmi the existence of the Jewish world-conspiracy. If this is the case, *The Protocols* can be seen as an all too successful example of victim blaming.

[15] See publications on Piragis' problematic writing and editorial career (Abyzov and Timenchik, 2016; Hellman, 2013).

[16] Thus, for instance, in 1921 he forged and published a poem presumably written by the famous Russian poet Alexander Blok (who died in the same year), in which the poet expresses his deep repentance for his former fascination with the Bolshevik revolution (see Abyzov and Timenchik, 2016; Hellman, 2013, pp. 36–37, 39).

[17] *Kormchii* means a "helmsman" in Russian.

[18]   As I have mentioned earlier, in *Satanists of the Twentieth Century*, Jews-satanists predict the birth of their Messiah in 1902, which becomes the key topic of *Secrets of Martinique*.

[19]   Zolotonosov has likewise suggested that the first chapter of Bulgakov's novel, called "Never Talk to Strangers," where the heroes "inadvertently" encounter Woland, parallels the beginning of Shabelskaya-Bork's novel, where malicious representatives of the Judeo-Masonic intrigue become – seemingly "inadvertently" – acquainted with Olga Belskaya (see Zolotonosov, 1995, p. 79).

[20]   I have not found any evidence that people were arrested and executed for keeping this book in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. Yes, it seems possible that Glazunov's conspiratorial imagination made the participation of Shabelskaya-Bork's "son" in the killing of V. D. Nabokov into the conviction that people were executed for keeping this book.

[21]   See likewise priest-monk Serafim's claim that in writing her book, Shabelskaya-Bork "used reliable facts and witnesses from so called 'primary sources.'" Following Kormchii, Serafim claims that Shabelskaya-Bork's book was a fulfilled prophecy about the conquest of Russia by the Judeo-Masonic sect (Serafim, 2016).

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**

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