

Émigrants et réviseurs scolaires dans la Valachie de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle: transfert intellectuel et construction nationale. Étude de cas: Ioan Maiorescu Nicoleta ROMAN¹

Abstract:

The 19th century redefined the place of nations within empires. Enlightenment ideas of mother-tongue education, natural rights and liberty join the imperial center's aim to attract loyalties, gain allegiance, create economic wealth and educate a citizenry attached to the state. In south-eastern Europe, the fragile coexistence of three empires (Ottoman, Russian and Austrian) was disrupted by the way in which the neighboring ethnic groups intended to adjust the Enlightenment ideas to suit the development of their own cultures. The present study traces the transfers brought by the Transylvanian intellectual émigrés to the field of education from Austrian Transylvania to the neighboring Ottoman principality of Wallachia. Coming from the ranks of the Greek Catholic intellectuals – an intermediary stratum between the imperial center, the privileged aristocracy and the majority of Romanian peasants – they pursued, at the same time, their professional development and the rise of literacy in Wallachia. As school inspectors, they intervened administratively and pedagogically in the school network recently established in Wallachia. Their leader, Ioan Maiorescu, questioned the Russian-style model of modernization and called for adapting Western models to the local reality to further the aim of cultural emancipation.

Keywords: Transylvania, Wallachia, nation, academic mobility, education, reform.

Dans le contexte d'expansion de l'Empire russe, les autorités tsaristes ont introduit dans les principautés roumaines, provinces ottomanes autonomes se trouvant sous protectorat russe, une Constitution à prétentions réformatrices, le Règlement Organique (*Regulamentul Organic*). Similaire aux constitutions imposées antérieurement à d'autres provinces rattachées à l'Empire (comme la Pologne et la Finlande), il devint clair pour les Roumains ce que l'imposition de cet acte législatif visait à long terme.²

La modernisation fut négociée et défendue par les élites roumaines comme un processus qui devait servir la nation, notamment par la révision du curriculum

¹ Je tiens à remercier Elisabeta Gheorghe pour la traduction, de même que les évaluateurs anonymes et les éditeurs de la revue pour leurs aide et conseils.

² L'annexion des principautés roumaines par la Russie était un objectif politique de longue haleine. Voir Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6-8. Pour les Roumains, l'annexion de la Bessarabie par la Russie était présente dans la mémoire politique. Après le traité de Unkiar Iskelesi (1833) avec la Porte et le traité de Mûchengrätz avec l'Empire Autrichien (1833), la Russie a obtenu, jusqu'à la guerre de Crimée, une position ferme dans la région.



scolaire et la création d'un réseau d'écoles publiques. L'idée de modernité sera donc bâtie, dans la deuxième moitié du XIX^e, sur ces premiers réseaux d'écoles primaires et secondaires et les débats concernant le type d'enseignement dont la société roumaine avait besoin ; ces débats ont préfiguré les fondements de la future loi de l'enseignement gratuit et obligatoire pour garçons et filles de 1864. Le chemin qui aboutira à cette loi fut long, impliqua plusieurs adaptations partant de la préoccupation permanente pour connaître le territoire des deux principautés réunies en 1859 sous le nom de Roumanie, reconnue comme État en 1861, sa population et ses besoins.

Dans cette démarche d'édification d'un système d'enseignement sur des bases nationales au carrefour des intérêts politiques divergents des trois empires (ottoman, autrichien et russe), un rôle essentiel fut attribué aux lettrés roumains émigrés de Transylvanie (alors province de la monarchie des Habsbourg) dans la principauté roumaine de Valachie. Ces intellectuels émigrés, qui font l'objet de cette analyse, représentaient l'un des facteurs qui ont conduit à ce que la Valachie soit considérée par l'historiographie comme une région ayant obtenu du succès dans le domaine de l'enseignement.³ En effet, la Roumanie a été l'un des premiers États à mettre en place un enseignement gratuit et obligatoire pour les enfants des deux sexes.

L'analyse de l'émigration des lettrés roumains de Transylvanie met en évidence les changements que ce phénomène a déterminé dans la société de la Valachie, le dialogue avec l'élite locale concernant l'adaptation des modèles occidentaux aux besoins locaux et l'éducation d'une nouvelle génération d'intellectuels. Les émigrés de Transylvanie représentaient la liaison entre les révolutions de 1848 de Valachie et de Moldavie, d'autres provinces de l'Empire Ottoman et les Roumains de Transylvanie. C'étaient eux qui ont infusé de la vigueur à une conscience nationale synthétisée par des mots tels que *frère*, *nation* et *patrie* et, bien que conscients des différences du statut des citoyens dans les deux empires (autrichien et ottoman), ils participaient aux projets unionistes qui avaient pour but de rassembler tous les Roumains. Leurs identités étaient multiples: personnelles (de sang et de famille), religieuses (orthodoxes ou uniates), ethniques (roumaine) et intellectuelles. Le caractère fluide de la loyauté et de la citoyenneté cachait au revers une conscience ethnique immuable. Pour les Roumains de Transylvanie, le besoin d'affirmer leur identité fut intense car ils avaient senti de plein fouet la discrimination socio-politique, les Roumains étant une nation tolérée dans

³ G.D. Iscu, "Le début de l'enseignement public dans les villages en Valachie," *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, XII, 2/1974, 223. G.D. Iscu a apprécié que la Valachie était dans une situation privilégiée dans le Sud-Est Européen parce qu'elle avait surmonté des obstacles importants au long de dix ans (1838-1848). Iscu a analysé cette situation dans sa thèse de doctorat *Contribuții privind învățământul la sate în Țara Românească până la jumătatea secolului al XIX-lea* (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1975).

l'Empire des Habsbourg. Dès le Moyen Age, l'élite en Transylvanie a reconnu seulement trois nations (l'aristocratie magyare et les élites urbaines saxonnes et sicules conformément à *Fraterna Unio/Unio Trium Nationum*, 1437). La nation était définie selon les privilèges politiques et sur des critères ethniques. Un autre critère d'exclusion était l'appartenance à la religion orthodoxe. Ainsi, jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle (*L'Edicte de Tolérance*, 1781) et même après, il y eut une double barrière: la non-appartenance de l'individu à l'une des trois nations, d'une part, et à l'une des quatre religions constitutionnelles (catholique, luthérienne, calviniste, uniate), d'autre part. De ce fait, les Roumains étaient largement exclus de la vie publique.⁴ L'Empire autrichien devint l'espace d'affirmation de plusieurs mouvements nationaux (en compétition ou en collaboration) et du jeu de convergence entre nation politique, empereur et peuple.⁵ Comme la pédagogie des Lumières recommandait l'enseignement dans la langue maternelle, on assiste à une réévaluation de l'enseignement autour du concept d'*éducation nationale*.⁶ Ceci marque le passage de *l'idéologie de la nation nobiliaire magyare à l'idéologie à partir de la mission civilisatrice de l'élite nationale et politique magyare*.⁷ De ce point de vue, les actions des Roumains lettrés de Transylvanie émigrés en Valachie étaient définies comme une stratégie d'échapper aux politiques culturelles colonisatrices de l'élite magyare.

Parmi les représentants de cette émigration des Roumains de Transylvanie liée à l'enseignement en Valachie, il y eut trois qui eurent une influence durable dans ce domaine d'activité: Aaron Florian,⁸ August Treboniu Laurian⁹ et Ioan

⁴ Keith Hitchins, *Români, 1774-1866* (București: Humanitas, 2011), 248; Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 121. Hitchins, 266 affirme que même après 1781 la situation restait précaire puisque *leur foi uniate ou orthodoxe continuait d'être un désavantage aussi sérieux que l'origine sociale 'plébéienne'*. Gábor Vermes, *Hungarian Culture and Politics in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1711-1848* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2014), 41.

⁵ Steven Beller, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1815-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 64-65.

⁶ Paul Brusanowski, *Învățământul confesional ortodox din Transilvania între anii 1848-1918. Între exigențele statului centralizat și principiile autonomiei bisericești* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005), 54-60. En 1790, la Diète et l'empereur Léopold II ont renversé partiellement les réformes joséphiennes, ce qui représentait la base du nationalisme hongrois.

⁷ Brusanowski, *Învățământul confesional ortodox*, 64.

⁸ Aaron Florian (1805-1887) fut professeur, historien et publiciste. Avec des études à Budapest, il vint en Valachie ; en 1826 il fut professeur de langue roumaine, latine et d'histoire universelle. Il participa à la Révolution roumaine de 1848, écrivit des manuels scolaires et un dictionnaire franco-roumain. Ses préoccupations constantes furent l'histoire de la Valachie (voir son livre *Idee repede de istoria Printipatului Țării Românești*, 3 vols., Tipografia lui Eliad, 1835-1838) et la discussion du concept de patrie.

⁹ August Treboniu Laurian (1810-1881) était philologue, historien, publiciste et politicien. Avec des études à Vienne et Göttingen, il vint en Valachie et fut professeur de philologie et histoire. Il participa à la Révolution roumaine de 1848, a réalisé la première revue d'histoire roumaine avec Nicolae Bălcescu (1845, *Magazin istoric pentru Dacia*) et fut l'un des fondateurs de l'Académie Roumaine (1867).



Maiorescu. Actifs durant l'époque du Règlement Organique, ils ont parcouru tous les échelons de la hiérarchie dans l'enseignement (en tant qu'instituteurs, puis professeurs, inspecteurs et directeurs). Tous les trois devinrent réviseurs¹⁰ avant le début de la révolution de 1848, furent impliqués dans les projets de l'Union des Roumains des deux empires dans un seul État, mais aussi dans des recherches expérimentales afin de trouver les meilleures solutions pour une réforme de l'enseignement ; cette réforme sera mise en place en 1864, après l'accomplissement de l'idéal d'union politique. Ioan Maiorescu fut le chef de file informel de groupe d'émigrés. Libéral modéré et critique intransigeant du système d'enseignement, ce fut lui qui ébaucha la théorie des formes dépourvues de fond qui allait être développée et énoncée par son fils, Titu Maiorescu, futur premier ministre (1912-1914) et ministre de l'Instruction Publique (1874, 1876, 1888-1889). Maiorescu-père fut la voix qui influença le développement de l'enseignement en Valachie concernant la mise en place des programmes adoptés en 1831. De condition modeste, avec des études à Vienne marquées par l'esprit de l'Aufklärung allemande, avec peu de chances de s'affirmer dans l'Empire autrichien à cause de son ethnie, Maiorescu connaissait la réalité du monde rural et, comme d'autres émigrés venus de Transylvanie, milita pour un enseignement primaire égalitaire répondant aux besoins des classes populaires.

L'année 1838 et deux moments formateurs: le début de la construction du réseau d'écoles dans le milieu rural et le débat organicisme culturel vs. occidentalisation

La mise en place du réseau d'écoles dans la principauté de la Valachie fut le résultat de l'activité d'une équipe dirigée par Petrache Poenaru, avec des études en Occident. À la suite de la collaboration entre l'élite roumaine valaque, les évêques locaux de l'Église orthodoxe et le gouverneur, le *Règlement Organique* stipulait que l'enseignement public devait :

« (...) faire l'objet des soins et de la surveillance du gouvernement afin que l'éducation des jeunes soit fondée dès début sur la plus saine moralité [...]. Des écoles élémentaires pour les deux sexes seront fondées dans chaque capitale de département, où l'on enseignera les connaissances élémentaires d'après la méthode de Lancaster, on assurera à ces établissements le progrès dans les limites des sommes d'argent assignées à l'enseignement publique. Les cours seront donnés en roumain non seulement pour mettre à l'aise les écoliers et pour développer la langue du pays, mais aussi parce que cette langue, qui est celle dans laquelle on officie le service divin de notre sainte foi, sera aussi la langue des institutions publiques. »¹¹

¹⁰ En Valachie, le *réviseur* est l'équivalent d'origine russe du titre français d'inspecteur général.

¹¹ *Regulamentul Organic : intrupat cu legiurile din anii 1831, 1832 și 1833, și adogat la sfârșit cu le-*

En 1832, les autorités valaques commencèrent à créer l'infrastructure scolaire avec pour point de départ les écoles dans les villes. L'organisation hiérarchique des écoles était la suivante : les écoles communales, les écoles « *preparentale* » (qui se trouvaient dans les *plăși*, sous-divisions administratives territoriales d'un département (*județ*), où il y avait deux instituteurs, qui étaient également le siège des réviseurs), les écoles normales (dans les capitales des départements, qui préparaient les futurs instituteurs), centrales (à Bucarest et à Craiova) et complémentaires (Bucarest). Conformément au Règlement Organique, l'enseignement public était en roumain, étant destiné aux enfants des deux sexes et ouvert à l'ensemble de la population de la Valachie. Le roumain était également la langue de l'administration et la langue utilisée dans l'église. Les autorités scolaires considéraient la méthode de Lancaster comme efficace pour l'alphabétisation des classes défavorisées (pauvres, orphelins, etc.), exigeant une intervention institutionnelle limitée.¹²

Dans la principauté, il y avait déjà des écoles, y compris des écoles ouvertes aux filles et aux étrangers. Au début du siècle, l'arrivée de Gheorghe Lazăr de sa Transylvanie natale à l'école supérieure de la capitale de la Valachie (Saint Sava) revigora le sentiment national des Roumains et avait contribué à la diminution de la présence grecque dans l'enseignement et l'éducation. Il fut le professeur et le mentor de nombre de futurs personnalités roumaines responsables de l'enseignement. Comme la plupart des Roumains de Transylvanie qui ont fait une carrière, Lazăr était issu de la classe paysanne. L'Eglise Orthodoxe locale l'avait envoyé pour faire des études à Vienne dans l'esprit des Lumières allemandes. A Vienne, il prit conscience de l'importance d'une éducation nationale. Il était persuadé qu'une puissance impériale n'était intéressée par l'instruction publique que si elle en tirait un bénéfice. En Transylvanie, les Roumains (mais aussi d'autres ethnies) furent soutenus par les Églises Orthodoxe et Uniate locale et construisirent eux-mêmes leurs écoles. Lazăr critiquait l'imitation des modèles occidentaux; il rejetait l'élitisme des Phanariotes¹³ qui altérait la culture roumaine et affirmait qu'il ne fallait pas idéaliser les études à l'étranger car elles pouvaient corrompre moralement:

« Nombreux jeunes hommes qui sont envoyés voyager dans des pays étrangers pour s'enrichir intellectuellement reviennent en apportant habitudes étrangères,

giurile de la anul 1834 până acum, împărțite pe ficare an, precum și cu o scară deslușită a materiilor (București: Tipărit la pitarul Z. Carcaleki, tipograful Curtii, 1847), 365-6.

¹² Nicoleta Roman, "Școlile sătești din Țara Românească : începuturi, obstacole și realizări (1831-1848)," in *Educația publică și condiționările sale (secolele XIX-XX)*, eds. Cătălina Mihalache, Leonidas Rados (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2015), 50-51.

¹³ Après 1716, la Porte nommait sur le trône de Valachie des princes régnants d'origine grecque qui venaient s'y installer avec leur suite.



mode vestimentaire, démarche extravagante, prolixité irréfléchie; et pourtant certains les considéraient comme personnes éclairées précisément pour ces raisons et appréciaient davantage les défauts des étrangers que la modestie ou la piété paysanne. »¹⁴

Venu en Valachie, il encourage le développement de l'enseignement et de toutes les sciences parce que *nous aussi [les Roumains] nous sommes nés, tout comme les autres nations, et en nous aussi Dieu a mis ces dons – là [de la connaissance]*.¹⁵ Aussi Lazăr mettait-il le signe d'égalité entre les nations dans leur effort d'émancipation à travers la culture et esquisse-t-il le portrait des personnes censées la propager au sein du peuple. Avoir des connaissances dans un domaine, où qu'elles fussent acquises, même dans l'Europe de l'Ouest, pour jouir du prestige, n'était pas suffisant; il était nécessaire qu'elles fussent doublées de vertu et d'une haute moralité. Son élève, l'un des futurs chefs de file de la révolution de 1848, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, écrivain, savant et futur académicien, allait soutenir d'abord une approche quantitative : *Écrivez, mes braves, n'importe quoi, mais écrivez!* – pour s'approcher finalement de la vision de Lazăr. Rădulescu fut convaincu de cette approche après un débat public sur la qualité de l'enseignement en Valachie.

Au moment de la mise en place en Valachie du fondement du réseau d'écoles et des programmes, l'influence française prenait déjà essor dans la principauté, introduite d'abord par les princes phanariotes et ensuite par l'administration russe.¹⁶ Elle n'intéressait que les élites et était contestée par les Roumains et en partie par les autorités impliquées dans le processus d'enseignement, d'autant plus qu'elle venait par la filière politique russe, où la modernisation institutionnelle cachaient parfois des fins colonisatrices. Il ne s'agissait pas là d'une attitude anti-européenne. Au contraire, la réticence à l'égard de l'influence française exprimait le besoin de chercher son propre chemin vers l'Europe. C'est une raison pour laquelle Petrache Poenaru, le directeur de l'Ephorie des Ecoles (*Eforia Scoalelor*), l'institution qui s'occupait de l'enseignement public, assurait le bon fonctionnement de son institution par l'intermédiaire des circulaires, qui lui donnait la possibilité d'offrir des explications supplémentaires, de corriger rapidement les inadvertances apparues et d'intervenir de manière complémentaire dans la loi adoptée en accord avec les Russes.

Aussi, la circulaire du 24 janvier 1838 complétait-elle le Règlement Organique, étant considérée comme l'acte de création des écoles dans les villages :

¹⁴ Gheorghe Bogdan-Duică et Popa Lisseanu, *Viața și opera lui Gheorghe Lazăr* (București, 1924), 290.

¹⁵ Bogdan-Duică et Lisseanu, *Viața și opera lui Gheorghe Lazăr*.

¹⁶ Pompiliu Eliade, *De l'influence française sur l'esprit public en Roumanie: les origines* (Paris: Ernest Leureux, 1898).

« En accord avec les propriétaires des domaines, que l'on mette en application le texte du Règlement, en créant dans chaque village une école pour l'instruction des enfants des villageois, les classes ayant lieu seulement en hiver, à savoir du 1^{er} novembre jusqu'à la fin du mois de mars, de sorte que pendant les autres mois ils puissent aider leurs parents aux travaux des champs ». ¹⁷

L'inclusion des enfants des villages dans le processus d'enseignement est évidente, de même que la mise en place de la réalisation du réseau d'écoles de village. L'objectif poursuivi était de faire apprendre aux enfants à lire et à écrire, de leur apprendre le calcul et le catéchisme. Cet enseignement était en accord avec les conditions de la vie à la campagne et les travaux agricoles. Il tenait compte du fait que les enfants devaient aider leurs parents au champ, offrant également des manuels d'agriculture. En même temps, dans leur correspondance interne, les autorités expliquaient que l'instruction publique était aussi ouverte aux esclaves tziganes:

« (...) aucune loi [n.n., section] du Règlement Organique n'interdit aux Tziganes de jouir eux-aussi du droit dont jouissent tous les habitants de ce pays de mieux connaître leurs devoirs de chrétiens et de membres de la société. » ¹⁸

Dans les villes, les écoles primaires avaient les mêmes objectifs minimaux concernant l'alphabétisation, le programme d'études s'élargissant et devenant de plus en plus complexe au fur et à mesure que l'on avançait vers l'enseignement secondaire. L'enseignement primaire s'adressait à des personnes dont l'âge variait entre 6 et 17 ans. ¹⁹ Les obstacles qui empêchaient l'accès à l'instruction publique étaient de nature économique: la taxe que les parents devaient payer pour les salaires du personnel didactique, l'aménagement du bâtiment de l'école et la collaboration avec les propriétaires des domaines agricoles. Le directeur de l'Ephorie des Ecoles déclarait que le rôle de l'instruction publique était de former *des générations plus adaptées aux nouvelles institutions*. Il affirmait en même temps que les deux types de réseaux scolaires – le réseau urbain et le réseau villageois – étaient complémentaires selon leur but et étaient fondés sur la cohabitation entre morale et science :

« Par l'enseignement religieux et pratique qu'ils recevront dans ces écoles, les villageois acquerront depuis leur jeune âge l'habitude d'être meilleurs chrétiens, d'aimer l'honnêteté, de mieux se défendre contre toutes sortes d'hérésies et d'être plus travailleurs. Une fois l'instruction répandue dans les villages, les écoles

¹⁷ V.A. Urechia, *Scoalele sătesci in Romania: istoricul lor de la 1830-1867, cu anesarea tuturor documentelor relative la cestiune* (Bucuresti : Tipografia Nationala, 1868), 5; V.A. Urechia, *Istoria scoalelor de la 1860-1864* (București: Imprimeria Statului, 1892), II, 1.

¹⁸ Gheorghe Pârnuță, Ștefan Trâmbaciu, *Mărturii și documente muscelene (1215-1918)* (București: Semne, 1997), 104.

¹⁹ Roman, *Școlile sătești*, 59.



supérieures des villes se développeront de plus en plus. De cette manière, se reconnaissant l'un et l'autre fils de la même famille, le nom de Roumain ne sera plus terme d'insulte, mais l'un et l'autre le porteront avec la fierté de nos ancêtres, convoité par toutes les nations. »²⁰

La religion chrétienne et la conscience nationale représentaient les parties d'une identité qui devait constituer la base du savoir. La famille était associée à la nation ; tout Roumain, quelle que fût son milieu social ou la région était formé dans le respect pour son identité et l'histoire de sa nation. L'instruction les aidait à se développer en tant qu'individus, mais aussi comme groupe et nation. Cette vision fut partagée par le fondateur de l'enseignement national en Moldavie qui affirmait que le *progrès d'un peuple ne signifie pas emprunter toutes les formes étrangères et nouvelles, mais dans le respect de son passé*²¹ et le développement de la nationalité. Dans sa Moldavie, Gheorghe Asachi appréciait les Roumains de Transylvanie pour leur manière de résister aux politiques impériales visant à restreindre leurs droits civils : *pendant des siècles, malgré les événements qui ont troublé toute l'Europe, ils ont gardé jusqu'aujourd'hui presque identiquement le type original, la langue et les traditions de leurs ancêtres.*²² Le directeur de l'Ephorie des Ecoles de Valachie, Petrache Poenaru, était du même avis; de plus, il désirait que l'enseignement se développât de l'intérieur. C'est pourquoi il avait soutenu et attiré en Valachie, pour les impliquer dans le réseau scolaire nouvellement mis en place, des lettrés roumains de Transylvanie, éduqués dans l'espace culturel allemand.

En 1838, l'année de la mise en place du réseau scolaire rural, l'un de ces émigrés, devenu professeur à Craiova, publia un article dénigrant l'élite francophile et l'influence française en Valachie:

« Je fais des efforts dans beaucoup de domaines et au milieu de la joie je soupire. Où trouver chez nous la chaleur et le feu – où sont le nationalisme et le patriotisme qui animent les Roumains de Transylvanie ? Un matérialisme épais est tombé sur la Valachie. D'où vient-il? De la Gaule. Une littérature fallacieuse trompe tout le monde. D'où vient-t-elle? De la Gaule. – Un jugement faussé, un goût dangereux, un effort dirigé uniquement vers les apparences, un luxe destructif. D'où viennent-ils? Du matérialisme français. Une légèreté, une inconstance, un enrichissement superficiel. D'où viennent-ils? De la littérature française. On voit bien que le goût pour la lecture s'est développé: le nombre des revues augmente. Nous avons le *Curier românesc* qui sortira dans un nouveau format, plus beau encore, en roumain et français (peut-on savoir pourquoi?). Nous avons le *Buletin Oficial*, *Muzeu National*, *Curier de Ambe-Sexe* et *Cantor de Avis* (...) En l'apprenant, on pourrait

²⁰ Urechia, *Scoalele sătesci*, 53.

²¹ Gheorghe Asachi, *Albina românească* 15/1843.

²² Asachi, *Albina românească* 15/1843.

croire que la Valachie a fait des progrès étonnants. Moi aussi, en comparant la Valachie d'il y a six ans à celle d'aujourd'hui, j'en suis tout étonné. »

Et il continue:

« Si le renard de la fable²³ venait en Dacie [n.n., les Principautés roumaines ; le nom antique de l'espace servait aussi à l'époque aux intellectuels militant pour l'identité nationale roumaine à affirmer l'unité ethnique et linguistique des principautés] et montait au sommet des Carpates et voyait jusqu'au Danube un beau masque décervelé, il en serait étonné lui aussi et si, comme moi, il aimait les Roumains, il pleurerait avec moi. – Comment? Me tromperais-je? Nullement. Gardez-vous, mes frères, de vous laisser berner! Ne prenez pas en compte seulement le fait que nous avons aujourd'hui beaucoup d'écrivains, livres et journaux, plus que nous n'en avons pas besoin. Il faudrait vivre ici, avec nous pour nous connaître! Nous avons des écrivains qui ne sont pas dépourvus de talent. Mais quel poète s'est-il donné la peine d'apprendre ce dont le Roumain a besoin et ce qui lui nuit ? Et s'il l'a appris, s'est-il efforcé de le chanter, ce besoin, dans ses vers et, en le chantant, de l'enseigner à celui-ci conformément à la nature qui lui est propre? ».²⁴

Ces lignes furent publiées dans *Foaia literară*, revue qui paraissait à Braşov, ville qui se trouvait à la frontière de l'Empire Autrichien avec l'Empire Ottoman. L'auteur s'appelle Ioan Maiorescu. Il reconnaissait qu'il y avait une production culturelle en Valachie, mais il la voulait plus adaptée, plus rapprochée de l'idée de nationalité. Maiorescu était contre la production culturelle « quantitative », alors que le promoteur de cette approche, Ion Heliade Rădulescu se sentit attaqué personnellement par cet article. Il n'en pouvait pas être autrement puisque l'élite culturelle dont il était le chef y avait été traitée de *société sans cerveaux* (*societate fără creieri*). Tout le corps des professeurs avait lu l'article en cause. En guise de conséquence, après avoir été suspendu et que l'on jeta l'opprobre sur lui, Maiorescu fut menacé d'être renvoyé et obligé à se rétracter dans la même revue pour garder son poste. Il le fit en disant que *venu depuis peu de temps en Valachie et isolé de la société, je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de connaître dès le début ni ce pays, ni le corps des professeurs et que ce qu'il avait dit n'étaient qu'impressions hâtives et, par conséquent, erronées.*²⁵ En privé, il écrivait néanmoins à un ami qu'en Valachie *on ne sait pas ce que c'est que la critique.*²⁶

²³ Il s'agit de la fable du Jean de La Fontaine, *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, édité pour la première fois en 1668 dans le volume I de *Fables choisies, mises en vers*. Les fables sont devenues un instrument d'éducation de l'identité nationale. Voir Ralph Albanese, « Les Fables de La Fontaine et la pédagogie républicaine de la 'francité' », *Cahiers du dix-septième siècle* IX, no. 1 (2004), 143-155. Le renard symbolise l'identité nationale qui doit être renforcée en Valachie, selon le sens donné par Maiorescu.

²⁴ *Foaia literară*, 16/1838.

²⁵ *Foaia literară* 16/1838.

²⁶ Ion Heliade Rădulescu, personnalité paradoxale, lui répondit par un article. Les proches de



Ni le directeur, ni les collègues de Maiorescu qui, comme lui, étaient venus de Transylvanie,²⁷ ne considéraient pas opportun de discuter publiquement de pareilles questions: elles auraient blessé l'amour propre de certaines personnes dont la collaboration était absolument nécessaire et en même temps elles pourraient troubler le processus de construction du système de l'enseignement national en cours de déroulement alors que la principauté se trouvait sous protectorat russe. Elles étaient l'expression d'un débat local et le besoin de se détacher des modèles occidentaux. Elles situaient en même temps la conscience nationale des Roumains au carrefour des politiques impériales. Maiorescu écrivit son article de la perspective d'un Roumain dont l'éducation et les droits civils étaient restreints dans l'Empire autrichien à cause de son ethnie. La situation de la Valachie lui augmenta son sentiment d'insécurité qu'il a ressenti lors de sa venue et lui suscita la perception que les Roumains avaient d'eux-mêmes. Le stéréotype selon lequel la langue roumaine manquait de cultivation existait déjà en Transylvanie.²⁸ Pour Maiorescu, l'engouement des productions littéraires locales en Valachie pour les traductions et les modèles culturels était décevant. Son désir et celui de sa génération fut de *créer le citoyen-patriote et non le patriote national*.²⁹ Lui, comme d'autres ses contemporains, eut de la peine à comprendre pourquoi les Roumains de l'Empire Ottoman, qui jouissaient d'une plus grande liberté concernant leur nationalité et leurs droits civils dans une province ottomane se trouvant sous protectorat russe, ne l'utilisaient pas. La réponse vint la même année, Maiorescu s'apercevant la différence entre les apparences et la réalité; une réalité qui pratiquait la censure.

Toujours en 1838, le libéral Ion Câmpineanu a lancé deux documents en déclarant le *Règlement Organique* et la régnée de prince en Valachie comme illégales. Francophile, il a essayé d'obtenir l'appui de la France et de l'Angleterre (1839) pour éliminer l'influence de la Russie en Valachie. Câmpineanu a fait des voyages à Paris et à Londres en rencontrant le prince polonais Adam Czartoryski, mais à son retour à Bucarest, a été emprisonné jusqu'en 1841 par l'ordre du

Rădulescu (Simeon Marcovici, le poète N.N. Rucăreanu) en firent de même pour défendre celui-ci et pour protéger leurs créations et intérêts.

²⁷ Aaron Florian, lui aussi professeur, vint en Valachie avant Maiorescu, désavouant ce que son collègue avait écrit, bien qu'il fût du même avis. Il le faisait parce que ce genre de textes *fâchent et font du mal, car, au lieu d'améliorer quelque chose, ils font beaucoup de dégâts*. Sa duplicité dans cette affaire s'explique par le fait qu'il savait *qu'il peut être dangereux d'écrire et de publier parce que les méchants veulent passer en société pour des gens vertueux*. Murgescu, "1838", 21.

²⁸ Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni* (București: Humanitas, 1997), 335.

²⁹ Mirela Murgescu, *Între „bunul creștin” și „bravul român”*. *Rolul școlii primare în construirea identității naționale românești (1831-1878)* (Iași: A92, 1999), 52.

tsar. Sa libération a été possible seulement après avoir reconnu « ses erreurs » politiques.³⁰ En 1840, une autre contestation contre le régime eut Valachie eu le même résultat, la prison.³¹ D'ailleurs, Maiorescu écrivit à l'éditeur de *Foiaia literară* de faire attention à la propagande autour du cas de Câmpineanu. Il lui était devenu désormais clair qu'il n'était pas possible de parler librement et que le régime était loin d'être démocratique. En Valachie, l'émancipation politique de la nation commença en avance de l'émancipation culturelle; les événements de 1838 le rendirent visible. Il fut donc quelque peu surprenant pour Maiorescu d'avoir avancé de telles appréciations.

Néanmoins, pendant la décennie entre 1838 et la révolution de 1848, l'Ephorie des Ecoles dirigée par Petrache Poenaru créa le réseau de l'enseignement primaire qui avait fonctionné même pendant le protectorat impérial russe. Mirela Murgescu a montré qu'avant la révolution de 1848 le nombre d'écoles primaires était de 2309 avec 48 545 élèves.³² Les contemporains et même le prince Cuza qui a donné la première Loi pour l'enseignement gratuit et obligatoire en Roumanie (1864) l'avaient reconnu. Pour comparer, dans la Transylvanie natale de Maiorescu les écoles primaires pour enfants orthodoxes étaient 282 en 1843, tandis qu'au Banat, province relevant du même Empire autrichien, les écoles orthodoxes étaient 480.³³ Ágoston Berecz a constaté les discrepancies entre différentes régions de l'Empire³⁴ avec un avantage pour le sud de la Transylvanie où les Roumains avaient beaucoup plus d'écoles.³⁵ L'explication en est la proximité avec la frontière de Valachie, la migration entre les deux espaces et la solidarité ethnique accrue. La mobilité et la présence des lettrés de Transylvanie dans les Principautés Roumaines voisines ont été déjà remarquées.³⁶ Dans cette étude,

³⁰ Radu R. Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in the Romanian Principalities: A Study in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821-1854* (Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 196-208; Constantin Vlăduț, *Ion Câmpineanu* (București: Editura Științifică, 1973). Les deux documents, *Act de unire și independență* et *Osebitul act de numire a suveranului rumânilor* vinrent en guise de réaction à l'acte additionnel introduit par l'Empire russe (accepté en Moldavie, mais pas encore en Valachie) au Règlement Organique.

³¹ Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians. A History*, trans. Alexandra Bley-Vroman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), 141.

³² Murgescu, *Între „bunul creștin” și „bravul român*, 38, en observant qu'il s'agissait d'une augmentation par rapport à 1838-1839 (1975 écoles primaires et 32 521 élèves).

³³ Brusanowski, *Învățământul confesional ortodox*, 81. Il faudrait y ajouter que les écoles confessionnelles orthodoxes n'étaient pas financées par l'état austro-hongrois.

³⁴ Ágoston Berecz, *The Politics of Early Language Teaching Hungarian in the primary schools of the Late Dual Monarchy* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2013), 71, 73-74.

³⁵ Berecz, *The Politics*, 102 (pour Brașov, Sibiu, Făgăraș).

³⁶ Alex Drace-Francis, *Geneza culturii române moderne. Instituțiile scrisului și dezvoltarea identității naționale, 1700-1900* (Iași: Polirom, 2016), transl. Marius-Adrian Hazaparu, 114-115; Ro-



nous nous sommes intéressées en revanche à l'activité de Maiorescu comme réviseur scolaire (inspecteur général) en Valachie au croisement des moments fondateurs pour l'enseignement public roumain.

L'inspection, l'inspecteur et le réviseur

Le Règlement Organique introduisit l'institution d'inspecteur dans l'enseignement primaire, son attribution principale étant celle de *surveiller le bon fonctionnement de l'enseignement dans les écoles dans tous les départements*.³⁷ La loi expliquait aussi comment il devait s'y prendre :

« À l'aide du comité d'inspection il s'efforcera de faire en sorte que chaque école atteigne un état de perfection morale et matérielle ; il cherchera les moyens pour surmonter les empêchements et les obstacles qui puissent entraver le progrès de l'enseignement public ; il donnera les aides nécessaires et soutiendra l'émulation de la jeune génération dans le domaine de l'enseignement. Pour ce faire, l'inspecteur visitera chacune des écoles des départements au moins une fois par an, les unes vers la fin du premier semestre, les autres à la fin de l'année scolaire. Le réviseur changera le moment de l'inspection périodiquement, de sorte que les écoles qui seront visitées pendant la première année au printemps, seront visitées l'année suivante en automne. »³⁸

La loi prévoyait qu'il collabore avec les notabilités locales, qui l'accompagnent lors de l'inspection et qui puissent lui prodiguer des conseils sur les *mesures à prendre pour remédier aux irrégularités rencontrées dans les écoles*.³⁹ À la suite de l'investigation sur le terrain et du dialogue avec les notabilités locales, l'inspecteur rédigea un journal d'inspection pour chaque école qu'il transmet au ministère. En tant qu'acte administratif, le journal d'inspection reflétait une réalité plus ou moins négociée avec ces notabilités. Le journal d'inspection comprenait *le nom des hauts dignitaires présents, évalu[ait] l'état moral et matériel de l'école* ; signé par l'inspecteur et les *membres du Comité d'instruction*,⁴⁰ il représentait un document officiel assumé par toutes les personnes présentes. De ce point de vue, l'inspecteur était un fonctionnaire, un bureaucrate envoyé sur les chemins départementaux pour recueillir des informations administratives, pour assurer et resserrer la collaboration avec d'autres institutions de l'État (mairies et autres établissements

mul Munteanu, "L'influence de l'école transylvaine sur la vie culturelle et sur l'éducation en Valachie et en Moldavie", in *La culture roumaine à l'époque des Lumières*, ed. Romul Munteanu, I (București: Univers, 1982), 290-306.

³⁷ *Regulamentul Organic*, Secsia IV, art. 143, p. 397.

³⁸ *Regulamentul Organic*, 397.

³⁹ *Regulamentul Organic*, art. 144, 397.

⁴⁰ *Regulamentul Organic*, art. 145, 397.

administratifs). L'observation et l'évaluation portaient sur le réseau scolaire et les personnes qui y étaient impliquées. Aussi, dans le même Règlement Organique était-il stipulé que l'inspecteur – *afin de mieux connaître l'état de l'école* – fit attention à la situation : 1) des instituteurs ; 2) des écoliers ; 3) des parents ; 4) des bâtiments où l'école fonctionnait et 5) des dignitaires chargés de l'école. L'État avait besoin d'informations spécifiques et, par conséquent, la loi détaillait clairement sur quoi l'inspecteur devait porter son attention.⁴¹ L'inspecteur général était nommé, en utilisant un terme venu du russe, le réviseur (revizor). Deux inspecteurs spéciaux étaient institués pour les deux premières villes du pays (Bucarest et Craiova).

La révision du statut d'instituteur, de professeur et d'inspecteur se fit à l'intérieur du Ministère et les décisions en furent envoyées depuis le centre vers les départements par l'intermédiaire des circulaires. En 1847, la loi de la réorganisation des écoles opérait des modifications significatives concernant les fonctions d'inspecteur général (réviseur) et d'inspecteur primaire (sous-réviseur). L'une d'entre elles concernait la répartition des responsabilités dans le vaste territoire de la principauté de sorte que la connaissance des besoins de la population et du degré d'intervention soit aussi proche de la réalité que possible. S'appuyant sur l'expérience accumulée, le ministère décida que l'on prévienne *un inspecteur primaire pour les écoles communales de deux plăși*. Les inspecteurs primaires, qui doivent être *compétents et actifs* étaient définis comme *l'organe le plus directe par lequel l'Ephorie puisse s'informer de l'état des écoles communale afin de pouvoir y remédier*. Les inspecteurs bénéficiaient d'une mobilité accrue en fonction des saisons : *au moins trois fois pendant l'hiver et deux fois pendant l'été, mais en hiver pour observer et évaluer et pendant l'été pour surveiller les réparations dans les salles de cours de l'école et leur maintien en bon état*.⁴² Les inspecteurs généraux collectaient ces informations de leurs subalternes ; dans les inspections ultérieures ils corrèleraient la situation sur le terrain rapportée avec les besoins de la population et l'objectif de l'Ephorie. La différence par rapport à la lettre du Règlement Organique résidait dans la reconnaissance implicite et indirecte du besoin de connaître et de mieux gérer la réalité qui existait dans le territoire. Le réviseur ne pouvait pas tout faire, il ne pouvait non plus identifier tous les problèmes pendant une seule visite à l'école ; pour cette raison, le sous-réviseur avait pour rôle de précéder les visites du réviseur.

En 1847, Ioan Maiorescu devenait réviseur scolaire à côté de deux autres intellectuels émigrés de Transylvanie (Aaron Florian et August Treboniu Laurian). C'était son activité professionnelle, très appréciée à l'époque, et son parcours professionnel qui expliquaient son avancement après la vive contestation du système éducatif et culturel de 1838 que j'ai présentée au début de cette étude.

⁴¹ *Regulamentul Organic*, art. 147, 398.

⁴² *Învățătorul satului*, no. 29/1847, 107.



L'homme du système, l'homme contre le système: Ioan Trifu alias Ioan Maiorescu

L'histoire de Maiorescu est l'histoire d'un homme qui changea le système éducationnel en Valachie. Son histoire mérite d'être récupérée ; elle commence en l'Empire autrichien de son vrai nom, Ioan Trifu. Le 24 octobre 1835, Ioan Trifu fut ordonné prêtre par l'évêque d'Oradea. Par la suite, il allait prendre le chemin vers Vienne où l'évêque Lemeny l'envoyait faire un doctorat en théologie à Augustineum ou Frintaneum.⁴³ L'évêque l'avait bien connu à l'époque où Ioan Trifu avait fait ses études à Cluj et à Oradea et ayant apprécié ses aptitudes ; il sollicita auprès du directeur de l'institution aussi bien qu'auprès de l'empereur qu'il y fût accepté.⁴⁴ Obtenant ainsi la permission de quitter le diocèse d'Oradea et d'être reçu à Vienne, il s'y installa et fréquenta en parallèle des cours de philologie et d'histoire. Malgré le soutien dont il bénéficia, en 1836, Ioan Trifu renonça à ses études et émigra en Valachie pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord il se rendit compte qu'il n'avait pas de vocation de prêtre. Ensuite, il fit la connaissance de Maria Popazu, la sœur de Ioan Popazu de Braşov, qui se trouvait lui aussi à Vienne. Ioan Popazu y avait été également envoyé par un autre évêque. Les deux jeunes hommes issus de villes différentes, envoyés par deux évêques de Transylvanie faire des études à Vienne se lièrent d'amitié et, après le mariage de Ioan Trifu avec Maria, furent liés par des liens de parenté. La lettre par laquelle il avait porté à la connaissance de son bienfaiteur la décision prise était d'une sincérité brutale :

« (...) mon zèle, qu'autrefois l'espoir d'obtenir la faveur de Votre Excellence enthousiasmait, faiblissait chaque jour davantage, et maintenant je dois quitter le statut de prêtre pour remplir le devoir que je dois à ma nation, même ayant ce statut (n.n., de prêtre) et qu'avant je n'ai jamais pu prester. Cela signifie que de mon propre gré je renonce à exercer les charges qui m'incombaient de par l'ordre (n.n., de prêtre) et je me suspends pour pouvoir me marier. »⁴⁵

Le désir de Trifu de renoncer à la prêtrise est clair, ainsi que ses raisons. Il savait qu'il avait l'option de renoncer, trouvant un remplaçant convenable et disposé de retourner l'argent dépensé pour lui. Il laissa à son bienfaiteur la responsabilité d'informer le directeur de l'institution.

Mais la lettre montre également le rapport entre les notions de nation et de patrie. Pour Ioan Trifu, la patrie est la Transylvanie, le lieu de sa naissance,

⁴³ *Das höheres Weltpriesterbildungsinstitut zum hl. Augustin*, institution qui a fonctionné pendant un siècle (1816-1918), créée par l'empereur Franz I à la suggestion de Jakob Frint, recteur de Cour, pour transformer les meilleurs prêtres de l'Empire en serviteurs de l'Etat.

⁴⁴ Coriolan Suci, "Din tineretea lui Ioan Trifu alias Maiorescu. De ce au venit în țară?", *Societatea de mâine*, 1927, 252.

⁴⁵ Suci, "Din tineretea lui Ioan Trifu", 272-273.

tandis que la nation a un sens plus large, comprenant l'identité de confession (orthodoxe), d'ethnie et de langue. Ce fait était très important pour un Roumain de l'Empire autrichien, où les trois entités étaient limitées. C'est pour cette raison qu'il énuméra comme possibles pays d'émigration la Valachie, la Moldavie et la Grèce.

Pourquoi donc choisit-il d'émigrer en Valachie ? Il ne pouvait pas retourner en Transylvanie une fois que son action avait été interprétée comme *une éternelle tache d'ingratitude envers ses protecteurs*.⁴⁶ Il ne voulait pas être prêtre car il voulait fonder une famille et avoir une profession. De deux ans son aîné, son ami et futur beau-frère, Ioan Popazu, savait lui aussi à ses 27 ans ce qu'il voulait faire dans sa vie. Peu de temps après, en 1837, il devint professeur à Braşov, la ville qui faisait la liaison entre la Transylvanie autrichienne et la Valachie de l'Empire Ottoman. Ensuite, il fit des démarches pour le développement de l'enseignement en langue roumaine, mais sans renoncer à sa qualité de prêtre.⁴⁷ Le choix de la Valachie fut donc dû à ces relations familiales. En août 1836, Ioan Trifu quitta Vienne pour aller à Braşov, d'où il allait quitter l'Empire autrichien pour entrer dans l'Empire Ottoman, en Valachie. Il se dirigea vers Bucarest pour faire usage de ses relations et pour solliciter un poste dans l'enseignement. Pour laisser derrière soi passé et dettes morales, il prit le nom de Maior car il était apparenté par sa mère à l'un des chefs du mouvement culturel et militant de Transylvanie.⁴⁸ Dans les premiers documents où on le trouve employé à l'Ephorie, son nom connaît des transitions (Maioreanu) pour aboutir à la forme consacrée que l'on connaît aujourd'hui (Maiorescu). En fait, le choix de la Valachie eut aussi une autre raison. Le seul endroit où il y avait d'autres Roumains venus de l'Empire Autrichien était le système éducatif valaque nouvellement mis en place et où il y avait aussi Aaron Florian, Ioan Axente Sever de Transylvanie, de même qu'Eftimie Murgu et Damaschin Bojincă venus de Banat, etc.). Il apprécia également ce que Gheorghe Lazăr avait fait pour l'enseignement en roumain. Il résonna avec la Valachie, elle lui semble plus familière, elle l'attirait et il espérait y trouver sa place. Aidé par Petrache Poenaru, le directeur d'Ephorie des Ecoles, il obtint une place à Cerneţi, petite ville de province, où il était censé développer et réformer

⁴⁶ Suciu, "Din tinereţea lui Ioan Trifu", 272-273.

⁴⁷ Ioan Popazu (1808-1889) fut un lettré roumain, évêque orthodoxe de Caransebes (1865-1889), collaborateur du métropolitain Andrei Şaguna en Transylvanie. Il joua un rôle marquant dans la lutte des Roumains pour leurs droits civiles et religieux dans la Transylvanie et le Banat, provinces de l'Empire autrichien.

⁴⁸ Petru Maior (1756-1821), philologue, théologien et prêtre Greco-Catholique Roumain, fut l'un des trois auteurs de *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, la déclaration d'émancipation des Roumains de Transylvanie; auteur principal du premier dictionnaire étymologique de la langue roumaine (*Le Dictionnaire de Buda*) (publié posthume en 1825).



l'école primaire. Cette ville de province fut le point sur la carte de la Valachie d'où Ioan Trifu, désormais Ioan Maiorescu, commença à mettre en œuvre sa vision sur l'enseignement.

Périple dans les principautés roumaines: Cerneți, Craiova, Iași, Craiova

En 1837, une année après son arrivée comme instituteur à Cerneți, la ville fut visitée par le prince régnant Alexandru Dimitrie Ghica.⁴⁹ La visite s'inscrivait dans un voyage plus ample du prince en Olténie et l'école de Cerneți se trouvait sur la liste de ces objectifs. On lui y montra la situation du département en insistant sur les améliorations déjà faites et en train d'être faites. Le prince assista à une leçon et remarqua l'instituteur Maiorescu. À cause du manque de personnel, on décida la mutation du jeune homme à Craiova comme professeur de lycée à l'*École centrale et nationale* (fondée 1826). Son transfert dans la deuxième grande ville et également un centre du pouvoir administratif représentait une « promotion ». Avant lui, d'autres professeurs de cette école eurent également le statut d'inspecteurs dans le département d'Olténie.⁵⁰

Maiorescu fut très apprécié jusqu'à ce qu'il entrât en conflit avec les Grecs proches du frère du prince régnant.⁵¹ Il fut rapidement écarté en 1842 et, se trouvant à la recherche d'un emploi, dut prendre le chemin vers la principauté voisine, la Moldavie, devenant professeur à Iași. Il fut d'abord professeur d'histoire et de rhétorique au Séminaire de Socola et, ensuite, à l'Académie Mihaileană sur la base des diplômes obtenus dans l'Empire autrichien et de l'expérience acquise en Valachie qui *confirmaient ses connaissances de philosophie et d'autres louables qualités*.⁵² Il n'y resta pas trop longtemps, mais les recherches montrent son implication à fond dans le processus éducationnel. Il pourrait paraître paradoxal que lui, *qui avait renoncé à son rang de prêtre pour se consacrer à l'enseignement laïc, était devenu professeur dans une institution dont la mission était de préparer ses*

⁴⁹ Alexandru Dimitrie Ghica (1796-1862), Prince Régnaant (1834-1842) et *caimacam* (1856-1858) en Valachie.

⁵⁰ Le professeur Căpățâneanu, l'ami d'Ion Heliade Radulescu (fondateur de l'école), et le professeur Serghie.

⁵¹ Mihail Ghica (1794-1850) fut grand boyar et Ministre de l'Intérieur, archéologue amateur, collectionneur. Il fut également membre de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie d'Odessa (1842) et le fondateur du Musée National de Bucarest.

⁵² V. Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu, profesor de istorie la Iași (1842-1843)", *Cercetări istorice* (1977) : 311. Le nom sous lequel Maiorescu fut embauché représentait une forme transitoire (Ioan Trifu-Maior). Son salaire était plus élevé que celui de ses collègues. Ce salaire lui suffisait pour payer son logement et les repas.

*étudiants pour devenir prêtres.*⁵³ L'explication en est que Maiorescu reconnaissait les mérites de l'Église, mais simplement, comme le suggèrent ses propres dires, il n'avait pas vocation de prêtre. Pour lui, le Séminaire de Socola, première école officielle en langue roumaine en Moldavie (1803), présentait le grand intérêt de lui offrir la possibilité d'enseigner des disciplines laïques et, en même temps, celle de pouvoir intégrer l'histoire nationale dans l'histoire universelle. Le sens de l'histoire était étroitement lié, dans sa vision du monde, au sentiment national.⁵⁴ Maiorescu enseigna ici le premier cours d'histoire de la Moldavie et, plus largement, du peuple roumain.⁵⁵ Il fit partie du conseil académique consulté en été 1843⁵⁶ en vue de la réorganisation de l'enseignement en Moldavie. Par la suite, l'histoire nationale devint objet d'étude dans le programme des écoles de tout degré.

A Iași, Maiorescu se disputa avec ses supérieurs, restés attachés à la propagande russe ; par conséquent, il préféra présenter à nouveau sa démission.⁵⁷ Le moment était opportun pour lui de revenir sur ses projets initiaux.

Maiorescu rentra en Valachie, profitant du changement de régime. Le prince régnant qui l'avait promu mais qui lui était devenu hostile pour des raisons personnelles, avait été remplacé par Gheorghe Bibescu,⁵⁸ originaire de la région d'Olténie, familière à Maiorescu. Par l'intermédiaire du frère du nouveau prince et du directeur de l'Ephorie des Ecoles (Petrache Poenaru), Ioan Maiorescu réintégra le corps professoral. En 1844 il revint à Craiova comme professeur d'histoire et inspecteur du département d'Olt. Son frère était également professeur dans la même ville. En même temps, Maiorescu commença à avoir des liaisons plus serrées avec la jeune génération d'intellectuels roumains qui avaient fait des études en Occident (le général Magheru, les Golescu, Brătianu, Rosetti et Câmpineanu). Intégré au groupe des futurs révolutionnaires de 1848, Maiorescu n'était plus isolé quant à ses idées réformistes concernant le système éducationnel et son attitude antirusse.

Le retour de Maiorescu en Valachie et l'activité des réviseurs scolaires avant la révolution de 1848

En 1847, l'Ephorie des Ecoles avait commencé à réorganiser l'enseignement, mais à la fin de l'année, en Valachie, les événements prirent une nouvelle tournure.

⁵³ Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu," 313.

⁵⁴ Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu," 316.

⁵⁵ Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu," 319.

⁵⁶ Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu," 323.

⁵⁷ Cristian, "Ioan Maiorescu," 323.

⁵⁸ Gheorghe Bibescu (1804-1873) fut Prince Régnant en Valachie (1843-1848).



À la suite des discussions internes, l'Ephorie des Ecoles revint sur le statut et les attributions du réviseur. L'enseignement public était censé concerner l'ensemble de la population (*du plus bas au plus haut* [n.n., niveau], selon les préceptes chrétiens et *les devoirs envers la société*). Les inspecteurs primaires des écoles rurales et urbaines devaient *surveiller de plus près* et offrir des informations pour chaque milieu social. Les *Instructions pour les réviseurs scolaires* avaient pour but de:

« (...) voir si les écoliers fréquentent les cours jusqu'à la fin de l'école;

Savoir à la suite des inspections répétées si dans les villages, après avoir fini les travaux au champ, les enfants utilisent leur temps pour apprendre à lire, à écrire, à calculer, à prier Dieu ou à Le remercier;

Si à la ville, outre ces connaissances élémentaires, les écoliers apprennent également les autres connaissances demandées à ce niveau, c'est-à-dire si les professeurs respectent les principes censés inspirer la peur de Dieu et la reconnaissance envers Lui et notre sainte Église;

Si les professeurs enseignent exactement le contenu établi pour leur discipline, s'ils ont le niveau professionnel requis et s'ils font consciencieusement leur travail;

Et, enfin, si par leur comportement ils se montrent dignes de la mission à laquelle ils sont appelés. »⁵⁹

Les réviseurs contrôlaient l'activité des instituteurs et des professeurs. Le savoir devait être corrélé à la moralité chrétienne, l'enseignant devant être un modèle pour l'enfant. Toute transgression dans son comportement et le langage de l'enseignant devait être rapportée. Les instituteurs devaient être consciencieux et s'impliquer dans l'activité didactique, ils devaient adapter leur vocabulaire à l'âge des écoliers et utiliser le matériel pédagogique autorisé, comme suit:

«Les réviseurs rappelleront tout cela aux instituteurs quel que soit leur degré à chaque fois qu'ils voient que ceux-ci manquent à leur devoir par paresse ou parce qu'ils enseignent un contenu non-conforme au bien par l'utilisation en classe de livres qui ne sont pas acceptés par l'Ephorie, soit par l'emploi d'un langage inadéquat à l'âge et à la psychologie des enfants, soit enfin par quelque comportement incompatible avec leur fonction et toutes les observations que les réviseurs feront à l'occasion de leurs inspections seront clairement rapportés à l'Ephorie des Ecoles pour qu'elle puisse prendre les mesures nécessaires afin de faire cesser les manquements et d'encourager ceux qui tiennent le bon chemin. »⁶⁰

En ce moment-là, l'Ephorie des Ecoles décida de nommer dans la fonction de *réviseurs* en Valachie les émigrés de Transylvanie Ioan Maiorescu, Aaron Florian et August Treboniu Laurian, qui étaient proches du directeur de l'institution, Petrache Poenaru. Les trois *réviseurs* se partageaient les départements qu'ils

⁵⁹ Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR), *Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice (MCIP)*, 44/1847, f. 3.

⁶⁰ ANR, MCIP, 44/1847, f. 3.

devaient visiter afin d'en vérifier et évaluer les écoles. Aussi, les départements Dolj, Romanați, Gorj et Mehedinți (la région de l'Olténie) étaient-ils assignés à Ioan Maiorescu, les départements Dâmbovița, Muscel, Argeș, Olt et Teleorman à Aaron Florian, tandis que Vlașca, Ialomița, Brăila, Slam Râmnic, Buzău et Prahova revenaient à August Treboniu Laurian.⁶¹ Maiorescu avait l'avantage de connaître de près l'Olténie puisqu'il avait été inspecteur à Craiova et instituteur à Cerneți. Il se tint au courant des mesures prises après son départ de 1842 en Moldavie et bénéficiait de la sympathie de la population.

L'Ephorie avait réfléchi à la manière de rendre les déplacements sur le terrain moins chers et passa un accord avec les autres autorités « (...) pour se déplacer d'une ville à l'autre, les réviseurs ont la permission de prendre la poste aux frais de la caisse des écoles. »⁶² Le transport dans les villes était donc décompté. Dans les villages, pour que les dépenses de transport puissent être décomptées, le réviseur devait partager les moyens de transport avec les autorités locales, le but en étant double: économie budgétaire et corrélation entre l'administration locale et les autorités scolaires. Il y a là un progrès par rapport à la situation antérieure, quand l'État avait pris en compte les déplacements des sous-réviseurs, qui devaient précéder les visites des réviseurs. Les inspecteurs nés en Transylvanie représentaient une autorité moins flexible, partageant une vision unitaire sur l'enseignement. L'Ephorie des Ecoles convint avec le ministère de l'Intérieur pour envoyer une circulaire aux administrations départementales sous-mentionnées. Le texte d'une circulaire, ci-dessous, concernait Ioan Maiorescu. Les circulaires visant d'autres réviseurs avaient un contenu quasi identique:

« Conformément à la décision de réorganisation des écoles, les dirigeants de l'Administration des Écoles ayant nommé Monsieur le serdar⁶³ I. Maiorescu réviseur pour les écoles des villes et villages de ces départements, invitent les distinguées administrations locales de bien vouloir lui offrir tout leur soutien afin qu'il mette en pratique les instructions reçues tant en ce qui concerne les écoles communales des villages que les écoles élémentaires des villes.

L'Ephorie n'eut aucun doute que par la bonne entente entre les autorités locales et les réviseurs qui viennent d'être nommés, le but de faire progresser lesdites écoles sera atteint à force de les surveiller elles-aussi avec zèle et exactitude, à l'instar du progrès obtenu dans le pays dans les autres domaines d'intérêt public, d'un côté pour que le but du gouvernement éclairé de ce pays soit atteint et de l'autre pour que les autorités publiques qui confirment avec zèle et compétence la confiance que le haut gouvernement leur accorde pour veiller sur une partie des

⁶¹ ANR, MCIP, 44/1847, f. 7.

⁶² ANR, MCIP, 44/1847, f. 7.

⁶³ Titre de petite noblesse obtenu en 1846. Voir Paul Cernovodeanu, Irina Gavrilă, *Arhondologiile Țării Românești de la 1837* (Brăila: Muzeul Brăilei-Istros, 2002), 117.



intérêts les plus importants de la société le soient également de par leurs nobles sentiments la fierté de la nation. »⁶⁴

Par ce formulaire, l'Ephorie des Ecoles indiquait les responsabilités des trois réviseurs envers l'État et la nation : ils se devaient d'être précis dans leur évaluation et dans leurs rapports afin que le progrès dans l'enseignement fût en accord avec les efforts faits dans d'autres domaines d'activité.

Le 28 novembre 1847, les réviseurs s'en allèrent vers les départements qui leur avaient été assignés, les frais de transport payés. L'exemple de Maiorescu est similaire à celui des deux autres réviseurs:

«Monsieur le serdar I. Maiorescu, le réviseur des écoles des villes et villages des départements de l'Olténie Dolj, Romanați, Vîlcea, Gorj et Mehedinți part maintenant les inspecter. Veuillez remettre à la caisse des Postes 500 lei (cinq cent), soit huit chevaux de voiture de poste pour vingt-cinq relais de poste

De Craiova à Romanați Relais de poste, 3

De Romanați à Rîmnicul Vîlcei Relais de poste, 7

De Rîmnicul Vîlcei à Tîrgoviște Relais de poste, 5

De Tîrgoviște à Cerneți Relais de poste, 4

De Cerneți à Craiova Relais de poste, 6»⁶⁵

Le 9 janvier 1848, Ioan Maiorescu remettait son rapport à l'Ephorie des Ecoles. Il y montrait qu'il avait rencontré lors de ses inspections «de l'embarras et des difficultés concernant la méthode de travail » dans les écoles primaires. Il était resté 2-3 jours dans chacun des chefs-lieux pour montrer aux instituteurs et aux professeurs comment il s'y était pris personnellement pour obtenir de bons résultats avec ses élèves. Il avait laissé à chaque instituteur ou professeur, de même qu'aux représentants de l'autorité locale, les règles qu'il avait trouvées utiles après les avoir mises en pratique durant plusieurs années. Il les avait appelées *Règles et réflexions sur l'enseignement primaire dans les écoles élémentaires et communales*.

L'enfant était encouragé à acquérir une bonne moralité et un bon comportement en société. Pour ce faire, il recommandait la prière de matin au début des classes et celle du soir à la sortie des classes. Elle était suivie de les discussions entre le professeur ou l'instituteur et les élèves sur le bon sens et le bon comportement en société. Maiorescu appréciait que pareilles discussions dussent avoir lieu une fois par semaine et qu'elles devaient durer environ un quart d'heure. Concernant le processus d'enseignement, il contestait le système lancastérien fondé sur la mémorisation automatique par l'intermédiaire des moniteurs des classes. Maiorescu montrait qu'il était nécessaire que les professeurs adaptent leur discours au niveau de compréhension des écoliers et qu'ils adoptent une certaine

⁶⁴ ANR, MCIP, 44/1847, f. 9-9v.

⁶⁵ ANR, MCIP, 44/1847, f. 15.

familiarité pour favoriser un rapprochement des deux parties dans le processus d'enseignement. La conversation était la méthode à adopter afin que l'enfant se libère du texte pour n'en retenir que les idées. Ce qui l'intéressait, c'était de développer la pensée critique aux dépens de la mémorisation. Pour assurer le bon fonctionnement de l'enseignement, les instituteurs devaient être examinés régulièrement, la fréquence des écoliers étant soigneusement enregistrée ; l'administration locale avait la tâche de punir (à leur guise) les parents dont les enfants ne fréquentaient pas l'école. Les prix offerts à la fin de l'année scolaire avaient pour but d'encourager les bons élèves et les parents à envoyer leurs enfants à l'école.

Ce rapport montre clairement que Maiorescu et les autres réviseurs venus de Transylvanie prêtaient attention aux exigences imposées par l'État, mais ils les adaptaient aux besoins locaux et n'avaient pas hésité à dénoncer les limites de certains modèles, par exemple le système lancastérien.

Pendant ce temps, Ioan Maiorescu n'avait pas interrompu ses relations avec l'espace culturel autrichien et allemand et publia dans *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* et *Ostdeutsche Post*. De plus, Ioan Maiorescu participa à la révolution de 1848, représentant un maillon entre les révolutionnaires roumains de Valachie et ceux de Transylvanie. Le gouvernement révolutionnaire de Valachie était politiquement modéré.⁶⁶ À la suite des discussions internes, le gouvernement décida qu'Ioan Maiorescu aille en Allemagne faire pression auprès de l'Assemblée nationale de la Confédération allemande de Frankfort,⁶⁷ tandis que d'autres devaient se diriger vers Paris, Londres et Constantinople. Leur but principal était de protester contre l'intervention de la Russie dans les gouvernements des principautés roumaines et faire connaître en Europe le projet d'une Roumanie autonome. Maiorescu a présenté à Frankfort deux memoranda en parlant de la possibilité d'unifier la Valachie, la Moldavie, la Bucovine et la Transylvanie dans un royaume nommé Roumanie, régné par un prince autrichien et sous la protection d'Allemagne.⁶⁸ L'idée fédéraliste, présentée différemment par les révolutionnaires roumains de

⁶⁶ Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia*, 229.

⁶⁷ Angela Jianu, *A Circle of Friends. Romanian Revolutionaries and Political Exile, 1840-1859* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 144-145; Dan Berindei, *Din începuturile diplomației românești moderne* (București: Editura Politică, 1965), 65-69; Septimiu Albini, *1848 în Principatele Române* (București: Imprimeriile „Independența”, 1910), 170-186. La revue roumaine *Gazeta de Transilvania*, XI, 74/1848, 306 annonçait le 9 septembre 1848 que Maiorescu était reçu comme « agent diplomatique » à Frankfort par Heinrich von Gagern. A. G. Golescu-Negri fut envoyé en mission à Paris et à Londres, alors qu'Ion Ghica était parti pour Constantinople.

⁶⁸ Voir Ion Ghica, *Amintiri din pribegia după 1848. Nouă scrisori către V. Alecsandri* (București: Sococ, 1889), 120-145 (le memorandum du 5 Septembre 1848 et du 4 novembre 1848).



Valachie, divisa le milieu révolutionnaire.⁶⁹ Force est de souligner que la majorité des intellectuels roumains était favorable à l'inclusion du nouvel royaume dans un empire multiethnique et multiconfessionnel, gardant les droits locaux, une culture nationale, des solutions pour les problèmes socio-économiques du pays et, surtout, évitant un second centre politique (pour les roumains de Transylvanie, la Hongrie ; pour la Valachie, la Russie).

Maiorescu fut aussi présent à Vienne et à Sibiu. A Vienne il fit partie d'une délégation des Roumains qui avait la mission de discuter avec les autorités autrichiennes au sujet de l'émancipation nationale des Roumains, hélas sans aucun effet.⁷⁰ Les centres politiques impériaux restèrent prudents sur la question des nationalités.⁷¹ A Sibiu, Maiorescu aida les chefs roumains de la révolution de 1848 en Transylvanie à être libérés de la prison. Il fut aussi le co-auteur des rapports sur leur activité, faits pour la Cour de Vienne.⁷²

Après ces missions diplomatiques, en 1850, Maiorescu alla à Vienne pour s'engager comme fonctionnaire au ministère de la Justice où il traduisit en roumain les codes de lois autrichiennes. Il fut enlevé par les autorités pour avoir continué à publier dans les journaux des articles militant pour la cause nationale des Roumains. Maiorescu fut l'un des chefs modernes et pragmatiques de la révolution de 1848 ;⁷³ Nicolae Bălcescu, le chef de la révolution en Valachie, le considérait néanmoins comme trop modéré.⁷⁴

En 1857, Ioan Maiorescu écrivit un ouvrage paru à Bruxelles. Il y discutait les concepts de suzeraineté, de vassalité et de féodalité, lançant une plaidoirie pour le droit des peuples à l'autodétermination.⁷⁵

Ioan Maiorescu se rendait compte que l'union des principautés portait un coup dur non seulement à l'Empire Ottoman, mais aussi à l'élite locale, désireuse de négocier avec la Porte sur le trône de l'une des principautés. L'union des principautés roumaines représentait un pas en avant dans le processus de

⁶⁹ Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia*, 275-6.

⁷⁰ G. Barițiu, "Ioan Maiorescu", *Transilvania*, X, no. 14/1877, 155.

⁷¹ Hans Joachim Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German Speaking Europe* (Abingdon-New York, 2001), 129-153.

⁷² Il s'agit de Avram Iancu, Simion Balint et Axente Sever. Ces rapports furent publiés sous le titre *Die Romanen der Österreichischen Monarchie*, 2. Heft (Wien : Drud von Carl Gerold & Gohn, 1850). L'ouvrage a été publié sans auteurs, mais on sait qu'a été réalisé par Ioan Maiorescu et A. Treboniu Laurian.

⁷³ Jianu, *A Circle of Friends*, 187. Il est à côté d'Ion Ghica, Al. Golescu-Negru, Ion Ionescu de la Brad et Nicolae Bălcescu, tous impliqués dans la réalisation de la Constitution de Valachie de 1848, surtout de l'article 13 (concernant la situation de paysans).

⁷⁴ Dan Berindei, *Pe urmele lui Nicolae Bălcescu* (București : Sport-Turism, 1984), 219.

⁷⁵ Ioan Maiorescu, *Desvoltarea drepturilor principatelor Moldo-Române în urma Tratatului de la Paris din 30 martie 1856* (Bruxelles, 1857).

désintégration de l'Empire Ottoman et de l'ancienne élite politique. Maiorescu fut également conscient des différences économiques entre les principautés au niveau des paysans, mais il crut à la possibilité d'une réforme agraire qui devait uniformiser et améliorer la situation de cette classe sociale. Il vit aussi l'émancipation de la nation comme un moyen d'assurer l'accès des paysans à l'enseignement et à la culture et, par conséquent, d'élever leur situation économique.

Préparation de la loi de l'instruction publique (1864)

L'Union de la Moldavie et de la Valachie avait été réalisée par la volonté des deux Assemblées électives de choisir le même prince dans les deux principautés (le 5 et le 24 janvier 1859). Les démarches diplomatiques entreprises pour la reconnaissance européenne du nouvel État furent accompagnées sur le plan intérieur d'un processus de réorganisation administrative. Les premières nominations dans les fonctions clés du jeune État roumain étaient le résultat d'influences, de collaborations et de mérites personnels. Je m'arrêterai sur les premiers discours et nominations en poste afin de mettre en évidence la contribution des trois représentants de l'émigration de Transylvanie, anciens réviseurs scolaires valaques, et surtout sur ceux d'Ioan Maiorescu, à la préparation de la loi de l'enseignement de 1864.

Lorsque sa carrière diplomatique prit fin, Ioan Maiorescu revint dans l'enseignement en tant que professeur d'histoire critique et statistique au Collège Saint Sava de Bucarest,⁷⁶ pour devenir ensuite directeur de l'Éphorie des Ecoles. Il devint le directeur de l'institution qu'il avait critiquée dans sa jeunesse, et l'un des chefs du système scolaire à la réforme duquel il avait contribué. Il se trouvait maintenant dans la position de pouvoir influencer l'enseignement public et de le déterminer à suivre le cours auquel lui et ses collègues de génération avaient rêvé depuis toujours. Son ami et ancien collègue, August Treboniu Laurian, venait de fonder un périodique officiel, *Instrucțiunea publică*. Ce sera le lieu où les trois anciens réviseurs et leurs collègues de Valachie et de Moldavie (Vasile Boerescu, Gheorghe Costaforu, V.A. Urechia et d'autres) discuteront idées, programmes et règles concernant le corps des professeurs et les réformes à adopter dans le nouvel État.

Après l'accomplissement de l'union des principautés, l'enseignement se trouva parmi les principaux objectifs sur l'agenda de l'équipe du prince nouvellement élu. Le 8 décembre 1859, le prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza annonçait le programme de son gouvernement, qu'il voulait voir mis en œuvre parce que l'époque du provisoire et des troubles politiques était passée. Il attira l'attention sur le fait que dans l'intérêt du pays, pour pouvoir expliquer et mettre en place les projets voulus, il fallait qu'il y ait enfin une unité de l'élite et des intellectuels – *si à ce jour il y a*

⁷⁶ *Monitorul Oficial al Țării Românești*, no. 74 (1859).



*encore de vaines espérances ou rêves personnels restés cachés dans quelque tête, tout cela doit finir aujourd'hui.*⁷⁷

Le prince reconnaissait que l'enseignement public fonctionnait depuis 1832, revendiquant l'héritage de l'époque du Règlement Organique, mais il était conscient de ses imperfections :

« Depuis 27 ans que nos écoles fonctionnent elles n'ont nullement réalisé les espoirs de la nation. Loin de moi de rendre coupable qui que ce soit, je préfère faire porter le chapeau au système d'enseignement. Nous avons trop cherché à imiter ce qui se passe dans d'autres pays, en préparant les gens uniquement pour des professions libérales. La Roumanie a d'autres besoins qui lui sont spécifiques et le temps est venu d'y penser. »

Par son gouvernement, il voudrait mettre en place un enseignement public graduel, à la portée de toutes les classes sociales et que l'éducation du peuple assure :

« Les meilleures garanties d'ordre, de progrès et de patriotisme éclairé. Elle (n.n., l'éducation du peuple) doit donc répondre aux vrais besoins et à la véritable position de chaque nation. Si une instruction supérieure de grande importance nous est vraiment utile, l'instruction élémentaire et primaire nous est absolument nécessaire afin de répandre la vie nouvelle dans tout le pays. »⁷⁸

La vie nouvelle dont parlait le prince régnant était pour les Roumains le nouveau commencement en tant qu'État. Mais ce nouveau commencement ne jaillissait pas du néant, il avait pour fondement les expériences éducationnelles antérieures. Tout comme à l'époque du *Regulament*, Cuza se rendait compte de l'importance des représentants de l'Église dans le milieu rural et recommandait la collaboration avec eux, de sorte que chaque paysan pût lire et écrire. Les prêtres pouvaient beaucoup *aider à propager les lumières au sein de la population paysanne*.⁷⁹ Il reprenait à nouveau une idée très présente chez Maiorescu, à savoir que l'élite et les intellectuels devaient se détacher des modèles occidentaux, ne plus imiter méthodes et systèmes de travail :

« Je voudrais que l'enseignement soit davantage approprié aux besoins et à la nature des Roumains et qu'il n'imité pas sans réflexion aucune telle ou telle institution étrangère. »⁸⁰

Le prince exigea que l'on réunît toutes les informations et les expériences nécessaires pour que les futures réformes (y compris celles dans l'enseignement public) eussent une base et les plus grandes chances d'être mises en pratique avec succès. Il était conscient qu'il y avait des divergences d'opinion entre générations

⁷⁷ *Monitorul*, no. 148/1859, 589.

⁷⁸ *Monitorul*, no. 148/1859, 590.

⁷⁹ *Monitorul*, no. 148/1859, 590.

⁸⁰ *Monitorul*, no. 148/1859, 591.

et également à l'intérieur de chaque génération ; mais il voyait la situation comme une chance de renouveau national, *le temps étant venu de s'occuper de nos affaires et, dirais-je, de faire le ménage dans notre pays*:

«Les frères de sang, de religion, de langue et d'intérêts, les Moldaves et les Valaques, m'ont appelé à prendre le pouvoir afin de les confondre dans le même amour, de leur octroyer les mêmes soins.

Ce que nous devons accomplir est sans doute difficile, mais en même temps c'est quelque chose de grandiose, car nous avons à consolider notre nationalité. Que chaque Roumain, qu'il soit petit ou grand, le considère comme son devoir et qu'il mette à son accomplissement tous les pouvoirs qui lui inspire son amour de la patrie. J'appelle tous les Roumains, sans distinction, et leur dis qu'il faut que nous oublions [les dissensions]».⁸¹

Pour oublier les dissensions, on devait les résoudre et trouver un équilibre dans la législation pour unifier les systèmes administratifs de la Valachie et de la Moldavie. Même si les signataires étaient des gens issus de ces territoires, une contribution importante y eurent également les représentants des émigrés de Transylvanie. Ils n'occupèrent pas de hautes fonctions, comme celle de ministre, parce que le processus de reconnaissance officielle de l'État roumain était en cours de déroulement au niveau européen. Au printemps de la même année 1859 où Cuza transmettait son message sur la réforme et l'unité avec la capitale à Bucarest, les autorités décidèrent la nomination des intellectuels de Transylvanie dans des fonctions de haute responsabilité, Ioan Maiorescu étant nommé directeur à l'Ephorie des Ecoles

Les intellectuels de Transylvanie collaborèrent assidûment avec le prince Cuza et son équipe, mais d'une manière moins visible. En remémorant événements et sentiments, l'un de ces intellectuels affirmait vers la fin du XIX^e siècle qu'à cette époque-là, *les Roumains de Transylvanie étaient prêts à mourir pour le prince Cuza*.⁸²

En 1859, lorsque le prince Cuza transmettait son message, dans le contexte européen difficile que l'on vient de préciser, l'émigré de Transylvanie August Treboniu Laurian publiait dans le journal officiel qu'il dirigeait l'état des lieux de l'instruction publique du jeune État roumain :

« Nous reconnaissons la nécessité de répandre les lumières des connaissances élémentaires dans toutes les classes de la société et par conséquent nous voulons voir la création des écoles communales pour les enfants des deux sexes dans toutes *les oppides*⁸³ et les villages de sorte que dorénavant tout garçon ou fille puisse, à

⁸¹ *Monitorul*, no. 148/1859, 592.

⁸² A. Papiu-Ilarian, "Memoriu inédit", *Revista pentru istorie, arheologie și filologie* I, no. I (1883): 145.

⁸³ Oppid, abréviation d'oppidum (Lat.) = ville. Le latinisme de Laurian est connu à l'époque. Il y a des différences entre les lettrés de Transylvanie à cet égard. Maiorescu a tenté de garder l'impartialité là-dessus. Voir Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale*, 344.



l'âge de 12 ans, lire, écrire, calculer, prier Dieu et connaître les devoirs moraux de l'homme.

Les bases en sont jetées et, Dieu merci, nous avons maintenant presque 2000 écoles en Roumanie. Mais, afin d'atteindre notre but, elles sont encore trop peu nombreuses, l'organisation interne du ministère a encore beaucoup de choses à améliorer, les salles de classe ne correspondent que dans très peu de cas à leur destination, la rétribution des instituteurs est bien trop petite par rapport aux tâches qu'ils doivent remplir. Il est absolument nécessaire d'augmenter les fonds destinés à l'enseignement pour permettre son développement, car aujourd'hui, si l'on ne prenait en compte que seules les écoles communales, tous les revenus des écoles sont loin de suffire à couvrir rien que les modestes salaires des instituteurs communaux. >⁸⁴

La vision de Laurian était fondée sur son expérience de réviseur départemental. En même temps, elle répondait à la volonté du prince Cuza d'édifier un enseignement égalitaire (pour les deux sexes), adapté aux besoins de la population et en accord avec les valeurs chrétiennes. L'infrastructure scolaire qui représentait le point de départ de la réforme était estimée à 2000 écoles communales. Laurian anticipait les difficultés budgétaires et le ralentissement que celles-ci marqueraient dans le développement d'un réseau scolaire stable et de bonne qualité. Peu après, Ioan Maiorescu rédigea ses *Instructions pour inspecteurs généraux, inspecteurs départementaux, sous-inspecteurs et instituteurs communaux*.⁸⁵ Il y donnait des dispositions qu'il considérait comme essentielles (*les devoirs*) pour le profil de l'inspecteur et pour atteindre les objectifs de l'État concernant l'enseignement. On y voit une similarité avec les conseils de Petru Maior en Transylvanie au début du XIX^e siècle pour les curés de campagne qui devaient avoir *conscience de leurs ouailles*.⁸⁶ A la différence de son ancêtre, Maiorescu envisageait une désacralisation de l'enseignement et une instrumentalisation des prêtres.

Ioan Maiorescu rendait les inspecteurs responsables en les transformant non seulement en serviteurs de l'État, mais aussi de la nation. Il complétait la vision de Laurian en définissant l'instruction primaire comme *fondement de la culture de toute nation*. En ce sens, la vérification des connaissances devait être faite pour les deux sexes, aussi bien dans les villes que dans les villages. Un article des *Instructions* précisait que les inspecteurs devaient être bien instruits et d'une

⁸⁴ A.T. Laurian, "Despre instrucțiunea publică", *Instrucțiunea Publică*, décembre 1859.

⁸⁵ I. Maiorescu, "Instrucțiuni pentru inspectorii generali, inspectorii de județe, subinspectorii de plăși și plaiuri și pentru învățătorii comunali", *Instrucțiunea Publică*, décembre 1860.

⁸⁶ Apud Petru Maior en Romul Munteanu, «Les idées pédagogiques de l'École transylvaine», dans *La culture roumaine à l'époque des Lumières*, ed. Romul Munteanu, II (București: Univers, 1985), 103.

conduite morale irréprochable (il mentionne *le sérieux, le calme, l'affabilité et la bienséance qui caractérisent les gens cultivés*).⁸⁷ Dans les articles détaillant l'activité des inspecteurs généraux, il montrait qu'ils devaient visiter les écoles publiques et privées, de garçons et de filles deux fois par saison et rendre six visites par an dans la capitale du département (chap. III, art. 5-8). C'étaient *les inspections ordinaires* et obligatoires. En même temps, les inspecteurs devaient être conscients qu'ils étaient à la disposition de l'Ephorie des Ecoles et qu'ils pouvaient être envoyés en missions spéciales dans le territoire (chap. III, art. 9). Ils avaient la liberté de faire des observations afin d'améliorer la situation constatée.

En ce qui concerne la façon de réaliser l'inspection, Maiorescu demanda la collaboration avec les autorités locales: en milieu rural, le maire et le plus vieux prêtre et en milieu urbain, les membres des conseils municipaux. Ceux-ci devaient assister soit en personne, soit par représentants (chap. III, art. 12). S'ils refusaient, l'inspecteur seul pouvait faire son inspection (chap. III, art. 13). Le système d'enseignement accepté était le système mixte – il rejetait le système lancastérien pur, mais aussi sa forme *dégénérée*. *La méthode lancastérienne ou mutuelle n'est bonne que pour un apprentissage mécanique des lettres, la lecture des mots syllabe par syllabe, l'acquisition des habitudes fondamentales de calligraphie, la notation et la connaissance des nombres*. Tout le reste se faisait par des questions directes, de sorte que l'élève sût ce qu'il devait apprendre et comment il devait le faire. L'apprentissage de la grammaire était essentiel et Maiorescu était impitoyable là-dessus en sanctionnant durement quiconque (élève ou instituteur) s'éloignait de la règle: *L'instituteur qui n'a pas de cesse de connaître à fond la langue nationale et sa grammaire ne mérite pas le poste d'instituteur et sur ce point les inspecteurs seront de la plus grande rigueur et impartialité*. Ils feront également très attention à la forme calligraphique de l'écriture des écoliers (chap. III, art. 16.). Les règles devaient être respectées sur l'ensemble du territoire, dans les villes et à la campagne, afin de réaliser un enseignement uniforme. Ioan Maiorescu mentionnait qu'on introduisit également à la campagne dans le plus court délai un petit cours d'agronomie et d'agriculture pratique.

Ioan Maiorescu considérait que les inspecteurs (fonction qu'il avait occupée lui-même) étaient importants parce qu'ils seraient dorénavant non seulement les instituteurs des candidats au métier d'instituteur, mais les vrais directeurs des écoles communales rurales ; par conséquent, on leur demandait d'avoir des connaissances profondes et vastes qui les mettaient en état d'apprécier d'un côté l'importance de ces écoles et de l'autre la gravité et la délicatesse de leur mission.⁸⁸ La haute qualification exigeait aussi un salaire sur mesure, l'aspect économique s'imposant à plus

⁸⁷ Munteanu, "Les idées pédagogiques".

⁸⁸ *Starea Instrucțiunii publice în România-de-Sus la fînitul anului scolastic 1859-1860* (București: Tipografia Statului, 1860), 7.



forte raison en milieu rural. Pendant l'époque précédente, la communauté rurale était obligée de soutenir financièrement les écoles, en contribuant avec une taxe de quatre jusqu'à cinq lei par famille. L'instituteur d'une commune pouvait toucher jusqu'à 300 lei par an, ce qui était peu pour lui, mais difficile à obtenir en imposant des taxes à la communauté. De même, la paye du réviseur départemental, 200 lei par mois, *était modique pour une charge si laborieuse, même le temps physique ne suffisant pas pour qu'il puisse remplir dûment les tâches assignées.*⁸⁹

Maiorescu affirme encore une fois l'importance d'un subalterne du réviseur départemental (le sous-inspecteur *de plasă*) car l'expérience de l'époque antérieure avait démontré que c'était une bonne solution et, de ce fait, il la recommandait:

« L'expérience concernant le fonctionnement des écoles communales de 1838 à 1848 quand il y avait un sous-réviseur pour chaque *plasă* a démontré la nécessité et l'opportunité de ce poste. Ces sous-inspecteurs seront recrutés parmi les actuels instituteurs communaux qui se sont fait remarqués par leurs connaissances et leur diligence. »⁹⁰

Par ses efforts personnels et ceux de son équipe, le salaire des instituteurs fut doublé (de 300 lei à 600 lei).⁹¹ Maiorescu se rendait compte que, malgré la haute qualification professionnelle que les instituteurs bien instruits par leur inspecteur pouvaient atteindre, dans les villages plus isolés et plus éloignés des grandes villes ils arrivait inévitablement à ne plus pouvoir se tenir au courant du progrès scientifique, des grands débats et des besoins de la société.⁹²

Par conséquent, l'Ephorie qu'il dirigeait y avait trouvé comme solution la relocation budgétaire pour imprimer les meilleurs livres *contenant les connaissances usuelles nécessaires aussi bien à l'instituteur qu'au paysan pour son économie domestique afin de les mettre entre les mains des instituteurs et finalement des écoliers villageois.*⁹³ Ce fut le ministère qui intervint dans la constitution de ce sous-budget spécifique en offrant une somme de 400 *galbeni* (pièces en or) destinée à imprimer quatre types de manuels: 1) *d'agriculture correspondant au niveau d'intelligence du paysan, avec des chapitres supplémentaires concernant l'élevage, la culture des potagers, des forêts et des vignes*; 2) *d'hygiène*; 3) *de morale pratique avec des exemples historiques* et 4) *de pédagogie, conformément à la mission de l'instituteur.*⁹⁴

La revue cessa son activité en novembre 1861, après seulement deux années d'existence. Mais ces deux années furent particulièrement importantes parce que les pages de la revue étaient un espace de vifs débats et tous ceux qui furent

⁸⁹ *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 7.

⁹⁰ *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 8.

⁹¹ *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 8.

⁹² *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 8.

⁹³ *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 8.

⁹⁴ *Starea Instrucțiunei publice*, 8.

activement impliqués dans la réforme de l'enseignement y avaient contribué. Immédiatement après, le 11 décembre 1861, fut réalisée l'union administrative des deux principautés sous le nom de Roumanie. L'Ephorie des Ecoles fut elle aussi supprimée et un Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Publique fut créé, fonctionnant dans le cadre du ministère des Cultes et de l'Instruction Publique. À la suite de cette réorganisation, Ioan Maiorescu fut remplacé dans le poste de directeur. Sur la demande du Conseil, Vasile Boerescu fut chargé de réaliser un projet de loi de la réorganisation de l'enseignement public roumain (1863). La loi de l'instruction publique fut promulguée le 25 novembre 1864 ; elle stipulait la gratuité et l'obligation de l'enseignement primaire pour tous les enfants, garçons et filles, quelle que fût la classe sociale à laquelle ils appartenaient.

En 1863, une année avant sa mort, toujours attaché à l'idée de l'édification de l'enseignement public sur des bases solides, appropriées à la réalité roumaine et rejetant l'idée de l'imitation, Ioan Maiorescu rédigea une petite brochure, *Réflexions (Reflesiuni)*,⁹⁵ où il établissait une liaison étroite entre le développement de la société moderne et le développement des villages. Il pensait que le meilleur moyen d'y parvenir était de laisser une large autonomie aux communes rurales. Pour Maiorescu, le progrès à travers l'école était liée à cinq facteurs : l'accessibilité (pour tous), la hiérarchie (pour tous les degrés), le statut public (d'État) de l'établissement, l'égalité d'accès pour les deux sexes et le caractère unitaire, obligatoire et gratuit pour l'enseignement primaire.⁹⁶ Il affirmait que *malgré les apparences, ma nation a fait le plus grand progrès puisque en deux générations seulement on est parvenu à ce que tout Roumain sache lire et écrire, les quatre opérations arithmétiques et le petit catéchisme*, ce qui représentait dans sa vision d'ancien instituteur, professeur, inspecteur et directeur le minimum d'alphabétisation attendu.

Bien sûr, il ne faut ni exagérer les mérites de Maiorescu, ni les sous-estimer. D'ailleurs, il regrettait lui-même ne pas avoir pu élever le nombre des écoles. En 1859, la statistique de son directorat montre, pour l'enseignement primaire (d'État et privé), l'inscription de 59 512 élèves dans les écoles publiques (58 546 garçons, 966 filles) et 4538 élèves dans les écoles privées (3724 garçons, 814 filles). Cela revient à un total de 64 050 élèves dans les écoles primaires et de 2501 instituteurs.⁹⁷ En 1861, la situation est la suivante : 65 039 élèves inscrits dans les écoles publiques (62 575 garçons, 2462 filles) et 3750 élèves dans les

⁹⁵ *Reflesiuni fugitive asupra modificărilor și reformelor ce se introduce în ramura instrucțiunii publice prin bugetul pe anul 1863*, signée par un vieux professeur et avec les initiales I.M. A (București: Imprimeria națională a lui St. Davidescu, 1863).

⁹⁶ Marin Stoica, *Ioan Maiorescu* (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1967), 123-130.

⁹⁷ *Starea Instrucțiunii publice (1859)*, 20. Le nombre des villages avec écoles communales était de 2491.



écoles privées (3203 garçons, 547 filles), à savoir un total de 68 789 élèves dans les écoles primaires sur un total des 2584 instituteurs.⁹⁸ La solution proposée était d'augmenter le nombre des élèves pour chaque instituteur. Ces chiffres représentent l'héritage de la Valachie avant l'unification administrative avec la Moldavie (1861).

La maladie tua Ioan Maiorescu assez jeune, à 53 ans. Ses projets furent repris par son fils, Titu Maiorescu. D'ailleurs, en 1867, Titu se trouva parmi les membres fondateurs de la *Societatea Literară Română*, l'ancêtre de l'Académie Roumaine d'aujourd'hui, à côté des collègues de génération de son père : August Treboniu Laurian, George Barițiu, Timotei Cipariu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, etc. Peut-être le plus important héritage laissé par son père fut la conceptualisation de la théorie des formes dépourvues de fond, à laquelle l'historiographie reconnaît la provenance roumaine.⁹⁹ Les élèves d'Ioan Maiorescu évoquaient dans un volume qui lui avait été dédié son exhortation à travailler acharnement : *Travaillez ! Nous avons travaillé, nous, mais vous devez travailler encore davantage !*¹⁰⁰ Maiorescu était un acteur social qui avait la capacité de consolider la communauté ethnique et identitaire. Pour lui, être Roumain était une identité qui pouvait cohabiter avec celle de sujet ottoman/ autrichien ou avec la notion de « citoyen européen ». ¹⁰¹ En leur ensemble, les lettrés de Transylvanie, bien que dispersés et se trouvant dans une mobilité continue *ont ouvert de larges perspectives à la culture roumaine moderne.*¹⁰²

Conclusions

Il y eut une continuité d'idées et de projets tout au long du XIX^e siècle qui aboutirent à la loi de l'enseignement de 1864. L'équipe qui rédigea le texte de la loi sur l'enseignement primaire obligatoire et gratuit pour les deux sexes avait largement puisé dans l'expérience antérieure et s'en réclama. Le réseau scolaire fut révisé périodiquement à l'époque du Règlement Organique (1831-1856) et fut présenté par la suite comme un modèle à suivre. La liaison entre les deux moitiés du XIX^e siècle fut assurée par des intellectuels impliqués dans le processus éducationnel. L'émigration des intellectuels roumains de Transylvanie eut l'effet

⁹⁸ *Starea Instrucțiunii Publice în România-de-Sus la finalul anului scolastic 1860-1861* (București: Tipografia Statului, 1861), 9.

⁹⁹ Constantin Schifirneț, *Formele fără fond, un brand românesc* (București: Comunicare.ro, 2007), 36-39.

¹⁰⁰ A. Bănescu, V. Mihăilescu, *Ioan Maiorescu. Scriere comemorativă cu prilejul centenarului nașterii lui, 1811-1911* (București : Tipografia Românească, 1912) ; Vasile Mihăilescu, *Subscriptia Monumentului Ioan Maiorescu* (Craiova: Tiparul Tipografiei „Ramuri”, 1913).

¹⁰¹ James Morris, “Locating the Wallachian Revolution of 1848”, *The Historical Journal*, 64, 3 (2021), 625.

¹⁰² Munteanu, “L'influence de l'école transylvaine”, 306.

de limiter l'influence française qui se manifestait dans la société roumaine des deux principautés et de rejoindre les voix critiques qui s'élevaient contre les modèles occidentaux. À côté des intellectuels des principautés, les intellectuels émigrés de Transylvanie rejetèrent tout type d'universalisme culturel, s'intéressant, en revanche, à mettre en place une adaptation aux particularités de la société roumaine.

Les émigrés de Transylvanie, surtout leur chef de file, Ioan Maiorescu, en vertu de leurs fonctions d'inspecteurs et de réviseurs, sont intervenus avec des initiatives administratives et pédagogiques marquantes. Ils rejetèrent partiellement la méthode lancastérienne, malgré sa diffusion en Europe, la considérant inadéquate aux objectifs poursuivis. Le réseau scolaire commencé à être créé à l'époque du *Règlement Organique* était un projet ambitieux ayant réussi dans certaines régions géographiques de la Valachie tenant compte de quelques facteurs sur le territoire de la principauté: des facteurs économiques, le niveau professionnel du corps des professeurs, la disponibilité et la capacité des individus de faire face au volume de travail assigné, la collaboration avec la communauté locale, etc. Ayant vécu et professé en Valachie, dans une région de frontière (Cerneți), dans une grande ville de province (Craiova) et dans la capitale de la principauté (Bucarest), Ioan Maiorescu avait été conscient des disparités. Qui plus est, les déplacements à travers la Moldavie et la Transylvanie lui avaient permis d'entrer en contact avec des réalités multiples et avec diverses méthodes de travail et modèles, y compris des modèles occidentaux.

L'inspection scolaire fut un instrument de contrôle, d'évaluation et d'intervention. Le réviseur était un fonctionnaire qui avait à la fois des attributions administratives et pédagogiques. À l'époque du *Règlement Organique*, les réviseurs départementaux (Ioan Maiorescu, August Treboniu Laurian et Aaron Florian) publiaient également des articles dans les journaux ; ils étaient traducteurs et philologues. De 1830 jusque vers la fin du siècle ils montèrent dans la hiérarchie du système d'enseignement. Ils connaissaient aussi bien les politiques impériales régionales (russe, autrichienne et ottomane) et les réalités du monde paysan. De ce fait, ils proposaient des activités complémentaires à leur activité de réviseurs. Loin d'avoir une attitude passive, ils étaient en dialogue permanent (souvent en contradiction) avec le régime au sujet des politiques éducationnelles, tandis que leur origine paysanne les rapprochait de la population, leur permettant de comprendre ses besoins.

**Rezumat:**

Secolul al XIX-lea este unul al redefinirii locului națiunilor în cadrul imperiilor. Ideile iluministe despre educația în limba maternă, drepturile naturale și libertate se alătură dorinței centrului imperial de a atrage loialități, de a obține supunere, a crea bunăstare economică și a educa un cetățean atașat statului. În sud-estul Europei coexistența fragilă a trei imperii (otoman, rus și austriac) este tulburată de modul în care etniile conlocuitoare înțeleg adaptarea ideilor iluministe și dezvoltarea propriilor culturi. Studiul de față urmărește rolul emigrației academice transilvănene în domeniul învățământului din principatul Valahiei. Provenind din rândul intelectualilor uniți – un catalizator între centrul imperial, aristocrația privilegiată și majoritatea românilor țărani –, ei urmăresc în paralel o dezvoltare profesională și o ridicare a nivelului alfabetizării din Țara Românească. În calitate de revizori școlari, aceștia intervin administrativ și pedagogic în rețeaua școlară recent demarată aici. Liderul lor, Ioan Maiorescu, pune sub semnul întrebării o modernizare realizată pe filieră rusă și pledează pentru adaptarea modelelor occidentale la realitatea locală și pentru emancipare culturală.

Cuvinte-cheie: Transilvania, Țara Românească, națiune, mobilitate academică, învățământ, reformă.

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Reframing the Lupeni Strike of 1929: State Intervention and Organized Labor in Romania's Jiu Valley

Anca GLONT

Abstract

The article examines the Lupeni strike action of 1929. While Communist-era historiography exalted the strike as a political action led by party members, the strike was atypical for local labor organization. Placing the strike in the wider context of 1920-1931, the article traces the interaction between local organized labor, the coal companies of the Jiu Valley, and state agents, both locally and in Bucharest. In the post-1918 period, the unions pressed for miners to receive reasonable compensation; given the state's demand for coal and the companies' need for labor, this initially fostered compromise. The Romanian state was willing to tolerate local labor unions led by Social Democrats, while using repression — including the army — to suppress strikes and ensure an uninterrupted coal supply. Shifts in the market and coal production, however, reduced the need for miners — resulting in the fragmentation of local unions. In 1929 the combination of a relatively liberal regime, coal companies seeking rationalization of their work force, and a radicalized fringe group resulted in the strike. While rejecting pre-1989 depictions of the strike, the text argues that labor history helps to reveal the limits of Romanian interwar democracy in ways that political and legal approaches may not.

Keywords: Labor organization, coal miners, Jiu Valley, state intervention, Social Democrats

The Romanian Communist Party (*Partidul Comunist Român*—PCR) co-opted the 1929 Lupeni miners' strike, as it did the country's wider history of organized labor. Lupeni played a particular mythological role, represented, for instance, by the 1963 film *Lupeni 29*. Starring Lica Gheorghiu (daughter of then-General Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej), the film's tragic love story is set against the backdrop of the strike, as a group of miners demand “justice and bread,” only to be shot down by the gendarmerie. Lupeni represented “the growth in the combative spirit of the working class.” The strike became a staple event in Communist-era political speeches as proof of the radicalization of industrial workers.¹ Such use of Lupeni also reflected how the party successfully wrote

¹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *30 de Ani de Luptă a Partidului sub Steagul lui Lenin și a lui Stalin* (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, 1951), 17; Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Rolul istoric al Clasei Muncitoare,” *România pe Drumul Construirii Societății Socialiste Multilaterale Dezvoltate* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1977), 548.



itself into the past as the leader of organized labor — and, in utilizing Lupeni as a symbol of labor activism, of the miners' labor unions of the Jiu Valley.

Communist historiography between 1948 and 1965 went through several stages, all rooted in Marxism-Leninism, but ending with some ideological flexibility regarding the broader history of Romanians.² Twentieth century labor history had less flexibility: the core theme was the rise in labor militancy and class struggle under communist leadership, culminating in the 1945 rise to power of the Communist Party. After the shift to nationalist communist history in the 1970s, labor history (and the history of Lupeni 1929) lost some of its importance, but continued to be interpreted as part of the teleology of the Communist revolution.³ While the most egregious fabrications of the early period were quietly dropped, the simple progression of increasing oppression and corresponding labor radicalization remained central to the party's view of its history.⁴ The simplification of labor history in the interwar period means that the rich tradition of labor activism that characterized the 1920s, as well as the unions' reasons for emphasizing cooperation with the interwar state after 1929 were completely obscured in the process. Labor activism in Transylvania had a long history of organization, and unions associated with the Social Democratic Party continued (with changed names) through the 1920s in Romania. These unions focused on using strikes and negotiation to secure a working relationship with the state and the mining companies. The Romanian state sought to nationalize and modernize. The companies sought increasing profits and depended on the state as their main client for coal through the national railways. Casting labor militancy as inherently opposed to the state obscures one of its main purposes: to draw in state actors on the miners' side during labor negotiations. In this context, the strike of Lupeni 1929 was not a culmination of organized labor in the Jiu Valley: it was the effect of increasing union fragmentation and the failure of the social democratic unions to secure the expected state cooperation.

² Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români 1944-1977* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2008), 17.

³ Looking at the full run of *Studii*, the main journal of the Romanian Academy, bears out this contention: there are several studies of the Lupeni 1929 strike setting up the thesis of communist leadership and increasing labor oppression during the 1950s and 1960s. Starting with the 1970s the strike is simply mentioned, together with the strikes of Grivița 1933, in various lists whenever the author needs examples of increasing labor unrest and the rise of the party.

⁴ In the case of Lupeni and wider Jiu Valley history, the continuity between its labor movement and the communist party is established both in *Studii* in local history, and in references in party speeches. See for instance Ion Lungu, Vasile Radu, Mircea Valea, Ion Poporogu, *Valea Jiului – File de Istorie* (Petrosani: Muzeul Mineritului Petrosani, 1968), 174 and M.C. Stănescu and M. Silvan, *Lupeni Ieri și Azi* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1983), 94-121.

Romanian historiography since 1989 has dismantled much of the Communist Party's historical narrative. However, there has been relatively little attention towards reinvestigating interwar labor history, perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the PCR's prolific and bombastic engagement with the topic closely affiliated the study of the labor movement with the party. Just as Adrian Grama and Alina-Sandra Cucu have used labor history to shed novel light on our understanding of the early Communist era, so too can this field deepen our understanding of interwar Romanian politics and society.⁵ Successive governments between 1918 and 1938 sought to actively foster economic modernization, creating tensions between state policy, industrial workers, and the peasantry. If this encouraged labor organization (usually under the auspices of the Social Democrats), unions were systematically undermined by state elites. This highlights the limits of interwar Romanian democracy and the parties' use of the state apparatus to cement their positions through violence, intimidation and patronage networks. Re-examining provincial labor organizations and their relationships with local institutions highlights the sometimes-stark difference between laws as they were applied in the rest of the country and the administration of politically suspect areas — leading to better understanding of National Liberal economic policies. Finally, labor history can begin to address the issue of the extent to which we can speak of a communist revolutionary movement in interwar Romania: were *Siguranța* efforts enough to ensure that communism remained, at best, a fringe option, or was it always a realistic possibility for increasingly embittered socialist organizers?

Recently, there has been some discussion of the interwar Romanian state's use of emergency legislation to curtail political participation by the fascists and the communists and to control border areas.⁶ Jiu Valley labor history suggests that the state had tested these policies in parts of Transylvania beforehand, at least for a decade. Possibly due to the simplification of labor history before 1989 and its association with the communist party, studies looking at interwar democracy and political systems do not engage significantly with strikes or industrial action as a test of civil rights or of the inclusivity of the political system. The breakdown of order and the increasing uncertainty of local and union politics in the Jiu Valley during 1928-1929 highlights the importance of

⁵ See Adrian Grama, *Laboring Along: Industrial Workers and the Making of Postwar Romania* (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2018); Alina-Sandra Cucu, *Planning Labor: Time and the Foundations of Industrial Socialism in Romania* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

⁶ See Corneliu Pintilescu, "Fetișizarea siguranței statului, starea de asediu și ascensiunea autoritarismului în România interbelică," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie »George Barițiu« - Series HISTORICA* 59, (2020), 219-235 and Cosmin Sebastian Cercel, "The 'Right' Side of the Law. State of Siege and the Rise of Fascism in Interwar Romania," *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 2, (2013), 205-233.



state agents in maintaining local cooperation, as well as the extent to which the state had previously resorted to a combination of coercion and economic incentives to maintain coal production and calm.

In engaging these questions, I argue that the Lupeni Strike was far more complex than depicted in Romanian Communist historiography: namely, as a heroic strike by the local party leadership. In fact, the strike was atypical for local labor organization and reflected emerging cleavages within the ranks of the local working class. The Jiu Valley saw frequent (often illegal) strikes in the interwar period that spanned multiple mines and towns and reflected a high degree of labor solidarity in the face of repression by the Romanian state.⁷ Such strikes might touch on political issues, but they more frequently reflected the miners' anger over wages and living standards. While officially repressed, organized labor in the Jiu Valley was able to secure a seat at the negotiating table, albeit one continually contested by an ongoing declared state of emergency. The 1929 strike, in contrast, reflected a reality of disunion: a newly founded "independent" mining union in Lupeni declared a wildcat strike. Not only did the established mining unions in other towns refuse to join, but some crossed picket lines — an unprecedented act. This article examines the 1929 miners' strike in Lupeni, seeking to move beyond the Communist narrative claiming that labor in the Jiu Valley was a revolutionary force and instead placing the strike in the context of local traditions of labor activism, the role of mining unions, and economic insecurity within the coal market.

Struggles to define labor activism, 1919-1927

The Kingdom of Romania unified with Transylvania on 1 December 1918, and among the opportunities and challenges for the government in Bucharest was the Jiu Valley. Starting in the 1850s, the Austrian Empire had begun to exploit the high-grade coal in the valley, with control shifting to Budapest after the 1867 *Ausgleich*. To expand production, Budapest both opened state-owned mines and supported private companies.⁸ This support included both state planning and funding to build the seven coal towns in the valley, incentives to encourage skilled miners to move from across the Empire (in the process, creating a multiethnic workforce), and a willingness to act as a broker between the companies and

⁷ There are seven towns in the Jiu Valley, with nineteen mines. However, not all mines operated throughout the interwar period — in 1929, there were only 18 as Petroșani Vest closed in 1928 — and in 1931 the merger of the coal companies consolidated and closed additional mines.

⁸ For convenience, the term "coal companies" is used throughout the text, since the companies involved evolved over time. Under Hungarian administration the Salgótarján and Urikány companies were key, along with the small Felső-zsilvölgyi Company and a single state mine at Lonea. The state mine was privatized after 1918, while Salgótarján's holdings later spun off into the Petroșani Company (though Salgótarján owned half of the stock) and Urikány's would similarly become the Lupeni Company. In 1931, the Petroșani and Lupeni companies merged.

the workforce.⁹ After 1918, Jiu offered the promise of coal to power Romania's railways, industry, and heat urban homes, but it also posed the threat of labor organization.

Communist-era historiography argued for the party's leading place in national labor organization after 1921, after a firm break with the Social Democrats. However, after 1965 this position softened to a claim that Communists provided leadership within Social Democratic organizations.¹⁰ For the Jiu Valley (and much of Transylvania), such a claim neglected the local development of union chapters starting in the 1880s and their connections to a broad Social Democratic network of union activity across the Kingdom of Hungary. Unionization ensured that Jiu coal miners could negotiate a joint collective labor contract with the coal companies annually.¹¹ The miners, over time, secured subsidized food, clothing, and other goods to be provided by the companies, free workers' housing, and free schools for their children. In November 1918, the miners responded to the uncertain future of Transylvania by declaring a "socialist revolution" to press these claims and thus guarantee that this system would continue. The government in Bucharest responded in December by sending in the army to forcibly suppress these revolutionary sentiments.

State agents, directors of the coal companies, and the mining unions alike thus sought in the postwar years to define what forms of labor organization would be allowed in the Jiu Valley.¹² The March 1920 Jiu miners' strike emphasized the importance of establishing a working relationship between the unions, the

⁹ The 1910 Hungarian census mentioned Hungarians (47%), Romanians (38%), Germans (7.5%), Slovaks (1.6%), Ruthenes (1.2%), Serbs (.2%), and Croats (.1%) (by "mother tongue") in the coal towns, among others; in addition, the confessional questions referred to Jews as well (4.4%). In contrast, the villages were predominantly Romanian (85%).

¹⁰ See Mircea Rusnac, "Modalități de prezentare a trecutului social-democrației românești în istoriografia comunistă," in *Fenomenul Muncitoresc și Social-Democrația din România* (Reșița: Editura Intergraf, 1997), 72-75; Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Istoria poporului român* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1983), 326-332.

¹¹ Communist-era historiography was critical of this issue, suggesting that Social Democrats short-sightedly sought immediate advantages for the workers, rather than systemic change. See Stănescu and Silviu, *Lupeni*, 60.

¹² This definition was complicated by the fact that the labor organization in Jiu, as across Transylvania, had been tied, as noted, to the efforts of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (*Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt*) to organize workers in industrial sites across the pre-1918 Kingdom of Hungary. This raised a dual specter: organized labor was both better developed than in Wallachia and Moldavia and tied to what many in Bucharest saw as a hostile ethnic minority and a foreign power. The fact the broad patterns established by Irina Livezeanu in *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).



companies, and the state. When the companies first jointly proposed to increase prices at their company stores (*Consum*) and subsequently failed to make payroll, the miners went on strike and demanded better salaries and working conditions.¹³ The Romanian military intervened, provoking further unrest that was put down by force.¹⁴ Minister of Labor Grigore Trancu-Iași intervened, ordering arbitration meetings at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection in Bucharest, held between 21 June and 10 July. The miners secured a collective contract that addressed salaries and prices at *Consum* stores.¹⁵ The companies received state assistance in finding food, negotiating prices with local merchants, and obtaining preferential freight space on the carriages of the Romanian Railways (*Căile Ferate Române*—CFR).¹⁶ The state secured a fixed price on roughly 80 percent of the companies' coal output. More importantly, Bucharest had secured a position from which it could not just arbitrate but dictate to the companies and the miners. The state would tolerate the “red” unions so long as those chapters agreed to negotiate alongside the newly-established “yellow” chapters of the *Sindicatelor Naționale Române* (Romanian National Unions—SNR) and accept a uniform labor contract.¹⁷ The state's position was reinforced after the 1920 general strike in Romania. During the 1920 general strike in Romania, which took place from 21 to 23 October, a state of emergency was declared. The army again intervened, and union activity was briefly banned by the People's Party (*Partidul Poporului*) government of Alexandru Averescu.¹⁸

Although the state seemed to have the upper hand, it also needed the long-term skilled labor of the coal miners. By the mid-1920s, Prime Minister Ion Brătianu and his National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*, or PNL) sought to promote domestic industry, in a drive to modernize the country. The Jiu Valley was the only significant source of high-grade, bituminous coal, and the PNL worked closely with the coal companies to increase production. Prominent members of the PNL were granted stock in coal companies on preferential terms or were offered positions on company boards in return for excluding foreign

¹³ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter, ANIC), Fond 2886, Mișcarea Sindicală din Regiunea Valea Jiului (colecție), Folder 1/1920, 209-225.

¹⁴ ANIC, Fond 2952 Uniunile Profesionale ale Lucrătorilor din Industria Minieră, Folder 3/1920, 5-9.

¹⁵ Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Hunedoara (hereafter, SJANH), Fond 144 Societatea “Petroșani” Direcția Muncă și Salarii (hereafter, SPDMS), Folder 1/1920, 1-15, 46.

¹⁶ SJANH, Fond 144 SPDMS, Folder 1/1920, 99.

¹⁷ See the memoranda sent to the ‘coal companies of the Jiu Valley’ SJANH, Fond 86 Inspectoratul general al minelor de cărbuni din Valea Jiului, Document 331/1922.

¹⁸ Ion Aldescu, *Armata Română în Valea Jiului: Repere istorice 1916–1999* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2001), 232.

capital and erecting high tariffs to protect domestic industry. Thus, the 1925 crisis of European coal over-production¹⁹ meant only that the Jiu companies had to send a memorandum demanding the increase of coal tariffs by at least 400 lei per ton, which the Council of Ministers acceded to.²⁰ Until 1927 the companies expanded exponentially, aided by the fact that both their investments in equipment and purchases of other companies' shares were included *within* the cost of coal. Thus, between 1921 and 1927, over 560 million lei were invested in repairing the mines, new technology and over 1,000 workers' houses, built by 1923.²¹ Total Jiu Valley coal production expanded from 1,028,934 tons in 1919 to 1,691,366 tons in 1925, or to a proportion of 58 percent of national production.²²

The expansion of production meant increased demand for skilled underground miners. Although thousands of ethnic Romanian miners were encouraged to move to Jiu, the companies and the Brătianu government still had to forge a working relationship with the existing Social Democratic unions, which in 1921 had joined the *Uniunea Muncitorilor din Industria Minieră din România* (Union of Mining Industry Workers in Romania—UMIMR). Something of the older, Habsburg-era pattern was in effect re-created, and this relationship — not the Lupeni strike of 1929 nor Communist agitation — defined interwar labor relations in the Jiu region. The state guaranteed the miners' unions a certain standard of living, in return for stability, and was willing to tolerate the “red” unions if they avoided politics.²³ The companies enjoyed state contracts and protective tariffs, in turn providing coal to the CFR at guaranteed prices. Finally, the Social Democratic

¹⁹ The 1924 Dawes Plan meant that the Ruhr basin began producing again, and Germany could pay part of the war reparations in coal. The British and Romanian coal mines had expanded during 1923-1924, partially as a result of the vacuum left on the coal market by the French occupation of the Ruhr, so the abrupt drop in the price of coal, coupled with the increase in supply, caused a shock to both industries. See John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, “Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout: The Struggle for Dignity” in *The Struggle for Dignity: Mining Communities and the 1926 Lock-Out*, ed. John McIlroy, Alan Campbell and Keith Gildart (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 63.

²⁰ Ludovic Báthory, *Societățile Carbonifere și sistemul economic și politic al României (1919-1929)* (Cluj: Presa Univeritară Clujeană, 1999), 198.

²¹ Mircea Baron, *Cărbune și societate în Valea Jiului, perioada interbelică* (Petroșani: Editura Universitas, 1998), 177.

²² SJANH, Fond 133 “Salgó-Tarján” Societate pe actii maghiare; Folder 22/1911-1918 f.4; percentage calculated based on Victor Axenciuc, *Evoluția Economică a României: Cercetări statistico-istorice, 1859-1947. Industria*, vol. 1 (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1992), 218.

²³ SJANH, Fond 29 Comisariatul de Poliție Petroșani (hereafter, CPP), Folder 10/1923, 4; Folder 16/1922, 100-118. Such toleration was fragile, however: state agents often seemed to have trouble distinguishing between a Social Democrat and a Communist, and a miner showing “the instigation to strike” was sometimes taken to be synonymous with “communist agitation.” See SJANH, Fond 299 Parchetul Tribunalului Hunedoara-Deva, Folder 24/1922, f. 1-34; Folder 6/1923, f.1-20; Folder 11/1927, 8-15.



unions represented the most leftist political position acceptable to Bucharest, and cooperation was an acceptable price to successive governments in power if it checked the spread of Communist ideas.

In addition to favorable collective contracts, the state and companies took on the responsibility of providing the miners with subsidized food and goods: the new public *Consum* stores created in addition to company-run suppliers were established in 1923 by the General Director of the Petroșani Company, Nicolae Theodorescu, with the support of minister Tătăărăscu and director Bujoiu.²⁴ These stores were in addition to (but named in the same fashion as) the *Consum* of the mining companies. The state collective stores were mandated by the collective contract and, in a continuation of previous workers' demands and the policies of the Habsburg era, provided six basic necessities at indexed prices and forty-three products at lower prices, generally adding about 15 to 20 percent to cover transportation and storage costs.²⁵ The *Consum* company stores only served employees, their dependents, and parish and school officials. The state *Consum* stores, in contrast, were public and open to all.²⁶ The other major difference between the company collective stores and the public *Consum* was that the company stores sold on credit (the next salary of the miner would cover his tab), while the state stores only sold based on cash and, later, company scrip.²⁷

The Petroșani Company would subsequently detach its *Consum* stores into a different corporation, the *Asociația de Consum* (Consumer Company), contributing 99 percent of the 1 million lei starting capital, provided an initial credit of 3 million lei, and allowed the use of Petroșani Company staff, buildings and administration by the new retail company.²⁸ The initial project focused on slaughterhouses and meat distribution, and in July 1923, four slaughterhouses and accompanying retail centers were opened in the Jiu Valley.²⁹ By September, at the miners' request, the *Asociația de Consum* expanded its total capital to 3 million lei, 75 percent of this increase being supported by subscription from miners' salaries. General stores were also opened alongside the slaughterhouses, carrying both basic necessities and luxuries.³⁰ The propaganda value of these stores was not lost on the Liberal Party — indeed, *Gazeta Jiului* ran features on the stores' success several times.³¹ By September 1924, the *Consum* had sold merchandise

²⁴ "Consumul Muncitorilor din Valea Jiului," *Gazeta Jiului*, March 2, 1924, 1.

²⁵ SJANH, Fond 69 Intreprinderea Minieră Lonea, Folder 2/1926, f.54-60.

²⁶ SJANH, Fond 83 Consumul Muncitorilor din Valea-Jiului Petroșani, (Henceforth CMVJP) Folder 1/1923, f. 18.

²⁷ SJANH, Fond 86 Inspectoratul general al minelor de cărbuni din Valea Jiului, document 598/1920; Fond 255, Societatea "Petroșani" Confidențiale, (hereafter SPC) Folder 1/1925, 29.

²⁸ SJANH, Fond 83 CMVJP, Folder 1/1923, f. 23-26.

²⁹ SJANH, Fond 83 CMVJP, Folder 1/1923, 5.

³⁰ "Consumul Muncitorilor din Valea Jiului," *Gazeta Jiului*, March 9, 1924, 3.

³¹ The articles at the end of 1924 emphasized the alliance between the Company and the Liberal Party in defending the locals from the exaggerated prices and the predation of local merchants. See "Consumul Muncitorilor din Valea Jiului," *Gazeta Jiului*, August 2, 1924, 2; *Gazeta Jiului*, September 20, 1924, 2.

valued at over 7 million lei, at a 3.5 percent profit.³² The stores sold most of their inventory below market prices, sparking increasing complaints from local businesses.³³

Not unexpectedly, during the period of massive hires, good collective contracts,³⁴ and good consumer prices (after mid-1923), the number of union members paying their dues and remaining in good standing dropped dramatically.³⁵ However, a report by the *Siguranța* during the same period pointed out that most of the workers supported the Social-Democratic union, even if they were not officially contributing to the union coffers. The *Siguranța* estimated that 7,000 workers could be considered “unionized” (including the pro-Liberal SNR), in terms of their willingness to aid union representatives.³⁶

The Social Democratic unions, however, faced two sources of pressure. First, the coal cartel created a framework where the mining directors could more easily work together to pressure the local labor market.³⁷ From 1925 on, the companies increasingly invested in mechanization to extract and wash coal, reducing the need for miners — nearly half of the miners and support staff would retire or lose their jobs over the following six years.³⁸ This encouraged miners to support union efforts — but which unions? The fragmentation of labor representation was the second source of pressure, and this factor is critical in understanding labor relations in the Jiu Valley after 1918. Most miners continued to adhere to the UMIMR chapters, but ethnic Romanian miners new to the valley and workers in support industries supported the SNR chapters in increasing numbers. The Habsburg-era tradition of a single, Social Democratic union had fragmented, and

³² “Consumul Muncitorilor din Valea Jiului,” *Gazeta Jiului*, September 20, 1924, 2.

³³ SJANH, Fond 83 CMVJP Folder 1/1926, 31.

³⁴ See, for instance, the discussions of collective contracts in the National Union newspaper, “Hotărârea adusă de Tribunalul Deva asupra arbitrajului,” *Graiul Muncitorimei*, February 29, 1924, 5.

³⁵ “Înainte și după organizarea muncitorilor,” *Minerul*, January 31, 1925, 2. “Darea de seamă morală și materială a Uniunii pe anii 1923 și 1924,” *Minerul*, June 30, 1925, 3.

³⁶ SJANH, Fond 29 CPP Folder 12/1924, 15-17.

³⁷ SJANH, Fond 814 Întreprinderea Minieră Lupeni (hereafter ÎML), Folder 3/1926 3. For Lupeni Director Ion Bujoiu's support of this and further collaboration see Folder 21/1925, 77; and for the feasibility studies on how to develop coordination between the companies at all levels, see SJANH, Fond 252, Societatea “Petroșani” D.M., Serviciul Tehnic, Folder 21/1926, f.1-5. Ion Bujoiu would later serve as a Liberal minister of industry and as a director of several of these companies over the next twenty years, as well as the General Director of the coal companies after their restructuring in 1931.

³⁸ Baron, *Cărbune și Societate*, 275; SJANH, Fond 250, Societatea “Petroșani” Direcția Serviciul Producție, Folder 10/1940; SJANH, Fond 80, Inspectoratul Geologic și Minier Deva. Secția Petroșani, Folder 22/1931, 4.



relations between the two labor groups were often openly hostile and sometimes violent. Communist-era scholars presented the interwar Communist Party as leading an overarching group of mass organizations, rather than struggling with the reality of a limited group of “a few hundred members with multiple affiliations.”³⁹ This approach occluded the significant role that Communist organizers played in Jiu in opposing both the UMIMR (seen as the key rival of the Communist organization) and the SNR and helping to destabilize existing patterns of labor organization further.⁴⁰ Even if the UMIMR unions still predominated, they could not preserve workers’ jobs, as the companies mechanized and rationalized their production process. Before the signing of the 1926 collective contract, there were increasing calls within their ranks to take action. Such bitterness was reinforced by police arrests of miners’ representatives in 1926, before they could submit lists for the local elections — ensuring that the PNL faced no opposition.⁴¹ Arrests and interrogations of Communists ensued, as the gendarmerie and the *Siguranța* were increasingly concerned that the loss of jobs would provoke strike actions.⁴²

The breakdown of working-class solidarity in Jiu, 1927-1929

Organized labor in the Jiu Valley came under further strain after a crisis of overproduction in 1927. The Jiu mines had steadily expanded coal output after 1919 to supply the Romanian Railways, which purchased over two-thirds of production through state-negotiated annual contracts. This insulated the Jiu mining companies from international price fluctuations, but left them vulnerable when, in 1927, the CFR reduced its purchases.⁴³ In response, the companies cut costs by closing less productive mines and shafts and dismissing personnel.⁴⁴ Mindful of labor militancy, the coal companies worked with Romanian officials in an attempt to offset layoffs. Some provisions were made for social aid, and state and company funds supported a new workers’ home for the unemployed.⁴⁵ Starting in 1928, Bucharest funded local road improvements to employ former miners.⁴⁶

³⁹ See Francesco Zavatti, “Between History and Power. The Historiography of Romanian National-Communism (1964-1989),” *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 42 (2020), 48.

⁴⁰ ANIC, Fond 2914 Comitetul Regional Valea Jiului al PCR, Document 2/1924; Document 3/1924.

⁴¹ SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 10/1926, 25, 43, 50.

⁴² “Verték-e a munkásokat a petrosenyi-i Sigurancán,” *Zsilvölgyi Napló*, March 28, 1925, 1; SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 22/1925, 26-31.

⁴³ SJANH, Fond 81 Societatea “Petroșani.” Direcția Generală, Consiliul de Administrație, Folder 1/1927, f.6.

⁴⁴ See SJANH, Fond 80 Inspectoratul Geologic și Minier Deva. Secția Petroșani, 68/1931, f. 5-18; Folder 99/1931, f. 13-30; and Folder 111/1931, f. 1-6.

⁴⁵ “Căminul Muncitorilor,” *Gazeta Jiului*, February 13, 1927, 1.

⁴⁶ “Pentru Ajutorarea Șomerilor din Valea Jiului,” *Avântul*, January 13, 1929, 3.

At the same time, the state cracked down on the UMIMR chapter activity. Directors of the mining companies informed the *Siguranța* about workers' meetings, and union members who raised funds for the Social Democratic Party were arrested and prosecuted.⁴⁷ In April 1927, the prefect's office went further and banned all union meetings, whether of the UMIMR or the SNR.⁴⁸

UMIMR's union leadership urged miners to aid each other — collecting funds for the less fortunate — and negotiated with the directors of the coal mines to cut work hours for all instead of layoffs. When the mining companies dismissed miners instead and reduced the remainder's shifts, the union appealed to the government in Bucharest.⁴⁹ As the scale of the crisis became apparent, the dues-paying membership of both unions grew dramatically, and the UMIMR and SNR chapters became closely cooperative — all SNR chapters would be integrated into the UMIMR by 1931.⁵⁰ The UMIMR leadership successfully negotiated salary increases in early 1928, but the situation remained tense.⁵¹ By this point, miners and industrial workers largely abandoned their support for the National Liberals and, by late 1927, shifted support to the National Peasant Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc*, or PNTȚ).⁵²

The PNTȚ, formed by a 1926 merger of two existing parties, promised an alternative to the postwar dominance of the National Liberals and the People's Party — castigating both of them as focused on elite interests and hostile to labor organization.⁵³ Ideologically, the PNTȚ promised democratization, civil rights, and decentralization. In practical terms, it represented an opportunity to shift power locally, within the Jiu valley. As it was a mono-industrial region, the state could apply extraordinary pressure through the CFR coal contracts. This factor led to a workable alliance between the coal companies and the National Liberals after 1918. The ministries in Bucharest had significant power over local matters, given continued centralization and the widespread use of patronage. A PNTȚ regime thus promised to decisively shift power within the valley — exacerbating local tensions, which came to a head in May 1928.

⁴⁷ SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 6/1927, 52; Folder 8/1926, 1-23.

⁴⁸ SJANH, Fond 255, SPC Folder 3/1928, 13; "Jandarmii din Lupeni descarcă armele în muncitori," *Minerul*, May 1, 1927, 3.

⁴⁹ "Mari concedieri de muncitori la minele de pe Valea Jiului," *Minerul*, September 30, 1927, 1.

⁵⁰ SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 16/1927, 1-10.

⁵¹ "Pe Valea Jiului," *Minerul*, May 1, 1928, 4.

⁵² SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 1/1927, 76.

⁵³ Not unreasonably; note Keith Hitchins' description of the PNL as oligarchic and the People's Party as largely continuing PNL policies in *Romania, 1866-1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 369, 390, 404.



The PNT announced its first national congress at Alba-Iulia on 6 May. When hundreds of miners requested days off at the Lupeni mine to attend the meeting, Uricani Company Director Francisc Frey refused: “This is a company concerned with taking out coal, not politics.”⁵⁴ Over 10,000 miners subsequently walked out—in this case, walking 40 kilometers north to catch freight trains to Alba-Iulia.⁵⁵ The directors of the mining companies conferred with Minister of the Interior Gheorghe Tătărăscu, and when the miners returned to work on 7 May, they filed past the watchful eyes of 500 gendarmes and a company of the Târgu Jiu 18th Infantry Regiment.⁵⁶ Despite this show of force, the union chapters jointly requested negotiations over salaries and over the method of recording the length of miners’ shifts.⁵⁷ The miners at Lupeni went farther: hundreds refused to enter the mine until confronted by a group of armed infantry, demanding that Petroșani Company Director Bujoiu, Royal Labor Inspector Popescu, and Colonel Milincescu of the 7th Army Corps renegotiate the labor contract immediately.⁵⁸ When this demand was rejected, thousands of miners began wildcat strikes the following week, while others took up pickaxes on 14 May and tore apart first Frey’s office and later, his home.⁵⁹ In response, the gendarmerie arrested the union leadership participating in negotiations, while the miners *en masse* threatened a general strike.

When Milincescu ordered the company officials to take control of the situation, the miners heckled them.⁶⁰ Exasperated, Milincescu ordered Frey to compromise.⁶¹ But General Clemente Davidoglu, national commander of the gendarmerie, now declared a state of emergency: there could be no meetings of more than three persons, whether “under a roof or under the sky,” and a curfew would be imposed from 9 pm.⁶² Bujoiu confidentially ordered his staff in Lupeni to compile lists of the “guilty parties”, together with the *Siguranța*, and ensure these men would be fired.⁶³ One week after the first outbreak of the strikes, the three members of the negotiating team were arrested and sent to the military tribunal in Sibiu for investigation. On this issue, both the Social Democrats and the Communists agreed: the miners would not go back to the mines until

⁵⁴ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.336.

⁵⁵ “Pe Valea Jiului după plecarea minerilor la Alba Iulia,” *Dimineața*, May 11, 1928, 2.

⁵⁶ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.341; “Informațiuni,” *Avântul*, May 13, 1928, 3; *Avântul*, May 20, 1928, 4.

⁵⁷ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.331.

⁵⁸ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.308.

⁵⁹ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.322, 320, 326.

⁶⁰ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.323.

⁶¹ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.315.

⁶² “Înăsprirea Stării de Asediu,” *Avântul*, May 20, 1928, 4.

⁶³ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f.297.

the detained representatives were freed.⁶⁴ Miners physically assaulted the royal commissioner, the gendarmes, and several engineers and (except at the Lonea mines) refused to begin their shifts or enter the mines until their demands were met and their negotiating team released.⁶⁵ Between 27 May and 1 June, the mines stood mostly idle. The army compelled miners to return to work by going house-to-house with the gendarmerie and escorting workers to the mines.⁶⁶ There, the miners refused to begin their shifts — again seeking to negotiate lower prices at the company stores, to change the method of how the companies calculated salaries, and to secure the freedom of all those arrested during the unrest.⁶⁷ The miners' representatives were beaten, and the miners were informed that the gendarmerie would eject anyone who refused to work the next day from their company housing. This, finally, broke the miners' resistance. While the state of emergency and the deployment of additional army units rendered the Jiu Valley outwardly quiet, the mining directors did not believe the situation had improved, or that the workers would be quiescent for long.⁶⁸

They were proved correct: Iuliu Maniu of the PNTȚ was sworn in as prime minister on 10 November. The death of National Liberal leader Ion Brătianu in November 1927 had left the Liberals both internally fractured without his guiding hand and under increasing pressure from the PNTȚ. The Maniu government immediately abolished the state of emergency in the Jiu Valley. On 11 and 12 November, the UMIMR union chapters organized rallies, drawing at least 4,000 people into the street and convening meetings in order to reorganize.⁶⁹ Soon, a newly-appointed county prefect promised to find help for the unemployed, so that “those without bread would receive help.”⁷⁰ The trade unions and the Romanian Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat Român*, or PSDR) allied with the PNTȚ, which recognized the existence of class struggle (though prioritizing that of the peasantry) and advocated a platform of social justice.⁷¹ The new Maniu

⁶⁴ ANIC, Fond 2914 Comitetul Regional Valea Jiului al PCR, Document 4/1928.

⁶⁵ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 6/1928, 45-46.

⁶⁶ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 291-3; 48.

⁶⁷ Police records suggest that rumors among the miners alluded to further demands — Transylvanian autonomy or independence, for example: see SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 279-280; 6/1928, 48-49. PNTȚ officials later argued this was only speculation or disinformation by the police: “Adevărul asupra faptelor din Valea Jiului,” *Dreptatea*, July 29, 1928, 2.

⁶⁸ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 6/1928, 3-4.

⁶⁹ “Adunări,” *Minerul*, October 31, 1928, 4.

⁷⁰ “Megkezdődtek a választási harcok” and “Az új prefektus a zsilvölgyében,” *Zsilvölgyi Napló*, November 28, 1928, 1.

⁷¹ Ioan Scurtu, *Din viața politică a României: întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* (București: Editura Litera, 1975), 62. On the underlying ideas behind the National Peasant economic policies, see Hitchins, *Romania*, 319-334.



government called for parliamentary elections, subsequently taking nearly 80 percent of the vote and firmly displacing the National Liberals from power.

With the PNT's victory, the miners now demanded a renegotiation of their collective contract. In December 1928, the mining directors of the Jiu Valley sent a joint memorandum to Bucharest stating that "the situation is becoming worse day by day." Bearing axes, staves and knives, groups of unemployed miners first appeared at the mines and moved from there to cause repeated confrontations and skirmishes at the mining offices. The directors begged the authorities to deal with the anarchic state of the Jiu Valley, and a stream of complaints were issued until August 1929.⁷² In particular, the miners targeted the foremen who had supported the National Liberals as "traitors" to the working class.⁷³ Similarly, there was growing alarm at the return of Communist agitators, who had been expelled in 1928 and now began to take up positions in the trade unions.⁷⁴ Formal negotiations began in January 1929, and the miners fully expected — and directly petitioned — the Maniu government to actively support these efforts.⁷⁵ In this hope, they would be disappointed; although Labor Minister Ion Răducanu expanded support for the unemployed and the existing efforts to provide jobs through road building, the PNT did not intervene in the negotiations, referring them to arbitration.⁷⁶

The miners' rapid disappointment with the PNT would prove a key destabilizing factor in the valley. The more militant miners at Lupeni and Vulcan in 1928 had launched wildcat actions, clashing with a union leadership they saw as conciliatory. This provided an opportunity for radical organizers like Teodor Munteanu. A new, highly radical Independent Union (*Sindicat Independent*) was launched in 1929 at Lupeni. The communist affiliation of its membership is at best unclear — UMIMR claimed that the leadership were communist agitators and that Munteanu was a *Siguranța* agent and a communist agitator that sought to entrap workers. Still, relations between the UMIMR unions and their former membership were highly acrimonious.⁷⁷ The Independent Union both attempted to put pressure on contract negotiations through physical coercion and fought in the streets with UMIMR loyalists.⁷⁸ Rumors swept the valley, hinting that if the contract negotiations failed, the Communists would turn to violence and kill

⁷² SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f. 272-277; 205-250.

⁷³ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 6/1928, 5-8.

⁷⁴ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, f. 160; Fond 29 CPP, Folder 16/1928, f. 3-7.

⁷⁵ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 190.

⁷⁶ Stănescu and Silvan, *Lupeni*, 75.

⁷⁷ "Masacrul dela Lupeni" *Minerul*, September 1, 1929, 1.

⁷⁸ Jos cu trădătorii clasei muncitoare!" *Minerul*, July 1, 1929, 1.

company administrators.⁷⁹ Munteanu, in fact, sanctioned attacks with explosives on the house of Frey in early July, an attack repeated later that month by another band of miners; in addition, at least one sub-director was attacked at gunpoint.⁸⁰ The Independent Union further demanded that the former president of the UMIMR chapter in Lupeni, Petru Mihăilă, be fired from the mine and forbidden access to the Jiu Valley. Otherwise, the Independents claimed, they could not guarantee his safety.⁸¹

The Independent Union provided Communist-era historiography with the opportunity to align the unions with contemporary political movements — e.g., assigning the leadership of the looming strike of 1929 to the Communists by drawing on the other leaders. However, accounts from the period do not mention Munteanu by name.⁸² Even more confusingly, some scholarship in both the Communist and the post-1989 era argued that the National Peasants protected the Independents.⁸³ The origin of this allegation reflects the wealth of conflicting information about Munteanu — both a known Communist (central in the 1924 scandal during which eleven Communists were arrested) and, at least according to contemporary Social Democrats, allegedly also a member of the National Liberal Party.⁸⁴ Without further investigation, it is uncertain if this strike represented the skilled work of a Communist political operative or if Munteanu was willing to seek a variety of partners to achieve his goals — something one can see in the case of other local agitators as well.⁸⁵ Pre-1989 historiography that sought to establish a clear Communist pedigree for labor organization thus obscures the complexity of the profile of labor radicals who might draw on multiple sources of support.

By August 1929, the situation in the Jiu Valley was tense. Although a collective contract was finalized in July 1929, many miners were unhappy that the wage raises

⁷⁹ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 143.

⁸⁰ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 150-155; 139.

⁸¹ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 160-1.

⁸² Lungu, et. al., 174. Stănescu and Silvan, 71-72; 81.

⁸³ Stănescu and Silvan, 84; Marin C. Stănescu, *Stânga politică din România din anii crizei 1929-1933* (București: Editura Mica Valahie, 2007), 43. This assertion stems from the fact that Munteanu was reportedly on good terms with PNT County Prefect Ștefan Rozvan, who was attempting to create National Peasant-aligned unions, and that Munteanu had participated in contract negotiations with the PNT. Such allegations may be the result of hostility from both the heads of other union chapters and from company officials; the latter detested Rozvan, and reported to Bucharest on his relationship with Munteanu — see SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML Lupeni, Folder 9/1929, 111.

⁸⁴ “Jos cu trădătorii clasei muncitoare!” *Minerul*, July 1, 1929, 1. This may, of course, have merely been a slur against Munteanu.

⁸⁵ Vasile Sârb, for example, served as a secretary in a Social Democratic union — but simultaneously founded the Lupeni Communist Party organization. ANIC, Fond 2914 Comitetul Regional Valea Jiului al PCR, Document 3/1924.



were not larger, that miners at different mines would receive different raises, and that the PNTȚ — and even the PSDR — were not providing sufficient support.⁸⁶ The coal companies felt abandoned by a seemingly hostile Maniu government.⁸⁷ Finally, the unified front of mining unions had been shattered, being divided between Independent and UNIMR chapters, with the *Siguranța* reporting that the Communist threat in the region was rapidly growing.⁸⁸ The local elections of April 1929 had seen a Communist electoral list submitted in Vulcan. Worse still, it went on to defeat both the PSDR and the National Liberal lists handily.⁸⁹

The Strike of 1929

Despite the rising tensions, the Lupeni strike of 5-6 August 1929 was largely unexpected. True, the companies were concerned — sending repeated appeals to the Ministry of Labor for aid and arguing that the region was growing unstable.⁹⁰ But PNTȚ-appointed County Prefect Ștefan Rozvan had promised state support for the mining unions and blamed the companies.⁹¹ In this light, it seemed likely that the workers would be willing to negotiate rather than strike.⁹² The government's support, however, was half-hearted at best. While the PNTȚ regime was unwilling to send in the army to repress the miners — even when the Independent Unions had started a campaign of violence — it was also unwilling to intervene and force the companies to provide further salary increases or to introduce any serious alternative employment program in the valley.⁹³

Salary increases were one element of the contract negotiation (the unions pressing for 10 percent, the companies sticking to 6 percent). Another element was the companies' attempt to redefine the eight-hour shift as starting not upon *entry* into the mine (as in past contracts), but as starting when miners began work underground at the face. Workers were being asked to add one to two additional unpaid hours per shift.⁹⁴ But the key sticking point was whether the companies should pay the miners in the Independent Union their wages during

⁸⁶ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 133.

⁸⁷ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 125.

⁸⁸ SJANH, Fond 29 CPP, Folder 2/1930, 26-9.

⁸⁹ "O lecție," *Avântul*, 2:14 (14 Apr 1929), 1.

⁹⁰ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 108-113.

⁹¹ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 126.

⁹² ANIC, Fond 2937-2943 Procese Întocmite de Organele Justiției, Siguranței și Jandarmeriei pentru Comuniști, Militanți ai Mișcării Muncitorești și ai Organizațiilor de Masa (hereafter, PÎOJS), Folder 2642/1929, f. 2.

⁹³ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 108-115; "Iparos. Mit várhatunk a tavaszi szezontól?" *Zsilvölgyi Napló*, April 18, 1929, 1. "Nyit levél Madgareu kereskedelmi minister urhoz," *Zsilvölgyi Napló*, July 26, 1929, 1.

⁹⁴ SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 124.

a union-mandated strike — as the companies did for UMIMR actions.⁹⁵ As the negotiations dragged on, some miners at the Elena and Victoria mines in Lupeni refused to report to work on 5 August, and instead proceeded to the shaft head to stop any other miners from beginning work. Amid heated debate between miners from different union chapters, a group of 3,800 protesters marched towards the Lupeni power plant.⁹⁶

The power plant not only provided electricity to the town but powered the water pumps that prevented the mine from flooding — and, critically, also powered both the ventilation system that ensured miners at work had breathable air and the elevator system that allowed movement between the underground galleries and the surface. If the power plant was attacked, the mines could be shut down for months to remove floodwater — which, in turn, created the risk that the coal veins would emit methane and create the potential for an explosion in a gallery. Nicolae Radu, the chief mechanic of the plant, begged the strikers not to turn the plant off, because fellow miners were deep in the mines and could die. He was stabbed several times in the resulting mêlée while engineer Ion Socolescu was “savagely beaten.”⁹⁷ The power plant was shut down, trapping hundreds of miners belowground, with a limited supply of breathable air. In the subsequent trial, state prosecutor Marin Condeescu argued that the striking miners, armed with staves, iron bars, axes and revolvers, refused to allow the power plant to operate, despite being informed about the dangers to their fellow workers.⁹⁸ Communist-era historians argued that in 1929, Communist leadership was successful in convincing miners that “solidarity is necessary to win the fight for their demands” and drew Social Democrats and the non-politically minded miners in to support the strike.⁹⁹ In fact, miners from Vulcan, Lonea, Petroșani, and Petrila refused to join the strike. The action remained isolated and confined to the four mines in Lupeni alone.

On the morning of 6 August, under the orders of county prosecutor Marin Condeescu, the gendarmes and a detachment of 80 Frontier Guards from the army ranged themselves in front of the strikers at the power plant. The strikers had nowhere to retreat: the walls of the power plant were high, the gate was blocked by the gendarmerie and the guard, and the only possible exit was by shoving alongside the flanks of the police.¹⁰⁰ According to the official trial depositions,

⁹⁵ “Masacrul de la Lupeni,” *Minerul*, September 1, 1929, 1. SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 9/1929, 82.

⁹⁶ SJANH, Fond 299 Parchetul Tribunalului Hunedoara-Deva, Folder 4/1929, 3-7.

⁹⁷ ANIC, Fond 2937-2943 PÎOJS, Folder 2641/1929, f.325. Both survived their injuries: see SJANH, Fond 814 ÎML, Folder 7/1929, 88.

⁹⁸ ANIC, Fond 2937-2943 PÎOJS, Folder 3642/1929, f.56.

⁹⁹ Lungu, Radu, Valea, Poporogu, *Valea Jiului*, 174.

¹⁰⁰ “Masacrul de la Lupeni,” *Minerul*, September 1, 1929, 1



at 6 am, the gendarmes were ordered to clear a path to the power plant with the butts of their weapons, and the miners fought back.¹⁰¹ Hearing a shot, the guards opened fire on the workers — killing 13 miners and severely wounding 60 (seven of whom subsequently died). Strikers, including the more lightly wounded, fled to their homes or the mountains.¹⁰² With the strikers incapacitated or fleeing, the power plant was immediately restarted. The same day the army applied the same measures as during a state of emergency — all meetings were banned, and press censorship was strengthened.¹⁰³ The funerals of the miners took place on 7 August under military supervision, with only their immediate families allowed to participate.¹⁰⁴ Restrictions on assembly and the press were lifted by October, although the miners had already quietly met to discuss upcoming negotiations over the contract.¹⁰⁵ Despite their conflicts with the Independent Union, the Social Democratic union chapters gathered money for the legal defense of those miners who were under arrest for their actions during the Lupeni strike. The chapters also published a list of demands on behalf of all the miners regarding the new collective contract.¹⁰⁶

The miners themselves were shocked by the events of 6 August. While most had been horrified by the occupation of the power plant, the guards' shooting of the demonstrators led to the fear that this use of force represented the true outlook of the Maniu government.¹⁰⁷ The miners' fears were not alleviated by the fact that the company housed and fed the new army unit at its own expense, that Rozvan was only suspended for his part in the massacre (rather than fired or prosecuted), and that the trial of the miners who participated in the Lupeni strike was postponed several times.¹⁰⁸ What the miners termed the "Lupeni massacre" was a great blow to both the PNTȚ and the mining companies. The events of August 1929 significantly weakened the National Peasants' credibility: they had promised social justice and received, in return, a great deal of support from the Jiu Valley.¹⁰⁹ The national Romanian press depicted the companies as bloodthirsty Liberal oligarchs, who exploited the miners mercilessly for their own benefit.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ ANIC, Fond 2937-2943 PÎOJS, Folder 2642/1929, f. 70-71.

¹⁰² ANIC, Fond 2937-2943 PÎOJS, Folder 2642/1929, f. 42-50.

¹⁰³ "În Valea Jiului Teroarea Continuă," *Minerul*, November 1, 1929, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Stănescu, M. Silvan, *Lupeni Ieri și Azi*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ "Din Valea Jiului: Acțiunea de reorganizare a muncitorilor," *Minerul*, December 15, 1929, 4.

¹⁰⁶ "Conferința regională a sindicatelor din Valea Jiului," *Minerul*, November 1, 1929, 3.

¹⁰⁷ "Az édesanya..." *Zsilvölgyi Napló*, August 14, 1929, 1

¹⁰⁸ "În Valea Jiului Teroarea Continuă," *Minerul*, November 1, 1929, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Armin Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional*, Cornelia Eșianu and Delia Eșianu trans. (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1999), 138.

¹¹⁰ See Marian Boboc and Mihai Barbu, 6 August 1929 : Ziua de sânge de la Lupeni, vols. 1-3 (Deva: Editura Corvin, 2006-2007).

The PNT, in an effort to salvage the situation, intervened in the December 1929 joint contract negotiations in the Jiu Valley. Minister of Labor Ion Răducanu arbitrated between the companies and the unions in an unusually short series of meetings over six days. The miners secured most of their demands: an eight-hour workday, calculated from entry into the mine, overtime pay at 150 percent of the basic pay rate, the agreement that the *Consum* stores would continue to supply goods at low cost while some food would be further subsidized, and the assurance that free workers' housing would continue to be provided, along with free heating and electricity. Salaries were increased overall by 5 percent, and wages were further pegged to the prices of 36 products (food and clothing, plus soap) carried by the *Consum*.¹¹¹ The 1929 contract would remain in force until 1940, with minor across-the-board salary increases.¹¹²

Despite the PNT's intervention, the conflicts that provoked the 1929 protest continued through the 1930s. Bujoiu planned to continue restructuring the Lupeni Company's coal mining organization, presenting some of his ideas at the November 1929 conference of the *Institutul Românesc de Organizare Științifică a Muncii* (Romanian Institute for the Scientific Organization of Labor—IROSM).¹¹³ Rationalization, in the eyes of the Jiu Valley company administrators, meant mechanization, new techniques of extracting coal, and using the resulting layoffs as a way to break the back of radical labor organizers. Bujoiu's position to carry out this plan was increased after 1931, when the coal companies merged, and he became director general of the consolidated mines. Bujoiu's plan, as preserved in internal memos, emphasized that the first order of business was the "re-establishment of discipline" (a concept which would eventually be transformed into increased working hours) — a significant contributing factor to the unrest of 1928 and 1929. To prevent the recurrence of labor unrest, Bujoiu suggested a liberal use of the threat of dismissals: the loss of a mining job meant the loss of a miner's free housing. Since the company owned much of the housing in the coal towns, dismissed miners (particularly those with families) soon felt pressure to move and seek employment elsewhere in Romania. Using this threat, Bujoiu argued, would help remove the "agitators" from the workforce.

Further measures envisaged in the report emphasized "the rational use of unproductive workers, the elimination of the useless, undesirable and unskillful" — connecting the disciplinary aspects of the dismissals to the general improvement of the workforce. Bujoiu argued that dismissals would be extensive (and thus an even more efficient deterrent) as the companies should shift to "frontal exploitation faces," further concentrating the mine and thus requiring

¹¹¹ "Tratatavele pentru noul contract colectiv s-au încheiat cu succes," *Minerul*, January 1, 1930, 1.

¹¹² Baron, *Cărbune și Societate*, 305

¹¹³ Baron, *Cărbune și Societate*, 191



a smaller labor force. Finally, he argued for continued mechanization: “let us not allow a man to do what a machine can.”¹¹⁴ In carrying out these proposals in the 1930s, Bujoiu successfully stifled labor agitation. The company continued to provide education, housing, and subsidized goods to complying workers and “reliable” labor union members, while dismissing agitators — even while denying any such deeds.¹¹⁵ In this light, the 1929 strike provided a context in which labor in the Jiu Valley was *de*-radicalized for over a decade, as miners were reluctant to risk their standard of living by using their unions to press political points. This conclusion is the antithesis of the Communist myth of Lupeni ’29.

Conclusion

For the Romanian Communist Party, the 1929 Lupeni action demonstrated that the miners were radicalized and led by Communists, reflecting wider labor activism across the country.¹¹⁶ The Lupeni strike of 1929 made for good cinema — sufficiently so that *Lupeni 29* was followed by the 1966 *Golgota* (focusing on the widows of miners from the strike), and in 1981 by *O lume fără cer* (*A World Without Sky*), which reused footage from both. But the strike was not revolutionary, nor was it emblematic of labor organization during the interwar period. Politics were at the core of the strike only inasmuch as the miners had lost faith in the PNTȚ to deliver on its electoral promises. This was not revolutionary communism, but frustrated anticipation that the ruling government was supposed to be on the side of workers. The Lupeni strike resulted from a coal industry in crisis and from unions that fractured in response — leading to two years of unrest and inter-union street brawls. When the new PNTȚ government sought to put an end to the heavy use of the gendarmerie and army in support of the coal companies in the Jiu Valley in 1928, this meant that local state agents could not forcibly stop a union chapter from launching independent action — and turning on other miners in the process.

In fact, the strike of 1929 demonstrated to a generation of Jiu miners the futility of revolutionary politics and led to the reunification of the labor movement in the Jiu Valley. On the one hand, there seemed to be less need to strike: with the support of Bujoiu, the UMIMR unions could secure the miners’ core demands in their collective contracts. This did not stop the ongoing dismissal of miners, but the miners’ capacity to strike had diminished. Bujoiu’s policies to identify and dismiss labor agitators were broadly successful, and the remaining miners were well aware of the economic crisis of the Great Depression and the precarity of

¹¹⁴ Buttu, “Raționalizarea în minele de cărbuni,” 33-35.

¹¹⁵ SJANH, Fond 255, SPC, Folder 1/1931, f.10, 33.

¹¹⁶ On both points, see A. Simion, “Din luptele greviste ale muncitorilor mineri (1924-1929),” *Studii: Revista de Istorie*: no. 18:4 (1965): 856 and 867-868.

their situation. In addition, the PNT's fall from power in 1931 saw a succession of regimes that were inimical to organized labor, increasing the risks of industrial actions. At the same time, the Lupeni strike had been widely reported in the national press and garnered sufficient symbolic importance to remain relevant throughout the 1930s. It was deployed in various contexts, ranging from the Communist menace to the oligarchic nature of the Romanian state. As a result, successive state arbiters sought to ensure good collective contracts for the workers and, when necessary, pressured the companies for leniency in their policies to prevent a renewed political scandal.

What fresh perspectives on the interwar period does a re-examination of the 1929 Lupeni strike through the lens of labor history offer? Such local case studies are a way to reframe the understanding of how the Romanian political system functioned on the ground, of how it interacted with industrial concerns and of the degree of autonomy, it allowed for workers. The wider context of the events of 1929 emphasizes how successive regimes in Bucharest enacted policies of economic modernization and intervened in the national economy to achieve them. The Jiu Valley was important in providing high-grade coal for the CFR. Rather than relying on market mechanisms to ensure a steady flow of coal, the state resorted to frequent interventions to ensure that inputs like transportation and labor and outputs such as prices served the state's policies. This drew Bucharest into local disputes: the miners sought to organize and negotiate as the labor demand varied (whether due to waxing and waning CFR purchases or due to mechanization). For the companies, ensuring that they hired *the optimal number of miners* and kept the most skilled was difficult. When the miners struck in response, the state was willing to intervene through the armed gendarmerie or the military. But this did not solve the problem of labor militancy in the Jiu Valley; if Bujoiu was able as a company official to suppress labor activism in the 1930s, it would return during the Second World War, in the immediate post-war period, in 1977, and perhaps most famously in the *mineriade*¹¹⁷.

As Adrian Grama points out, the Romanian national economy of the 1930s turned inwards, as the Romanian state became the main buyer for the output of several industries which had previously operated on international markets. In this context, he highlights the 1930s as a period of increased state intervention in managing labor activism through collective contracts, through the state's legal right to be the arbiter of negotiations between unions and employers, and through

¹¹⁷The *mineriade* were a series of six violent protests in which miners from the Jiu Valley marched on Bucharest between January 1990 and February 1999. The first three of these protests, including the most infamous in June 1990, were at the behest of the leadership of the ruling *Frontul Salvării Naționale* (National Salvation Front, or FSN). During the 1990 *mineriade*, Jiu Valley miners (and other workers in smaller numbers) were brought to the capital to suppress anti-government protesters. The later *mineriade* were against the ruling government.



the state's ability to put pressure on both through its outsized role as the primary employer. Ultimately, Grama argues, the labor legislation of the 1920s, in concert with the economic nationalism and import substitution of the 1930s, resulted in quiescent unions, relatively low labor costs, and social welfare legislation.¹¹⁸ The economic nationalism of the Romanian state in the 1930s, however, continued certain policies that had been previously used in Transylvania to shift local industry, at least partially, into ethnic Romanian hands: using the economic clout of the state as the main buyer and legislator to leverage ownership, labor relations and local politics.¹¹⁹ In this sense, the labor militancy of the Jiu miners during the 1920s highlights how the Romanian state developed its ability to intervene in the economy and the labor market, whether through legislation, market pressure (as an economic actor) or the monopoly of legitimate violence, applied through the use of emergency legislation, the gendarmerie and the military. A comparative approach to labor action in Transylvania and the rest of Greater Romania during the 1920s and 1930s could give us a better perspective both on the ability of the Romanian state to curtail labor unrest as well as on the reasons behind the unions' willingness to cooperate.

Examining the interwar Jiu Valley also emphasizes the limits of interwar Romanian democracy. The Romanian state imposed a nine-year state of emergency to regulate labor in the Jiu region, from 1920 to 1929. Though the PNTȚ government lifted this exceptional state, it reimposed it after only ten months — long before the dictatorships of Carol II or Ion Antonescu. The state took a dominant role in managing labor relations in the Jiu Valley to ensure coal production, maintaining an equilibrium in which most labor activity was monitored — sometimes accepted, and occasionally violently suppressed. Local state agents relied on the availability of gendarmes and military personnel to enact this strategy, and strike activity repeatedly ended with interventions by the army and verdicts handed down by military courts. If industrial workers were a small portion of the population — eight percent, clustered in cities and industrial areas — the state's actions are still striking, suggesting that labor history provides three important insights into the interwar period.¹²⁰ First, Romanian political parties envisioned a modernizing Romanian state, albeit with differences in achieving

¹¹⁸ Adrian Grama, "The Cost of Juridification: Lineages of Cheap Labor in Twentieth Century Romania," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 17:3 (Sept. 2020), 32-39.

¹¹⁹ See for instance, Anca Maria Glont, „*Nihil Sine Carbo*: Politics, Labor, and the Coal Industry in the Towns of the Jiu Valley, 1850–1999” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015), 145-202; Anders E. B. Blomqvist, “Economic Nationalizing in the Ethnic Borderlands of Hungary and Romania: Inclusion, Exclusion and Annihilation in Szatmár/ Satu Mare 1867-1944” (PhD diss, Stockholm University, 2014), 244-273.

¹²⁰ Sorin Radu, “‘Peasant Democracy’ or What it was Like to Practice Politics in Countryside Romania between the Two World Wars,” in *Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania: Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda*, Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt eds. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 39.

this goal and in deciding which sectors should be predominant. Where did the ruling parties intervene, and why? In Jiu, the state's usual role was to suppress labor unrest — but a larger, comparative viewpoint would be revealing. Second, in what forms did this intervention take place? The Jiu valley case highlights that the role of state agents in the provinces was different from what political history might suggest — that, in addition to tariffs and state contracts, the state used its monopoly of violence whenever convenient. But the state could also be flexible — if the National Liberals preferred “yellow” unions that embraced Romanian nationalism, their practical actions in the Jiu Valley contradicted the primacy of ethnicity stated in their party platform. In other words, labor history helps to explore how state policy was undertaken “on the ground.” Finally, it underscores that in pursuing modernization, the ministries in Bucharest and the local state agents in Jiu repeatedly suspended or undermined civil rights — for example, by sending the accused strikers to be tried by military tribunals.

Rezumat

Articolul analizează greva de la Lupeni din 1929. În timp ce istoriografia din epoca comunistă a exaltat greva ca fiind o acțiune politică condusă de membrii de partid, greva a fost atipică pentru organizarea locală a muncii. Plasând greva în contextul mai larg al anilor 1920-1931, articolul urmărește interacțiunea dintre sindicatele locale organizate, companiile de cărbune din Valea Jiului și agenții statului, atât la nivel local, cât și la București. În perioada de după 1918, sindicatele au făcut presiuni pentru ca minerii să primească compensații rezonabile; având în vedere cererea de cărbune a statului și nevoia de forță de muncă a companiilor, acest lucru a favorizat inițial un compromis. Statul român a fost dispus să tolereze sindicatele locale conduse de social-democrați, în timp ce folosea represiunea - inclusiv armata - pentru a suprima grevele și a asigura o aprovizionare neîntreruptă cu cărbune. Cu toate acestea, schimbările pe piață și în producția de cărbune au redus nevoia de muncitori mineri, ceea ce a dus la fragmentarea sindicatelor locale. În 1929, combinația dintre un regim relativ liberal, companiile de cărbune care căutau să-și raționalizeze forța de muncă și un grup marginal radicalizat a dus la grevă. Deși respinge reprezentările grevei în istoriografia de dinainte de 1989, textul susține că istoria muncii ajută la dezvăluirea limitelor democrației românești interbelice în moduri în care abordările politice și juridice nu o pot face.

Cuvinte-cheie: organizarea muncii, mineri, Valea Jiului, intervenția statului, social-democrați

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What Soviet Periodicals Can Tell Us About the Propaganda on the Women's Service in the USSR's Armed Forces (1941-1945)

Nataliia ZALIETOK

Abstract

The materials of Soviet newspapers are an important source for studying the policy of the regime regarding the service of women in the armed forces of the USSR. Based on the frequency of publication of these materials, the date of their publication, and the content, it is possible to make assumptions about the need for female personnel in the armed forces during a particular period of war, as well as to highlight and evaluate the government's propaganda concerning female soldiers in general. However, the thematic articles contained almost no specifics about the service of women in the armed forces of the USSR as a mass phenomenon – they did not provide data on the establishment of women's military units, general statistics on the presence of women in the Army, conscription data, etc. The totalitarian regime kept this information secret, unlike other members of the anti-Hitler coalition.

Keywords: periodicals, USSR, women, armed forces, Soviet-German war.

Introduction

During the war years, the newspapers of the USSR continued to be under the full control of the Soviet government, which established control over them as early as the 1920s.¹ Admittedly, wartime is generally characterised by increased censorship and propaganda, even in democratic countries. Such changes are due to military needs. They are aimed at mobilising the resources available in the country, at keeping secret the information that could potentially harm the state's troops, etc.² However, turning to the problem of coverage of women's military service during the Second World War in various countries, one can see that some of them discussed this topic in detail, providing a large amount of data on the specifics of women's recruitment into the Army, their training and service at different stages of the war. For example, such information can be found in the

¹ Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses. Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 246, 248.

² For example, see Simon Eliot and Marc Wiggam, *Allied Communication to the Public During the Second World War: National and Transnational Networks* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 3; Phillip Knightley, "World War II: Britain, United States, Soviet Union, Germany," in *Censorship: a World Encyclopedia*, ed. Derek Jones (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 265.

periodicals of Great Britain and the US.³ Officially, women in these countries did not perform combat roles but held non-combat military positions. Conversely, the Soviet government did not limit the role of female military personnel to non-combat, and its public discourse in the interwar period rather encouraged women to master a wide range of different professions. At the end of the 1930s, there were widespread statements that gender equality had been fully achieved in the USSR, even in the military sphere, and women were ready to take up arms on an equal footing with men to defend the homeland if necessary⁴. However, the question is: can Soviet periodicals be used to deepen our knowledge about the military service of Soviet women during the Second World War, and if yes, to what extent?

The war experience of Soviet female soldiers has frequently been the subject of historical research. V. Murmantseva,⁵ V. Petrakova,⁶ G. Kameneva,⁷ O. Mamrotska,⁸ A. Krylova,⁹ R. Markwick and E. Cardona,¹⁰ among others, have considered certain aspects of this issue.

At the same time, there is only isolated research on the coverage in the newspapers of the military service of Soviet women, research that is often not based on diverse source materials. For example, in the article by A. Arinov,¹¹ the author aimed to investigate the peculiarities of the coverage of women's military

³ For example, see: "100,000 women wanted," *Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian*, September 06, 1941, 8; "Women's call-up rules tightened," *Leven Mail*, September 03, 1941, 3; "WAAC quota is increased," *The Tacoma times*, December 11, 1942, 20; "2,634 men from McDowell County are now on the firing lines! But only 13 Women from McDowell County have taken their places in the ranks! How about it, girls?," *Marion progress*, February 01, 1945, 7.

⁴ For example, see: Iosif Stalin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. T. 18 (Tver': Informacionno-izdatel'skij tsentr "Sojuz", 2006); *Vneocherednaja chetvertaja sessija Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR [1-go sozyva]*, (28 avgusta-1 sentjabrja 1939 g.): *stenograficheskij otchet* (Moskva: OGIZ, 1939), 41-42, 46-48, 75.

⁵ Valentina Murmantseva, *Sovetskie zhenshchiny v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Mysl', 1974).

⁶ Viktoriia Petrakova, "Podgotovka zhenshchin-snaiperov v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta* 8, no. 3 (2013): 92-109

⁷ Galina Kameneva, "Opyt sluzhby zhenshchin v riadah Voenno-Morskogo flota (1941-1945 gg.): na materialah Iuga Rossii," *Gumanitarnye i iuridicheskie issledovaniia*, 4 (2015): 72-78.

⁸ Oksana Mamrots'ka, "Interpretatsiia uchasti zhinok Ukrainy u viis'kovykh diiakh na frontakh Druhoi svitovoi viiny," *Hileia* 1, no. 143 (2019): 88-92.

⁹ Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat. A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Roger Markwick and Euridice Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹¹ Alemzhan Arinov, "Uchastie zhenshchin v boevykh deistviiakh na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v sovetskoi voennoi periodicheskoi pechati," *Zhenshchina v rossiiskom obshchestve* 4 (2021): 136-148.



service in Soviet periodicals. However, the source base for covering this broad topic is insufficient. The vast majority of newspaper materials used by the author were published in March 1945, when the end of the war was already predictable. Thus, it is impossible to investigate changes in the rhetoric regarding female military personnel during the war based on these sources. In addition, the materials selected by the author were published on the eve of International Women's Day (March 8). Since 1921, March 8 has been a public holiday in the USSR (since 1965, it was declared a day off). However, the Soviet authorities significantly distorted its meaning. In the context of this research, this holiday served as an occasion for the authorities to emphasize the presence of women in the ranks of the Army and create the appearance of gender equality in the country. Since 1942, a few days before and after March 8, there had been a sharp increase in the amount of materials about servicewomen. However, this occurred against the backdrop of a highly controversial discourse on the role of women in war on other days of the calendar. Therefore, based on Arinov's selected sources, and considering their publication date, it is impossible either to trace the frequency of mention of female military personnel in periodicals during the war or to understand the peculiarities of covering the issue of female personnel service during this period.

In addition, the author's conclusions are questionable. A. Arinov asserts that "... in the military periodicals, the issue of women's participation in the war was discussed from two opposite points of view (female and male). Female authors celebrated women's equality with men at the front and created and maintained the image of a valiant female soldier. Male authors honoured women with only a supporting role in the war, singling them out in the context of helping servicemen in various combat and non-combat conditions."¹² However, according to my observations, both male and female authors in the military and rear periodicals presented the women's role in the Army as auxiliary during the war. Sometimes female authors did not mention the presence of women at the front as soldiers, or they emphasised the purely 'feminine' qualities of female soldiers, such as caring, creating comfort, etc.¹³ It is also worth noting that many newspaper articles devoted to Soviet female soldiers were published without indicating the author, making it impossible to determine their gender.

The rest of the studies which paid attention to the coverage of women's military service in the Soviet periodicals during the Second World War were not aimed at a

¹² Arinov, "Uchastie zhenshchin...", 145.

¹³ For example, see: N. Ignatova, "Geroini," *Stalinskii sokol*, March 7, 1945, 3; Klavdija Kirsanova, "Sovetskie patriotki," *Stalinskii sokol*, March 7, 1945, 3; Ljudmila Pavlichenko, "Geroini fronta i tyła," *Krasnyi flot*, March 8, 1944, 3; Klavdija Nikolaeva, "Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu," *Pravda*, August 2, 1941, 3; "Vsesoiuznyi miting zhenshchin-materei i zhen frontovikov," *Pravda*, April 14, 1943, 3.

deep study of this problem. For example, S. G. Jug analysed the leading Red Army newspaper *Krasnaia Zvezda* while investigating the construction of masculinity of the male Soviet soldiers. In his work, considerable attention is paid to female soldiers' image. However, the author's choice of only one military newspaper as a source base does not make it possible to extend his general conclusions to the entire Soviet society and concerns only the military environment. S. G. Jug states, "...that divergent official and soldierly masculinities retained a common set of values that emphasised women's non-military nature and non-combatant roles as a way to preserve the gendered motivations established at the outset of the war."¹⁴ He agrees that Soviet propaganda tended to omit the women's presence in the military. Still, he did not give a detailed analysis of how this was accomplished through propaganda, which focused on masculine values to diminish women's participation.

Clearly, given the sustained interest of researchers in studying the problem of women's military service in the USSR during the Soviet-German war, a detailed and thorough analysis of this type of source and evaluation of its potential for the study of the issue is of particular interest.

We should understand the true nature of the Soviet need for women's participation in the Red Army from 1941-1945. This study aims to contribute to illuminating these aspects of history. In doing so, this paper analyses the content of the Soviet newspapers during the Soviet-German war to uncover their significance for studying the service of Soviet women in the armed forces.

Sources and methodology

The source base for this study was provided by Soviet rear and military newspapers. In particular, these concern the digital collections of central Soviet newspapers *Pravda* (almost all issues from 1941-1944),¹⁵ *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR* (the vast majority of issues from 1942-1945),¹⁶ *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (most of the issues from 1942-1945),¹⁷ the Moscow city newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* (almost all issues from 1941-1945),¹⁸ the main

¹⁴ Steven George Jug, "All Stalin's Men? Soldierly Masculinities in the Soviet War Effort, 1938-1945" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013), II.

¹⁵ "Newspaper 'Pravda,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/24>.

¹⁶ "Newspaper 'Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/3>.

¹⁷ "Newspaper 'Komsomol'skaia pravda,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/6>.

¹⁸ "Newspaper 'Vecherniaia Moskva,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/1>.



Red Army newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* (most issues from 1943-1944),¹⁹ the newspaper of the USSR Navy *Krasnyi flot* (the vast majority of issues from 1941-1945),²⁰ the newspaper of the Moscow military district *Krasnyi voin* (issues from 1944-1945),²¹ and the newspaper of the Air Force of the Red Army *Stalinskii sokol* (the vast majority of issues from 1943, January-May 1945).²² Studying these newspapers makes it possible to trace the peculiarities of the coverage of women's military service in Soviet propaganda that targeted both the civilian population and military personnel during the war. I performed an end-to-end search of the newspaper collections mentioned above using the keywords 'zhenshchina'/'zhenshchiny' ('woman'/'women'), 'devushka'/'devushki' ('girl'/'girls'), to establish the frequency of these words during the war years, as well as the context of their use.

For research purposes, I used a selection of 150 issues of wartime newspapers, namely:

1) **1941:** 20 issues of *Vecherniaia Moskva* (No. 153, 159, 162, 164, 165, 172, 174, 179, 180, 188, 196, 197, 203, 212, 214, 226, 231, 246, 268, 286); 20 issues of 'Pravda' (No. 180, 184, 186, 187, 197, 198, 199, 212, 214, 219, 230, 249, 250, 256, 271, 278, 279, 284, 296, 336); three issues of *Krasnyi flot* (No. 183, 217, 225);

2) **1942:** 11 issues of *Vecherniaia Moskva* (No. 27, 64, 108, 182, 209, 253, 254, 282, 287, 298, 305); six issues of *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR* (No. 41, 81, 92, 106, 120, 205); eight issues of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (No. 21, 31, 56, 70, 221, 224, 232, 249); seven issues of *Krasnyi flot* (No. 58, 109, 131, 169, 200, 277, 300); 11 issues of *Pravda* (No. 18, 26, 48, 79, 82, 131, 188, 249, 264, 345, 346).

3) **1943:** 15 issues of *Vecherniaia Moskva* (No. 10, 54, 55, 57, 87, 95, 124, 151, 156, 194, 211, 249, 255, 276, 295); three issues of *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR* (No. 7, 10, 202); four issues of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (No. 7, 189, 194, 257); three issues of *Krasnaia zvezda* (No. 55, 63, 230); seven issues of *Krasnyi flot* (No. 5, 53, 60, 67, 73, 218, 269); four issues of *Pravda* (No. 9, 97, 103, 286); one issue of *Stalinskii sokol* (No. 9).

4) **1944:** four issues of *Vecherniaia Moskva* (No. 43, 100, 259, 263); five issues of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (No. 55, 105, 121, 148, 267); two issues of *Krasnyi flot* (No. 57, 58); three issues of *Pravda* (No. 1, 45, 52).

¹⁹ "Newspaper 'Krasnaia zvezda,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/8>.

²⁰ "Newspaper 'Krasnyi flot,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/9>.

²¹ "Newspaper 'Krasnyi voin,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/7>.

²² "Newspaper 'Stalinskii sokol,'" *Electronekrasovka*, accessed September 03, 2022, <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/38>.

5) **1945**: four issues of *Vecherniaia Moskva* (No. 43, 51, 100, 112); two issues of *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR* (No. 229, 235); four issues of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (No. 30, 51, 56, 60); three issues of *Krasnyi vojn* (No. 52, 97, 154); one issue of *Krasnyi flot* (No. 100); 2 issues of *Stalinskii sokol* (No. 19, 20).

In this study, I used the methods of comparison and qualitative content analysis that allows 'to systematically describe the meaning of a material' from a specific angle.²³ For the processing of a wide range of Soviet periodicals, I used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The CDA is "... a research enterprise which critically analyses the relation between language and society. More specifically, CDA is a type of discourse-analytical research that studies the way ideology, identity, and inequality are (re)enacted through texts produced in social and political contexts."²⁴ The language in this context is "crucial in constructing and sustaining ideologies, which, in turn, are seen as important in establishing and maintaining social identities and inequalities."²⁵

The salient features of the discourse concerning servicewomen in the wartime Soviet periodicals

N. Gallimulina states that the most common texts during the Soviet-German war were propaganda materials, 'in which women of various ages (mothers, beloved ones, daughters) embodied "vulnerability", "those who must be protected", that is, they acted as the embodiment of what is worth fighting and even dying for'.²⁶ I agree with this statement; however, in my opinion, this assessment should be clarified and expanded. While conducting this research, I used a collection of digitised Soviet newspapers from the digital portal 'Electronekrasovka'.²⁷ It allows searching in the texts of newspapers by keywords, so that one can find the necessary thematic material more quickly and obtain significant findings. In particular, I found that throughout the Soviet-German war (1941-1945), there was a tendency to use the terms "woman"/ "women" when covering the atrocities of the enemy in the Soviet lands, while the representatives of the so-called 'weaker sex' performed the roles of victims who were beaten, raped, tortured, shot, etc.

²³ Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), 3-4.

²⁴ Ruth Wodak, "Editor's Introduction: Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Critical discourse analysis. Volume I. Concepts, History, Theory*, ed. Ruth Wodak (Los Angeles and Washington DC: Sage, 2013), XIX-XX.

²⁵ Wodak, "Editor's Introduction," XIX-XX.

²⁶ Nadija Gallimulina, "Zhenskie obrazy v sovetskoj propagande perioda Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny," *Vestnik Social'no-pedagogicheskogo instituta*, no. 1 (9) (2014), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/zhenskie-obrazy-v-sovetskoy-propagande-perioda-velikoy-otechestvennoy-voyny>, accessed on May 31, 2023.

²⁷ "Portal Elektronekrasovka", <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/>, accessed February 04, 2022.



Such materials significantly outnumber the articles covering various activities of women during the war. Women were mentioned alongside the elderly and children as the most vulnerable and weak members of society: ‘angry executioners shot every fifth villager, including women and children’;²⁸ ‘inhuman abuse of women wherever the attacker set foot – in Germany after the Nazis came to power, in the Balkans, in Poland, in the villages of Soviet Ukraine and Belarus occupied by Hitler’s hordes – this is not rabid war madness, this is a conscious plan and program’;²⁹ ‘after the young women were taken to the hospital, they were raped there by drunken brutalised soldiers’;³⁰ the Nazis ‘scoff, torture, rape women, and then kill them. They kill young children in front of their parents,’ etc.³¹

Regarding numbers, materials on women’s labour exploits are second. The newspapers emphasised that women had to replace men who had left their positions in the rear to go to the front. Consequently, women appear in factory jobs, agriculture and other employment positions in the rear. They learned ‘male’ trades, and in such a way, they helped the front.³² It is noteworthy that in almost all materials devoted to the participation of women in the war, this topic is the leading one, even when the material mentions female soldiers too. Exceptions are articles about women at the front (for example, those dedicated to L. Pavlichenko, N. Onilova, etc.). Soviet propaganda constructed images of war heroes, mainly through the mass media, often distorting reality and exaggerating their achievements. These persons were supposed to serve as examples of the ‘true’ patriotism of a Soviet citizen, and among them were not only heroes but also heroines.³³

In third place are materials on nurses, health education supervisors in the Red Army, and female partisans.³⁴

At the same time, a relatively small number of general materials were devoted to the servicewomen in the Soviet armed forces in combat positions. Notably, even in the materials about female soldiers, authors sometimes reminded the

²⁸ “Ot sovetskogo Informbiuro,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, July 14, 1941, 2.

²⁹ “Prizyv sovetskikh patriotok,” *Pravda*, July 19, 1941, 1.

³⁰ “Zverstva gitlerovskikh dushegubov,” *Krasnyi flot*, August 6, 1941, 2.

³¹ “Nemetsko-fashistskie zverstva vo L’vove,” *Pravda*, August 9, 1941, 2.

³² For example, see: Klavdiia Nikolaeva, “Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu,” 3; “Geroicheskies zhenshchiny,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 27, 1942, 1.

³³ See Kateryna Kobchenko, “Soviet Heroines of the Second World War: Their Making and Remaking in Ukraine” in *The political cult of the dead in Ukraine: traditions and dimensions from the First World War to today*, ed. Guido Hausmann and Iryna Sklokina (Göttingen : V&R Unipress, ein Imprint der Brill-Gruppe, 2021), 111-135; Henry Sakaida and Christa Hook, *Heroines of the Soviet Union 1941–45* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003).

³⁴ For example, see: “Patriotki,” *Pravda*, July 5, 1941, 1; “Za Lizu Chaikinu!,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, May 28, 1943, 1.

reader that women were closer in status to children than to men. For example, in the article 'Great People's Power', M. Tikhonov puts them in a row, writing that 'Mass heroism of Leningrad – the exploits of not only men but also women, adolescents and schoolchildren.'³⁵

A similar, albeit not identical, picture is recorded based on the use of the word 'girls.' This keyword appeared in the materials about servicewomen relatively often. Still, in general, the number of such articles was low, compared to materials dedicated to the work of civilian girls on the 'labour front', while collecting parcels for soldiers, etc. B. M. Schechter explains that Soviet female soldiers were often referred to as 'girls' because this term '...implied sexual purity and the placing of duty above both personal happiness and the fulfilment of traditional roles of lover, wife and in particular, mother.'³⁶ At the same time, the term 'woman' '... in Russian was generally associated with the loss of virginity, pointed to a person who was sexually active and potentially pregnant.'³⁷ For two reasons, I can only partially agree with this statement. First, female soldiers were addressed both as 'women' and as 'girls', while the latter term was used more often. Second, the term 'girls' was more popular because the Komsomol, or the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth Union, played a very significant role during the war years in mobilising young men and women into the ranks of the Army.³⁸ 'Girls' ('devushki') were often mentioned in the periodicals together with 'young men' ('iunoshi'). According to the state propaganda, they both went to war to fight for their happy Soviet future.³⁹ Thus, in this case, the recruits' age, energy, and devotion to duty were paramount in the propaganda. The trope of 'moral purity' of female soldiers was significant during the war years. However, the attitude toward the sexual life of the servicewomen was generally more relaxed during the war than in its aftermath.⁴⁰

³⁵ Nikolai Tikhonov, "Velikaia narodnaia sila," *Pravda*, November 20, 1943, 3.

³⁶ Brandon M. Schechter, "'Girls' and 'Women.' Love, Sex, Duty and Sexual Harassment in the Ranks of the Red Army 1941-1945," *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies* 17 (2016): 3.

³⁷ Schechter, "'Girls' and 'Women,'" 3.

³⁸ Iuliia Ivanova, "Zhenshchiny v voynakh Otechestva," in *Voenno-Istoricheskaia Antropologiya*, ed. Elena Senavskaya (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2002), 351.

³⁹ For example, see: D. Zaslavskii, "Knut i priianik," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, October 2, 1942, 4; "Za schastlivuiu molodost'!", *Pravda*, September 6, 1942, 1; "Pis'mo komsomol'tsev i molodezhi Sovetskogo Soiuzu tovarishchu I. V. Stalinu," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 28, 1943, p.1; "Molodezh' v trude i v boiu," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 5, 1942, 2.

⁴⁰ For example, see Iu. Trifonov, "Bondarenko (Kataeva) Mariia Dmitrievna," *Ia Pomniu*, 30.10.2013, <https://bit.ly/3vVMUdY>, accessed February 04, 2022; Oleg Budnitskii, "Muzhchiny i zhenshchiny v Krasnoi Armii (1941-1945)," *L'URSS et la Seconde Guerre mondiale* 52/2-3 (2011): 405-422.



Female military personnel experienced the greatest pressure from society relating to their sexuality in the post-war period.⁴¹

In addition, information about women in the military service could be found using gender-specific position titles – ‘zenitchitsy’ (female anti-aircraft gunners), ‘pulemetchitsy’ (female machine gunners), etc. However, most often, materials about military women could be found by searching for their surnames, because Soviet propaganda published information primarily about a narrow circle of female soldiers who, in some way, became famous in battle during the war. The latter practice was beneficial to the authorities. On the one hand, the coverage of the biographies of a small circle of heroic women contributed to the rise of patriotism among the population, particularly among men, having an effect similar to that of the female death battalions during the First World War. On the other hand, the emphasis on individual heroines, against the background of the lack of relevant information about the numbers of women in the armed forces, represented the phenomenon of the female soldier as an uncommon occurrence, which minimized the potential obstacles to a return to the traditional social order after the war was over.

From omission to rare/ sporadic mentions:

Women soldiers in the Soviet newspapers of 1941-1943

V. Amirov states that, at the beginning of the Soviet-German war, the number of materials devoted to women in the military was negligible, and I agree with this statement. At the same time, the author asserts that a large number of such publications appeared in 1943 due to the increase in the number of female soldiers, as a consequence of the great losses of the Soviet Army: ‘The image of a female soldier is constructed in the publications of Soviet newspapers of the war period simultaneously with the construction of the image of a home front worker, gradually moving to the fore and becoming mainstream.’⁴² However, in support of this statement, Amirov gives only one quote about ‘thousands of Soviet women’ in the Army, from an article published in 1943, and refers to periodical materials that speak about specific women who embodied examples of heroism. These articles did not highlight the actual scale of women’s involvement in the military, and their number was not so great in the newspapers, contrary to the author’s contention. According to the results of my research, the reality was somewhat different, and the materials dedicated to female soldiers did not come to the fore within the newspaper materials dedicated to women throughout the war.

⁴¹ Budnitskii, “Muzhchiny i zhenshchiny v Krasnoi Armii (1941-1945),” 420-421.

⁴² Amirov Valerii Mikhailovich, “Unificirovannyi obraz sovetskoi zhenshhiny v sisteme markerov gazetnogo diskursa voennogo vremeni,” *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Serija 2: Jazykoznanie*, no.5 (2020), 150.

From the very beginning of the war, Soviet women joined the military service both voluntarily and due to mobilisation. Thus, according to the latest data, 490,235 Soviet women were mobilised into the armed forces during the war. There were 5,594 mobilised women in 1941, 235,025 in 1942; 194,695 in 1943; 51,306 in 1944; and 3,615 in 1945.⁴³ Therefore, the appearance of materials about them in the mass media since the beginning of the Soviet-German war was justified. In the first months after the start of the war, the news mostly concerned women who sought to go to the front as nurses and health education supervisors.⁴⁴ Most materials, which appeared in 1941, highlighted their work in the rear. Almost every article on the issue focused on women replacing men who went to the front.⁴⁵

At first, the Soviet authorities insisted that there was no need for women to become Red Army soldiers, even though the government acknowledged that there was a large number of women who asked to be sent to the front: "The whole country knows that a Soviet woman will take a rifle and go to the front to beat the enemy. At the moment, in the Army, at the front, a woman is needed first of all as a nurse, health education supervisor, and doctor."⁴⁶ This article was published on August 4, 1941, a little more than two months before Stalin signed an order to create three women's air regiments. As we can see, the creation of these regiments was not publicized. In the first years of the war, the USSR tried to deny that it had created purely female military units. After all, this could be seen as evidence of too few male recruits, a fact which the regime did not want to admit. Information about such units periodically leaked to the press, and the USSR responded to it with outright lies. For example, in an article published on July 8, 1941, it is stated:

"Stefani agency reported that 'the USSR's government ordered to form women's regiments. Millions of women in the USSR are ready to fight against the fascist hordes with weapons in their hands. But we were not going and are not going to organise women's regiments. We have three times as many men as in Germany, and everyone knows what they are fighting for, while in Germany, nine-tenths of the population do not know why the war against the Soviet Union began.'⁴⁷

Another message, published on August 1, 1941, stated that the reason for rejecting women's applications to be sent to the front as a soldier was that 'there is no need for women fighters' because the country's reserves are 'countless.'⁴⁸

⁴³ *Velikaia Otechestvennaia bez grifa sekretnosti. Kniga poter'. Noveishee spravocnoe izdanie* (Moskva: Veche, 2010), 38.

⁴⁴ "Patriotki," *Pravda*, July 5, 1941, 1.

⁴⁵ For example, see: Klavdija Nikolaeva, "Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu," 3; "Iestonskie zhenshchiny pomogaiut kovat' pobedu nad vragom," *Pravda*, July 1, 1941, 1.

⁴⁶ "Boevye podrugii," *Pravda*, August 4, 1941, 1.

⁴⁷ "Na ocherednoi press-konferencii inostrannykh korrespondentov," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, July 08, 1941, 3.

⁴⁸ "Doch' partizana," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, August 01, 1941, 2.



However, it quickly became clear that Soviet male human resources were not 'countless.' The number of materials that mention women who fought with weapons in their hands increased after the beginning of the defence of Leningrad.⁴⁹ In these materials, one could often find calls to intensify work in the rear and join the ranks of health education supervisors and nurses, but also to replenish combat units: "All women must become active fighters against fascism. If we want to experience maternal happiness, if we want to raise a free generation, a generation of people with the right to life and happiness, if we do not want wars to devastate our lands and our homes, and our children not to be orphans and disadvantaged vagrants, if we want all this – our place is in the ranks. Fascism is our worst enemy, women!"⁵⁰ Another example: "... All the workers of Leningrad, not only men but also women, came to defend their hometown. Our brothers, our sisters! We will not let the enemy enter our beloved, wonderful city..."⁵¹ Mentions of the large-scale participation of women in the war with weapons in their hands also became more frequent during the defence of Kyiv: "The girls of Kyiv, together with their parents and brothers, are selflessly fighting the enemy. Many female Komsomol members have already become famous on the battlefield: 18-year-old Tania Didenko, machine gunner Olga Iakimova, nurse Nezamykina, and partisan Katia Abramova. They are everywhere, these brave girls of our city. The inhabitants of Kyiv, both on the fronts and in the rear, show their courage and heroism."⁵²

However, along with such rhetoric extolling brave girls, the discourse continued suggesting that women should help the soldiers rather than join the army directly. This view presupposed that combat at the front should essentially remain a male pursuit. For example, an article by researcher L. Stern stated: "We, women, must help our soldiers by all means available to us at the front and in the rear, replacing those who go to the front in factories, laboratories, schools and in the fields."⁵³

No less popular during the first year of the Soviet-German war were various appeals to women of the USSR or worldwide.⁵⁴ In the appeal 'To women around the world!', published on September 8, 1941, emphasis was placed on the

⁴⁹ For example, see: "Otvazhnye zashchitnitsy goroda Lenina," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 10, 1941, 2.

⁵⁰ E. Ershova, "Zhenshchin y vsego mira – na bor'bu protiv fashizma," *Pravda*, September 9, 1941, 3.

⁵¹ "Ne toptat' fashistskomu sapogu goroda Lenina!," *Krasnyi flot*, September 14, 1941, 1.

⁵² "Radiopereklichka trekh gorodov," *Pravda*, September 15, 1941, 1.

⁵³ Lina Shtern, "Vse sily – na zashchitu chelovecheskoi kul'tury," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 24, 1941, 2.

⁵⁴ For example, see: "Net bol'shego vraga u zhenshchin, chem Gitler," *Pravda*, July 18, 1941, 2; "Prizyv sovetskikh patriotok," *Pravda*, July 19, 1941, 1.

auxiliary nature of women's participation in the war: Side by side with the Red Army, which bore the primary effort in the fight against Hitler's hordes, the Soviet woman proudly holds her position. The more furious the enemy becomes, the stronger her heart and her will to win. At the forefront, she assists the wounded. She extinguishes fires caused by Nazi pilots. She works at the factory and makes weapons and shells. She fights in guerrilla units with her husband and son."⁵⁵ As we can see, there is no mention in the text of women in combat positions in the regular Army.

In the article 'The Soviet Woman on a Combat Post', K. Nikolaeva tried to legitimize different types of women's participation in the war through historical references. Female service in the nursery units, on the front lines and in guerrilla units during the Civil War was mentioned: "Women of the Soviet land have always fought side by side with men, demonstrated their heroism, and inscribed many pages in the history of the struggle for the happiness of the homeland."⁵⁶ However, in the context of the Soviet-German war, the material addressed only issues relating to the fact that women sent their men and sons to the front, that they started to work in factories in their place, mastered the profession of health education supervisors and nurses, became donors, and prepared gifts and parcels for Red Army soldiers. There is no mention of women who also served in the war as soldiers.

In 1941, a famous Soviet historian, Professor M. Nechkina, in her review of the history of military conflicts, mentioned the female partisan and participant of the 1812 Patriotic War, V. Kozhina, who managed to capture several French soldiers.⁵⁷ A little later, more extensive reviews on military history appeared in the USSR, and they included more examples of female soldiers of previous centuries. Thus, the article by A. Novikov-Priboy, along with N. Durova, highlighted the examples of women associated with one of the historic places in Moscow – 'Babiy gorodok' (literally – 'Women's town') – that defended their settlement from the Mongol horde. The author described several examples of women's participation in battles during the Civil War and the current armed conflict. Novikov-Priboy argued that Russian women took part in the armed conflicts alongside men. He also tried to encourage more Soviet women to perform combat roles and show their heroism.⁵⁸

The rhetoric that highlighted the participation and contribution of women in the war did not reflect the Soviet government's declaration regarding the equal

⁵⁵ "K zhenshchinam vsego mira!," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 08, 1941, 1.

⁵⁶ Klavdiia Nikolaeva, "Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu," 3.

⁵⁷ Militsa Nechkina, "Nepobedimaia sila narodnaia," *Krasnyi flot*, August 2, 1941, 3.

⁵⁸ Aleksei Novikov-Priboi, "Nashi zhenshchiny," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 7, 1941, 2.



status for men and women in society. Newspapers often claimed that women had done something for the Red Army fighters, soldiers, and servicemen,⁵⁹ as if they were not part of the Army. Thus, these statements contained a hidden message, expressed through an implicit opposition of the concepts of ‘woman’ and ‘fighter’/ ‘soldier’/ ‘serviceman’.

The rhetoric on servicewomen in the Soviet Army in the newspapers of 1942 differs from the discourse of 1941. Female soldiers were mentioned more often, even though the coverage tended to be from the perspective of victims and of women whose main contribution was in the rear, the partisan units and medical services at the front. Nevertheless, the public discourse on the issue remained highly controversial. Articles with titles such as ‘female patriots’, ‘glorious female patriots’, etc.,⁶⁰ did not focus on their large-scale military service involvement, but noted their labour achievements and nursing activities. Thus, in the article ‘Soviet Higher School in the Patriotic War’, the role of women was presented with an emphasis on replacing men in the rear, but without mentioning their presence on the fronts.⁶¹ A similar picture is reflected in the material entitled ‘The Exploits of the Soviet Woman’. According to this text, the social position of the female population of the USSR improved and grew due to the Soviet-German war: “Everything that our women are doing today, now, in the days of the war, in the rear and at the front, at a loom, in the collective farms, in the medical units, in the rear of the enemy, is becoming epic. In the struggle against the enemies of our homeland, the Soviet woman – no matter the task – knows neither fear nor hesitation.”⁶² This sequence is followed by the example of Z. Kosmodemianskaia, and other female partisans, nurses, women who built fortifications on the outskirts of Leningrad and Moscow, factory workers, etc. However, there is no mention of female pilots, machine gunners, snipers and other military specialists.⁶³

The number of materials devoted to various forms of participation of Soviet women in the war grew rapidly before March 8, at least since 1942. This trend continued until the end of the Soviet-German war. *Komsomol'skaia pravda* published the article ‘Soviet girl’ on the front page of the March 8, 1942 issue. It stated that the Soviet women were building the Soviet state on an equal footing with men, and now they were also defending it together. Then it described women’s participation in partisan units, in constructing fortifications, their service

⁵⁹ For example, see: Klavdija Nikolaeva, “Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu,” 3.

⁶⁰ A. Ardov, “Slavnye patriotki,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 3, 1942, 2.

⁶¹ “Sovetskaia vysshaia shkola v Otechestvennoi voine,” *Pravda*, January 18, 1942, 1.

⁶² “Podvigi sovetskoi zhenshchiny,” *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchihsia SSSR*, February 19, 1942, 1.

⁶³ “Podvigi sovetskoi zhenshchiny,” 1.

as nurses, health care instructors, doctors, and factory workers. At the end of the article, it was stated that Soviet girls and women worked very well in the rear, and they would not be ashamed to look into the eyes of the heroes of the war (i.e., their men).⁶⁴ At the same time, the fact of women's service in the regular Army was not even mentioned.

An article entitled 'Rally of Women Participants in the Patriotic War' appeared in *Pravda* on May 11, 1942. Despite its title, the female combatants were mentioned there only in passing, and the material began with a paragraph where they were entirely forgotten:

"Millions of women of the great Soviet Union walk side by side with their sons, husbands, and brothers, fighting against the brutal Nazi hordes. At the loom, in the fields of collective and state farms, living a united life with the front, they help their relatives and friends who are the soldiers and commanders – pilots, tank drivers, gunners, mortar operators, infantrymen, and sailors – to defeat the hated enemy. The patriotic girls of our country are carrying the wounded out of the battlefield under a barrage of bullets. Glorious female partisans are fighting bravely in the rear of the enemy, avenging their sisters' disgraced honour and mothers' suffering and tears."⁶⁵

The primary roles of women here are rear workers, victims, nurses and partisans. In the following article in the same issue of the *Pravda* newspaper, with the title 'Congratulations to Comrade Stalin,' the female soldiers were given a little more attention. The article asserted that Soviet women were present 'in the fighting ranks of the Red Army....'⁶⁶ A little further, it said:

"many Soviet women and girls in the ranks of the Red Army honourably perform combat missions, working as signallers, nurses, paramedics, doctors, etc. The Soviet woman is proud that the country allowed her to defend the homeland together with the Red Army and ensures that a woman's hand will not tremble in the battles with the enemy!"⁶⁷

In the appeal 'To Women Around the World,' which was prepared as a part of the same rally, along with the examples of women who built fortifications on the outskirts of Leningrad and Sevastopol, were on duty during airstrikes, took out the wounded, and made weapons in factories, the machine gunner N. Onilova, who killed more than 500 enemy soldiers during the defence of Sevastopol, was mentioned.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ "Sovetskaia devushka," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, March 8, 1942, 1.

⁶⁵ "Miting zhenshchin-uchastnits Otechestvennoi voiny," *Pravda*, May 11, 1942, 3.

⁶⁶ "Privetstvie tovarishchu Stalinu," *Pravda*, May 11, 1942, 3.

⁶⁷ "Privetstvie tovarishchu Stalinu," 3.

⁶⁸ "K zhenshchinam vsego mira," *Pravda*, May 11, 1942, 3.



Some materials often showed pictures of female soldiers. The newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* on March 18, 1942, published a photograph of four smiling girls in uniform. The photo's caption was: "Thousands of girls volunteered for the Red Army. In the photo are the excellent fighters of the Nth Signal Battalion, where the commander is Comrade Shvets – Marynenkova, Petrova, Trevogina and Shkarina."⁶⁹ The note on the anti-Nazi rally of the female workers of Trokhgorka stated: 'the best daughters of the Soviet people went to the front and became brave spies, machine gunners, fearless partisans.'⁷⁰ The article published on December 29, 1942, in the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* stated that Ukrainian women were bravely fighting against the Germans as doctors, nurses, spies, snipers, and bombers.⁷¹ An article from the *Pravda* newspaper (March 23, 1942) mentioned female pilots at the front.⁷² In addition, sometimes, in the press, one could come across isolated reports about the training of female snipers. For example, the material 'The girl-snipers' published on October 22, 1942, in the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia pravda* stated that the unit of female snipers of Vseobych (general compulsory training) of the Railway district of Voroshilov achieved considerable success. The women showed promising results in shooting and trained hard in any weather.⁷³

In general, in 1942, the Soviet periodicals, along with attempts to omit or minimize the presence of women in the ranks of the armed forces on the front line, almost openly began to call them to join the Army. The Soviet armed forces had extremely high losses in the first years of the war: 3,137,673 in 1941, 3,258,216 in 1942, and 2,312,429 in 1943,⁷⁴ while they lacked male conscripts and recruits. Because of this, the Soviet government was interested in recruiting women to the Army. At the same time, by analysing the peculiarities of the public call for women to join the Army and the coverage of women's military service in the periodicals, it becomes clear that the authorities tried to use female troops in the military without substantially changing gender roles. In particular, the article 'Soviet girl! Master the military specialities,' published on March 25, 1942 in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, presented information about Soviet girls who fought at the front alongside their husbands, brothers, and dads.

⁶⁹ "Tysiachi devushek ushli dobrovol'tsami v Krasnuiu armiiu," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, March 18, 1942, 1.

⁷⁰ "Antifashistskii miting rabotnits Trekhgorki," *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiaschikhssia SSSR*, May 8, 1942, 1.

⁷¹ "Udary ukrainskikh partizan," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, December 29, 1942, 3.

⁷² "Sobranie aktiva zhenskoi molodezhi v stolitse," *Pravda*, March 23, 1942, 1.

⁷³ "Devushki-snaipery," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, October 22, 1942, 4.

⁷⁴ Grigorii Krivosheev (ed.), *Rossia i SSSR v voynakh XX veka: poteri vooruzhionnykh sil* (Moskva: OLMA-PRESS, 2001), <https://bit.ly/3uYudp8>, accessed September 24, 2022.

Along with examples of female partisans, L. Zemskaia described her experience as an anti-tank gun operator. She wrote: "If an enemy shell tore off my hand, I would fight with one hand. If I lose my legs, I would crawl to the beast herd and destroy it with a grenade. If my eyes are torn out, I would see the enemy with the eyes of my heart, and I would not miss."⁷⁵ The article called on other young women to master military skills. However, the call for girls to become military pilots, machine gunners, air defence specialists, etc., was justified by the strong desire of women to acquire such a profession:

"We can and must take care of the direct military training of women and girls. We sent women to the Army, at the forefront, in exceptional cases: we have enough men's reserves for it. However, this does not mean we should limit the opportunities for combat training of Soviet female patriots who sincerely want to take up arms. If a young Soviet female patriot is eager to master a machine gun, we must allow her to realise this dream. If a Soviet girl wants to become a sniper, we have no right to deny her the realisation of her dream. If a Soviet girl has mastered equestrian sports before the war and wants to master the cavalryman's weapon, we must help her to do this."⁷⁶

It is worth noting that these and other similar articles, which called on women to join the Army and fight against the enemy in battle, argued that this was necessary to attempt to finish the war in 1942.⁷⁷ These texts stated that this was feasible if everyone, including women, did their best to accomplish it. Thus, they tried to impose on society the idea that the presence of women on the battlefield as soldiers was not the result of the defeats of the Red Army and the lack of human resources, but rather the outcome of the ardent desire of the women themselves, as well as a reflection of the attempt to end the war as soon as possible.

Although many women served in the same combat positions as men and could cope with their duties, they continued to be described in the periodicals as 'the weaker sex.' Even the materials devoted to their combat experience emphasised their perceived inferiority. For example, the article 'Russians are Fighting with Exceptional Skill and Unsurpassed Fiery Rage' asserted that 'even women and children are fighting against hordes of conquerors.'⁷⁸ In this context, the word 'even' is an apparent attempt to emphasise that those categories of the population

⁷⁵ "Sovetskaia devushka! Ovladevai voennymi special'nostiami," *Komsomol'kaia pravda*, March 25, 1942, 1.

⁷⁶ "Sovetskaia devushka!," 1.

⁷⁷ For example, see: "Ovladet' voennym delom – dolg kazhdogo sovetskogo patriota," *Pravda*, July 7, 1942, 4; "Kliatva sovetskikh zhenshchin," *Pravda*, May 11, 1942, 1.

⁷⁸ "Russkie boriutsia s iskliuchitel'nym masterstvom i neprevzoidennoi plamennoi iarost'iu," *Pravda*, December 12, 1942, 4.



that joined the struggle were considered the most vulnerable and, therefore, they could not compete effectively with the 'stronger sex.' In a real fight, however, the one who is stronger physically does not always win. Success in the fight depends largely on factors such as the combat position, the availability of weapons, their class and suitability, the ability to spot the enemy before he spots you, the ability to move quickly and hide, etc.

The authorities maintained the concealment of the scale of women's presence in the military through means of censorship.⁷⁹ In the summary of materials censored in 1942, it is indicated that 13 materials reporting on the mobilisation of women into the Red Army were withdrawn from publication.⁸⁰ Revealingly, , from June 10 to August 15, 1943, the film 'Presentation of the Guard Banner to the Female Aviators' was prohibited from being shown because it became evident that all three squadrons of the regiment consisted of women.⁸¹

However, the government allowed the publication of numerous materials devoted to specific female heroic figures. One of the most striking examples of the construction of Soviet heroines was the case of the sniper L. Pavlichenko. Materials about her began to appear in periodicals more and more often, starting from the summer of 1942. Information about the outstanding female combatant was published in general articles about the snipers of the USSR, but also in texts dedicated to her personally. The portrait of L. Pavlichenko and a note about her were published on September 5, 1942, in the column 'Youth in work and battle' of the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva*.⁸² The text reported that this female sniper was a student of the history department. During her military activity, she reportedly won the Order of Lenin, took part in the battles for Odesa and Sevastopol and killed 309 enemy soldiers. In the letter published in the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia*

⁷⁹ For more information on the Soviet censorship and propaganda, see Gennadii Kostyrchenko, "Sovetskaia tsenzura v 1941—1952 gg.," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 11-12 (1996), 87-94; Elena Petrovicheva and Ilia Triakhov, "Tsenzura v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945 gg. (na materialakh Vladimirovskogo kraia)," *Vestnik Leningradskogo gosud. un-ta im. A.S. Pushkina. Ser. Istorii* 4, no. 1 (2015), 49-59; Andrei Sergeevich Gorlov, "Sovetskaia propaganda v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: institutsional'nye i organizatsionnye aspekty" (Kandidat nauk diss., Russian State University of Tourism and Service, 2009), <http://www.dslib.net/istoria-otechestva/sovetskaja-propaganda-v-gody-velikoj-otechestvennoj-voiny-institucionalnye-i.html>, accessed May 31, 2023.

⁸⁰ "Svedeniia ob iziatiakh tsenzury za 1942 g. 11/I-43 g.," in the *Sovetskaia propaganda v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny. «Kommunikatsiia ubezhdeniia» i mobilizatsionnye mekhanizmy*, eds. Aleksandr Livshin and Igor' Orlov (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2007), 193.

⁸¹ "Iz svodki iziati tsenzury s 10 iunია po 15 avgusta 1943 g. 20 avgusta 1943 g." in the *Sovetskaia propaganda v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny. «Kommunikatsiia ubezhdeniia» i mobilizatsionnye mekhanizmy*, eds. Aleksandr Livshin and Igor' Orlov (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2007), 656.

⁸² "Molodezh' v trude i v boiu," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 5, 1942, 2.

pravda on September 19, 1942, L. Pavlichenko revealed some details about her everyday life as a sniper. In particular, she wrote that on the streets of Sevastopol, children asked how many Germans she had killed the day before and were very upset when the woman admitted that there were days when she did not kill anyone.

The sniper called on Soviet 'sisters and brothers' to master their weapons and kill the enemies even more zealously.⁸³ In the Soviet press, L. Pavlichenko was presented as an effective sniper representing Soviet youth.⁸⁴ Sometimes, however, the female sniper was described primarily in gendered terms. For example, V. Gaibova's article highlighted the fact that German officers called the 'girl with a sniper rifle' the 'elusive "Bolshevik Valkyrie"'.⁸⁵ In V. Lavrenev's *Untamed Heart* story, L. Pavlichenko was described as 'fragile and feminine'. At first, some Soviet soldiers did not even believe the stories about the sniper's expertise, but later expressed admiration for her talent. As for the Germans, according to V. Lavrenev, they recognised her talent and openly tried to lure her to collaboration, but the girl remained faithful to her homeland.⁸⁶ Another 'public' Soviet heroine who fought with weapons in her hands was the machine gunner N. Onilova.⁸⁷ The orphan, brought up in an orphanage, went to the front in 1941. Her directness, devotion to the communist regime and willingness to self-sacrifice represented the desired image of the Soviet citizen.⁸⁸

In 1943, there was a clear tendency to increase the number of female fighters in the USSR's armed forces covered by the press. This change was due to two factors. The significant growth in the number of female soldiers (235,025 women were mobilised in 1942)⁸⁹ made it impossible to ignore them completely in the public discourse, and the need for further human resources prompted Soviet ideologists to increase the number of materials dedicated to female soldiers, which was expected to inspire the female recruits to serve more devotedly. In 1943, the mobilisation of women continued, but the number of the mobilised was slightly lower – 194 695.⁹⁰

⁸³ Ljudmila Pavlichenko, "Za chto ia ikh ubivaiu," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, September 19, 1942, 3.

⁸⁴ D. Zaslavskii, "Knut i priianik," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, October 2, 1942, 4; "Za schastlivuiu molodost'!", *Pravda*, September 6, 1942, 1.

⁸⁵ V. Gaibova, "Stalinskoe plemia," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, December 15, 1943, 3.

⁸⁶ V. Viktorov, "Rodina bogatyrei," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, December 1, 1942, 3.

⁸⁷ "Geroini Sevastopol'skoi oborony," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, March 8, 1942, 4; "Na frontakh Otechestvennoi voiny," *Pravda*, March 20, 1942, 2; V. Jakovlev, "Sevastopol'tsy," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, December 8, 1942, 3; "Komsomol v Otechestvennoi voine," *Krasnyi flot*, December 23, 1942, 3.

⁸⁸ For example, see "Anka-pulemetchitsa," in *Za rodnoi Sevastopol'*, ed. Petr Garmash (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1983), 41.

⁸⁹ *Velikaia Otechestvennaia bez grifa sekretnosti. Kniga poter'*, 38.

⁹⁰ *Velikaia Otechestvennaia bez grifa sekretnosti. Kniga poter'*, 38.



At the All-Union rally of mothers and wives of soldiers, in 1943, the representation of mothers of servicewomen was much higher than in the previous year. In addition, the speakers emphasised that many women were soldiers of the regular Army. In particular, the mothers of the dead sniper N. Kovshova and pilot M. Raskova were present at the event. In her speech, the latter stressed that she received letters from women at the front and in the rear daily. For example, the female representatives of Bashkortostan promised to continue her famous daughter's work.⁹¹

The article 'Heroic Daughters of the Soviet People' emphasised that "the Soviet woman proved to be great and powerful in the war! The Russian woman, described enthusiastically in the best pages of our literature, has risen to her full height, full of love and anger, energy and inexhaustible mental strength."⁹² Detailing the contribution of women to the country's effort in the war, the authors first emphasised their work in the rear, where they took up the 'male' positions in production, agriculture, and supply. However, their presence in the Army was not forgotten. It was noted that the woman "... found her place in the ranks of our army, in its medicine units, in partisan units and on the battlefield, where, like Liudmila Pavlichenko, she smashes the enemy with the fire of hate."⁹³ However, the article provided no information on the scale of this phenomenon.

A short note about Soviet snipers, published on May 28, 1943, mentions that among them were not only men, but also women: "Abduzvaleeva and Shalashnova, girl-snipers who voluntarily went to the front, also shoot well. In two days, both killed two Nazis."⁹⁴ Materials dedicated to female machine gunners and tank drivers followed those about female snipers. The note 'Exciting Meeting' referred to N. Onilova's sister-in-arms G. Markova, who also took a direct part in the battles as a machine gunner and spy, and who had combat injuries.⁹⁵ V. Davydovich's article is devoted to M. Hrudistova, who first went to the front as a nurse, and later changed her profession and became a machine gunner.⁹⁶ The article 'The Tank 'Boevaia Podruga' is Ready for Combat!', published on August 27, 1943, brought up the example of M. Oktiabrskaiia, who lost her husband at the front, paid for the construction of the tank at her own expense, called it 'Boevaia Podruga' (it can be translated into English as 'Fighting Girlfriend') and decided to become its mechanic-driver. At the time of publication, the woman had mastered the tank

⁹¹ "Vsesoiuznyi miting zhenshchin-materei i zhen frontovikov," *Pravda*, April 14, 1943, 3.

⁹² "Geroicheskie docheri Sovetskogo naroda," *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR*, January 13, 1943, 1.

⁹³ "Geroicheskie docheri Sovetskogo Naroda," 1.

⁹⁴ "Vystrely snaiperov," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, May 28, 1943, 1.

⁹⁵ "Volnuiushchaia vstrecha," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 21, 1943, 2.

⁹⁶ V. Davidovich, "Pulemetchitsa," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, November 23, 1943, 3.

driving skills and was ready to go to the front. M. Oktiabrskaiia claimed: "When I get behind the wheel of the tank, I will take revenge on behalf of all women and children tortured by Hitler's thugs. It will be the happiest day of my life."⁹⁷

Descriptions of the exploits of the Soviet servicewomen often focused on how many enemies they had killed. Often these figures were exaggerated and differed from article to article. For example, the most widespread data is that machine gunner N. Onilova killed more than 500 soldiers.⁹⁸ However, L. Uspensky's note titled 'The City of Maritime Glory' mentioned that 2000 enemies were allegedly killed by her.⁹⁹ It is worth noting that such exaggerations were widespread in the Soviet public discourse even before the war. The totalitarian state often tried to show itself and its inhabitants in a favourable light. In this case, these exaggerations represented a way of enhancing patriotism and intimidating enemies.

In addition, the publications on famous Soviet female soldiers appeared in the periodicals on the occasion of their deaths. In particular, when the death of the famous pilot M. Raskova was reported, on January 9, 1943, several Soviet newspapers published an article titled 'In Memory of the Hero of the Soviet Union Marina Raskova',¹⁰⁰ written by her brothers and sisters-in-arms. Its text focused on the fact that she was a brave pilot, a heroine of long-distance flights, and a mentor of Soviet pilots.¹⁰¹ At the same time, it emphasised the modesty of the heroine and the fact that M. Raskova believed that 'Soviet aviation was created and existed to protect the peace.'¹⁰²

The most objective in covering the presence of women at the front as fighters were the texts of the Soviet Komsomol leaders and its members. For example, a letter from Komsomol members and youth of the USSR to Stalin referred to the examples of Heroes of the Soviet Union and even tried to adhere to the principles of gender equality by naming among them two women and two men – Viktor Talalikhin and Natalia Kovshova, Ilia Kuzin and Maria Polivanova.¹⁰³ In contrast, in the various appeals and slogans of the Central Committee of

⁹⁷ "Tank 'Boevaia podruga' k boiu gotov!," *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR*, August 27, 1943, 3.

⁹⁸ For example, see Klavdiia Nikolaeva, "Sovetskaia zhenshchina na boevom postu," 3.

⁹⁹ Lev Uspenskii, "Goroda morskoi slavy," *Krasnyi flot*, November 14, 1943, 4.

¹⁰⁰ "Pamiat' Geroia Sovetskogo Soiuzo Mariny Raskovoi," *Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia SSSR*, January 9, 1943, 4; "Pamiati Geroia Sovetskogo Soiuzo Mariny Raskovoi," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 9, 1943, 4; "Pamiat' Geroia Sovetskogo Soiuzo Mariny Raskovoi," *Pravda*, January 9, 1943, 4.

¹⁰¹ "Pamiat' Geroia Sovetskogo Soiuzo Mariny Raskovoi," 4.

¹⁰² "Pamiat' Geroia Sovetskogo Soiuzo Mariny Raskovoi," 4.

¹⁰³ "Pis'mo komsomol'tsev i molodezhi Sovetskogo Soiuzo tovarishchu I. V. Stalinu," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 28, 1943, 1.



the CPSU (b) during the war, the Heroes of the Soviet Union are referred to exclusively as ‘sons.’¹⁰⁴

As noted above, the tradition of publishing most of the materials devoted to female soldiers (and to women’s participation in the war, in general) on the eve of International Women’s Day, on March 8, which began in 1942, was kept in the following years. For example, in 1943, several materials were published before or around that date. The issue of women’s service in the Soviet armed forces during the war was covered in an appeal of the women from Moscow to Stalin. On the eve of the holiday, they reported to the ‘leader of the people’ about the contribution of Soviet women to the fight against the enemy. The appeal emphasised that, when the enemy aimed to reach Moscow, women defended the city together with men – they went to the anti-aircraft gun sites, became firefighters, etc. In addition, “thousands of women from Moscow joined the ranks of the Red Army – they serve as snipers and machine gunners, signal officers and bombers, nurses and partisans.”¹⁰⁵ The text gave examples of the exploits of some of these women: Z. Kosmodemianskaia, E. Poltavskaia and A. Lukovina-Hrybkova, N. Kovshova, and M. Polivanova.

The appeal of the chairpersons of the women’s councils of the Siberian Military District to Stalin on the eve of International Women’s Day stated that

“Siberian women, alongside their husbands and brothers, are fighting the hated enemy on the fronts of the Patriotic War. Siberian Guards Captain Quartermaster Krylova, Senior Sergeant Solomina, Sergeant Tkacheva, Chief of Medical Service Verozubova, nurse Alekseeva and many others were awarded orders and medals of the Soviet Union for excellent military service, courage and bravery.”¹⁰⁶

The Soviet media periodically published photos of the servicewomen. For example, in the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva*, a photo of two smiling female snipers was published on September 7, 1943. The text that accompanied it reported that Corporals R. Skrypnikova and O. Bykova had returned from the stakeout. They are “happy and satisfied: today, each of them killed two Nazis.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ For example, see “Lozungi CK VKP(b) k 25-i godovshchine Velikoi oktiabr’skoi socialisticheskoi revoliucii,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 28, 1942, 1; “Prizvyvy CK VKP (b) k 1 maia 1945 g.,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, April 28, 1945, 1.

¹⁰⁵ “Velikomu vozhdii narodov, Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduiushchemu vooruzhennymi silami SSSR, Marshalu Sovetskogo Soiuz, nashemu liubimomu otsu, uchitelii i drugu Iosifu Visarionovichu Stalinu,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, March 10, 1943, 1.

¹⁰⁶ “Moskva, Kremli’ Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduiushchemu vooruzhennymi silami SSSR Marshalu Sovetskogo Soiuz tovarishchu Stalinu,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, March 17, 1943, 2.

¹⁰⁷ “Efreitory Raisa Skrypnikova i Ol’ga Bykova...,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 7, 1943, 3.

Sometime after the beginning of the Soviet-German war, women were recruited to the anti-aircraft and searchlight crews. At times they outnumbered the men in these units, which was reflected in the media. While at the beginning of the Soviet-German war, in 1941, Soviet newspapers glorified male members of searchlights and anti-aircraft crews,¹⁰⁸ in 1943, women were mentioned frequently in these roles. For example, a small article in the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva*, published on July 31, 1943, stated: "Together with the Red Army soldiers, the airspace of Leningrad is guarded by anti-aircraft girls who have voluntarily joined the ranks of the armed defenders of the heroic city. The girls thoroughly mastered the military skills and became the leading combatants of the batteries."¹⁰⁹ A photograph depicting female anti-aircraft gunners running to the battle positions after the alert was given.

Decrease of published materials on female soldiers against the background of victories of the Allied powers

In 1944, there was a significant decrease in the number of materials on women's service in the Red Army, compared with the previous year. After 1944, the advantage in the war was clearly on the side of the Allied Powers. The losses in the armed forces were significantly lower than in the previous years (1,763,891 in 1944 and 800,817 in 1945¹¹⁰). Thus, the Soviet government did not need to recruit more women into the armed forces. Therefore, such a sharp decline in the number of materials about them in the periodicals was probably due to this fact.

That year, several materials about female soldiers appeared on the eve of March 8. For example, the authors of the article 'Heroic Daughters of the Soviet Land' devoted a separate paragraph to the female soldiers:

"Many brave female patriots came under the banner of our armed forces and became snipers, signal officers, anti-aircraft crew members, pilots, and medical workers of the Regular Army. The feats of the Heroes of the Soviet Union, Natalia Kovshova and Maria Polivanova, went down in the history of the war, and 75 girl snipers of the 1st Baltic Front, who continue their work, killed two and a half thousand Nazis in three months. For posterity, people's memory will preserve the bright image of a young pilot, Lieutenant Lilia Litviak, who shot down twelve German planes and died bravely in an unequal air battle. The Soviet people proudly heard, in one of the orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the name of Major Evdokiia Bershanskaia, the commander of the night light bomber regiment that distinguished itself during the destruction of the German bridgehead in the Kuban, and is now called Tamansky."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ S. Bogatyrskii, "Prozhektoristy," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, July 31, 1941, 2.

¹⁰⁹ "Vместе s krasnoarmeitsami ...," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, June 29, 1943, 3.

¹¹⁰ Grigorij Krivosheev (ed.), *Rossia i SSSR v voinah XX veka: poteri vooruzhionnykh sil*.

¹¹¹ "Geroicheskie docheri sovetskoi zemli," *Krasnyi flot*, March 8, 1944, 1.



Even those materials that did not ignore the presence of women in the armed forces often interpreted it according to the usual set of stereotypes about male and female gender roles. For example, the article by the Heroine of the Soviet Union, sniper L. Pavlichenko, devoted to women at the front and in the rear, highlighted their presence in the Soviet armed forces in combat positions. It gave examples of their heroism through the rhetoric about a 'caring woman's hand' that defends her cities, takes care of male soldiers, restores cities destroyed by the enemy, enthusiastically works in factories in 'male' positions, etc.¹¹² In this text, L. Pavlichenko called on women to work even harder for the needs of the front, as the future decisive victorious battles required more resources.

Compared to 1943, the periodicals increased the mentions of female snipers and pilots. The article 'Girl Snipers,' published on June 6, 1944, in the newspaper *Krasnaia Zvezda*, mostly focused on the combat experience of sniper R. Shanina. However, it also mentioned her sisters-in-arms, the recipients of the Order of Glory K. Poshlina, L. Gurkova, E. Khozeva, P. Larina, and L. Kolpakova. According to the article's author, Major J. Miletsky, all these women were highly respected in their unit.¹¹³ The note 'Glorious Female Patriots,' published on June 23, 1944, in the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, was also dedicated to women snipers. A photo showing nine servicewomen in uniform (senior sergeants A. Smirnova, N. Selianina, V. A. Krohalyova, S. Anashkina, I. Poligalova, Z. Shmelova, and junior sergeants N. Barinova, V. Nikolaeva, A. Shamanova) accompanied it. The note's text stated that a meeting of the snipers of one of the Red Army units was held: 'In a short period, the girl-snipers of the unit killed 427 Germans.'¹¹⁴

In 1945, the number of materials devoted to women in the war decreased even further, including the references to women who served in the military and worked in the rear, but also to those who described the atrocities they suffered. This was due to the significant advantage of the Allied forces over the enemy forces and to a clear awareness of their pending victory. There was no longer a need to convince the population to join the armed forces, the partisan detachments, or go to work in military factories. At the same time, materials about women in the war, including their military service, did not entirely disappear.

The number of articles on women continued to be disproportionately large in the first half of March, 1945, on the eve of the International Women's Day. Thus, in the newspaper *Stalinskii Sokol*, issued on March 7, 1945, one page is entirely devoted to glorifying women's exploits. It contains several articles and portraits of six Heroes of the Soviet Union: N. Meklin, R. Gasheva, A. Popova, E. Zhigulenko,

¹¹² Pavlichenko, "Geroini fronta i tyła," 3.

¹¹³ Ia. Mileckii, "Devushki-snaiperi," *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 6, 1944, 3.

¹¹⁴ "Slavnye patriotki," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, June 23, 1944, 2.

I. Sebrova, and K. Riabova. The article 'Soviet Female Patriots' was primarily devoted to women's work in collective farms, factories, and other activities in the rear. Only the second part of the article mentioned that women fought on the fronts of World War II. However, there are many questions regarding this description. First, it was presented after a quotation of Stalin's phrase:

"In the name of the honour and independence of the Motherland, Soviet women and youth show bravery and heroism on the labour front. They proved worthy of their fathers and sons, husbands and brothers, who defended the Motherland from the Nazi inhuman forces."¹¹⁵

Therefore, as soon as the readers have formed in their minds a picture whereby men were fighting at the front and women were working in the rear, they were confronted with the fact that some other women fought together with the men. Once again, the article used a somewhat strange wording, widespread in the first years of the war, asserting that women "... fight side by side with the Red Army soldiers on the fronts of the Patriotic War."¹¹⁶ It turns out that the authors of this article did not think of female soldiers as a part of the Red Army, contrary to the reality on the ground.

N. Ignatova's article 'Heroines' was also published in the same newspaper. She paid more attention to female soldiers, but constantly compared them to men. For example, the author asked: "What helped them? What allowed them to embark on this difficult path, to take on a task that not every man can cope with? And how well they performed it! Earnestly, boldly, skilfully!"¹¹⁷ In the end, the author concluded that the reason for this success was that a woman was not only '... the source of life on earth, but also a fighter for life.'¹¹⁸

The issue of the newspaper *Krasnyi voin* published on March 8, 1945, also had a whole page dedicated to women. Its title was eloquent enough: "Soviet Women with Feats in the Rear and at the Front Are Bringing Forward the Time of Our Complete Victory over the Enemy."¹¹⁹ Below this headline, there were four articles with the following titles: 'National Honour' (about the mother-heroines),¹²⁰ 'Our Front Brigade' (about the best industry workers),¹²¹ 'Why I Went to the Front' (about the nurse N. Klochko),¹²² and 'The Girl from Kashira' (about the military

¹¹⁵ Klavdija Kirsanova, 'Sovetskie patriotki', *Stalinskii sokol*, March 7, 1945, 3.

¹¹⁶ Kirsanova, "Sovetskie patriotki," 3.

¹¹⁷ N. Ignatova, "Geroini," *Stalinskii sokol*, March 7, 1945, 3.

¹¹⁸ Ignatova, "Geroini," 3.

¹¹⁹ "Sovetskie zhenshchiny podvigami v tylu i na fronte priblizhaiut chas nashei polnoi pobedy nad vragom," *Krasnyi voin*, March 8, 1945, 3.

¹²⁰ "Vsenarodnyi pochet," *Krasnyi voin*, March 8, 1945, 3.

¹²¹ Serafima Shundrovskaja, "Nasha frontovaia brigada," *Krasnyi voin*, March 8, 1945, 3.

¹²² Nadja Klochko, "Pochemu ia poshla na front," *Krasnyi voin*, March 8, 1945, 3.



pilot, Guards Junior Lieutenant R. Yushina).¹²³ Thus, only the last article was devoted to a woman who served in the military. This text shows that, on the path to her dream profession, R. Yushina had to fight against stereotypes that a pilot was not a female profession. She first studied at the aeroclub and later became an instructor there. In 1943, Yushina began her military career. She fought in the Kuban, Crimea, Belarus, and East Prussia. Talking about Yushina's reasons for joining the Army, the article's author viewed revenge as her main motivation:

“A girl from Kashira crossed thousands of kilometres of air combat route. She saw the Soviet cities and villages destroyed by the enemy; she smelled the burning of her native land, devastated by a fierce German. And she vowed to take revenge for everything: for the ashes of cities, for the dead comrades, for the girls tortured by the Nazis, for the thousands of Soviet people burned in the furnaces of Maidanek.”¹²⁴

In his article ‘Daughters of the Motherland,’ published on March 10, 1945, M. Bobrov wrote about two famous pilots – Heroes of the Soviet Union Guards Major E. Nikulina and Guards Senior Lieutenant R. Gasheva. Both fought in the 46th ‘Taman’ Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment, whose members were known as ‘night witches.’ Describing R. Gasheva's first combat experience, the author emphasised that the woman felt great joy ‘when, during the first flight, she saw an enemy craft sinking into the abyss!’¹²⁵ The reasons that prompted E. Nikulina to go to war included revenge for her native city of Smolensk, destroyed by the Germans.

Also, in 1945, the number of photographs in the press pieces dedicated to women at the front increased significantly. Mostly, these were portraits of female fighters in uniform. Thus, in the issue of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* from March 13, 1945, there was a photo of snipers R. Shanina and Z. Shmeleva during their service.¹²⁶ Detailed textual information accompanied the illustrations and photographs.¹²⁷ Sometimes, such portraits of female soldiers in the periodicals could be found even during the first months after the end of the war in Europe. For example, the issue of the newspaper *Krasnyi voin* of July 21, 1945, included a picture of S. Danute – the famous Lithuanian machine gunner who had killed more than 100 Nazis.¹²⁸

¹²³ S. Ruben, “Devushka iz Kashiry,” *Krasnyi voin*, March 8, 1945, 3.

¹²⁴ Ruben, “Devushka iz Kashiry,” 3.

¹²⁵ N. Bobrov, “Docheri Rodiny,” *Stalinskii sokol*, March 10, 1945, 4.

¹²⁶ “V Germanii,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, March 13, 1945, 2.

¹²⁷ “Slavnye patriotki nashei rodiny,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, March 8, 1945, 2.

¹²⁸ “Bolee 100 gitlerovtsev...,” *Krasnyi voin*, July 21, 1945, 1.

In May 1945, it was reported that the exhibition 'Komsomol in the Patriotic War' received new exhibits – portraits of female Heroes of the Soviet Union G. Maslova and E. Chaikina by P. Vyuyev; V. Kashcheeva and T. Makarova by A. Osipov; and O. Kolesova by artist M. Lapshov.¹²⁹

Conclusions

The Soviet newspapers are an essential source for studying the policy of the communist regime regarding the service of women in the armed forces of the USSR and its propaganda dimension. Based on the frequency of these materials, the date of their publication, and the content, it is possible to make informed assumptions about the need of the Soviet armed forces for female personnel during a particular period of the war, as well as to evaluate and assess the government's propaganda concerning female soldiers, in general. However, the thematic articles gave almost no specifics about the service of women in the armed forces of the USSR as a mass phenomenon. For instance, they did not provide data on the establishment of women's military units, general statistics on the presence of women in the Army, conscription data, etc. The totalitarian regime kept this information secret, unlike other members of the anti-Hitler coalition. When such data were leaked to foreign media, the Soviet government sometimes tried to refute it.

The only specific details that appeared in Soviet periodicals concerned information about some heroines of the frontline (for example, L. Pavlichenko, N. Onilova, N. Kovshova, M. Raskova, and S. Danute). However, one needs to be careful in using these data because, even in these cases, the relevant information is not always the main aim of these materials. These publications were propagandistic; they aimed at enhancing patriotism and mobilising the population, rather than at giving relevant information on women's activities at the front.

In many materials published in the Soviet periodicals during the war, there was either no place for female combatants, or they were only briefly mentioned. The materials concerning women's efforts in the war emphasised their activities in the rear. At the same time, most cases dealing with women in the periodicals were dedicated to the description of Soviet women as a vulnerable category of the population and as victims, although the Soviet government recruited women to the Army on a large scale and, in contrast to many other countries, did not forbid them to undertake combat roles.

At the beginning of the war, in 1941, the Soviet newspapers often emphasised the lack of need for women in the Army, as the country seemed to have enough male human resources. At the same time, the government created women's military

¹²⁹ "Portrety devushek-Geroev Sovetskogo Soiuz," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, May 14, 1945, 4.



units, such as special air regiments. Most of the material about women at the front published in the Soviet periodical press dates back to 1942-1943, when the Army desperately needed female resources, while the authorities tried to prompt the female population to join the military ranks. Since 1944, when the Allied forces gained the upper hand in the war, the number of materials about servicewomen declined significantly. Most of these articles were published, both in 1944 and in the following years, on the eve of International Women's Day.

Thus, the admission of Soviet women to military roles resulted from the catastrophic losses of the Soviet Army in the early days of the war. It was not beneficial or expedient for the Soviet authorities to highlight the significant scale of women's presence in the Army, because it could undermine the construction of the image of Soviet women as victims of war and as an auxiliary force. Therefore, in the Soviet discourse of the war years, in the beginning, the authorities tried to hide or deny the presence of women as soldiers at the front, and, when this became impossible, to focus on individual heroic cases. These exemplary narratives, on the one hand, symbolised the patriotism of Soviet citizens, and on the other, looked like conspicuous exceptions from the rule. Consequently, most female veterans of the Soviet-German war became a marginal group in the postwar period. They generally hid away their combat awards and kept silent about the very fact of their military service.¹³⁰

Rezumat

Materialele din presa periodică sovietică (în special, articolele publicate în ziare) reprezintă o sursă importantă pentru studierea politicii regimului în domeniul serviciului militar al femeilor în cadrul forțelor armate ale URSS. Pe baza frecvenței publicării acestor materiale, dar și reieșind din data apariției acestora în presă și din conținutul lor, este posibil să facem anumite presupuneri și să formulăm concluzii în privința necesităților legate de cadrele feminine în rândurile forțelor armate sovietice, în timpul unei anumite perioade a ostilităților militare. Aceleași surse ne permit să evidențiem și să evaluăm trăsăturile generale ale propagandei guvernului sovietic privind soldații de sex feminin din armată. Cu toate acestea, articolele tematice respective aproape că nu conțineau detalii specifice despre serviciul militar feminin din cadrul forțelor armate ale URSS în sensul unui fenomen generalizat, de masă. Astfel, aceste articole nu ofereau informații privind crearea unor unități militare feminine, statistici generale referitor la prezența femeilor în armată, date despre mobilizare și recrutare etc. Regimul totalitar

¹³⁰ Svitlana Aleksiiyevych, *U viiny ne zhinoche oblychchia* (Kharkiv: Vivat, 2016), 156.

sovietic considera că aceste informații trebuie să rămână secrete, spre deosebire de ceilalți membri ai coaliției anti-hitleriste.

Cuvinte-cheie: presa periodică; URSS; femei; forțe armate; războiul sovieto-german.

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April 9, 1989, as a Paradigmatic Event: “The Time we Live in Now Started That Night”¹

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Abstract

The events of the late 1980s-early 1990s played a key role in the history of Georgia. April 9, 1989, was one of the most important events in this respect. It defined the shared identity and memory for a long time and determined future developments in the country. April 9 proved to be a paradigmatic event in the recent history of Georgia. The narrative of trauma and triumph was formed, being reflected in historical, literary and documentary texts, as well as in different sites of memory. Two years later, at the very place of the tragedy, the restoration of independence of Georgia was declared. The paper deals with the process of the crystallization of April 9 as a paradigmatic event. Cultural patterns that played a crucial role in the establishment of the traumatic-triumphal narrative of April 9, 1989, and in the thirty-year dynamics of the attitudes towards this event are explored. The study presents how April 9 and its resonance influenced the perception of the past, as well as further developments. Theories of collective memory and cultural trauma serve as the theoretical framework for the research, while official documents, memoirs, literary texts and various types of media sources form its empirical basis.

Key words: Georgia, paradigmatic event, trauma, triumph.

“The time we live in started that night,”² this is how, in the first person and, perhaps, most accurately, the Russian journalist Yuri Rost communicated the meaning of the tragic night of April 9, 1989³ twenty-five years later. The photos he took

¹ This work was supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (grant N FR-18-3459).

² Yuri Rost, “Stydno mne [I Am Ashamed],” *Argument*, March 26, 2014, <https://bit.ly/3FSIPEB> (Accessed 04.02.2021).

³ On April 4, a protest was held at Rustaveli Avenue, in front of the Palace of Government in the center of Tbilisi. It was aimed against the Abkhaz separatism and its supporters demanding to directly incorporate the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic into the Soviet Union as a union republic. Soon, slogans demanding the restoration of independence of Georgia could be heard at the gatherings; protesters went on a hunger strike. The leadership of the Republic was alarmed by the situation that was getting out of control. They asked Moscow for help. Additional forces of the Soviet Army were brought to Tbilisi. On April 9, 1989, at 4 a.m. in the morning, without any warning, the Soviet Army dispersed the protest using batons, clubs, shovels, and poisonous substances. Sixteen people, mostly women, died on the spot. Within the next few days, four more injured protesters passed away; one individual was killed during curfew. Hundreds of citizens were hospitalized with various injuries and poisonings.

on Rustaveli Avenue that night did not only lead to the recognition of the incident by the local and central authorities, but also became one of the most important signposts in the memory of April 9. Thirty years later, Nana Makharadze, the girl from Yuri Mechitov's famous photo that became a symbol of April 9, conveyed this attitude in the following way: "April 9 is the day that marked a new page in the history of Georgia, the day that was filled with tragedy and a sense of great pride."⁴

The paper aims to study the process of the crystallization of April 9 as a paradigmatic event. It explores how the collective trauma of April 9, 1989, became the reference point for future history and memory; how the declaration of independence on April 9, 1991, formed a mnemonic bridge between the present and the past, emphasizing historical continuity and strengthening shared memory and identity. Theories of collective memory and cultural trauma form the theoretical basis of the work, which is based on the analysis of the official documents, literary texts, various types of media sources, materials found in social media, and monumental sites of memory.

April 9 proved to be the "seismic historical occurrence" that shattered both the cultural and symbolic framework of the Georgian society within the Soviet system. It "turned the social reality upside down"⁵ and defined the country's shared identity and memory for a long time. The occurrence which is perceived as a key event in the national memory and almost always is caused by extreme forms of violence is termed a *paradigmatic event* by Aleida Assmann; it leaves an enduring imprint on material culture and collective consciousness.⁶ A paradigmatic event finds its meaning through "cultural processing" – its interpretation and reinterpretation, which results in the formation of the *impact narrative*. This is not a single and conclusive text, but "an amazing plethora of narratives in different media and genres."⁷ An impact narrative takes shape through the interaction of these media.

Remembrance and representation of the occurrence are based on cultural patterns. According to Aleida Assmann, these are stable motives or repetitive structures in canonized pictures or stories, "with which members of a community see, experience, value and interpret each other, situations, experiences and events."⁸

⁴ "kali 9 ap'rilis pot'odan: vpikrobdit, chveni taoba shedzlebda, ghirseulad etskhovra damouk'idebel kvq'anashi [The Woman from the Photo of April 9: We Believed that Our Generation Could Live in an Independent Country with Dignity]," *Metronome*, April 8, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3q28euA> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

⁵ Aleida Assmann, "Impact and Resonance – Towards a Theory of Emotions in Cultural Memory," in *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future: Collective Remembering and Identity Formation*, eds. Terje Stordalen and Saphinaz-Amal Naguib (Oslo: Novus Press, 2015), 53.

⁶ Assmann, 53, 67.

⁷ Assmann, 57.

⁸ Assmann, 60.



Through them, it becomes possible to understand, analyze, and form attitudes towards phenomena that have not been experienced before.⁹

“There have been magnificent moments in the history of Georgia, and this particular moment is one of the most magnificent, when for the first time in these seventy years, in this suffering, misery, and bloodshed, the Georgian nation – unified and integrated – appeared before God as one”¹⁰ – these words, uttered by Merab Kostava before the attacks that night, laid the foundation of the April 9 narrative. They clearly communicate the Georgian cultural pattern: the “deeply rooted icon” of national unity (“the integrated, [...] unified [...] Georgian nation”) and patriotic devotion, which “highlight a sense of identity and continuity in the experience of difference and change.”¹¹

Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech at the protest of April 9, 1989, was a concentrated expression of the Georgian cultural patterns and of the tragic-triumphal rhetoric: „God is with us! And there will be God forever! We defeated innumerable forces with this consciousness, the forces of darkness, the empires of darkness, and we will defeat the greatest and the vilest among them. For we have St. George on our side, we have the holy blood of our martyrs who sacrificed themselves for Georgia, for Christ, for April 9. [...] Their blood joined the blood of other holy martyrs, hundreds of thousands of them. And that blood will save us [...]. This is the path of our nation; we have no other path. Our path is the path of martyrdom, of Christ, of the crown of thorns, of crucifixion and the inevitable resurrection...”¹²

The first reaction to the tragedy of April 9 was an emotional one – an amalgamation of the cultural values and practices of Georgian society – expressed through shock, pain, indignation, rage, thirst for revenge, grief and mourning. Black flags were draped over the balconies; early in the morning of April 9, one could find red graffiti all over the city: “Patiashvili¹³ the murderer,” “Gorbachev the murderer.”¹⁴ The whole country was mourning: those who died on Rustaveli Avenue came from different parts of Georgia, where they were buried a few days later. The site of the tragedy was covered with flowers the next morning. Lists of

⁹ Assmann, 44.

¹⁰ Merab Kostava’s Speech on April 9, 1989, *Myvideo.ge*, April 9, 2014, <https://bit.ly/31CGl3a> (Accessed 22.09.2020).

¹¹ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 60.

¹² Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech on May 26, 1991, Tbilisi, *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3FXZEmi> (Accessed 09.04.2021).

¹³ Jumber Patiashvili – the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia in 1985-1989.

¹⁴ Nomad Bartaia, *erovnuli modzraobis dghiurebidan. 1988-1993* [From the Diaries of the National Movement. 1988-1993] (Tbilisi: Intelekti, 2020), 41.

the dead and injured were posted in different neighborhoods of the city.¹⁵ April 11 was declared as a day of national mourning. With black ribbons wrapped around their heads, young people stood outside of the Palace of Government, holding flags also decorated in black. People kept coming. It was a collective funeral for the deceased. Lots of people joined the procession on the days of funerals. The images of mourning have been preserved in photographs – most notably, in the works of Giorgi Tsagareli and Yuri Mechitov, whose photo icons imprinted April 9 in the collective memory.

The tense and ambiguous situation was exacerbated by the fact that this form of mourning was completely incomprehensible for the Soviet soldiers who were enforcing the curfew announced in the capital about two hours prior to the tragedy. They clearly felt the negative attitude of the population. After several days of disagreement and debate, it was decided to end the national mourning on April 28.¹⁶ The flowers were moved to the Sioni Cathedral courtyard, photos of the deceased were plastered on the walls, and visitors lit candles in front of them.

This, sometimes overly theatrical mourning, in which government officials also participated,¹⁷ enabled the shocked public to articulate their trauma. The multiplicity of poems pasted on the plane trees on Rustaveli Avenue and read by silent passers-by clearly displayed this fact. These white sheets are among the few images, along with “the sea of tulips and daffodils,” that the contemporaries still “remember from that April, thirty years ago.”¹⁸ Famous poets also wrote poems about the tragedy, among them also those “who until then sang praises to Lenin or Stalin. [...] Even those who had watched the April 9 massacre from their windows eventually joined the collective “chant.” [...] Faces of poisoned and injured boys and girls became the main artistic symbol of 1989. [...] Their photos circulated everywhere.”¹⁹ It was this kind of mourning that made it possible to express the trauma, to make it public, to share it, and to determine the perpetrators and the victims.

All this led to the articulation of the narrative of April 9 as a paradigmatic event that combined the feelings of shock, pain, helplessness, injustice, and confusion. Aleida Assmann points out that emotions of love, sorrow, and suffering,

¹⁵ Bartaia, 42.

¹⁶ Bartaia, 52.

¹⁷ Eduard Shevardnadze, the then Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, whose function was to defuse the tension, laid flowers on the site of the tragedy with Givi Gumbaridze, the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia.

¹⁸ Eka Kevanishvili, “erovnuli modzraobis dghiurebidan. 1988-1993 [April 9 Poetry – Poems Posted on Trees],” *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], April 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/32Udp7a> (Accessed 15.02.2021).

¹⁹ Gogi Gvakharia, *tsremliani satvale* [Tearful Glasses] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2013), 218.



which contain socially established cultural meanings, bolster remembrance.²⁰ „April 9, 1989, was imprinted in my memory more in sound than in images,” Zaza Bibilashvili recalls thirty years after April 9. “First of all, this is the sound of Lado Asatiani’s poem performed by the ensemble of the blind women against the backdrop of the slow groan of tank convoys moving towards the people. [...] One more sound that will accompany the night of April 9 is silence. Genuine, sublime silence overcome with one idea, terrible, crowded. [...] None of this have I heard with my own ears. This is all my civil, historical memory – part of my civil identity, if you will.”²¹

The meaning that was ascribed to April 9 and contributed to overcoming the trauma had a connotation of triumph. It united the elements of self-sacrifice for the homeland, trampling down death through death, and resurrection. A music video of the song created the next day after the tragedy, “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips” (lyrics by Moris Potskhishvili, music by Jemal Sepiashvili),²² and performed by fifty Georgian singers, was recorded by the Georgian broadcaster. Thanks to the burst of emotion, both the song and the video immediately emerged as the symbol of April 9. Patriotic self-sacrifice and trampling down death through death as the motives of the triumphal narrative also took shape on the trail of the massacre in Ana Kalandadze’s poem published in the newspaper “Literaturuli sakartvelo” (“Literary Georgia”).²³

The representation of the tragedy as an act of heroism and self-sacrifice helps to transform death into a symbol of immortality, reinforces notions about the uniqueness of the group, sacrifice for which is an honorable mission. The trauma experienced in this way gives meaning to the future struggle.²⁴

The image of the Battle of Didgori²⁵ became the cultural pattern of patriotic devotion which is still used to legitimize the victims: “When they ask why we should celebrate April 9, I want to tell them: we celebrate the victory of the Didgori Battle. Didn’t people die there as well? April 9 was a victory” (Nemo Burchuladze).²⁶ “On April 9, I understood how Georgians went to war in ancient

²⁰ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 42-43.

²¹ Zaza Bibilashvili, “Salagobo,” *Forbes Georgia*, April 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qVoo0Z> (Accessed 13.04.2021).

²² “vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi [Let’s Give Each Other Tulips],” *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3zxWpj7> (Accessed 11.09.2020).

²³ Ana Kalandadze, “rom prtebs upore dzlierad vshlidit [We Spread Our Wings Wider],” *9 aprili [April 9]*, compiled by Guram Gverdtseteli (Tbilisi: Merani, Sabchota sakartvelo, 1990), 30.

²⁴ Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (10 August 2018), 6.

²⁵ In the battle of Didgori, on August 12, 1121, the king of Georgia David the Builder defeated the army of the Great Seljuk Empire.

²⁶ Eka Mishveladze’s TV Program “pirveli studia [Studio One],” Public Broadcaster, 2014, *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3G8VIPK> (Accessed 04.03.2020).

times, why they sacrificed themselves for the country, for their faith... This suppresses and vanquishes fear. Of course, once we learned about the victims, the joy subsided, but it was still a victory over the enemy. Could you imagine going to the Battle of Didgori and fearing that people would die?”²⁷ (Akaki Asatiani²⁸).

Along with loss, triumph continues to be emphasized in the memories and personal stories, even after thirty years: “Nobody died on April 9, they are not dead. On April 9, people fell with dignity. If we speak from a Christian perspective, why should we understand death as the end?”²⁹ (Irakli Tsereteli, leader of the National Independence Party);³⁰ “Despite the great tragedy, April 9 is not only a day of mourning, but also a day of joy, a day of sacrifice for the homeland and a day of salvation” (Eter Kavelashvili, participant of the April 9 protest).³¹

Thus, this cultural pattern formed the basis for giving meaning to and dealing with the difficult experience; it “created continuity across rupture.”³² The pattern of Georgian culture, embodied in rituals, contributed to establishing the place of April 9 in a historical series of “glorious moments.”

Aleida Assmann talks about the *resonance* of paradigmatic events. This refers to the interplay of occurrences that take place before and after the main event, which consciously or unconsciously guide and form the latter.³³ April 9 summoned back from the repressed and nearly erased memory important and painful events of the past, which were linked to the same place where the April 9 tragedy unfolded. In the process of remembrance, April 9 as a *resonance* connected old and new events to each other and, whether consciously or unconsciously, earlier experiences contributed to the formation and definition of the new trauma.

One such event was the tragedy of March 9, 1956, that occurred on Rustaveli Avenue and near the monument of Stalin on the riverbank.³⁴ The Soviet Army carried out a bloody retaliation against citizens gathered near the Stalin monument to protest against the criticism of the cult of personality. No official report exists, though several dozens, if not hundreds of protesters were killed; others were wounded, injured and arrested. The authorities did not allow people to mourn the

²⁷ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, “9 aprilidan 9 aprilamde [From April 9 to April 9],” *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], April 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3EXpVQs> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

²⁸ Akaki Asatiani – the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia in 1990-1991, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia from April 18, 1991, to January 1992.

²⁹ Mishveladze, “Studio One.”

³⁰ Mishveladze, “Studio One.”

³¹ Rekhviashvili, “From April 9 to April 9.”

³² Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 63.

³³ Assmann, 45.

³⁴ The name of the Mtkvari bank at that time.



dead, they were buried immediately and unnoticed, under the supervision of the security services. Their names were not mentioned, they were known only to their close relatives. According to Volkan, when it is impossible to mourn the trauma, the mental representation of the shared traumatic event is stored in the memory and passed to the next generation(s) to mourn the loss and restore the injured self-image. The historical truth about the event becomes less important for the group members; what is important is that the shared trauma links them together and becomes an inseparable part of their identity. This thread of the “canvas of identity [...] may not be evident for a long period of time;” however, it can be reactivated under the influence of different circumstances. In this case, a time collapse occurs, emotions related with trauma are activated, and the trauma is experienced “as if it has happened only yesterday.”³⁵ March 9 is just such a case. It turned out that the repressed recollection of March 9, 1956, was still preserved in the communicative memory, and it was quickly revived in the aftermath of another traumatic event. Those who had witnessed the massacre started speaking about it. The film director Givi Vepkhvadze, who was a participant of the tragedy himself and had been trying to gather information on March 9 since the 1960s, made a documentary called “March 9” in 1993. The film is based on the memories of eyewitnesses and the parents of the deceased.³⁶ Every year, on March 9, family members of the victims gathered to honor them on the river bank where Stalin’s statue has been replaced with a memorial informing the passers-by that a monument dedicated to the victims of March 9 will be built.³⁷ If we borrow Aleida Assmann’s words, this is a clear example of an instance when memory moved from an informal to a public form.³⁸ April 9 had a “therapeutic effect,”³⁹ and March 9 re-established itself in the narrative of the past.

The April 9 resonance also impacted other events that took place on Rustaveli Avenue: the struggle against the Red Army on the outskirts of Tbilisi in February 1921, and the burial of the fallen fighters at the same site where the Palace of Government would be built later; the demonstration of April 14, 1978, as a result of which the Georgian language was preserved as a state language.

³⁵ Vamik D. Volkan, *When Enemies Talk: Psychoanalytic Insights from Arab-Israeli Dialogues*, Zigmund Freud Lecture (Vienna: 1999), 13-14.

³⁶ Nino Kapanadze’s interview with Givi Vepkhvadze, *chemi kharagauli* [Mykharagauli], March 9, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3eYfTUq> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

³⁷ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, “1956 ts’lis mart’is t’ragedia [The Tragedy of March 1956],” *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], March 9, 2010, <https://bit.ly/3zBfbWE> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

³⁸ Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, “Memory and Political Change: Introduction,” in *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9.

³⁹ Assmann and Shortt, 7.

For its part, the collective trauma of April 9, 1989, became a reference point for future history and memory. Temur Koridze, an active member of the national liberation movement, called this day a historic crossroads, after which the Georgian man no longer was part of "a new anthropological type – Homo Sovieticus."⁴⁰ A new, non-Soviet future was becoming clearly visible on the horizon, also demanding a "new past."

After the first shocking days of April 9, the communist government of Georgia became increasingly accommodating towards the national movement and, in general, towards the demands of those who felt "no longer a Homo Sovieticus." Against the backdrop of the government's silence, and at times with its participation, names, facts, and events erased from memory during the Soviet period were first brought to life through communicative memory and then gradually transferred to the sphere of cultural memory in the form of texts, memorials, monuments, celebrations, and rituals.

As A. Diener and J. Hagen note, the revival of national identity is reflected in the urban landscape: revised and reified national cultural-political narratives are crafted by preserving, rebuilding, or creating historical landmarks that emphasize unity and historical tradition.⁴¹ In 1989-1990, to highlight national history and national identity,⁴² historical names were restored or, conversely, names of popular Georgian public figures were given to cities, district centers, streets, squares, and metro stations that had previously been named after revolutionaries and communist party leaders.⁴³

Similar to other countries, the dismantling of the statues of Soviet figures and of monuments that were symbols of the Soviet system was the manifestation of active forgetting and a form of revenge on the past. Some of them were demolished publicly, and sometimes with enthusiasm, while others disappeared from urban squares and gardens quietly. The monument of Sergo Orjonikidze, the famous Georgian Bolshevik who led the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia, fell victim to the April 9 tragedy: on the morning of April 10, Tbilisi residents found the giant grey statue standing at the intersection of the two avenues in the central part of the

⁴⁰ Temur Koridze, "k'atsi ar q'vela sts'oria [Not Everyone is a Man]" (Tbilisi: Intelekti, 2016), 59; Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "sakartvelos damouk'idebloba - ori 9 ap'rilis p'irmsho [The Independence of Georgia – The Child of Two April 9s]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/31A52gt> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

⁴¹ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, "From Socialist to Post-Socialist Cities: Narrating the Nation through Urban Space," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 4 (2013), 489.

⁴² Derek H. Alderman, "Place, Naming, and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, eds. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Routledge, 2008), 195.

⁴³ Giorgi Mchedlidze, *ist'oria udist'antsiod (mghelvare 1988-1995 ts'lebis kronik'ebi)* [History without Distance (Chronicles of the Emotional Years of 1988-1995)] (Kutaisi: 1999), 188, 237.



capital with its hands painted red, littered with broken eggs and garbage. After the incident, the authorities first erected a fence around the statue, and then removed it without much fuss. Guram Tsibakhashvili captured the whole process on a photograph – “the monument, covered in paint, fenced and knocked down, is a manifestation of falling monuments.”⁴⁴ This episode was soon followed by the dismantling of a huge sculptural composition standing in front of the Palace of Government on Rustaveli Avenue, bearing the strange name “Labor, Science, Technique.”

On August 29, 1990, by a decision of the Presidium of the Tbilisi Council of People’s Deputies, the monument to Lenin was dismantled from Lenin Square. The townspeople, gathered in the square, greeted the demolition with applause and cheers. An August 29 interview in the “Tbilisi” newspaper with the then chairman of the presidium of the city council, Niko Lekishvili, clearly demonstrated the efforts of the communist government to maintain control over the process:

“A large section of society has been demanding the removal of the monument of Lenin from the main square and the reconstruction of this area. It is no secret that Tbilisi has become a city of monuments. One can rarely find so many monuments of the same person elsewhere. [...] There have been several attempts to remove the monument, as a result of which the pedestal of the statue was damaged. [...] The place was guarded by militia units who had been detached from their primary responsibilities. [...] The dismantling started yesterday evening and ended late at night. Lots of people gathered on the square, and they also helped the representatives of the Executive Committee to take the monument down.”

And again, Aleida Assmann’s *resonance* comes to mind: Niko Lekishvili used March 9, 1956 as the argument for reminding the population of an unpleasant moment which probably no one remembered: “One factor to consider: the erection of the monument on Lenin Square is directly linked to the bloody affair of March 9, 1956, and this was irritating for people, causing painful associations among Tbilisi residents.”⁴⁵ After Tbilisi, Lenin’s monuments disappeared one by one from the squares of other Georgian cities and villages, but also from the courtyards of state institutions.

In 1990, the famous sculptures on the façade of the Marxism-Leninism Institute created by the renowned Georgian sculptors Iakob Nikoladze and Tamar

⁴⁴ Guram Tsibakhashvili, *100 pot'oambavi. 80-ianebi* [100 Photostories. The 80s] (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2018), 115.

⁴⁵ Eka Tsamalashvili, “rodesats tbilisma uari tkva leninis dzeglze [When Tbilisi Abandoned the Lenin Monument],” *damouk'ideblobis gak'vetilebi - momavlisk'en ts'arsulis gaazrebit* [Lessons of Independence - Towards the Future through Comprehension of the Past] (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3qXNBPK> (Accessed 16.10.2018).

Abakelia, were sacrificed to the *revenge on the past*. They symbolized the revolutionary movement and the building of socialism in the country. Unlike many other monuments, they had significant historical and aesthetic value; the building of the Institute itself was an important site of Soviet memory. One could surmise that this action reflected the trauma of April 9. On the other hand, it echoed the traumatic memory of the Soviet past.

The vinyl records "April Morning", released in 1991, can also be considered a resonance of April 9, 1989. The album compiled patriotic songs by famous Georgian composers, written on the basis of the poems of famous Georgian poets, including "Let's Give Each Other Tulips." *Radio Liberty* dedicated a special program to this album, called "±21 April Morning: The Story of One Album,"⁴⁶ where composers and performers recalled the emotions of the time, among them, those evoked by the songs written and performed in those days.

Thus, as often happens during the transition period, the counter-memory that existed in the Soviet era was gradually replaced by a generally accepted and officially recognized normative memory.⁴⁷ Suppressed and almost forgotten voices came to the center of public attention and became a part of common memory. The "old" Soviet memory, reflected in some monuments and rituals, which not so long ago captured the public's attention, quickly lost its emotional appeal and shifted from the sphere of memory to the realm of history, becoming the "property" of historians and an object of scholarly research.

On the two-year anniversary of the tragedy, on April 9, 1991, on the very spot where the Soviet Army attacked the peaceful demonstrators, the restoration of Georgia's independence was proclaimed. As noted by E. Zerubavel, "constancy of place is a formidable mnemonic tool for establishing a strong sense of historical continuity, shared memory and identity"; it "also allows us to virtually 'see' the people who once occupied the space we do now." This method, named *the same place* by Zerubavel, is widely used in identity rhetoric.⁴⁸ Zviad Gamsakhurdia's speech clearly highlighted this moment of continuity: "It is symbolic that the restoration of the independence of Georgia was declared on April 9, as the fate of Georgia was decided on this day. The souls of the April 9 martyrs look down upon us and rejoice in the heavenly light, because their will, the will of the Georgian nation, has been fulfilled."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "± 21: ap'rilis dila: erti albomis ist'oria [±21: April Morning: The Story of One Album]," *radio tavisupleba* [*Radio Liberty*], April 11, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3eWBm0e> (Accessed 12.04.2021).

⁴⁷ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change," 8.

⁴⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past. Time Maps* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 42.

⁴⁹ "zviad gamsakhurdia – sakartvelos damouk'ideblobis gamotskhadeba [Zviad Gamsakhurdia – The Declaration of Independence of Georgia]," *YouTube*, March 31, 2017, <https://bit.ly/3G4KP1f> (Accessed 10.02.2021).



The choice of April 9 as the day of the declaration of independence was not an accident: overlapping important dates that are already imbued with historical significance is an established social practice, which Zerubavel calls *the same time*.⁵⁰ It is aimed at “building a mnemonic bridge”⁵¹ and at maintaining *discursive continuity*.

There was another option for the date of the declaration of independence – May 26, the day of the first independence, especially because of the fact that in 1991, independence was restored on the basis of the Act of May 26, 1918. Akaki Asatiani recalls: “I asked [Zviad Gamsakhurdia] whether it could coincide with May 26, to avoid doubling. He responded with the same words he would publicly state later: how else can we honor the memory of those who died on April 9; only by doing this; for the sake of those who died for independence on this day, we will declare our independence.”⁵²

The mnemonic bridge with the past was also established through the emphasis on historical legacy and continuity in the first paragraph of the Act of Independence. Thus, to use Zerubavel’s term again, the *legato narrative*⁵³ of the history of Georgia, distorted during the Soviet era, was now restored:

“The statehood of Georgia, that dates back to ancient times, was lost by the Georgian nation in the 19th century, following the annexation of Georgia by the Russian Empire, which suppressed Georgian statehood. The Georgian people have never accepted the loss of freedom. The suppressed statehood was restored on 26 May 1918 by the declaration of the Act of Independence. [...] In February-March 1921, Soviet Russia violated the peace agreement of 7 May 1920, between Georgia and Russia, and, by an act of aggression, occupied the state of Georgia, previously recognized by Russia. This was followed by the actual annexation of Georgia. [...] The Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia, elected on the basis of a multi-party system and democratic principles on October 28, 1990, based on the unanimous will of the population of Georgia, expressed in the referendum of March 31, 1991, hereby establishes and proclaims the restoration of the independent state of Georgia, on the basis of the Act of Independence of May 26, 1918.”⁵⁴

Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech was an attempt of imbuing the traumatic narrative of April 9 with a triumphal content: good overcame evil, death vanquished

⁵⁰ Zerubavel, *Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, 46-48.

⁵¹ Zerubavel, 44.

⁵² Rekhviashvili, “From April 9.” There are still different opinions regarding the date of celebration of the Independence Day.

⁵³ Zerubavel, 34-36.

⁵⁴ “Act of Restoration of State Independence of Georgia,” *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, April 9, 1991, <https://bit.ly/3zZ4V1c> (Accessed 04.09.2021).

death. By doing this, the value of the sacrifice made in the name of freedom would be emphasized once more, and the tragic sequence of events since 1921 (with the exception of April 14, 1978) would result in a triumphal ending.

The feeling of triumph was clearly evidenced by the six-minute applause and ovation that followed Zviad Gamsakhurdia's speech given in the meeting room, which was followed by the ceremony of signing the Act of Independence, the restoration of the flags of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and the performance of the state anthem ("Glory"). The signing of the Act of Independence was broadcast live. In the blink of an eye, a lot of people gathered on Rustaveli Avenue. They congratulated each other on the victory, danced, sang, and rejoiced. The emotions expressed by the signatories of the Act reveal this feeling of triumph:

"When I signed, I felt as if I paid my dues to my grandparents and ancestors, those who stood at protests before, to thousands of people who could not sign the document, but who had chosen freedom, to the heroes of April 9" (Akaki Asatiani).

"My signature is the largest one, since I was nervous, I could not control my emotions ... Ilia Chavchavadze himself could not witness independence, and you [...] could sign the document and become one of its authors. [...] It is truly unbelievable. Each signature is Ilia's dream come true!"⁵⁵ (Nemo Burchuladze, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council).

"I signed [...] on behalf of each and every person who preserved and passed this idea on to us. I remember I signed very slowly, my last name is long too, and I had a feeling that I was completing a truly important task. But I also couldn't stop wondering if we were worthy of signing the Act of Independence."⁵⁶ (Davit Berdzenishvili, Member of the Supreme Council).

"This is how 'April 9' acquired a double meaning, combining both the blood-bathed dedication of April 9, 1989, and the triumphal victory of April 9, 1991. Moreover, the events that transpired between the two April 9s largely determined the logic of the next thirty years," Jimsher Rekhviashvili notes.⁵⁷ As to the extent to which April 9, 1989 is perceived today as a factor in the restoration of the independence of Georgia and its subsequent fate, our research showed the following: About half of the respondents agree with the idea that, in the absence of April 9, 1989, Georgia would not have become independent; among them, respondents from the older generation outweigh those born after 1985; emotion, as one of the defining factors of memory, seems to play a role here, as well as lived memory,

⁵⁵ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."

⁵⁶ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."

⁵⁷ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."



which is more diverse and loaded with emotion compared to the institutionalized forms transferred to the realm of cultural memory, which are simplified and unambiguous, in order to become conventional and transferrable.

The chosen trauma – the mental representation of an event that caused drastic losses, feelings of helplessness and victimization⁵⁸ – complemented the collective identity and became one of its important markers. Its dramatic transformation into “a chosen victory” reinforced the feeling of overall success and triumph. April 9 is “the sunny night of our history, [...] it is the day of victory, since we gained independence on this day two years later, in 1991” (Giorgi Kalandia);⁵⁹ “We live in this kind of country, a country that was born from tragedy. [...] This country is the child of April 9” (Nona Kobalia).⁶⁰ These phrases are key components of the traumatic-triumphal narrative of April 9. And yet, the night of April 9, 1989, still overshadows April 9, 1991 – the day of the restoration of state independence – in the collective/cultural memory. This is facilitated by the wide-scale and multifaceted institutionalization (photos, poems, documentaries, songs, memoirs, memorials, celebrations, parts of museum exhibitions). From this perspective, April 9, 1991, looks more modest from the point of view of memoirs, video shots and photos, featuring less prominently in historical works and textbooks. Even during the annual commemoration of April 9, the emphasis is on sacrifice and heroism, candles are lit in memory of the victims, flowers are laid on the site of the tragedy. Since 1991, the day of national independence is celebrated on May 26.

Thus, April 9 was established as a paradigmatic event, while that section of Rustaveli Avenue emerged as a place of paradigmatic meaning – “our agora,” “where the history of Georgia has been written for thirty years,” as politician Salome Samadashvili mentions.⁶¹ “Possession” of this space equals the possession of power. Important festive events were being held here: the traditional presidential swearing-in ceremony, which has been discarded since, the Christmas chant with the attendance of parliament members, children’s fairs, exhibitions dedicated to important events, etc. Significant protests were also held there (the November 1988 hunger strike; April 9, 1989; the December-January Tbilisi War of 1991-

⁵⁸ Volkan, *When Enemies Talk*, 13.

⁵⁹ Giorgi Kalandia, “9 ap’rili chveni mziani ghamea [April 9 Is Our Sunny Night],” TV Program “imedis dghe [Imedi’s Day],” *TV Imedi*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3q2zklu> (Accessed 05.10.2020).

⁶⁰ Patsatsia, Salome. “es kveq’ana 9 ap’rilis shvilia – demonstrant’ebis mogonebebi 29 ts’lis shemdeg [This Country is a Child of April 9 – Memories of the Protesters 29 Years Later],” *radio atinati [Radio Atinati]*, April 9, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3F28KgZ> (Accessed 10.02.2021).

⁶¹ Jana Akopashvili, “erti ts’eli gavrilovis ghamidan – ‘sirtskhvilia’ 20 ivnisis aktsiistvis emzadeba [One Year after Gavrilov’s Night – the ‘Shame Movement’ Prepares for the Protest of June 20],” *mtavari arkhi [Main Channel]*, June 5, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3nSyyIU> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

1992; the 2003 Rose Revolution; the 2007 and 2011 anti-government rallies; the August 12, 2008 protest against the Russian occupation; the anti-government mass-protests before the 2012 parliamentary elections; the protests against the special operation carried out in Tbilisi clubs in May 2018; the demonstrations of June 19-20, following the "Gavrilov Night",⁶² and, a year later, the protests against the 2020 elections, etc.). Occasionally, tents are being set up and dismantled (by the supporters of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in 1991, against President Mikheil Saakashvili in 2011, by the seekers of truth and justice – e.g., those protesting the killings of Dato Saralidze (on December 1, 2017) and of Temirlan Machalikashvili (on December 26 of the same year, during a special operation in Pankisi).

In the words of Emzar Jgerenaia, the area in front of the Parliament of Georgia "is a kind of sacred place in our national memory"; "all major national-scale dramas have played out in this space"; "for those living in Georgia, this area is a site of memory, where society makes important decisions."⁶³ "Anyone who has stood on Rustaveli Avenue at least once, will definitely feel the spiritual connection with the heroes of April 9, their support and protection in the battle for independence, but those who have used even so-called "legitimate force" against the citizens gathered on Rustaveli Avenue, at least once, would have felt its frostiness and heaviness,"⁶⁴ notes Jimsher Rekhviashvili.

As April 9 itself, this space, too, became associated with martyrdom. This meaning was determined by its *resonance*, which linked the chain of events with the blood of victims who died in the fight for the independence of their country. "[April 9, 1989] is our history, and a hagiography at the same time."⁶⁵ This kind of perception proves the quality of April 9 as a paradigmatic traumatic event.

The mental representation of April 9 is reflected in different forms of institutionalization (religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific, and in the field of mass media).⁶⁶ It acquires a certain mnemonic inviolability, and its ignorance is perceived as an

⁶² On June 20, 2019, the appearance of the Russian MP, Sergei Gavrilov, a member of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy, in the seat of the Head of the Georgian Parliament, was followed first by protests from several Georgian parliamentarians and then by a large protest outside of the Georgian Parliament. Police used force against the protesters, as a result of which several protesters received various degrees of injuries.

⁶³ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "evroremont'i sak'ralur adgilze [Refurbishing the Sacred Place]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, July 20, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3HJxEmV> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

⁶⁴ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "shemoghobili da dausrulebeli 9 ap'rili [Fenced and Unfinished April 9]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eZdE3h>.

⁶⁵ Niko Nergadze and Shio Khidasheili. "ra (ar) vitsit 1989 ts'lis ap'rilis aktsiebze [What We (Do Not) Know about the 1989 Protests]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3qPLQUs> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁶⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Neil J. Smelser, Bernhard Giesen, Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 16-17.



insult to the sanctity of the event. As James Wertsch explains, once a narrative is formed and “embraced by a mnemonic community, the idea that there might be legitimate alternatives is likely to be dismissed as heresy.”⁶⁷ For example, in November 2018, Yuri Mechitov’s comment in a film produced by Al Jazeera was met with a harsh reaction. Mechitov is the author of several famous photographs taken on the night of April 9 and after it, one of which, a girl with the flag of independent Georgia, became a symbol of April 9. In his statement, he contradicted the dominant narrative of April 9 and its established meaning: “The protesters were mostly between 13 and 25 years old. Only young people. Eighty percent of the participants had gathered because April 9 was a show, and they wanted to be part of it. It was a criminal act on the part of the organizers, designed to achieve those results. It was a plan to seize power. No one wanted to kill anyone. They all died in a stampede. Twenty women died of asphyxiation. They did have wounds, but they were not intentionally killed,”⁶⁸ he mentioned.

Among others, the girl who became the symbol of April 9, Nana Makhradze, responded to Mechitov: “Many forget that on April 9, with lit up hearts and eyes ablaze, clean hands and national spirit, we gained the most valuable thing we own today – freedom! [...] To the question whether the girl on his famous photo was brave or stupid, I will say that she was stupidly brave, just like many other people on that day, who were violated, poisoned, and trampled!!! [...] This bloody day will always remain a symbol of freedom, along with the names of those heroes whose memory we, the participants of the “show,” will pass on to posterity!”⁶⁹ There were even harsher reactions: “Mechitov and those like him are pawns in Russia’s hybrid war that is geared against the independence and success of Georgia. These pawns are brought out when needed.”⁷⁰

Mechitov felt it necessary to apologize: “It hurts me terribly that I have caused so much pain to my compatriots with my statement. [...] This pain does not leave me. This event happened 29 years ago, it all happened [in front of our eyes. [...] I caused pain to my friends as well, who did not expect that I could say something like this. It would be good if my sincere apologies could alleviate the anger I have caused. [...] The most important thing is to act so that all this is not in vain; to build a state where we can all live proudly and happily.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ James V. Wertsch, “Deep Memory and Narrative Templates: Conservative Forces in Collective Memory,” in *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 182.

⁶⁸ Tamuna Varshalomidze, “The Soviet Scar: Legacy of USSR Architecture in Georgia,” *Aljazeera*, 10 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/3HHdhql> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁶⁹ Facebook user Nana Nani Makharadze’s post, November 12, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3t6I0JI> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁷⁰ Nana Nani Makharadze’s post, November 12, 2018.

⁷¹ “iuri mechitovis bodishi [Yuri Mechitov’s Apology],” *YouTube*, November, 15, 2018, <https://bit.ly/33eskZX> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

The rally of May 2018, which followed the special operations in the clubs “Bassiani” and “Gallery,” displayed an obvious struggle for this place of sacral significance. On the second day of the protest, on May 13, members and supporters of certain aggressive nationalist groups (“Georgian March” and others) gathered in front of the National Youth Palace and tried to occupy the space in front of the parliament building for a few hours, during which time they physically retaliated against the protesters and removed them from the location.⁷² The strong reaction that followed a dance of one of the protesters, Ani Subeliani, on the April 9 memorial also revealed the struggle for maintaining control over the sacred event and place: “an insult to national dignity,” “an insult to freedom and history,” “an insult to the April 9 heroes, everyone must be punished,” “the April 9 memorial is not simply a random monument, it is as sacred as a temple.”⁷³ However, Ani Subeliani believed that the individuals who had gathered outside of parliament felt like they were continuing the April 9 battle: “Dancing on the memorial was an act of freedom for me. [...] What followed my actions – the aggression, hatred, and threats against me and my family – is not the right way for protecting sanctity.”⁷⁴ Two years later, recalling the events of May 2018, she explained: “When I stood on the memorial and danced, I felt a strong energy. It felt like I was invincible and could turn the fight around, and this brought a huge sense of happiness.”⁷⁵ In April 2021, Nini Gogiberidze, the granddaughter of Tina Enukidze, who died on April 9, declared: “A girl danced on the April 9 memorial a few years ago, and many were outraged. Tina sacrificed herself so that someone could dance on Rustaveli.”⁷⁶

In April 2019, on the 30th anniversary of April 9, 1989, a controversy ensued following the presentation of a new video of the song “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips” on Imedi TV’s “Prime Show.” The composer had recorded a new video, for which only male singers were invited. This provoked a protest from a part of the society: “Let’s give each other tulips without the seventeen women who were

⁷² “ani subeliani ambobs, rom 9 ap’rilis memorialze tsek’vis gamo emukrebian [Ani Subeliani Says She Is Being Threatened for Dancing on the April 9 Memorial],” *Liberali*, May 16, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3q3ZXGT> (Accessed 23.01.2021).

⁷³ “ana subeliani: memorialze tsek’va chemtvis tavisuplebis akt’i iq’o [Dancing on the Memorial Was an Act of Freedom for me],” *TV Imedi*, May 13, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3eXtefS> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁷⁴ “ana subeliani: memorialze tsek’va chemtvis tavisuplebis akt’i iq’o”.

⁷⁵ “rodesats monument’ze videki da vtsek’vavdi, titkos, dzalian dzlevamosili viq’avi’ – ana subeliani aktsiidan 2 ts’lis shemdeg [When I Danced on the Monument, It Seemed Like I was Powerful’ – Ana Subeliani Two Years after the Protest],” May 15, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eXtefS> (Accessed 20.01.2021).

⁷⁶ “nini gogiberidze, romlis bebiats - tina enukidze 9 ap’rils nichabma imskhverp’la [Nino Gogiberidze, Whose Grandmother, Tina Enukidze, Died on April 9],” *Formula*, <https://bit.ly/3F5CMQH> (Accessed 07.05.2021).



killed?”⁷⁷ “We call on all people for whom the seventeen women are a symbol of defending the country, [...] this is an insult to those seventeen and many other women who sacrificed themselves for their homeland.”⁷⁸ The composer responded: “We believe that man is the strength of the family, he is the defender of the country. Because of that, these twenty-five men will sing this song.”⁷⁹ This was met with even greater outrage: “How do you spit in the face of so many heroic women? What are you saying to little girls?! That their love, respect, and devotion for the country is nothing, compared to the devotion of a man?” “In a country where the Mother of Kartli proudly stands with a bowl in one hand and a sword in the other, such statements are ridiculous if not heart-breaking!”⁸⁰ The outrage quickly subsided: the new video was played only two or three times and was soon forgotten.

The “Gavrilov Night” of June 20, 2019, brought April 9, 1989, back to the collective memory: “I woke up on June 20 and saw that [...] in the parliament building, near the April 9 memorial, the seat of the speaker of the Georgian Parliament was taken by [Sergei Gavrilov], a leader of the parliament of that country [...] which painted Rustaveli Avenue in red in 1989,” wrote a young person. “I was ashamed of myself and my country, ashamed of the deceased who in 2008, in 1990, and in 1989 sacrificed themselves for the nation and politics, for which we were now being shot at.”⁸¹ In the words of Archbishop Zenon, the authorities’ ruthless actions reminded the people on that day of “how the enemy’s punitive units were hunting down our freedom fighters” on April 9, 1989.⁸²

A decision of the city mayor to renovate the area surrounding the parliament in 2020 was perceived as an attempt to seize the sacred place and to disrupt and take over the traditional site of protest. Such a perception had some basis and a precondition: shortly before the start of the works, on December 20, 2019, the City Hall dismantled Malkhaz Machalikhvili’s tent, under the pretext of putting

⁷⁷ Nino Bidzinashvili, “‘vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi’ – simgheris akhali versia mkholod k’atsebis monats’ileobit da p’rot’est’I [‘Let’s Give Each Other Tulips’ – Protesting the New Version of the Song Performed Only by Men],” *Netgazeti.ge*, March 29, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3HKpudU> (Accessed 02.02.2021).

⁷⁸ “kveq’nis sidzliere mamak’atsia - simgheras ‘vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi’ mkholod k’atsebi shearsruleben [The Strength of the Country Lies with Men – The Song ‘Let’s Give Each Other Tulips’ Will be Performed Only by Men],” *Tabula*, March 29, 2019, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3zxxgXs5> (Accessed 02.02.2021).

⁷⁹ Nino Bidzinashvili, “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips.”

⁸⁰ “The Strength of the Country Lies with Men.”

⁸¹ “gavrilovis ghame – nik’usha [Gavrilov’s Night – Nikusha],” *Imitom.ge* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3n75xpM> (Accessed 12.01.2021).

⁸² “dghes 9 ap’rili gagvaxsene – mtavarep’isk’op’osi zenoni khelisuplebas [You Reminded Us of April 9 Today – Archbishop Zenon to the Government],” *On.ge*, June 21, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3F3HggqW> (Accessed 16.02.2021).

up New Year decorations for children. The tent had been standing there since 2018, when Machalikashvili set it up, demanding the investigation of his son's murder.

Due to the renovation process, for the first time in thirty years, it became impossible to celebrate the April 9 anniversary in 2020. The government representatives went up to the green fence that surrounded the Parliament and honored the memory of the victims by placing the traditional red tulips on the ground. "The government reacted to the April 9 anniversary, but the people could not commemorate it. [...] For the first time since that tragic night, people did not gather in front of Parliament at dawn, as a curfew was imposed⁸³ again, just like in those April days,"⁸⁴ recalls Giorgi (Gogi) Gvakharia. The President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, did not go to Rustaveli Avenue, yet she reiterated the traditional April 9 narrative ("April 9: triumph and tragedy"), emphasized the historical significance of the date,⁸⁵ and explained her absence by invoking the restrictions imposed due to the Covid pandemic, which prevented many individuals from going to the memorial.

The renovation and restoration works, which began in January 2020, were completed in August. The historical stone slabs that were part of the original April 9 memorial were returned to their initial place. The monument also remained unchanged, but the space was surrounded by lawns. These changes were deemed to be an erasure of the sacred site and "an attempt to occupy the area." However, as Emzar Jgerenaia notes, "no such attempt will change the importance of this place, and it will remain the area where citizens will always have their say. People will always manage to gather here."⁸⁶

The part of Rustaveli Avenue in front of parliament still remains a place where the modern history of Georgia is written. As for April 9, this paradigmatic date has been commemorated, since 1993, as a holiday and as the day of "Georgia's national unity, civil consent and remembrance of the victims who died for their homeland." Resolution # 211 of the Parliament of Georgia, adopted on April 8, 1993, states: "April 9 is a very important day in the recent history of Georgia. On this day, the Georgian nation unanimously and clearly expressed its aspiration for freedom and independence. On this day, the innocent blood of patriots who sacrificed themselves for their homeland was shed. On this day, the independence of

⁸³ The curfew was imposed by the authorities because of the Covid Pandemic.

⁸⁴ Giorgi Gvakharia, Program "April 1989-2020," from the program series "anareklebi [Reflections]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 12, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3K1o9Sf> (Accessed 10.02.2020).

⁸⁵ Natia Kenkadze, "salome zurabishvili – me ar mivsulvar 9 ap'rilis memorialtan [Salome Zurbishvili – I Didn't Go to the April 9 Memorial]," *ITV*, April 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3G6X91c> (Accessed 16.02.2021).

⁸⁶ Rekhviashvili, "Refurbishing the Sacred Place."



Georgia was declared. Thus, this day is not only a symbol of the national liberation movement, but also the day of Georgia's unity and progress."⁸⁷

The collective trauma of April 9 as a paradigmatic event conditioned and determined the meaning of many subsequent events in the future history of Georgia. It reinforced and established the "Georgian political rhetoric and the whole symbolic world of national consciousness, along with the images of the enemy, the friend, the traitor and the national hero."⁸⁸

Rezumat

Evenimentele de la sfârșitul anilor 1980 și începutul anilor 1990 au jucat un rol crucial în istoria Georgiei. Ziua de 9 aprilie 1989 a marcat unul dintre cele mai importante evenimente în acest sens. Această zi a definit identitatea comună și memoria colectivă a georgienilor pentru o perioadă îndelungată, determinând și evoluțiile ulterioare din țară. Data de 9 aprilie s-a dovedit a fi un eveniment paradigmatic în istoria recentă a Georgiei. A fost creată o narațiune a traumei și triumfului, narațiune care s-a reflectat în diverse texte istorice, literare și documentare, precum și în diferite locuri ale memoriei. Doi ani mai târziu, în același loc în care s-a întâmplat tragedia din 9 aprilie 1989, a fost declarată restabilirea independenței Georgiei. Articolul analizează procesul cristalizării datei de 9 aprilie ca un eveniment paradigmatic. Sunt examinate tendințele și codurile culturale care au avut un rol crucial în consolidarea narațiunii traumatic-triumfaliste a zilei de 9 aprilie 1989, precum și în dinamica, elaborate treptat în următorii treizeci de ani, legată de atitudinile în raport cu aceste evenimente. Studiul descrie modul în care 9 aprilie și rezonanța acestei date au influențat percepția trecutului, dar și evoluțiile ulterioare. Autorul folosește teorii ale memoriei colective și ale traumei culturale drept bază pentru cadrul teoretic al cercetării. În același timp, documentele oficiale, memoriile, textele literare și diverse tipuri de surse generate de mass media reprezintă baza empirică a articolului.

Cuvinte-cheie: Georgia, eveniment paradigmatic, trauma, triumf.

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⁸⁷ "Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the Declaration of April 9, the Day of the Adoption of the Act of Restoration of State Independence of Georgia, the Day of National Unity, Civil Consent and Remembrance of the Victims Who Died for Their Homeland," *sakartvelos sak'anonmdeblo matsne [Legislative Herald of Georgia]*, April 8, 1993, <https://bit.ly/3qYMIX8> (Accessed 11.04.2021).

⁸⁸ Giorgi Maisuradze, "dghesasts'auli, romelits mudam chventanaa [Celebration That Is Always with Us]," Giorgi Maisuradze, *chak'et'ili sazogadoeba da misi darajebi [Closed Society and Its Guardians]* (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2011), 6.

1989 – Annus Mirabilis for the Moldavian SSR

Sergiu MUSTEATĂ

Abstract

The study synthesizes the most important events and transformations that marked Moldovan society in 1989 and its future developments. The study's primary aim is to highlight the most important events from 1989 that led the Moldovan society towards obtaining the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the study also shows the current knowledge of the 1989 developments to draw new research perspectives. Thus, in chronological order, the most critical social, cultural, and political events that have had long-term effects on Moldovan society are reviewed. The article analyzes the national emancipation movement's emergence, activity, and counter-movements to maintain the Soviet regime. The 1989 events in the Moldavian SSR resulted from Gorbachev's reforms (glasnost, perestroika) and the "revolutions" in the socialist states that succeeded in bringing down the communist regimes. Starting with cultural demands and rights (the language and alphabet), people had reached economic and political demands (economic autonomy, sovereignty, independence). The emergence of alternative political forces to the Communist Party, their official registration, the legalization of their meetings, and public manifestations led to the consolidation of the critical mass opposed to the Communist regime. Changing the language legislation, returning to the Latin alphabet, and condemning the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact are just some of the successes of 1989 that impacted the following years, resulting, eventually, in the Declaration of Sovereignty of 1990 and the Declaration of Independence of 1991.

Keywords: Moldavian SSR, USSR, Chişinău, political changes, national movement, 1989

Introduction

1989 played an essential role in world history, in general, and in the history of Europe, in particular. By the beginning of the 1980s, the communist system had reached its ethical exhaustion. Although Mikhail Gorbachev, the initiator of the reformist trend, hoped for the revival of socialism, the crisis became systemic, thus unsolvable. The political changes in Hungary and Poland in 1989, which led to the abolition of the political monopoly of a single party, set the tone and the pace of the subsequent changes in other socialist states, to a large extent. Significant political changes and even revolutions in 1989 directly reacted to the situation created in most states of the socialist camp. Discussing the situation in Romania in 1989, Vladimir Tismăneanu applies a less common characterization –



“a (successful) attempt to usurp revolutionary power,” which shows the specificity of the political transformations in this country compared to the other socialist states. Tismăneanu asserts that the greatest significance of the 1989 revolutions was to cause the collapse of the communist regimes, which ultimately led to the creation of their destiny by the people of the USSR.¹

For most of the socialist states in Europe, 1989 was the year of the demolition of communism, while for China, it meant consolidating the power of a single party through the massive suppression of the student demonstration on Tiananmen Square. In 1989, although several events encouraged the national emancipation movement in the USSR, there was also firm repression leading to human victims in Baku, Tbilisi, Vilnius, Alma-Ata, and Riga. Thus, 1989 became known as an *annus mirabilis*, because crucial transformations took place in the European states, leading to the collapse of communist regimes and the end of the Cold War.² A “collapse or twilight of Leninism” occurred in 1989, as the founding myths of the communist ideology were destroyed.³ As Leszek Kolakowski states, “Communism represented the supremacy of the lie”. In this context, Tismăneanu writes that “We can separate ourselves from the Leninist legacy at the mental level only if we renounce this culture of lies and duplicity.”⁴ Although, at the level of statements, this ideology was proclaimed to be a saving one, creating a new society, etc., in reality, communism was based on dictatorship. Communist regimes were, in their radical phase, genocidal or exterminating regimes, a mythocracy and a hierocracy, which eventually became one of the pathologies of the twentieth century. The closed society built by the communist regime could not be sustainable.

Given the character of the events that deeply impacted the world three decades ago, it is high time to review the most consequential episodes of 1989. The year 1989 is important from several perspectives: from China’s perspective, focusing on the student demonstration in the central square of Beijing – Tiananmen, from the perspective of the events in Poland, when *Solidarność* won the elections and formed the first democratic government, or, conversely, the initiative of the “Charter 77” members and the beginnings of changes in Prague, the events in Budapest, the collapse of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 (the Wall of Shame), etc.

¹ Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009).

² Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflecții asupra revoluției din Europa* (București: Humanitas, 1993); Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Revoluțiile din 1989. Între trecut și viitor* (Iași: Polirom, 1999); Sorin Antohi, Vladimir Tismăneanu (eds), *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* (New York and Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000); Stelian Tănase, *Istoria căderii regimurilor comuniste. Miracolul revoluției*, 2nd ed. (București: Humanitas, 2009).

³ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Despre 1989: Naufragiul utopiei* (București: Humanitas, 2009).

⁴ Tismăneanu, *Despre 1989...*

These changes directly echoed in the USSR, including in the Moldavian SSR, which had already undergone transformations caused by Gorbachev's perestroika, launched in 1985. The first demands of the people in Chişinău were not of an economic, social, or political order; they concerned culture and identity, with people demanding the restoration of the right to their mother tongue and the Latin alphabet, with "freedom" as a watchword. Many photos of those times show people holding placards with the word "freedom." People wanted to talk and act freely without fearing being pursued. In other words, they wanted to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The most offensive fact for the citizens of the Union's republics was that they could not speak and write correctly in their native languages. That is why the first demands of the Chişinău protest movements concerned the language and the alphabet, which marked the whole year.⁵

As a result of the decision of 1987 to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan, the last Soviet troops left this country in 1989, after a ten-year war during which more than 14,000 Soviet soldiers had been killed, and huge sums of money had been wasted. The official announcement on February 15, 1989, that the last Soviet military had left Afghanistan had a positive impact on Soviet society. However, in 1989, bloodshed occurred in Tbilisi, Baku, Vilnius, Alma-Ata, and Riga. On April 9, 1989, manifestations of civil disobedience resulted in fourteen deaths in Tbilisi, and those of January 13, 1991, in Vilnius resulted in thirteen deaths. However, the bloodiest crackdown against civilians who wanted freedom occurred in Baku between November 17 and December 5, 1988. The situation was solved with the help of the army and the intervention of tanks in the central square of Baku.

In January 1989, the organization "Memorial" was established in Moscow, bringing together the most influential personalities of the dissident movement in the USSR. The Soviet authorities refused to register the association. In December 1989, at Sakharov's funeral, Mikhail Gorbachev asked Elena Bonner, Andrei Sakharov's widow, whether he could do anything for her. "Register Memorial," she replied. As there was no proper legislation, "Memorial" was initially registered as a sports association. The founder of the "Memorial" association, the academician Sakharov, advocated the defence of human rights, encouraged the collection of information on repression in the USSR, and demanded concrete steps towards opening the Soviet archives. The association has published the names of over 2.5 million victims of communist terror on the Internet, out of a total number estimated at between 11 and 15 million.

The year 1989 directly impacted the USSR and hastened the dismantling of the Soviet empire. Thus, 1989 meant the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification

⁵ Klaus Heitmann, "Probleme der moldauischen Sprache in der Ära Gorbačev". *Süd-Ost-Europa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartforschung* 38, (1989): 28–53.



of Germany, the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of communism in Europe, and the end of the Cold War. 1989 meant also the beginning of the dismemberment of some states, the advancement of the European integration process, the expansion of NATO, and the outbreak of new ethnic and military conflicts. In other words, 1989 meant a break between the past and the future, or between “the world before and after 1989.”⁶

Several studies discuss the events of 1989 in the Moldavian SSR in the context of the effects of the *perestroika* reforms, the national emancipation movement that was gaining momentum in Chisinau, and the perspective of the opponents of these transformations.⁷ Although access to the archives has been liberalized in the last decades in Moldova, the publication of relevant collections of documents regarding the events of 1989 is relatively underdeveloped. In this sense, we highlight the contributions of historians M. Cernencu, A. Galben, and Gh. Rusnac. M. Adauge, I. Cașu, and I. Șarov published volumes of documents that contribute to researching the period of 1988-1991.⁸ The memoirs of some politicians of those times, such as Grigore Eremei, Mircea Snegur, Petru Lucinschi, Ion Costăș,

⁶ Jean-Marie Le Breton, *Sfârșitul lui Ceaușescu. Istoria unei revoluții* (București: Cavallioti, 1997); Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Decembrie 1989 – Deconstrucția unei revoluții* (Iași: Polirom, 2004); Peter Siani-Davies, *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989* (București: Humanitas, 2006), (trad. Cristina Mac); Bogdan Murgescu (coord.), *Revoluția română din 1989. Istorie și memorie* (Iași: Polirom, 2007); Apostol Stan, *Revoluția română văzută din stradă: decembrie 1989 – iunie 1990* (București: Curtea Veche, 2007); Andrei Codrescu, *Gaura din steag* (București: Curtea Veche, 2008).

⁷ Lora Bucătaru (red. alc.), *Istoricul an 1989* (Chișinău: Universitas, 1991); П.М. Шорников, *Покушение на статус: Этнополитические процессы в Молдавии в годы кризиса (1988-1996)*, Издание 2-е, переработанное и дополненное (Кишинев: Кишиневская община россиян, 1997); Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut* (Chișinău: Prut Internațional, 2001); Igor Cașu, „Die Republik Moldau 1985-1991 – von der Perestroika zur Unabhängigkeit”, Klaus Bochmann, Vasile Dumbrava, Dietmar Müller, Victoria Reinhardt (Hg.), *Die Republik Moldau. Ein Handbuch* (Leipzig: Moldova-Institut-Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag GmbH, 2012), 109-117; Igor Cașu, „Mișcarea de eliberare națională în RSSM, 1989-1991: Unele contribuții”, *Tyragetia*, vol. VII (XXII), nr. 2 (2021): 291-303; D. СІМРОЕȘU, S. MUSTEAȚĂ, *BASARABIA LA UN SECOL DE LA MAREA UNIRE. O istorie politică a Republicii Moldova (1991-2018)* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2018); S. Musteață, „De la restructurarea URSS la independență RSSM (1985–1991)”, Liliana Corobca (editor), *Panorama comunismului în Moldova Sovietică. Context, surse, interpretări*, (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 235–247; Elena Negru, “Bătălia pentru limbă și alfabet din RSSM în anul 1989”, *Revista de istorie a Moldovei*, No. 3-4 (119-120), (2019): 114-135.

⁸ Mihai Cernencu, Andrei Galben, Gheorghe Rusnac, *Republica Moldova: istoria politică (1988–2000). Documente și materiale*, vol. II (Chișinău: USM, 2000); Mihai Adauge (alc.), *Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat. Documente și Materiale*, vol. 1 (1988-1994) (Chișinău: Tipografia Prag-3, 2008); Igor Cașu, Igor Șarov, *Republica Moldova de la Perestroikă la independență, 1989–1991. Documente secrete din arhiva CC al PCM* (Chișinău: Cartdidact, 2011).

Nadejda Brânzan, and others, play a special role in the analysis of the events of 1989 in Moldova.⁹

Building on the existing literature, this study provides a synthesis and analyzes the most significant events and transformations that had an impact on Moldovan society in 1989 and its future developments. The study highlights the landmark events in 1989 that led to the Republic of Moldova's sovereignty and independence. The paper will also summarize the current knowledge of the 1989 events and developments, from which we could draw new research perspectives.

Preliminaries

After the April 1985 Plenary of the CC of the CPSU, the USSR's models of internal and external development changed. The period between 1985 and 1989 is thus considered the beginning of the democratic movement in Moldova, which was possible thanks to the new policy promoted by Gorbachev, the so-called "restructuring" or *perestroika*, in Russian, and freedom of speech, *glasnost*.¹⁰ During 1989–1991, the USSR was engulfed by a profound political crisis, largely due to national emancipation movements throughout the USSR. Most Union republics opted for sovereignty, and the Baltic countries demanded their independence from the beginning. 1988 was a year in which the effects of *perestroika* were felt in Chișinău as well. At the beginning of 1988, during the 7th Plenary Meeting of the CC of the CPM, the necessity of introducing political and economic reforms was discussed. This reformist trend was reflected in the theses of November 1988: "Let's affirm restructuring with concrete acts!"¹¹ These theses were elaborated in the style of communist ideology and were criticized even by some communists.

On the sidelines of the turmoil inside the Communist Party, civil society gradually mobilized itself to support Gorbachev's initiatives. On June 3, 1988, in Chișinău, the Democratic Movement for the Support of Restructuring (DMSR) was set up, with intellectuals at its head. Judging by the DMSR's program, approved on August 24, 1988, it appeared that the movement supported the democratization of society by introducing more freedoms, such as the transition of the Moldavian SSR to self-management, the introduction of the MSSR citizenship,

⁹ Grigore Eremei, *Fața nevăzută a puterii* (Chișinău: Editura Litera, 2003); Mircea Snegur, *Labirintul destinului. Memorii*, vol. 1: *Calea spre „Olimp”* (Chișinău: Fundația Draghiștea, 2007); Petru Lucinschi, *Moldova și moldovenii. De ce țara noastră este mereu la răscruce? (încercare de răspuns la întrebare)* (Chișinău: Editura Cartea Moldovei, 2007); Ion Costăș, *Transnistria 1989-1992. Cronica unui război „nedeclarat”* (București: Editura RAO, 2012); Nadejda Brânzan, *La cumpăna dintre milenii* (Chișinău: Editura Pontos, 2018).

¹⁰ Musteață, „De la restructurarea URSS la independența RSSM...”, 235–247.

¹¹ Cașu, Șarov, *Republica Moldova de la Perestroikă la independență...*, 25.



the improvement of development conditions for the Moldovan culture, the re-establishment of the social functions of the Moldovan language, etc.¹²

On the 1st and 2nd March 1988, at the plenary meeting of the Management Committee of the Writers' Union of the USSR, the writer Nil Ghilevici proposed to decree the language of the people that gave its name to each national republic to be the state language in the respective territory. In Chişinău, Valentin Mândăcanu took the initiative to support that proposal in the article "Veşmântul fiinţei noastre" (The Raiment of Our Being).¹³ On March 25, 1988, a commemorative plaque was unveiled, and a commemorative meeting was held in honour of the poet Alexei Mateevici near the house at no. 33 Livezilor Street in Chişinău, where he lived during his last years. On March 26, 1988, a conference dedicated to the centenary of the poet Alexei Mateevici's birth was held, followed by a festive evening. Radio and Television skipped the live broadcast in which the actor Victor Ciutac read Mateevici's article "What we need" and the end of the concert, when the chorus of Radioteleviziune performed the song "Limba noastră" (Our Language), and the 800 spectators rose in applause.¹⁴

The Alexei Mateevici Cenacle, led by Anatol Şalaru, whose meetings were allowed in the area of Komsomol Lake, played a crucial role in promoting democratic ideas and national rebirth. One of the first meetings of the Cenacle was held on January 15, 1988, near the bust of Mihai Eminescu on the Classics' alley of the Public Garden in Chişinău.¹⁵ On June 3, 1988, the Democratic Movement, headed by intellectuals, was set up to support the *perestroika*. It gradually became a national emancipation movement for the Moldavian SSR's inhabitants.

On October 31, 1988, the Conference of Romanian Linguists in the USSR took place in Chişinău. It recommended decreeing the national language of the MSSR to be the state language and recognizing the unity of the languages used in the MSSR and Romania. Although the Communist Party of Moldavia, headed by Simion Grossu, opted for Moldovan-Russian bilingualism in the MSSR, the interdepartmental Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR for studying the history and problems of the development of the Moldovan language was forced to accept the decision of the Conference and to recommend the decreeing of the "Moldovan language" as the state language.¹⁶ According to the 1989 census, there were 4,335,000 people in the Moldavian SSR, 64.47% of whom were Moldovans, 13.85% Ukrainians, and 12.97% Russians.¹⁷

¹² Caşu, Şarov, *Republica Moldova de la Perestroikă la independenţă...*, 27. Cernencu, Galben, Rusnac, *Republica Moldova: istoria politică (1988–2000)...*, 6.

¹³ Valentin Mândăcanu, "Veşmântul fiinţei noastre", *Nistru* 4 (1988).

¹⁴ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 31–32.

¹⁵ Caşu, „Mişcarea de eliberare naţională...”, 292.

¹⁶ Heitmann, *Probleme der moldauischen Sprache...*, 28–53.

¹⁷ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demografia_Republicii_Moldova (accessed on 20.02.2023).

1989 – Language, Alphabet, Tricolor

As a result of the discussions that started in 1988, the whole of the next year, starting from January 1989, was marked by debates centered around the Romanian language.¹⁸ On January 22, 1989, the Alexei Mateevici Cenacle organized an unauthorized rally on Lenin Street in Chişinău, which the CC Bureau of the CPM qualified as a manifestation of mob violence, extremism, and nationalism. On January 25, 1989, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR adopted a Decision regarding the elaboration of the draft law on the functioning of languages on the territory of the Republic. On the same day, the Decree on the use of the state language of the Lithuanian SSR was adopted in Vilnius, which encouraged the movement for the national language in Chişinău. As an experiment, the weekly *Literatura și Arta* and the works of some classics of national literature – Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Alexandru Donici, etc. – were published in the Latin alphabet.

During February 1989 (on the 12th, 19th, and 26th), several informal street meetings were held in Chişinău, and on February 23, between 15,000 and 25,000 people chanted in front of the CPM Central Committee: “We want our language and our alphabet!”, “Stop the migration!”, “Give us our history!”, “Down with the mafia!”, “Down with the bureaucracy!”, “We have lost confidence!”, “Long live Gorbachev!” The protesters also demanded the release of Iurie Țurcanu, who had been arrested while picketing the *Casa învățământului* (House of Education). For the first time, the protesters organized a march on Lenin Street, from the CPM CC to the Academy of Sciences. The law enforcement bodies described the participants as “criminals and people without culture.”¹⁹

On March 3, 1989, during the General Assembly of the Writers’ Union, Vladimir Beșleagă proposed three draft decrees:

1. Regarding the annulment of the MSSR decisions from 1940 on the prohibition of the Latin alphabet;
2. Regarding the Moldovan language as a state (official) language;
3. Regarding the economic independence of the MSSR, in connection with the Republic’s transition to self-financing and self-management.

After the publication of the draft laws on the state language elaborated by the Writers’ Union (March 16, 1989) and by the Institute of Language and Literature (April 24, 1989), on May 13, 1989, the General Assembly of the Academy of Sciences voted for decreeing the Moldovan language as the state language in the MSSR and for the return to the Latin alphabet. On March 8, the women of Chişinău

¹⁸ Negru, “Bătălia pentru limbă și alfabet...”, 114-115.

¹⁹ Igor Cașu, *Cronologia URSS 1989*, 16.03.2011, Radio Free Europe

<http://www.europalibera.org/content/article/2339682.html> (accessed 19.02.2023).



organized a rally and a parade on Lenin Street, demanding the adoption of the decree regarding the state language and a return to the Latin alphabet, democratic elections, and an end to misinformation through the official press. Subsequently, on March 12, the Democratic Movement in Support of Restructuring organized an unauthorized meeting in front of the CC of the CPM after the latter had rejected their request to organize a meeting at the Summer Theater.

On March 12, 1989, the Romanian (red-yellow-blue) tricolor flag was raised for the first time; after that, it was present at all public events. Later on, similar meetings were organized in Bălți and Cahul. On March 13, 1989, the first issue of *Glusul* appeared as the first newspaper in the Latin script published in the Moldavian SSR, founded by Ion Druță, printed in Riga by the association “Dacia,” with a print run of 60,000 copies, and then secretly brought to Chișinău. On March 19, 1989, the largest rally yet was organized at the Summer Theater, attended by tens of thousands of people. Over seven hours, a meeting of the Alexei Mateevici Cenacle initiated a dialogue between the CPM leadership (S. Grossu, A. Mocanu, I. Kalin, V. Pshenichnikov) and the Democratic Movement in Support of Restructuring. Through the newspaper *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, the ATEM news agency spread the rumor that the Alexei Mateevici Cenacle was calling for violence and intended to obtain weapons from the Baltic republics. The writers demanded the annulment of the decisions of the Soviet authorities to introduce the Cyrillic alphabet and the linguistic norms that distorted the Romanian language.

On March 31, 1989, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR decided to publish the draft laws “On the status of the state language in the MSSR” and “On the functioning of the languages spoken on the territory of the MSSR.” The content of the proposed legislation was not what protesters had expected. Thus, on April 9, the Democratic Movement in Support of Restructuring organized a new rally, during which over 25,000 citizens voted for the draft law on the state language proposed by the Writers’ Union, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the official proposals, which were viewed as examples of political and legal incompetence. The protesters also demanded the release of the citizens I. Vărtosu, S. Popa, and F. Calistru, who had been arrested for participating in the street protests.²⁰

The election campaign for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dominated the first months of 1989. The elections took place on March 26. For the first time, citizens whose visions differed from the ideology of the Communist Party were

²⁰ Rezoluția mitingului organizat de Mișcarea Democratică pentru Susținerea Restructurării consacrat problemelor limbii de stat și grafiei latine. Adauge, *Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat...*, 57-58.

able to enter the electoral competition. Thus, the elections brought a new elite to the fore. Among the deputies from the MSSR, a series of personalities from the cultural circles in Chişinău were elected – Ion Druţă, Grigore Vieru, Dumitru Matcovschi, Mihai Cimpoi, Ion C. Ciobanu, Eugeniu Doga, Mihail Munteanu, Gheorghe Chidirim, Anton Grăjdireu, Ion Hadarcă, Gheorghe Rusu, Nicolae Dabija, and Veniamin Apostol – a group whose voice was heard both in Chişinău and in Moscow.²¹ On May 17, 1989, on his way to Chişinău Airport, Dumitru Matcovschi, a people's deputy of the USSR and the editor-in-chief of *Nistru* magazine, who had won the election in the constituency where his opponent was the KGB head of Chişinău, was seriously injured in an accident. A group of deputies from Chişinău addressed an official inquiry to Aleksandr Sukharev, the prosecutor general of the USSR, demanding an urgent clarification of the case. There was much discussion and speculation about the incident, but its causes were never elucidated.²²

On May 25, 1989, the First Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR began its work in Moscow, including the delegation comprising fifty deputies from the MSSR. During his speech at the Congress, Ion Druţă asked Moscow to stop sending staff from the center and to promote decent people from Chişinău into core functions. Mihai Cimpoi proposed elaborating a resolution on national issues, including nationality and the functioning of national languages. Leonida Lari proposed canceling the restricted border area with Romania and raising the issue of open borders between socialist countries. Solidarity with the Moldovan deputies was demonstrated by those from the Baltic and Caucasian republics, facing similar problems.²³ At this Congress, Andrei Sakharov launched the idea of abolishing the CPSU's monopoly of power, which was taken up by Mikhail Gorbachev only in February 1990. The Moldovan deputies had the exceptional courage to declare, in 1989, that the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was a crime against humanity. They called on the Soviet Parliament to set up a committee to discuss its impact. In 1989, in Chişinău, the newspaper *Literatura și Artă* published, for the first time, the additional secret protocol to the Pact, which those in power had not wished to be known, and which had long been considered a myth. After it was published and its existence confirmed, it was clear that Europe had been divided between Germany and the USSR in 1939. Indeed, even today, attempts are made to argue that it was fake, as the treaty was only a friendly agreement between the two states. Some forces in Moscow still do not recognize the existence of secret agreements between Germany and the USSR. Moldovan deputies asked Pimen,

²¹ Adauge, *Partidul Popular Creştin Democrat...*, 57-58.

²² Brînzan, *La cumpăna dintre milenii...*, 515.

²³ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 104-108.



the patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, to withdraw Metropolitan Serapion, who had disgraced the Moldovan Church by his actions at the head of the Chişinău Diocese, and to appoint in his place a clergyman who knew the language of the majority of the parishioners, the history of the people, and the spiritual needs of the population.

During the demonstration of May 1, 1989, informal groups with tricolor flags, slogans, and non-traditional “Labour Day” placards emerged for the first time, demanding “Sovereignty!”, “Power – to the Soviets, the land – to the peasants!”, “Freedom to the political prisoners!”, “Down with the mafia!”, etc.²⁴ Simion Grossu, the Party’s first secretary, mentioned in his report at the Plenary meeting of the CC of the CPM on May 11, 1989, that the issue of decreeing the Moldovan language as the state language should be resolved without affecting the interests and needs of the other ethnic groups in the MSSR. On May 19, 1989, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR published the draft law “On the transition of the Moldovan language to the Latin alphabet.”

On May 20, 1989, the founding Congress of the People’s Front of Moldova (PFM) took place, convened by the Initiative Group of the Democratic Movement to Support Restructuring.²⁵ Representatives from thirty districts participated in the Congress. Several resolutions were adopted, including: “On the Sovereignty of the MSSR”, “On the national symbols”, etc. The Congress ended with an appeal of the PFM “To the citizens of the republic”. The appeal stated that the purpose of the PFM was not to get political and state power in the Republic, but to achieve the economic, social, and cultural sovereignty of the MSSR as an equal state within the USSR, to organize and involve the masses to secure the actual exercise of the will of the people and the creation of the necessary conditions to promote democratic freedoms.

At the same time, the “Interfront” initiative was launched in the Moldavian SSR, in explicit opposition to the People’s Front of Moldova. It was later transformed into the “Unity-Edinstvo Movement”, whose primary purpose was to strengthen the friendship and brotherhood between the people of the MSSR and those of the entire Soviet Union. The leaders of “Interfront” declared that they would not allow anyone to “deposit the red flag at the museum – that flag, under which the revolution took place, under which our fathers and grandparents fought during the civil war and, during the years of the great patriotic war, for the defence of the country”.

²⁴ Cojocaru, 1989 *la Est de Prut...*, 89–90.

²⁵ Caşu, Şarov, *Republica Moldova de la Perestroikă la independenţă...*, 27. Aduage, *Partidul Popular Creştin Democrat...*, 61-86.

The spring of 1989 ended on a rather hot note. On May 31, 1989, a group of citizens declared the first hunger strike in front of Stephen the Great's monument, in protest against the arrest of several people during the demonstrations of March 12, 1989.

The Hot Summer of 1989

Even though the Central Committee of the CPM was putting up hurdles and barriers, even though it was beginning to criticize public gatherings as provocative acts, even though it was trying to ban some of them, more and more people started to converge and, from several tens of participants, initially, the protests involved several tens of thousands of people in the summer of 1989. On June 4, 1989, the first authorized meeting of the Popular Front took place in the Victory Square in Chişinău, during which the participants filled the square with tricolor flags. The Open Letter of the PFM addressed to the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR highlighted that “the statehood of the Moldovan people and the sovereignty of the republic are incomplete without the state language.”²⁶ On June 15, 1989, the first issue printed in the Latin alphabet of the weekly *Literatura și Arta* appeared, under the editorship of the writer Nicolae Dabija. The largest print run of any publication in the MSSR was recorded: 250,000 copies. This newspaper played a special role in the national emancipation movement.

On June 18, the Congress of the Association of Historians of Moldova was convened. It was attended by 467 delegates from all districts of the Republic, who pleaded for an unbiased history and the liquidation of the monopoly over the study of history, but also for the introduction of pluralism of ideas and opinions and the rejection of dogmatism (Address of the delegates to the Congress to the citizens of the Republic).²⁷ Professor Alexandru Moşanu was elected president of the association; he would later become the chairman of Parliament. Historians, writers, and other categories of intellectuals played a central role in the national emancipation movement. Starting from 2011, June 18 has been officially celebrated in the Republic of Moldova as the professional day of historians.

On June 25, 1989, a new meeting, organized by the PFM, took place in Chişinău, gathering more than 50,000 participants, during which an appeal was made to the Supreme Soviet and the CC of the CPM, demanding that December 2 be declared Independence Day for the Moldovan people between the Prut and the Dniester. This date commemorated the formation of the Democratic Republic of Moldova on December 2, 1917. On June 28, a protest rally against the occupation of Bessarabia by the USSR (June 28, 1940) was organized in Chişinău

²⁶ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 109.

²⁷ „O nouă asociație. Într-un ceas bun!”, *Literatura și Arta*, 23 iunie 1989.



for the first time. Thus, supporters of the People's Front of Moldova prevented the organization of a meeting dedicated to "liberating Bessarabia from the Romanian landowners' yoke and its reunion with the Soviet homeland." The CC of the CPM condemned the PFM's actions and deemed them politically harmful.

In July 1989, the book *Let's Read, Let's Write in Latin Letters* by Vlad Pohilă appeared at Lumina Publishing House (at the initiative of Chiril Vaculovschi). The first print run of 100,000 copies was sold for 10 kopecks per copy. The total circulation was 1,105,000 copies. The first book in the Latin alphabet was published by Prof. Ion Berghia, *Returning to the Latin Alphabet*, Chişinău, 1989, followed by the volume by Teo Chiriac, *Salon 33*, Chişinău, Literatura Artistică, 1989, in September. In December, *Anul 1989* by Leonida Lari was published. Thus, 1989 marked the beginning of the use of the Latin alphabet in print within the Moldavian SSR.

On July 29, 1989, the CC plenary meeting of the CPM recommended Mircea Snegur as president of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR, and he was elected instead of Alexandru Mocanu. On July 30, 1989, Snegur participated in the meeting at the Summer Theater, organized by the PFM, where he pleaded for the officialization of the Moldovan language and the return to the Latin alphabet. On August 2, 1989, the PFM published its *Declaration on the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact*, condemning the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR in 1940. The PFM demanded from the Soviet government the following:

1. to recognize the inclusion of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina into the USSR as an annexation;
2. to return the territories illegally included in the Ukrainian SSR (the former districts of Ismail, Bolgrad, Cetatea Albă, and Hotin) to the MSSR.

On August 22, 1989, the conclusions of the Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR for the study of the German-Soviet treaties of 1939 and their consequences were published in Vilnius. These conclusions declared the treaties illegal and null. At the same time, they proclaimed as illegal the Declaration of the Lithuanian People's Party of July 21, 1940, regarding the accession of Lithuania to the USSR, together with the law of August 3, 1940, regarding the acceptance of Lithuania into the USSR. On August 23, 1989, the three Baltic countries joined in a human chain of solidarity, thus protesting against the Soviet annexations of 1939–1940. Meanwhile, in Chişinău, on August 23, 1989, the PFM organized a meeting dedicated to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Still, the organizers refrained from categorical assessments until the session of the Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR closed. On August 24, 1989, the CC of the CPM organized a meeting to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the liberation of the Republic

from the fascist occupiers, following the Iași-Chișinău operation. On August 25, 1989, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR “On the provisional rules of registration of public associations” was adopted, allowing for the legal activity of non-governmental organizations.

The first Great National Assembly (August 27, 1989) took place at the end of the summer. Over 700,000 people attended it. It requested the decreeing of the Romanian language as the state language and the transition to the Latin alphabet. The slogan of the day was “Language! Alphabet!” The resolution “Despre pământ (About land)” was also adopted at the Assembly. Finally, Ion Ungureanu read the concluding resolution of the Great National Assembly of August 27, 1989, “Concerning state sovereignty and our right to the future.”²⁸ On August 31, 1989, a series of legal acts were adopted, including the Law on the status of the state language of the Moldavian SSR, the Law on the return of the state language of the MSSR to the Latin alphabet, and the Law on the functioning of the languages spoken on the MSSR’s territory. At the same time, it was decided that August 31, 1989, should be declared a national holiday, named “Our Language”. The Romanian language based on the Latin alphabet, which had been replaced in 1944 by the Soviets with the Cyrillic script, became the state language in the Moldavian SSR, preserving the designation “the Moldovan language, of Romance origin and structure.”²⁹

These events led to the emergence of legally organized political movements in 1989. The first four social-political movements were registered in Chișinău. These later transformed into political parties. The Popular Front was legally registered then, too. Precisely in this context, there was a growing pro-Russian opposition, wishing to preserve the Soviet Union and boosted by threats from Moscow. Mircea Snegur, later elected the first president, mentioned in his memoirs that the Chișinău authorities were told very clearly: if you do not want to sign the Union Treaty, instead of one Republic, you would have three. This is what happened. On May 21, 1989, the first Congress of the Gagauz Halkî People’s Movement was held in Comrat, attended by 523 delegates from the localities in the south of the Republic inhabited by the Gagauz people. The Congress set up a commission to elaborate a detailed concept of Gagauz autonomy.

In that specific context, a separatist movement in Transnistria emerged. On 11th August 1989, the United Council of Labor Groups (Ob’edinennyi Sovet Trudovykh Kollektivov – OSTK) was set up in Tiraspol. On August 16, 1989, it organized a preventive strike against the draft laws regarding the status of the

²⁸ Gheorghe Cojocaru, “Marea Adunare Națională ca expresie supremă a aspirațiilor populare spre emancipare etnopolitică”, *Cugetul* 3, (2000): 63–72; Aduage, *Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat...*, 103-109.

²⁹ Negru, “Bătălia pentru limbă și alfabet...”, 124-127.



Moldovan language and the transition to the Latin alphabet. This strike later turned into a general political strike of the factories in Chişinău, Bălţi, Tiraspol, Rîbniţa, Bender, Grigoriopol, Dubăsari, and Comrat. Shortly after that, the OSTK decided to create a Tiraspol separatist district.³⁰ On August 18, 1989, the *Soiuz Trudovyykh Kollektivov Trudiashchikhsia* was founded in the hall of the *Mezon* plant. It opposed the introduction of Moldovan as the state language and demanded that Russian become the second state language. V. Nikulin, the *Mezon* plant's director, stated, "We must live well, have everything, and feel at home in any locality of the Soviet Union."³¹ On August 19, 1990, the leaders in Comrat declared the establishment of the SSR of Gagauzia. On September 2, 1990, the Moldavian Transdniestrian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed. These secessionist movements aimed to prevent the Chişinău leadership from rejecting Moscow's control over the MSSR, especially since one of the largest armed units of the Soviet Union, the 14th Army, was garrisoned in Tiraspol. The remnants of the latter remain in Tiraspol even today. Therefore, the consequences of the Soviet regime are still felt in the present.

The Fall of 1989, Hotter than the Summer

Starting on September 1, 1989, at the Faculty of History of the Ion Creangă Pedagogical Institute, the course on the history of the CPSU was canceled for the first time and replaced with a new course, *The History of the Romanians of the East*. But these changes along national (Romanian) lines were not to the liking of the leaders of the Communist Party, the heads of the Union enterprises, or the pro-Russian population. On September 3, the Edinstvo Movement organized a protest meeting in Chişinău against the Law on the State Language, launching strikes that involved around 200 workgroups, with approximately 200,000 employees. On September 13, 1989, during the 13th Extraordinary Session of the Tiraspol City Soviet, the idea of creating an autonomous republic within the MSSR was launched. Moldovan, Russian, and Ukrainian were declared institutional official languages in that area.

At the beginning of September 1989, the Moldavian SSR was visited by the members of a special commission of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, who commented on the subject of language policy, accepting the idea of returning to the Latin alphabet, but also emphasizing the need to preserve the privileges of Russian speakers.³² On September 30, the 15th Plenary meeting of the CC of the CPM was held, during which Simion Grossu described the Great National

³⁰ Coşaş, *Transnistria 1989-1992...*, 29.

³¹ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 122.

³² Caşu, Şarov, *Republica Moldova de la Perestroikă la independenţă...*, 29–30.

Assembly as being subordinated to group interests and criticized the materials produced by some scholars who purportedly promoted the distortion of the historical truth and launched hypotheses and conclusions not confirmed by facts. He referred, in particular, to the years 1812, 1918, and 1940. At the same time, the leader of the Moldovan communists acknowledged that the CPM had made some mistakes when decreeing the Moldovan language as a state language.

On October 8, 1989, a new meeting organized by the PFM took place. It discussed the draft law regarding the elections of the people's deputies of the MSSR. This draft law was found to be undemocratic. At the same time, the participants at the meeting assessed the events in the south of the Republic as a consequence of the intensification of the activity of anti-perestroika and chauvinistic forces, which, to preserve the neo-Stalinist regime, were stirring up national enmity in the Republic. On October 22, 1989, during a new unauthorized meeting of the PFM, the protesters demanded the legal registration of this political movement. Thus, on October 26, 1989, the MSSR Government registered the first four political-cultural organizations: The People's Front of Moldova (leader I. Hadârcă); The Unity-Edinstvo Movement (A. Lisețki); Gagauz Halkı (S. Bulgac) and the Vozrozhdenie Bulgarian Cultural and Social Association (I. Zabunov). On October 28, 1989, the Green Movement (Green Action) was created, with the writer Gheorghe Malarciuc at its head. Although the Communist Party remained the only legal party, according to the constitution of the USSR, in several Union republics the process of legalizing alternative and opposition political movements had begun. However, the first officially registered political party in the Republic of Moldova was the Social Democratic Party, created on May 13, 1990, which initially had three co-chairs: Alexandru Coselev, Oazu Nantoi, and Ion Negură.³³

The leadership of the Baltic republics, Georgia, and Armenia canceled the traditional military parade on November 7, 1989, while the Chișinău authorities decided to organize the parade honoring the Bolshevik revolution, according to the Soviet tradition. On the morning of November 7, 1989, approximately 100 people came out with candles in front of the tanks preparing for the military parade. A detachment of the police forces attacked them. The CPM leadership left the central stand when the People's Front of Moldova column reached Victory Square.³⁴ In 1989, I was a first-year student in history, and I remember the events in Chișinău very well. I participated in many public activities. On November 7, 1989, people dared to go out in front of the tanks and stopped them, for the first time, in Chișinău. In fact, since then, Soviet tanks have not passed through

³³ Igor Cașu, "Gorbaciov propunea anularea rolului conducător al PCUS în februarie 1990", <http://www.europalibera.org/content/article/2299780.html> (accessed on 21.02.2020).

³⁴ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 188–189.



Victory Square (today Great National Assembly Square) in Chişinău. Therefore, these achievements and events had a profound impact on Moldovan society.

People came up with flowers in front of the military column. The soldiers embraced the people and stopped. So, for the first time, the leadership of the Communist Party fled from the central square in Chişinău. It was a sign that society was changing, that people wanted another leadership and something different. It was also a sign that the totalitarian regime, which had held millions of people in awe, had failed. These events greatly impacted the younger generation, who were not afraid to go in front of the tanks. I am not speaking ironically: maybe we did not realize the danger, since tragic events occurred in Baku and Tbilisi, resulting in human casualties, when the tanks crushed people.

On November 9, 1989, the same issue of the weekly *Literatura și Artă* in which the additional secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, was published, demanded the resignation of the top leadership of the MSSR. On November 10, 1989, a meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was held, to which the PFM leaders were invited to discuss the decision regarding the events of November 7, 1989. In the meantime, several young people who had tried to protest in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs against the actions of the police on November 7, 1989, were arrested. The arrests caused a spontaneous protest in front of the Ministry, with people chanting: “Release the arrested!” They were also attacked and beaten by police. By 6 p.m., more than 1,000 people had gathered in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Traffic on the central street was blocked. 200–300 policemen came out of the Ministry building and attacked the crowd. A group of deputies (N. Dabija, A. Grăjdieru, L. Lari, G. Vieru, P. Buburuz) and the PFM leaders (I. Roşca, Gh. Ghimpu, M. Ghimpu, V. Matei) came to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They insisted that Vladimir Voronin, the interior minister, order the troops to withdraw.

Those arrested were released under the pressure of the street. While the column was moving towards Victory Square, the police forces started firing blank rounds from the Ministry building. Automatic weapons fire was heard, inciting the crowd to violent actions. The protesters began to throw stones at the Ministry building. By 11 p.m., about 5,000–6,000 people had gathered in Victory Square, demanding the resignation of S. Grossu, V. Pshenichnikov, I. Kalin, and V. Semionov. As a result of the events of 7th and 10th November 1989, the prosecution and the dissolution of the PFM were attempted, but the authorities did not dare to apply this plan. During a press conference held on November 12, 1989, it was revealed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs that, on the night of November 10, ten military planes had landed at Chişinău Airport, with over 2,000 troops from the special forces of the USSR on board, under the command

of Lieutenant General Vladimir Dubeniuk, who declared that he had come to Chişinău at the request of the leadership of the Republic.

On November 12, 1989, the Second Extraordinary Congress of the Gagauz people adopted the Declaration on the creation of the Soviet Socialist Autonomous Republic of Gagauzia within the MSSR. The main goals of the SSARG were ostensibly to secure the economic independence of the region, to assert the power of the people – i.e., to create conditions for the free development of all nationalities and social strata, to revive the Gagauz state (sic!), and to restore the national customs and culture. The presence of Victor Puşcaş at the Congress and his urging to adopt a moderate stance had no effect. At the end of 1989, the secessionist projects on the left bank of the Dniester and in the southern part of the MSSR, which were directly supported by Moscow, entered their decisive stage.³⁵

In November 1989, the Communist Party of Moldavia published its allegedly reformist theses on *Restructuring by concrete acts*. On November 16, 1989, Petru Lucinschi, originally from the MSSR, was recalled from Tajikistan and appointed as the first secretary of the CC of the CPM. This attempt to reform and change the CPM leadership did not have the expected effects. Simion Grossu, the former first secretary of the CPM, was sent to the USSR Embassy in Mexico as an agricultural adviser. P. Lucinschi, in his memoirs, describes the state of Moldovan society at the time of his taking over the leadership of the CPM:

„I came to Chisinau on November 16, 1989. From the very beginning, I made it my goal to improve the situation. Two days after my election as first secretary of the Party, I demanded that the “Dzerjinski” division, stationed in the area of the railway station (it was estimated that the demonstrators could occupy it), be withdrawn from Moldova. I spoke with Gorbachev and assured him that I was in charge of the situation. On Sunday, when a rally was announced in the square, I went to TVM, and for two or three hours, I answered the many questions asked live by the viewers. Little by little, we, the leadership of the Republic, went out into the streets to talk to the people, and we started to attend the rallies. In this way, I understood better the unstoppable process of street demands, which focused on three issues – language, alphabet, social injustice...”³⁶

Mircea Snegur confirms in his memoirs the essential problems of Moldovan society but highlights “the sacred problems of the nation, related to language, alphabet, history.” Snegur believes that „these problems had been smoldering continuously for half a century, but the communist regime always extinguished them,” and only the policy promoted by Gorbachev allowed people to demand their national rights.³⁷

³⁵ Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut...*, 183.

³⁶ Lucinschi, *Moldova și moldovenii...*, 286.

³⁷ Snegur, *Labirintul destinului. Memorii*, vol. 1 ..., 393.



The End of 1989

The end of 1989, like the whole year, witnessed a series of important events, some of which have had a lasting impact on the region and the world. At the beginning of December 1989, at the Malta Summit, the Soviet and American heads of state, Mikhail Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush, declared the end of the Cold War.³⁸ At the end of the year (December 24, 1989), at the Second Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR, Aleksandr Iakovlev gave a speech regarding the political and legal assessment of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the additional secret protocol. Nevertheless, the references to the occupation of Bessarabia by the USSR disappeared from the final draft of the commission's decision.

The month of December radically changed the destiny of Romania. The uprising against the Ceaușescu regime, which started on December 16 in Timișoara, echoed throughout the country (Sibiu, Brașov, Craiova, Cluj). On December 21, 1989, protest demonstrations in Bucharest began, followed by clashes with law enforcement troops. The National Television was attacked by the protesters, who thus managed to broadcast the events in Bucharest throughout the country live. On December 22, 1989, the Council of the National Salvation Front took over state power. Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu fled from Bucharest but were apprehended in Târgoviște, where they were tried and executed on December 25, 1989. This is how the communist dictatorship in Romania ended. In the context of the situation in Romania, on December 22, 1989, the CC of the Communist Party of Moldavia and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR published a statement expressing their solidarity with “the just struggle of the Romanian people against the totalitarian regime” in the newspaper *Moldova socialistă*. This was a somewhat unexpected statement coming from the representatives of a regime bearing the same name.

On December 30, 1989, at a large meeting devoted to the condemnation of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the idea of the union of Bessarabia with Romania was aired publicly for the first time. During the second half of 1989, the slogans of a historical and cultural nature were gradually replaced by social issues and economic demands, e.g., the autonomous management of the economy by the state authorities.

Conclusions

During 1989, numerous public meetings (rallies, demonstrations, the Great National Assembly) were organized. They led to the awakening of the national consciousness of the citizens of the Moldavian SSR, culminating in the

³⁸ Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War, 1985–1991* (London: Macmillan, 2015).

proclamation of sovereignty (1990) and independence (1991).³⁹ Thus, what happened in 1989 strengthened the spirit of the growing national movement. In 1987, people would still express their thoughts with a certain dose of fear; in 1988, articles began to be published, and the first meetings were organized; in 1989, this freedom of speech and public meetings truly erupted. For the first time, in 1989, people began to display the tricolor during public demonstrations and to state openly that the tricolor was the Moldovans' true flag. In 1989, although the Soviet Union still existed, people were finally allowed to cross the Prut to visit each other. People could go to Romania for the first time and see their relatives after decades of isolation. Petru Lucinschi asserted that "at the beginning of 1990, the situation in Chişinău worsened due to the events in Romania. The December 1989 revolution quickly crossed the Prut, along with its anti-communist spirit. In this new conjuncture, the Flower bridges were not only allowed; they made people from both sides of the Prut meet by all possible means."⁴⁰

For the first time, young Bessarabians could study in Romania. Some colleagues from Chişinău, for example, continued their studies, after 1990, in Iaşi, Cluj-Napoca, or Bucharest. The Romanian state granted scholarships for 1,125 young people from the USSR, including 87 scholarships for young people from Northern Bukovina and 43 scholarships for young people from the region of Odesa. Since 1991, their number has gradually increased, so thousands of young people from Moldova are studying in Romania yearly. The Prut has thus become more of a symbolic boundary, but the barbed wire was only physically removed from the border in 2010, which meant that the political regime in Chişinău continued to fear Romania. Some people still believe that "Bucharest is the epicenter of evil," especially in the separatist region, where Romania is a convenient scapegoat. Thus, after so many transformations, the year 1989 could be considered an *annus mirabilis* for the Moldavian SSR, the year of the "permanent revolution,"⁴¹ because it laid the foundations of the national emancipation movement that later led to the 1990 declaration of sovereignty of the MSSR.

Today, 1989 is viewed as the year of revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, crucial events that changed millions of destinies. The events of 1989 laid the foundations of contemporary democratic societies by removing the totalitarian communist regimes. The totalitarian system had exhausted itself; it had nothing

³⁹ "Declarația de suveranitate a Republicii Sovietice Socialiste Moldova", Nr.148-XII din 23.06.90, *Vesti*, Nr. 8/192 (1990); P. Sandulachi, V. Darie (coordonatori), *Parlamentul Independenței* (Chişinău: S.N., 2010), 432 p.; Sergiu Musteață, "1991: A Chronology of Moldova's Independence", *Euxeinos* 15/16 (2014): 92–103.

⁴⁰ Lucinschi, *Moldova și moldovenii...*, 287.

⁴¹ See Chapter 2: "1989 – Anul „revoluției permanente”, Coștaș, *Transnistria 1989-1992...*, 20-35.



more to offer the people, and it had a lot of cracks that ultimately brought about an incurable crisis. Unfortunately, not all the lessons of 1989 have been learned. For this reason, several political parties in post-totalitarian societies, affected by nostalgia, still harbor and support pro-Russian positions.

Rezumat

Articolul oferă o privire de sinteză asupra celor mai importante evenimente și transformări care au marcat societatea moldovenească pe parcursul anului 1989, dar și evoluțiile sale ulterioare. Principalul scop al acestui studiu este să evidențieze cele mai importante evenimente din anul 1989, care au orientat societatea moldovenească în direcția obținerii suveranității și independenței Republicii Moldova. În același timp, articolul sintetizează, de asemenea, actualul stadiu al cunoașterii privind evoluțiile și evenimentele din anul 1989, în vederea elaborării unor noi perspective de cercetare. Astfel, în articol se examinează, în ordine cronologică, cele mai semnificative evenimente sociale, culturale și politice care au avut efecte de durată, pe termen lung, asupra societății moldovenești. Articolul analizează apariția și activitatea mișcării de emancipare națională, precum și dinamica mișcărilor care i se opuneau, pledând pentru menținerea regimului sovietic. Evenimentele din anul 1989 din RSS Moldovenească au fost un rezultat al reformelor lui Gorbaciov (glasnost, perestroika), dar și al „revoluțiilor” din celelalte state socialiste, care au reușit să doboare regimurile comuniste est-europene. Începând de la formularea unor cerințe legate de sfera culturală și anumite drepturi culturale (limbă, alfabet), mișcările de masă au formulat și revendicări de ordin economic și politic (autonomie economică, suveranitate, independență). Apariția și cristalizarea unor forțe politice alternative Partidului Comunist, înregistrarea lor oficială, legalizarea întrunirilor acestora, ca și manifestațiile publice de masă au dus la consolidarea unei mase critice a populației, care se opunea regimului comunist. Schimbarea legislației lingvistice, revenirea la alfabetul latin și condamnarea Pactului Molotov-Ribbentrop și a efectelor sale sunt doar câteva dintre succesele anului 1989 care au avut un impact direct în următorii ani, rezultând, până la urmă, în adoptarea Declarației de Suveranitate în 1990 și a Declarației de Independență, în august 1991.

Cuvinte-cheie: RSS Moldovenească, URSS, Chișinău, schimbări politice, mișcare națională, 1989

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The Chronotopos of the 1990s: Trauma and Triumph in Georgian Literary Texts¹

Ivane TSERETELI

*A text is written and it generates
multiple meanings itself.*
Umberto Eco²

Abstract

A collective trauma established in the cultural memory can function as a unifier of the in-group for a long time. The objective of this article is to clarify how April 9, 1989 and 1991, the Tbilisi War and civil confrontation, and a stressful series of sudden and intensive changes are analyzed, conceptualized, and interpreted in the fiction and memoirs created after Georgia became independent, to what extent the use of the notions of trauma and triumph are appropriate for Georgia, and whether the reality of the 1990s can be assessed as the trauma of victory. We believe that fiction and memoirs play a major role in constructing an event as a cultural trauma. On the one hand, literary texts determine the meaning of an event and shape it as a trauma and on the other hand, narration is an important method for overcoming a trauma. A trauma can be overcome through constantly conceptualizing and analyzing it, not through repression and hushing.

Key words: Georgia, trauma, triumph, literary texts.

A human is a narrator by nature. Narration implies not only description, but also interpretation. Deliberately or accidentally, meanings are attached to things, facts, and events that took place in the past. According to Robert Neimeyer, both narrators and audiences do so.³ If no texts depicting an event are created, they will not become a collective trauma no matter how tragic the event may be, as it is never the past itself that acts upon a present society, but representations of past events that are created, circulated and received within a specific cultural frame and political constellation.⁴

¹ This work was supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (grant N FR-18-3459).

² Umberto Eco, "Afterword for "The Name of the Rose," Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*. Georgian translation by Khatuna Tskhadadze (Tbilisi: Diogene, 2016), 693.

³ Robert A Neimeyer, "Re-Storying Loss: Fostering Growth in the Posttraumatic Narrative," *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth. Research and Practice*, eds. Lawrence G. Calhoun and Richard G. Tedeschi (New York: Routledge, 2006), 73-75.

⁴ Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, "Memory and Political Change: Introduction," *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3-4.



Fictional texts and texts published in the media, public speeches by politicians, celebrities, or unknown people, official documents, documentary movies and footage, poems, songs, and various types of artistic products and narratives are constantly discussed and interpreted, moving from one text to another. If a work on this issue wins recognition like, for example, Otar Chiladze's "Avelum," Aka Morchiladze's "Mamluk," or Archil Kikodze's "Southern Elephant," reading it will never end. It will not only find a place on the dusty shelves of libraries, but also will pass from hand to hand like in a relay race, becoming a subject of constant conceptualization.

Literary texts, with their ability to fictionalize and symbolize, can bring to life the experience which otherwise would be hardly verbalized and comprehended. They "have the potential to engage readers' powers of emotional identification and sympathy on the one hand, and critical reflection on the other."⁵

As Umberto Eco says, the creation of a literary text is a cosmological event like the story in Genesis. "The first thing to do is to create a universe and make it as comfortable as possible, taking even minor issues into account."⁶ To "create" an artistic "universe", it is necessary to have in-depth knowledge of the era to be described. It is necessary to know where people lived and how they lived, what they felt, what made them happy, what pained them, why they loved, why they hated, what they talked and thought about and how, what they ate, what they read, what they listened to, what they watched, and what they created and why. Creating a universe implies introducing rules, laws, and rules of the game, which apply to characters as well as the plot and, what is most important, the narration. The events of the 1990s, which had an innate potential to be shaped as a trauma, determine the narration. Incessant repetition of the narrations by various authors shapes the event as a cultural trauma and represents a means for overcoming it. The storyline and the behavior of characters depend on the rules and laws of the universe created by the author, but not on the desire of the author.

In our case, the universe created in/by literary texts is a reflection of the 1990s and is full of the features of that period. Therefore, even when the author wants to "write a fairy tale, the adventure of two joyful boys"⁷ from Vake and Vere,⁸ the story nevertheless proves to be aggressive, which is due to the rules of the "created universe" and stems from the stressful and traumatic nature of the era to be described.

⁵ Christa Schönfelder, *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 29.

⁶ Eco, "Afterword for 'The Name of the Rose,'" 701.

⁷ Aka Morchiladze, *Journey to Karabakh* [მოგზაურობა ყარაბაღში] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2017), 6.

⁸ Districts of central Tbilisi.

The authors of the works on the 1990s continue to have clear-cut and acute emotional links to the era they are writing about. The events are assessed and given meanings, and the assessments already given are revised or reinterpreted in the literature at this moment. It is possible to constantly continue revision, but the main nucleus of meanings is created in conditions when communicative memory still exists. Our objective is to outline precisely this nucleus. The objective of most fictional works and the main thing they have to say is not just to describe this era. However, writing about any issue – love, freedom, friendship, authors cannot avoid major events of the 1990s. Moreover, the rules of the game depicted in the literary texts are prompted exactly by these events. The main rules of the game of the era are under observation and hence, those of Eco’s “created worlds” fit the trauma-triumph paradigm. Therefore, the trauma-triumph of the 1990s determines the form and content of any text written about it.

We selected materials on the basis of Jeffrey Alexander’s features of the narratives reflecting collective traumas: A narrative is to depict an event and show what happened; clearly identify the victimized group; show that the traumatic event made an impact not only on one group, but also on the whole society; and point to a perpetrator, who is to be held responsible for what has happened.⁹

The selected texts are works not only recognized by critics, but also by readers’ interests. Many of them have been awarded various literary prizes: Lasha Bughadze’s “Small Country” and Iva Pezuashvili’s “Bunker” have been awarded “Saba” prize; Aka Morchiladze’s “Mameluke” and Archil Kikodze’s “Southern Elephant” – the prize of Ilia State University. Nino Kharatishvili’s “Eighth Life for Brilka” is recognized worldwide. In 1998, Otar Chiladze was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. The literary texts under analysis have been published several times. Some of them have turned into films (“A Trip to Karabakh,” “I Think I Will Die Without You”), while others have been staged (“Paliashvili Street Dogs”). Therefore, their impact on shaping collective memory and constructing traumas was quite strong. They have been created since 1989 up to now and show the dynamics of the narrative. In addition, the scene is laid in the works not only in the center of the capital and small towns, but also in the villages in the periphery, which enables us to realize what the center and regions have in common and what differences between them exist from the perspective of the attitudes towards the events studied.

The selected texts play an important role in the construction of trauma. In the process of narration, the components of the narrative find a consistent form; shared meanings are encoded in them. Through them, social

⁹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 53.



trauma acquires shape while society has the opportunity to discover and overcome it. Prose and poetic works are interesting for our research. Authors of the texts represent different generations and accordingly, their representations and assessments differ. Temporal distance from the events has had an impact on the representation of traumatic experiences. Works written in the heat of the moment are full of linguistic and emotional expressions common during the event. Works produced later, on the other hand, stand out with their “sober” style and plots produced as a result of conscious reasoning.

The Chronotops of the 1990s

*Happy families are all alike;
every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*¹⁰

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*.

This subchapter is about Georgia that is “unhappy in its own way.” The last years of the 20th century are referred to as the 90s, which has become a notorious term and notion. When mentioned, no one needs to specify, which century they belong to. The 90s encompass the events that have taken shape as a cultural trauma. This is not just a historical era, but first and foremost Eco’s “created world” – a unity of and interrelation between time, space, and actions depicted, interpreted, and represented. Only stressful events determine and set bounds of its limits, the artistic time of texts, and the space.

The creation of Eco’s universe implies that it is correctly arranged and minor things and seemingly insignificant details are taken into account. The artistic time and space, physical environment, scenery, and urban landscape create the aura of an imaginary universe. It ushers you in the text, makes you feel the rhythm and nature of time and the prospects for the storyline that is to unfold. However, the aura of the 90s is stressful. In the 90s, people love, are born, feel happy, laugh, get married, and become friends, but all this takes place in a stressful environment. The traumatic aura is the ether of this universe and a living force that shapes everything. Stress and trauma are the invisible starting point that creates everything and puts everything in order and in its due place.

A new era started and a new reality was shaped in the 1990s. Saying this, we first and foremost imply changes that started in attitudes and perceptions, not only in political, economic, and social aspects. These sudden changes can better be seen in the texts produced by news agencies, as they enable us to see everything according to precise dates. As regards fictional texts, they show things from their own angle, using symbols.

¹⁰ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. English translation by Constance Garnett (New York: The Modern Library, 1920), <https://bit.ly/3rQp9Qz> (Accessed 25.07.2021).

Before the 1990s, the word “mziuri” (“sunny” in Georgian) was an artistic symbol of Georgian reality. It reflected light, warmth, and happiness.¹¹ Others thought everything necessary for happiness was available here and Georgians were proud of this too. The song “Tbiliso” became not only the anthem of Tbilisi, but also an all-union hit.¹² It clearly shows the attitude towards Georgia in the Soviet times: a happy and pure region of the sun and roses, where it is agreeable to live. What was the Soviet Mziuri, a region comparable to “the sun and roses,” transformed into in the 1990s? How is the environment of the era described and what symbols are used to depict it? What changes are made to the language used to perceive and depict the universe? Even spring, which is a symbol of renovation and happiness, can undergo sharp changes in the language that becomes traumatic.

Trauma as the ether of the era also determines the meaning of snow as a symbol, making it negative. “There was a big fall of snow. The whole neighborhood was covered in such a manner that one would think the spring would never come and the snow frozen to the asphalt would never melt. The wind was blowing, driving the snow.”¹³ Snow implies cold here. The 1990s were a cold and numb universe. This story by Beka Kurkhuli, where the theme is to unfold “in the dark streets of Tbilisi full of criminals,” starts with the description of a cold environment. The girl, who was strolling in the Vere cemetery at midnight, was not afraid of the submachine gun rounds moving across the sky hanging over Tbilisi. The boy always carried in his pocket a Navajo – a Spanish knife with blade stabilizer and a symbol of revenge, which “Culinary Brotherhood members¹⁴ presented him with at the school banquet on 24 October 1992, shortly before they killed each other the same night.”¹⁵ The story about love and relations between a girl and a boy of the 1990 generation unfolds in a traumatic environment.

¹¹ Children’s pop group Mziuri founded in the 1970s was an ensemble of joyful, happy, and talented *pioneers* (members of the children’s Communist organization) from the sunny region of the Soviet Union. A documentary bearing the same name was made in 1973. There was also a children’s camp called Mziuri, a park of recreation and culture in the Vere Valley in Tbilisi (opened in 1982). On this topic see: Bela Tsipuria, *The Georgian Text in the Soviet/Post-Soviet/Post-Modern Context* [ქართული ტექსტი საბჭოთა/პოსტსაბჭოთა/პოსტმოდერნულ კონტექსტში] (Tbilisi: Ilia State University Press, 2016), 99.

¹² Music by Revaz Lagidze, lyrics by Petre Gruzinsky. The song was written for a film made in 1959 devoted to the 1500th anniversary of Tbilisi. In 1974, the well-known Melodia Soviet record company produced two phonograph records of the Orera pop group, which included “Tbiliso [თბილისი].” This made the song popular throughout the Soviet Union. In 1976, Nani Bregvadze sang it at the Song-76 festival.

¹³ Beka Kurkhuli, “City in the Snow [ქალაქი თოვლში],” Beka Kurkhuli, *City in the Snow* [ქალაქი თოვლში] (Tbilisi: Siesta, 2013), 70.

¹⁴ The Culinary Brotherhood – an armed criminal group in a neighborhood in Tbilisi, in the 1990s.

¹⁵ Kurkhuli, “City in the Snow [ქალაქი თოვლში],” 83.



A sudden and radical transformation of the epoch and the language of its perception is a characteristic feature of cultural trauma. Jeffrey Alexander defines cultural trauma as a state caused by a sudden and radical change in the social environment.¹⁶ When describing trauma of victory, Piotr Sztompka speaks about speedy and radical change with an unexpected and shocking effect.¹⁷ Description of an altered, stressful environment is permanently repeated in diverse texts, which proves that the society described by the author is shocked as a result of a sudden change. Such texts transformed into traumatic narratives that play an important role in attaching meanings to events and developing collective memory:

“The Mtatsminda ridge was cleft,
So was Makhata,
And the stony land in Nadzaladevi.
Avenues, streets, and squares were cleft.
It would be unfortunate, if Mount Mtatsminda would be cleft
And the nation dispersed.”¹⁸

“The antediluvian trolley-buses, so old that they list to one side, vibrate as they splash through torrents of sewage. The potholes are full of foul, foaming water of unspeakable origin. The pavements are strewn with drowned rats, their bellies bloated, their legs splayed.”¹⁹

“But it is better to stay at home at midnight, it is better to be at home trembling like a rabbit in a concrete warren. [...] If you go outside at night these days, you are either an idiot, or you no longer care about yourself. In any case, you have first to accept the idea that every time you leave the house, it may be the last time.”²⁰

“The war had just ended in Tbilisi at that time. The wrecked and miserable city, shrouded in smoke, was full of bread queues and plenty of unfortunate things.”²¹

“It was better to stay at one place than to move, because movement was dangerous.”²²

“Our country was speeding ahead to an abyss.”²³

¹⁶ Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” 1-2.

¹⁷ Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social Change,” 158-159.

¹⁸ Otar Chkheidze, *Artistic Revolution [არტისტული გადატრიალება]* (Tbilisi: Lomisi, 2002), 58.

¹⁹ Chiladze, *Avelum*. English Translation by Donald Rayfield (Garnett Press, 2013), *Saba Library* (pages are not indicated in the electronic version offered by Saba Library), <https://bit.ly/3IIyocD> (Accessed 15.07.2021).

²⁰ Chiladze, *Avelum*, 86.

²¹ Aka Morchiladze, *Mamluk [მამლოქი]* (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2019), 89.

²² Lasha Bugadze, *The Small Country [პატარა ქვეყანა]* (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2018), 52.

²³ Nino Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life (for Brilka) [მერვე სიცოცხლე (ბრილკას)]*. Georgian translation Nino Burduli (Tbilisi: Intelekti, 2019), 1018.

“German, Czech, and Chinese crockery cared for with so much love and suffering moved from the cupboards in living-rooms to the black market on the ‘dry bridge.’”²⁴

“I also went around many other places - robbed buildings of plants, empty schools, and closed printing houses.”²⁵

“We no longer paid any attention to news reports on thefts, robberies, and murders. We were happy to be alive at the end of the day.”²⁶

“We became accustomed to everything.”²⁷ “We had to live in a cruel reality.”²⁸

The excerpts are arranged chronologically in the line of ascent – from the 1990s to present. The 1990s seem equally traumatic at every stage. The language of narration is traumatic and the storyline unfolds in a traumatic environment. The excerpts describe traumatic environments, not concrete tragedies. This is a clear-cut representation of a cultural trauma constructed with fictional narratives repeated in various texts over the past thirty years.

Naira Gelashvili’s story “Grandma” is one of the best metaphors about the early 1990s. The excerpts quoted above say everything straightforwardly and almost realistically, while this text is a fable and it is the fable-like narration that makes it spellbinding.

“Grandma” is a fairy tale created on the basis of Georgian folk tales. This is a fairy tale about fairy tales and the text is full of symbols and cultural patterns. There would have been nothing special and prominent for the purposes of our research in the story without its date: the story was written in 1991. The date at the end of the story is a kind of brand label and to understand it, you are obliged to take a look at history and make the year 1991 a paradigm for understanding the story. Such an approach points to the traumatic nature of those years, because mentioning the 1990s thirty years later puts you within a kind of frame and restrains you, prompting to see everything within the paradigm of a cultural trauma and make generalizations from this angle.

Important passages in the text give us the impetus to conceptualize the 1990s as a metaphor. The author seems to very precisely describe the environment, where the theme unfolds in the fairy tale. “The black water welters from the side of the cemetery, flowing along the graves.” [...] “Although there is no forest, so there can be no deer, the Zoo is here... Does this river also flow down there?”²⁹ Literary

²⁴ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1019.

²⁵ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1022.

²⁶ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1050.

²⁷ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1050.

²⁸ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1051.

²⁹ Naira Gelashvili, “Grandma [დიდედა],” *Georgian Alternative Prose. Naira Gelashvili [ქართული ალტერნატიული პროზა. ნაირა გელაშვილი]* (Tbilisi: Karchkhadze Publishing, 2016), 214.



critic Levan Bregadze said that “the readers, who know Tbilisi, will definitely understand that it is about the Vere River and its valley.”³⁰ In other words, “the outlines of a real environment and an existent locus can be seen in the fairy tale.” The literary critic says that the writer lives not far from the Vere valley indeed. Therefore, “I have seen from the window many times”³¹ is also a documentary detail in the fairy tale. Movement from real to unreal, from abstract to concrete, and from imaginary to documentary is characteristic of post-modernist texts, particularly if a text comprises such clear-cut allusions.

“Lice have appeared in our city. Children have them. They are spread all over nursery schools and boarding schools. It was a genuine calamity for their mothers, who were already quite exhausted.”³² In addition to local residents, lice also attack characters of Georgian folk tales. The situation becomes so grave that the characters of the fairy tale, who can work miracles, are stunned, saying: “So strange! For some reason, nothing works any longer – neither the magic jewel nor the magic shirt. What country is this?”³³ “The art of poisoning the whole river and vineyard is unmatched! Some other country seems to have decided to kill everyone in this kingdom!”³⁴ If we judge according to cultural patterns, it is possible to transform imaginary and fabulous symbols found in the text into documentary details, as both the river and vineyard are symbols of Georgia. Although this country has a long line of the sea coast, rivers are much more important in Georgian culture and not only in fairy tales, but also in literature (“Letters of a Traveler” by Ilia Chavchavadze, the generation of authors of the 1860s in general, “Thoughts on the Riverside of Mtkvari” by Nikoloz Baratashvili, and so forth), and vine is one of the main symbols of the Georgian culture and Georgia. The guardian of the vineyard – “the dead white dog” – is also symbolic. The characters of the fairy tale are unable to revive it. The Georgian mountain guard dog – Tarti, also called shepherd and Kazbegura – is white. In addition, its point of origin and habitat is exactly where the main border between Russia and Georgia lies and it also crosses a river in the mountains – the Tergi.

By means of cultural patterns – images deeply rooted in the society – the author attaches significance to events and makes the reader perceive a tale as a fable-like narrative of reality.³⁵

³⁰ According to Levan Bregadze, the story predicts the tragedy of 13 June 2015 in Tbilisi, caused by the swelled up Vere River.

³¹ Levan Bregadze, “A Fairy Tale about Fairy Tales and Prophetic too [ზღაპარი ზღაპრებზე - თანაც წინასწარმეტყველური!],” Levan Bregadze, *Postmodernism in Georgian Literature [პოსტმოდერნიზმი ქართულ მწერლობაში]* (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2020), 132.

³² Gelashvili, “Grandma [დიდედა],” 194.

³³ Gelashvili, “Grandma,” 210.

³⁴ Gelashvili, “Grandma,” 212.

³⁵ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 44.

If we paraphrase the title of Svante Cornell's remarkable book, it follows that the "kingdom" doomed to be exterminated is a symbol of a "small nation" ("kingdom" – Georgia), and the "state" that has this desire symbolizes a "great power" ("state" – Russia), which makes everything logical. This is the answer to one of the questions of the traumatic narrative: Who is the enemy?

And who is the grandma herself?

The grandma is very old – "almost 100 years old." She knows everything – fairy tales, legends, fables, proverbs, poems, and riddles. She can identify healing herbs, make sugar syrups and ointments, forecast weather, interpret dreams, and utter incantations. Characters of the fairy tale sit around the grandma, listening to her, because she is the main narrator and the characters of the fairy tale exist in the grandma's text. If the grandma does not speak, they will disappear, they will no longer exist, and the fabulous universe will also disappear. The grandma is the past not as something that has ended, but the past as a foundation and cornerstone, where we stand. It exists in the present and in the future too. It is the past that is the spine of the wholeness and unity of culture, time, and space.

There are daughters-in-law and daughters-in-law of the daughters-in-law. Can they be symbols of the Soviet present? They remove lice from children, but they have no time to take care of grandma's long hair. Grandma is against shaving her hair off and daughters-in-law evict her to the wooden house on the small land plot at some distance from the house.

And there is a great-grandchild – a symbol of the future.

The several generations are a metaphor of the wholeness of Georgian reality. The invasion of lice (probably Soviet reality?) ruined the wholeness, but failed to make it disappear, because the great-grandchild longs to see the grandma. The child looks at her through the window, but they cannot hear each other's voices. There is no link. However, the child can see her and is worried, yearning to go and see her.

The grandma keeps silent. "Women are weeping... They comb their hair and weep... Men and horses are nervous."³⁶ These are documentary details of the 1990s turned into a fairy tale. It is a description of the 1990s, because everyone minded their own business then – men were nervous and dying, and women wept.

"I am looking at the heavens. A dark cloud is moving from the edge of the sky. It is a city with towers and aircraft rather than a cloud. Although I am glad that such an excellent and stunning cloud appeared for the first time in this city after my childhood, I note with fear that this cloud also emits some strange blackness, becoming increasingly dark."³⁷ This is also a description of reality. These

³⁶ Gelashvili, "Grandma", 209.

³⁷ Gelashvili, "Grandma", 203.



are documentary details. The author was born in 1947 and March 9 took place in her childhood. This may be a parallel. Representation of the relation between earlier and later events, the resonance of paradigmatic events, when an earlier fact subconsciously forms a later one.³⁸ This black cloud may be the desire of freedom and therefore, its appearance is dangerous and at the same time very joyful. Recalling Neimeyer,³⁹ the black cloud may be a symbol of a triumphal trauma of the 1990s revived by April 9 and a fable told on March 9.

In addition, we encounter clear artistic allusions in the text: Mother asks: "Can deer milk help?" and the child answers: "Can the milk of the deer kept in the cage help?" This is a symbol of freedom and the desire of freedom at the beginning of the 1990s.

The storyline reaches the culmination. "The river has overflowed its banks, turning everything into a swamp."⁴⁰ No way out can be seen any longer, but the threat can be seen from the waist up.

And the child decides everything.

It is not the mother's experience that decides, but the faith of the child - the "fabulous" love and great desire to rescue the grandma and bring her back. The child has trust in fairy tales and miracles. He uses a crystal bead from the magic family light fixture as a magic jewel, which turns him into a lamb, who runs over the waves of the river and makes Murman, who ruined the love between Abesalom and Eteri,⁴¹ say the magic words. As a result, the heavy waves of the river (a symbol of new times) take away the lice (a symbol of Soviet reality) and save, using the magic carpet, the grandma and the characters of the fairy tale sitting around her. "He is holding the grandma by her hand and they are by the river now... They will cross it now and we will go home."⁴² The fairy tale was written in 1991. It is full of symbols characteristic of Georgian culture. The end of a fairy tale should be happy. This is a reality perceived and seen in 1991. It is a story about a black cloud that has just emerged and that is joyful and dangerous at the same time and the story should also have a happy end. The text is a fabulous representation of a triumphal trauma.

The description of the stressful and melancholic environment is not due to the style of a concrete author, but to the traumatic nature of the era. It is equally stressful with any author writing about the 90s. In 2020, Iva Pezuashvili published

³⁸ Assmann, "Impact and Resonance," 45.

³⁹ Neimeyer, "Re-Storying Loss," 73-75.

⁴⁰ Gelashvili, "Grandma," 215.

⁴¹ Characters of the medieval Georgian folk poem "Eteriani."

⁴² Gelashvili, "Grandma," 213.

a small-size novel “Bunker.”⁴³ The multi-story buildings, constructed in the late Soviet period, had built-in garbage bunkers from which a stinking smell spread through the entrances and floors. The author used the bunker as a symbol of the recent past and thus revived the epoch of the 90s from the perspective of the year 2017: the 90s were a period in which the environment was as putrid as a garbage bunker. Shota Iatashvili entitled his story “The Sick City” and dated it January-March 1992. Like the date of Naira Gelashvili’s “Grandma,” this also becomes a paradigm of understanding the text. Tbilisi was indeed a “sick city” in January-March 1992. What does Iatashvili’s world of the 90s look like? “I live in a sick city. [...] It is almost impossible to get out of the sick city. [...] No one needs sick people beyond the boundaries of the city.” Young women queuing up to buy food discuss having sex with five males at the same time; a woman and a man quarrel in the queue; the man fires a gunshot; a person breaks in with a hand grenade and takes canned food with him; “cockroach jam” and “canned mice” are the main food. There is only stress in the city, not life: “A monster with houses with broken windows, canons, one-armed and one-legged men, raped women, brains mixed up with blood, crumpled paper with ‘spring will no longer come’ written on it, a depraved sister, whom her husband with cold eyes cuts the throat, canned mice, protesters, who fire submachine gun rounds in the air, a poet, who sells condoms instead of books... The monster called my city was coming.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there is hope. There are a lot of flowers in the city. Although no one can notice them, there is a man – “a Methuselah, who is as old as the city, “who notices them, collects them, and sings an “extremely beautiful and extremely everlasting song.”

“Avelum” by Otar Chiladze is also a metaphor of the 1990s. Two empires are breaking down. One is the Soviet Empire and the other one is an imaginary empire – “Avelum’s own or, to be more correct, the empire of love that exists only for him, being hidden in his heart.”⁴⁵ According to literary critic Manana Kvachantiradze, the reasons for the trauma of the 1990s are as follows: “The reverberating coincidence of the empires of evil and love; convergence of the personal and imperial disasters, which leads to the overall transgression of destruction at all levels; and the disappearance of one of the opposed pairs, which bodes the disappearance of the other.”⁴⁶ This empire consists of women: wife, daughter, granddaughter, and two mistresses - one of French and the other one of Russian nationality. This empire

⁴³ Iva Pezuashvili, *Bunker* (Tbilisi. “Intelekti” Publishing house, 2020).

⁴⁴ Shota Iatashvili, “The Sick City [ავადმყოფი ქალაქი],” Shota Iatashvili, *Attraction [მიზიდულობა]* (Tbilisi: Palitra, L, 2012), 87.

⁴⁵ Chiladze, *Avelum*.

⁴⁶ Tamaz Kvachantiradze, “The First Year [წელი პირველი],” *Literaturuli sakartvelo*, 13 აპრილი, 1990, Nr. 15, 65.



of Avelum is a metaphor of Georgia with its various manifestations. The wife symbolizes the past of Georgia, the daughter – the 1990s, and the granddaughter – the future. The French woman symbolizes Georgia's attitude towards Europe and the Russian – towards Russia. Both empires break down, because the transitional period leads to changes in approaches, attitudes, and perceptions. The “empire of love” is a kind of symbol of identity; therefore, its destruction is painful for him.

What does the description of the 90s in literature consist of and what are the events that are described and when did they unfold and where? It does not start either with the Tbilisi War in 1991 or April 9, 1989. These two main tragic events revive and become attached to earlier events. Therefore, the beginning of the reality of the 1990s in literature is linked to other tragic events that took place at other times and in other spaces.

War in Afghanistan – 1979-1989;
 Chernobyl catastrophe – 26 April 1986;
 Natural disaster in Svaneti – 1987;
 Spitak earthquake – 7 December 1988;
 Natural disaster in Ajaria – 1989;
 Karabakh conflict – from 1988;
 Ceaușescu's execution – 1989;
 War in Yugoslavia – from 1991.

This is the list of the events, which are at the beginning of the narrations or storylines about the 90s or are part of the content of the texts. These are a kind of components of the 90s, where actions, times, and spaces are all traumatic.

In addition to the present time described in the texts, the past of the artistic time is also interesting:

March 9, 1956;
 Soviet repressions;
 Sovietization.

Trauma of victory of the 90s plays the role of resonance, linking the earlier and later events and keeping alive the traumatic experience of the past.⁴⁷ The time, space, and action are also confined to tragic events in this case.

In addition to the major spaces that set bounds on the “world,” the texts comprise place names that represent a kind of scene, where the 90s unfold as an event. These place names have by themselves acquired a traumatic-triumphal meaning as a constituent part of the whole “world.” Names taken separately probably do not mean anything and cannot tell us anything, but if we list them together, a narrative will take shape:

⁴⁷ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 45.

Likhni;
Tbilisi State University;
Rustaveli Avenue;
Area in front of the Parliament.
Kashveti.

This is already a narrative and a kind of an associative game. These place names require almost nothing to bring the scene to life on April 9, 1989.

Cinema House;
Stairs outside TV;
Rkoni;
Tbilisi Sea;
Area in front of the Parliament;
“Tbilisi” Hotel;
Kashveti;
Bunker;
Didube Metro station;
Circus;
Chelyuskinites Bridge;
Samegrelo.

This is also a narrative. These words do not need additional explanations to recollect the scenes of the Tbilisi War and civil confrontation.

Rallies;
National;
Long live!
Down with!
KGB agent;
Putsch;
Mkhedrioni;
Guard;
Criminogenic situation.

These are some of the words, which trigger associations with the 90s.

Let us go back to Eco: “In the Middle Ages, cathedrals and monasteries used to burn like twigs, so stories of those times without fires is the same as a movie about a war without flaming planes.”⁴⁸ The same is true for us. The world of the 90s does not exist without these components. It is “obligatory” to use these components, when you write about the 1990s. Otherwise, it is impossible to create the world of the 1990s.

⁴⁸ Eco, “Afterword for ‘The Name of the Rose,’” 707.



The main character of Aka Morchiladze's "Mamluk" is a veteran of the war in Afghanistan. The main character of "Escape from Paradise" by Beka Kurkhuli also arrives from Afghanistan and the text comprises a long narration about that country. This seems to be natural, as Afghanistan is the first battlefield, where the generation of the 90s saw bloodshed, which never ended in their future lives, befalling on them in the shape of the Tbilisi War and civil confrontation, the wars in Tskhinvali, and Abkhazia, score-settling in the streets, and senseless wars between brotherhoods. Iva Pezuashvili's "Bunker" is a saga of the Simonyan family who have fled from Karabakh to Tbilisi during the war. In "Avelum" by Otar Chiladze, natural disasters are often mentioned before the narration of the main story starts, which is associated with the hardships of the transitional period, because at the beginning, the author speaks about the lack of hope for the future, fears, and the end of the world: "Really, the end of the world is coming. The death of big things begins with the death of little things. In this case, true, we are dealing more with a case of suicide rather than death from natural causes."⁴⁹ This judgment similar to "The Decline of the West" by Oswald Spengler is followed by a story of Georgia: "Already ten meters of red snow had covered Svaneti. [...] December earthquake shook the whole of Georgia and put it in jeopardy. "At the beginning of the same work, the author starts setting bounds on the space and installing decorations, where the storyline is to unfold later and he definitely has to present the space as a stressful environment, so the author uses the Chernobyl tragedy as one of the components: „Several forms of Chernobyl flu are simultaneously raging in the most beautiful of the cities of the Caucasus."⁵⁰

The geography and the contemplative space of the war are further expanded in a Georgian story narrated in German by Nino Haratischwili. "We noiselessly walked around this war, closing eyes. And when we had electricity, we watched footage of the war in Yugoslavia on TV. Strange as it was, our hearts bled for the war of others. Moreover, we were grateful that we had the opportunity to forget our own war. We had to live in a cruel reality."⁵¹

In his book "Tearful Glasses", Gogi Gvakharia starts his narration on April 9 with the story of Ceaușescu. "They filmed everything, how they put the couple up against a wall and how they shot them."⁵²

⁴⁹ Chiladze, *Avelum*.

⁵⁰ Chiladze, *Avelum*, 5.

⁵¹ Haratischwili, *The Eighth Life*, 1051.

⁵² Gogi Gvakharia, *Tearful Glasses* [ცრემლიანი სათვალები] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2013), 216.

Stories also mention calm places in the world. For example, Aka Morchiladze's story "Dogs of Paliashvili Street" starts in the following manner: "I want to go to Nice."⁵³ This also points to a trauma, because Nice symbolizes beating one's way out of the locked, dark, and traumatic space and finding a calm place to relax: "I don't know what it was, probably a dream... Otherwise, how could I have recalled Nice in this darkness: There was no electricity at night and there is no electricity now either, in the morning."⁵⁴ It is the inaccessible and idyllic place that is beyond the real space, and the real space is dark and cold. Aka Morchiladze describes it sarcastically: "The scene is fantastic – pants and a candle. In short, whether you wash or not, you resemble a dimwit. All of us have elongated ugly mugs. It is such a time. It is the classical time of becoming dimwits."⁵⁵ Cold is an important symbol of the 90s. It is so important that a joke became widespread throughout Georgia: "Those of us, who survive this winter, will make a joint photo with the inscription "Georgia" on it".

In addition to what the joke mingled with sarcasm says, the period was bloody. Time could change nothing in the environment. In this story too, it is frozen in blood, but this is the blood of criminal score-settling, not that of war. When you read the description of life of stray dogs living in ravines and forests, their running around to find food, treating passersby as enemies, killing them as well as each other, and terrifying the city day and night in the story, you can clearly imagine Tbilisi and the entire Georgia of the 90s that lived according to the rules of brotherhoods. This happened in independent Georgia, where the only thing acquaintances discussed was that "no one has been killed or robbed in the neighborhood over the past two or three days."⁵⁶

The language is not melancholic and pessimistic because of the fact that the story is written in the 1990s. With a good author, a language automatically becomes such as soon as he starts telling his story about a specific era. The story "Zinka Adamiani" was written quite recently, in the second decade of the 21st century. Literary critic Levan Tsagareli says that it is a story-requiem, which becomes evident from the very beginning.⁵⁷ The author dedicated the book to the friends of her mother, "beautiful girls, who remain in the 20th century."⁵⁸ Telling

⁵³ Aka Morchiladze, *Dogs of Paliashvili Street* [ვალაშვილის ქუჩის ძაღლები] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2017), 3.

⁵⁴ Morchiladze, *Dogs of Paliashvili Street*, 3.

⁵⁵ Morchiladze, *Dogs of Paliashvili Street*, 4.

⁵⁶ Morchiladze, *Dogs of Paliashvili Street*, 9.

⁵⁷ "Zinka Adamiani" - Levan Tsagareli [“ზინკა ადამიანი” - ლევან ცაგარელი], *YouTube*, March 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/334Ixxr> (Accessed 02.02.2021).

⁵⁸ Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani* [ზინკა ადამიანი] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2019), 152.



the tragic and fabulous story of people residing in so-called “Italian-type” yards in Tbilisi, the author revives true stories of Tbilisi of the late 20th century. In addition to personal tragedies and sentiments of these people, it is also interesting that the environment as a whole is stressful. It is so stressful that although you are aware from the very beginning what kind of text you are dealing with, the shocking story nevertheless unexpectedly breaks out on you: “Nothing will end and nothing will be brought in order, Zinka. Temiko and Zuriko are no longer in this world. [...] At dawn next day after the boys were buried, smoothly shaven and overdressed Data with a medal on his chest killed himself with his service weapon.”⁵⁹ Why were Temiko and Zuriko killed? Why did Data commit suicide? The 90s are the reason again.

Unlike other texts, this one does not mention dates or point to any streets and names. However, the space of the 90s is nevertheless determined and marked by epigraphs under the subchapters:

“Shavleg, your black tunic, Shavleg...” – an excerpt from a song that is a symbol of April 9;

“Light is back” – from the reality of the 90s;

“I want to go to Nice” – the expression of the desire to beat one’s way out of the stressful space of the 90s described by Aka Morchiladze;

“I will buy everything old with the exception of your grandmother” – life in need.

Components of the 1990s can be found not only in epigraphs. They are scattered in the text:

“After Zaur put his Moskvich on bricks and said loudly: ‘That’s it!’ grandpa and Zinka saw from the balcony on one very cold day that smoke flew up into the air somewhere. This was not the mushroom Zinka longed for. The city, the heart was burning”⁶⁰ – crime and the Tbilisi War;

“He had the opportunity to see tanks and also had the opportunity of surviving the curfew, but he had no fears. But now he was afraid of the end too”⁶¹ – April 9 and the Tbilisi War;

“This winter will never end and the war will never end either”⁶² – the Tbilisi War.

One of the first literary reflections of the 1990s belongs to Aka Morchiladze – “Journey to Karabakh.” The film adaptation of the novel was called “A Trip to Karabakh,” which reinforces the emphasis on the abnormality of the era, as the

⁵⁹ Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 78.

⁶⁰ Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 71.

⁶¹ Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 71.

⁶² Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 122.

title becomes more ironic and sarcastic: “A Trip to Karabakh,” i.e., a trip to war. The space described in the novel is enclosed by the war and is full of negative energy. The “world” is represented only in the spaces, where there is war. And the time seems to be standing still and immovable. It is not felt to be changing. It neither changes nor can change anything. The time is stiffened and petrified in the war spread in the space.

The confusion of old and new values was not always so comical. The events on April 9, 1989 gave rise to fears of the future, nature, each other, and uncertainty. All this is clearly seen in texts, and differences depend on the narrators. The author is the narrator in Lasha Bugadze’s novel “The Small Country.” The novel is autobiographic and it can be said that the author is telling the story of his childhood in the 90s. He tells the story not as an adult, but as a child, who saw and perceived things in 1989. He writes: “My first major fear is April 9.”⁶³ He focuses on the media showing mutilated corpses, noting that no one thought about the minds of children at that time. The fact that the exalted masses constantly go to the mortuaries, obsessed with the desire to see corpses, he regards as a widespread fear. “Show us the dead.”⁶⁴ Gogi Gvakharia said the same, when he wrote that the main artistic image of 1989 was the close view of the girls and boys killed and mutilated on April 9.⁶⁵ In his novel “Avelum,” Otar Chiladze speaks about fears of novelty and uncertainty. “All my life I’ve been waiting for the day which I have lived to see and... I’m afraid!”⁶⁶ It is this dangerous environment emptied of any hopes for the future and full of a pessimistic aura that is described in the introductory part of the novel. The author often speaks about the end of the world, which can be explained by expectations of changes in the 1990s. The fear of uncertainty is so strong, natural disasters, wars, criminal score-settling, and murders are so frequent, and changes are so swift that a space emerges at the end of the 20th century for fortune tellers, soothsayers, psychic mediums, aliens, or those, who have seen the latter. A fortune telling gypsy and psychic medium can also be encountered in “Avelum.” It is they who can “instantly (for just twenty kopecks) lead you out of the fog of uncertainty and ‘tell’ you what to expect. But people are most afraid of such knowledge.”⁶⁷ Longo is a psychic medium and the whole Soviet Union is waiting for him to appear on TV.⁶⁸ Aliens are often discussed on TV and people live in this reality. Everything changes for the narrator, too, after

⁶³ Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 40.

⁶⁴ Kordzaia-Samadashvili, *Zinka Adamiani*, 48.

⁶⁵ Gvakharia, *Tearful Glasses*, 218.

⁶⁶ Chiladze, *Avelum*.

⁶⁷ Chiladze, *Avelum*, 6.

⁶⁸ Bugadze, *The Small Country*, 34.



April 9. A completely different reality starts taking shape: monuments, names of streets, icons of saints instead of Lenin's pictures, sounds of prayers and chants, banned movies on TV screens, and what is most important, "everything is allowed to everyone now."⁶⁹ "Hammer and sickle was finally evicted from the Georgian post-Modernist still-life art and 'Iluzioni' no longer showed good movies only on Christmas and Easter."⁷⁰

The importance of April 9 was based on the cultural pattern of Christ's resurrection: you need to be martyred to rise. Nothing could oppose the concept of great victory achieved by means of a sacrifice. The only alternative narrative offered by the Soviet government was immediately forgotten. At the first stage, Shevardnadze tried to diminish the importance of April 9, 1991 in order to make people forget Zviad Gamsakhurdia, but after he strengthened his power, he also used to emphasize the importance of the restoration of independence. However, it is noteworthy that the attitude of the first years nevertheless remains in the texts of the supporters of "Shevardnadze's narrative." For example, in her memoirs that appeared in 2003 and then, revised, in 2019, Lana Gogoberidze does not write much about April 9, 1991, when speaking about April 9, 1989, but recalls other periods in detail.

The narrative of resurrection was again enacted on April 9. Being a victim at the individual and collective levels is a part of the Georgian cultural pattern. There are two things that serve as a foundation, purpose, and basis for self-sacrifice – Homeland and God. Both are at the same level and are mutually connected.

"A drop of blood-colored poppy

Near Uplistsikhe

Is probably a messenger of blood to be shed,

Not the blood already shed..."⁷¹

Murman Lebanidze wrote this poem in 1971, which is much earlier than April 9, 1989. This is a kind of literary prophesy or premonition that is based on the cultural pattern of sacrifice, because blood is necessary to achieve freedom and great victory. It was women, who mostly fell on April 9. To determine the importance of this day, society resorted to another cultural pattern: woman and mother as Georgia's protector. Georgia is under the auspices of St. Mary, the most important woman in the Christian world; St. Nino, the person, who accomplished the most important deed for Georgia – Christianized it; St. Shushanik, the main

⁶⁹ Bugadze, *The Small Country*, 42.

⁷⁰ Gvakharia, *Tearful Glasses*, 225.

⁷¹ Murman Lebanidze, "Near Uplistsikhe [უფლისციხესთან]," Murman Lebanidze, *Works in Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: Sabchota sakartvelo, 1989), 14.

character of the first Georgian literary work; and Ketevan, the queen martyred for her religion and homeland. The women, who fell on April 9, were identified precisely with these symbols.

From the next day after the April 9 tragedy, a number of attitudes were changed or clearly formulated. It was due to the April 9 trauma that the image of Russia as the enemy was reinforced and the perception was formulated in the following manner.

“Russia kills, as this word is synonymous to a natural disaster in Georgia. Russia means danger. [...] It is Russia’s plan; Russia has a hand in it; there is a Russian trace. Russia is a direct or indirect reason for Georgia’s misfortune; Russia is a resentful stepmother; there are seismic stations in Russia able to cause artificial earthquakes; Russian soldiers have no moral – they kill, rob, and rape. Russia is a killer.”⁷²

Changes in the attitude towards the past confirm this. People started actively talking about the tragic events in the past linked to Russia as a conqueror. April 9 put an end to the Soviet Union in the minds of Georgian society and transformed the idea of independence, which was not so widespread even on April 8, into a common Georgian idea.

April 9 as a paradigmatic event established a link between earlier and later happenings. One of the un-mourned traumas recalled from the past is March 9, 1956. The reason is not the similarity in content: on March 9, unlike April 9, there was a protest against criticism of Stalin’s cult of personality. These two events are connected due to the cultural pattern of sacrifice. The two tragedies occurred in the same place – Rustaveli Avenue. The perpetrator was the same – the Soviet Army. Thus, April 9 and March 9 have developed into a chain of traumatic events.

The story of the transformation of the events on March 9, 1956 unfolded precisely in the same manner as the first artistic texts written about it. This was, for example, “Revelation” by Otar Chkheidze written in 1973 and published only in 1989.⁷³ Another important text is a poem on March 9 by Simon Chikovani that became known to the public also after Georgia became independent. Narrators and listeners are needed to have an event transformed into a trauma. The narration is to be public, a discussion is to follow, and it is to be protracted in time. However, what happened to the March 9 tragedy is precisely what is said in the poem by Simon Chikovani: “They wounded me and shut my mouth last night.” It remained unspoken and failed to be transformed into a collective trauma. Public narration about March 9 started after April 9.

“And people forgot 9 March, equally doomed, equally unfortunate, led astray at that time too.”⁷⁴

⁷² Bugadze, *The Small Country*, 41.

⁷³ Tsipuria, *Georgian Text*, 189.

⁷⁴ Chkheidze, *Artistic Revolution*, 56.



“I don’t know why, but I’m horribly startled and alarmed by the indistinct pour and inarticulate shouts of a torrent of people merging into one great channel. [...] The time of testing is nigh. Nothing good will come of it. That’s how it was in 1956, too. That was how the city sheeted and boiled over then.”⁷⁵

“Unlike March 9, 1956, when people secretly took their dead and held modest burials, no one was afraid of anything on April 9, 1989.”⁷⁶

The tragedies of April 9 and March 9 became intertwined in literature and constructed as traumas in a single line. This process is clearly seen in “Avelum” by Otar Chiladze. The March 9 tragedy is described in detail in the text and the author constantly reverts to it in the novel. It is important that the author starts “arranging” the traumatic environment of the 90s with describing March 9. He introduces us into the novel’s traumatic space and time with the sharp description of this tragedy. A step before this, the author says in the novel: “Today, 1989 years after the physical incarnation of Son of God,” specifying the time of the novel. By narrating about March 9, he creates a stressful aura, preparing us for a tragic storyline.

In addition to reviving March 9, April 9 became a new paradigm for rethinking the past as a whole. Literary texts written after Georgia gained independence perceived the past in a different way.

In terms of recalling the past, there is an interesting episode in the story about Mikheil Javakhishvili and Beria in Archil Kikodze’s “Southern Elephant.” One of the main values of the book that is important for our research is that a story of one day is placed in the context of the centuries-old history of Georgia. The main character halts near a house in Kiacheli Street. The house belongs to Lavrenty Beria and overlooks Mikheil Javakhishvili’s house. Trees did not hinder the view at that time and “Beria could see the small house and its inhabitant, watching and observing him. [...] The grave of the writer is unknown as well as that of his executioner, but the two houses continue to stand one opposite the other, but there is no commemorative plaque on Beria’s house. My mother told me as a child that Beria lived there. She said that in such a manner that I retained this in my memory, although I had no idea who she was speaking about.” The main character recalls a semi-mythical story of relations between Beria and Javakhishvili. It is the transfer of such stories from the communicative memory to the cultural memory that transforms events into narratives of trauma or triumph. The description of the relations between Beria and Javakhishvili is a confrontation between good and evil. Beria is an “evil in the flesh,” who “needs as the air to breathe someone, who

⁷⁵ Chiladze, *Avelum*.

⁷⁶ Beka Kurkhuli, *Escape from Paradise [სამოთხიდან გაქცეულები]* (2015), *Saba Library* (pages are not indicated in the electronic version offered by Saba Library), <https://bit.ly/3r47R3y> (Accessed 02.04.2021).

he can play cat-and-mouse with and whom he will either allow to live or destroy.” Beria is a symbol of the enemy, i.e., a symbol of the one who created the traumatic past and who is responsible for the misfortune. Beria is a symbol of the group that is held responsible for the traumatic narrative. Beria wants to invite to lunch at his home “the thin-bodied and four-eyed writer,” who “has nothing for the exception of his own and others’ books”,⁷⁷ but the writer rejects the invitation. The main character supports the writer, who rejects the invitation of one of the most dangerous men in the world, which is equal to signing his own death sentence. Javakhishvili is aware of this, but he is unable to push himself to accept it, as “this is the last boundary and he will find it difficult to go on living beyond it.” The writer cannot go to the man, who needs his visit as yet another confirmation of his boundless power. This “fairy tale” has a bad end: Javakhishvili was taken from Kvishkheti.⁷⁸ He was to travel the road like any other person under repression. Mother tells the main character, and he reads elsewhere that Beria personally tortured Javakhishvili.

There is a very interesting passage in this segment. The main character is not sure whether the story of invitation his mother told him is true or not. In addition, she keeps constantly telling this and this constant narration is most significant, as it underscores that the event is of major importance. By doing so, mother tries to teach her son the difference between good and evil. “I do not know whether the invitation was indeed extended, but this is what my mother told me in half whisper, when I grew up a little and later, when it was not obligatory to whisper.” Not only the story is tragic, but the time is also presented as a tragedy – “the time of half- truths pronounced in half whisper.”⁷⁹ Such a metaphoric description of the period fully reflects the tragic nature of the era.

The fact that the Javakhishvili story was turned into a symbol of the era and was constantly narrated by different authors transforms it into a cultural trauma. The death of Mikheil Javakhishvili is a tragedy, but the narration and reconstruction transform the story into a myth that becomes triumphal, fitting the cultural pattern of “trampling down death by death” and telling us the story of a victory despite physical destruction. The narrator says: “It does not matter whether it is true or not, as it has already become the truth for me and I like the writer, who rejected the invitation by one of the most dangerous men in the world.” Reading the passage, readers feel not only sympathy, but also pride. “He put on a white suit and left together with them. His children could see for quite a long time their father in the

⁷⁷ Kikodze, *The Southern Elephant*, 144.

⁷⁸ Kvishkheti – a village in the Khashuri district of the Shida Kartli region. During the Soviet time, the summer residence for Georgian writers was located there.

⁷⁹ Kikodze, *The Southern Elephant*, 142-143.



white suit walking among the Chekists... A white spot walking among grey and black. [...] Pain, insults, and death awaited him. Those, who found no meaning in his or others' books at all, were going to torture and kill him. However, before they inflicted pain, besmeared him, and probably broke him, the only thing he could do was to confront them and put on the starched snow-white suit specially to offend their eyes."⁸⁰ You suffer, you pity him, and you sympathize with him, but the main sentiment that is above all is being proud of Javakhishvili's behavior: death is not a defeat. On the contrary, Javakhishvili, who was destroyed physically, won morally. It is also possible to draw parallels with hagiographic works. Javakhishvili is a martyr in the literal sense of the word, because he confirmed his faith, truth, and righteous path with his blood.

"The Eighth Life" by Nino Haratischvili, a classic example of a family romance, was perceived as a kind of historical fresco of "The Red Century." The upper middle-class family of Jashi from a provincial town in west Georgia (not Kutaisi) is the protagonist of the work.⁸¹

Although the memory depicted in the novel "lacks clarity in reflecting the spirit, flair, or uniting factors of various eras in the past,"⁸² the text is important in terms of interpreting cultural traumas. The story is viewed from the standpoint of the reality in the 21st century. The text about women of a 20th-century family is narrated by a woman. Everything seems to be in order, as "the family, who were successful confectioners in the times of the Russian Empire, were also successful in joining the ranks of the Soviet nomenklatura and survived the crisis of the 90s thanks to selling the leftovers from the past privileges."⁸³ However, as Tolstoy said, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way, and the Jashis are also unhappy in their own way due to the Soviet reality. Therefore, the novel is not just a well-narrated story of one family, but a symbolic description of the hardships of the era. By means of the arid language of a dictionary and sweepingly listed historical events and dates,⁸⁴ the author attempts to show that the tragedies that befell the women are nothing other than a result of these events. Therefore, the narrator aunt presents Brilka, a representative of the eighth and last generation of her family, with a blank white sheet of paper, hoping that she will break this vicious circle and head towards a better future.

⁸⁰ Kikodze, *The Southern Elephant*, 146.

⁸¹ Luka Nakhutsrishvili, "Nino Haratischvili: In Search for Georgia's Place III [წიხობრატიმვილი:საქართველოსაღაგისძიებაშიIII]," *Social Justice Center* [სოციალური სამართლიანობის ცენტრი], September 24, 2019, <https://bit.ly/34rEQpw> (Accessed 11.05.2021).

⁸² Nakhutsrishvili, "Nino Haratischvili: In Search for Georgia's Place."

⁸³ Nakhutsrishvili, "Nino Haratischvili: In Search for Georgia's Place."

⁸⁴ Nakhutsrishvili, "Nino Haratischvili: In Search for Georgia's Place."

The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was a period of important, long-desired, although unexpected and painful changes in Georgia. The research covers the issues of everyday life, changing relationships and values, the ways of coping with the success as well as extremely painful events. The narratives of the past and the present were developed in the process of rapid and radical changes. These narratives were reflected in literary texts, in the sites of memory that formed and enhanced the meaning of particular facts. The study shows that the situation in Georgia in the last years of the Soviet period and the first years of independence corresponds to the trauma of victory. The last decade of the 20th century in Georgia was defined by several major events: the trauma and triumph of April 9, fragmentation of the society and civil confrontation, destruction of state institutions and economic collapse. The analyzed literary writings reflect and, at the same time, create the world of the 1990s, represent it from various perspectives, highlight the seemingly insignificant details that acquire new meaning. These works produced by authors who still have a strong emotional connection to the epoch, help us establish an emotional link with the events of the 90s. The texts were selected based on their popularity and recognition in the literary world; therefore, they have an impact on the formation of collective memory. Written since 1989, they disclose the events which take place in the center of the capital as well as in smaller towns and villages, allowing us to compare the attitudes towards the happenings at the time across regions. Analysis of the reflection of the general atmosphere in fictional texts reveals why the 90s became a decade that is easily recognized without specifying the century. Literary texts play a major role in understanding the uncomfortable and difficult-to-remember events, which society prefers to leave behind rather than scrutinize, further distancing them from history. They do not become part of the past but remain in the realm of myths and legends.

The artistic texts represented from many angles the world of the 90s and made it emotionally accessible with moods and sentiments, joy and pain, love and hatred, and expectations and disappointments of the era. At the same time, these texts allowed us to critically interpret the period. The research made it clear that the 1990s are depicted as a trauma of victory and these works played an important role in shaping it as such. The storyline determined by the laws and rules of the game of the 90s can be encountered in multiple texts and this process has continued up to now. Together with other media and probably more clearly than others, artistic texts presented April 9 as a culturally defined event encompassing both triumph and trauma. Unlike it, the civil confrontation has remained an unarticulated and unshaped event and society has been unable to reach a consensus on how to describe it.



Rezumat

O traumă colectivă consolidată în sfera memoriei culturale poate funcționa drept un factor unificator în interiorul grupului pentru o lungă perioadă de timp. Obiectivul acestui articol este să clarifice modul, în care zilele de 9 aprilie 1989 și 9 aprilie 1991, războiul din Tbilisi și confruntările civile asociate acestor evenimente, precum și o serie întreagă de schimbări radicale, profunde, bruște și intense au fost analizate, conceptualizate și interpretate în literatura de ficțiune și scrierile memorialistice produse după ce Georgia a devenit stat independent. Articolul își propune, de asemenea, să răspundă la întrebarea, în ce măsură folosirea noțiunilor de traumă și triumf este adecvată pentru cazul Georgiei, și în ce măsură (și dacă) realitatea anilor 1990 poate fi evaluată în termenii unei traume a victoriei. Autorul consideră că lucrările de ficțiune și memoriile au un rol foarte important în „construirea” unui eveniment drept un exemplu de traumă culturală. Pe de o parte, textele literare definesc și determină sensul unui eveniment, dându-i forma unei experiențe traumatice. Pe de altă parte, narațiunea este o metodă importantă pentru depășirea unei traume. Astfel, o traumă poate fi depășită printr-un proces constant de conceptualizare și analiză a acestei experiențe, și nu prin reprimarea sau tăcerea forțată în raport cu trauma respectivă.

Cuvinte-cheie: Georgia, traumă, triumf, texte literare.

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Liberal Democracy in Estonia: Cracks behind the Seemingly Spotless Façade

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Abstract

Estonia is often seen as a model student among the post-communist countries. Many renowned think tanks and organizations measuring the quality of democracy (e.g., Freedom House, Varieties of Democracy, Bertelsmann Foundation) often give Estonia the highest scores in the region. However, the seemingly spotless façade hides growing tensions and emergent contradictions. The current paper will focus on the two most worrisome trends that have become evident in recent years, if not even earlier: (1) the limited success in integrating the large Russian-speaking minority and (2) the rise of the populist radical right. The failure to integrate the ethnic minorities would increase frustration and political alienation among Russian speakers, making it more difficult to build a healthy, cohesive democratic community. However, the rise of the populist radical right, namely the remarkable electoral success of EKRE (Estonian Conservative People's Party), has proven to be a bigger challenge because it demonstrates that many Estonians are deeply dissatisfied with how democracy works in their country. The article discusses whether it would be possible for dissatisfied Estonians and Russians to join forces to challenge the current liberal democratic model in Estonia. The analysis shows that even if the initial attempts have failed, one could not entirely rule out that prospect.

Keywords: Estonia, liberal democracy, democratization, right-wing populism, the Russian minority.

Introduction

Estonia is, indeed, often regarded as a post-communist *wunderkind*: a country which has not only been renowned for its good economic performance, relatively low level of corruption, and well-functioning institutions but also for its quality of democracy. According to the data provided by Freedom House (Nations in Transit), Varieties of Democracy (V-dem), and Bertelsmann Foundation, Estonia's scores of democracy are higher than those of any other post-Soviet country, including the other Baltic States¹.

Nonetheless, at a closer look, one can witness several tensions and contradictions in the current model of Estonian democracy. More precisely, two most disturbing trends stand out. First, despite numerous efforts to integrate the Russian-

¹ Martin Mölder, "Freedom and Democracy," in *The Estonian Human Development Report 2012/2013*, ed. by Mati Heidmets (Tallinn: Eesti Kootöökoda, 2013), 67-73; Kjetil Duvold, Sten Berglund, and Joakim Ekman, *Political Culture in the Baltic States* (Cham: Springer, 2020).



speaking minority into Estonian society, this process has not been as smooth and successful as expected, and thus many Russian speakers still feel like second-class citizens². Second, Estonia has witnessed the spectacular rise of the populist radical right in recent years and now is the home of one of the most successful radical right parties in the Baltic States³. In the last national elections (2019), the populist right-wing party EKRE (Estonian Conservative People's Party) got 18% of the votes⁴. Furthermore, according to recent opinion polls, the party has become one of the most popular parties in the country⁵. This demonstrates that not only the Russian speakers, but also many ethnic Estonians are dissatisfied with how democracy works in their country.

From this, we can conclude that Estonian democracy has two Achilles' heels behind its seemingly flawless façade: (1) the Russian minority (which is still poorly integrated), and (2) the success of the populist radical right (which would openly challenge the current liberal democratic model).

Furthermore, the recent local elections demonstrated that EKRE did not seek to mobilize only the dissatisfied ethnic Estonian voters, but also tried to make inroads into the Russian-speaking constituencies. Their initial effort to attract the Russian votes ended in failure, but there is no doubt that they continue to work in that direction. If they succeed, it might pose a serious challenge to liberal democracy in Estonia, because the coalition of resentful Estonians and Russians would be large enough to allow EKRE to get the biggest representation in the national parliament and to become a party one cannot ignore while forming the government.

Hence, the goal of the current study is to analyze the two major challenges to the Estonian democracy today: namely, the integration of the Russian-speaking minority and the rise of the populist radical right (EKRE), and to explore how they both, separately or jointly, can undermine the current model of liberal democracy.

From the methodological perspective, the article combines various qualitative and quantitative data sources in order to analyze the current state of Estonian de-

² Veronika Kalmus, Marju Lauristin, Signe Opermann, and Triin Vihalemm, *Researching Estonian Transformation: Morphogenetic Reflections* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2020).

³ Vassilis Petsinis and Louis Wierenga, "Working Paper No. 7. Report on Radical Right Populism in Estonia and Latvia," *Report of the Project: Populist Rebellion against Modernity in 21st-Century Eastern Europe: Neo-Traditionalism and Neo-Feudalism*, 2021.

⁴ Tõnis Saarts, Mari-Liis Jakobson, and Leif Kalev, "When a Right-Wing Populist Party Inherits a Mass-Party Organisation: The Case of EKRE," *Politics and Governance* 9, no. 4 (November 2021): 354–64; "Elections in Estonia," Estonian National Electoral Committee, 2021, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.valimised.ee/en>.

⁵ "Erakondade toetus 2018. aastast praeguseni (Support for Political Parties since 2018 until Now)," ERR News Portal, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.err.ee/reitingud>.

mocracy. On the quantitative side, we mostly rely on the data provided by various think tanks measuring the quality of democracy (V-dem, Freedom House, etc.) and also utilize the data from the relevant public opinion surveys. On the qualitative side, we mostly employ qualitative research synthesis⁶, in which we combine different scholarly sources previously produced about the quality of democracy, the Russian minority, and populism in Estonia to make sense of the current situation and the challenges ahead.

This study applies and refers to various theoretical views related to post-communist democratization, ethnopolitics and populism. However, the article is rather of an empirical nature, and therefore not much attention is paid to the theoretical contributions as such. Nonetheless, the study seeks to contribute to the wider literature on post-communist democratization/democracies, while drawing attention to a peculiar case in which democracy is seemingly strongly consolidated but still could be undermined by an unlikely coalition of resentful citizens belonging to different ethnicities.

This article is structured as follows. First, we examine the current state of Estonian democracy by discussing various measures and variables of the quality of democracy, but we also point out some of the contradictions and disturbing trends that have emerged in recent years. Second, we explore the first of these trends, namely the shortcomings in the integration of the Russian-speaking minority, with particular attention to their political integration. Third, we examine the rise of the far-right populist party EKRE – especially the reasons for its success and discuss its possible consequences for Estonian democracy. Finally, we explore the possibility that the resentful ethnic Estonians might join forces with the alienated Russians under the auspices of EKRE, and, thus, both groups would begin to seriously challenge the liberal-democratic consensus in Estonia.

Estonia – a model student of post-communist democratization

Estonia is often viewed as one of the most successful democratizers among post-communist countries, and post-Soviet countries in particular. While various well-known think tanks, such as Freedom House, V-dem and the Bertelsmann Foundation (Stiftung) have measured the quality of democracy and governance in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Estonia always ranks first, being comparable to the best performers in the region, such as Slovenia and the Czech Republic. Moreover, Estonia's scores are higher than those of its Baltic neighbors, Lithuania and Latvia. Unlike many other CEE countries, like Hungary and Poland, there has

⁶ Harris M. Cooper, *Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis: A Step-by-Step Approach*. 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010).



been no democratic backsliding in Estonia in recent years, and few scholars see this outcome as a likely scenario in the near future.⁷

Probably one of the most well-known scores measuring democracy has been provided by the Freedom House *Nations in Transit* project⁸. As one can see in Table 1, Estonia's Democracy Score is the highest in the whole post-communist region, and Estonia is firmly classified as a "consolidated democracy". There have been some minor fluctuations during the recent decade, but one can barely see a downward trend, as it has been evident even in Slovenia and the Czech Republic. There is no need to mention that Estonia's score is considerably higher than that for any post-Soviet country, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia included.

Table 1. The Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Democracy Scores in selected post-communist countries, 2011 – 2021.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Estonia	6.07	6.07	6.04	6.04	6.04	6.07	6.07	6.18	6.11	6.07	6.04
Lithuania	5.75	5.71	5.68	5.64	5.64	5.68	5.68	5.64	5.61	5.64	5.68
Latvia	5.86	5.89	5.93	5.93	5.93	5.93	5.96	5.93	5.86	5.79	5.82
Czech Republic	5.82	5.82	5.86	5.75	5.79	5.79	5.75	5.71	5.71	5.64	5.57
Slovenia	6.07	6.11	6.11	6.07	6.07	6.00	5.96	5.93	5.93	5.93	5.86
Poland	5.79	5.86	5.82	5.82	5.79	5.68	5.43	5.11	5.04	4.93	4.57
Hungary	5.39	5.14	5.11	5.04	4.82	4.71	4.46	4.29	4.07	3.96	3.71
Ukraine	3.39	3.18	3.14	3.07	3.25	3.32	3.39	3.36	3.36	3.39	3.36
Georgia	3.14	3.18	3.25	3.32	3.36	3.39	3.39	3.32	3.29	3.25	3.18
Moldova	3.04	3.11	3.18	3.14	3.14	3.11	3.07	3.07	3.04	3.11	3.11

Source: "Freedom House: Nations in Transit," Freedom House, accessed March 19, 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit>.

Notes: The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the lowest and 7 the highest level of democracy. The Democracy Score is a straight average of seven indicators: National Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Civil Society, Independent Media, Local Democratic Governance, Judicial Framework and Independence, Corruption.

The Varieties of Democracy (V-dem) project offers an even more nuanced and sophisticated approach to measuring the quality of democracy⁹. V-dem's Liberal Democracy Index captures a number of key parameters relevant for modern

⁷ Licia Cianetti, "Consolidated Technocratic and Ethnic Hollowness, but No Backsliding: Reassessing Europeanisation in Estonia and Latvia," *East European Politics* 34, no. 3 (2018): 317-36.

⁸ "Freedom House: Nations in Transit," Freedom House, accessed March 19, 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit>.

⁹ Michael Coppedge, et al., "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v11.1," Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project 2021, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds21>, or <https://www.v-dem.net/>.

Western-style democratic regimes. Since in our paper we are mainly talking about the threat to liberal democracy, it proves to be an appropriate criterion. In Figure 1, one can see that Estonia again proves to be a top performer among the post-communist countries, in recent years being ahead of even Slovenia and the Czech Republic, as well as its Baltic neighbors.

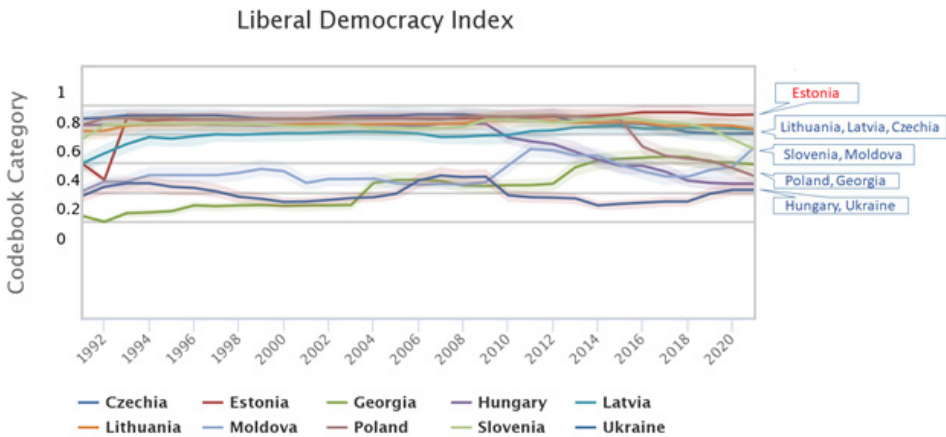


Figure 1. Liberal Democracy Index by the Varieties of Democracy (V-dem).

Source: Michael Coppedge, et al., "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v11.1," Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project 2021, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds21>, or <https://www.v-dem.net/>.

Notes: The index shows to what extent the ideal of liberal democracy is achieved. The principle of liberal democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority, the existence of constitutionally protected civil liberties, rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances in the field of executive power.

The third relatively well-known index is the Bertelsmann Transformation Index¹⁰. In table 2, one can find the Status index, which reflects the overall progress of a transition country (both of its economic and political transition), and the Democracy Status index (also called Political Transformation Index), which measures the quality of democracy. Here Estonia demonstrates impressive results, being ranked first among the post-communist countries and second among the 137 developing and transition countries worldwide. Again, Estonia outperforms Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and its Baltic neighbors.

¹⁰ "Bertelsmann's Transformation Index, 2021," Bertelsmann Stiftung, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://www.bti-project.org/en/home/>.



Table 2. Bertelsmann Foundation (Stiftung), Transformation indices in selected post-communist countries in 2022.

Country	Democracy Status	Transformation Status Index
Estonia	9.7 (2nd)	9.5 (2nd)
Lithuania	9.5 (4th)	9.3 (4th)
Czech Republic	9.3 (5th)	9.3 (3rd)
Latvia	9.0 (9th)	8.8 (7th)
Slovenia	8.7 (10th)	8.9 (6th)
Poland	7.5 (24th)	7.9 (14th)
Ukraine	6.8 (36th)	6.8 (26th)
Hungary	6.4 (48th)	6.6 (29th)
Georgia	6.1 (54th)	6.0 (52nd)
Moldova	6.2 (56th)	5.9 (56th)

Source: "Bertelsmann's Transformation Index, 2021," Bertelsmann Stiftung, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://www.bti-project.org/en/home/>.

Notes: The score is provided along with the country's position among the transition countries (in brackets). The Status Index is aggregated by calculating the average of the total scores given for the dimensions of political (democracy status) and economic (economy status) transformation for the developing and transition countries around the world; Democracy Status (or Political Transformation Index) includes the criteria comprising statehood, political participation, the rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, political and social integration.

Consequently, based on the data provided earlier, there is not much doubt that Estonia has been one of the most successful transition countries in Eastern Europe in building a consolidated liberal democratic regime. Nonetheless, the neat façade hides some inherent weaknesses and deficiencies relating to how democracy really works in Estonia. In order to understand these weaknesses, we have to explore the fourth widely used indicator, The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index¹¹. Here, the definition of democracy is more demanding than in previous indices, and the emphasis is on the more substantial and participation-orientated dimensions of democracy. Alongside the electoral process, pluralism, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation and political culture are also taken into account. According to the ranking for 2021, Estonia occupies the 27th position in the world – the highest score among the post-communist democracies, but Estonia is still classified as a "flawed democracy". Mostly, this occurs because democracy lacks substance: Estonia has a relatively low level of political participation, trust in institutions, an underdeveloped political culture, a fragmented party system, etc.

¹¹ "The Economist Intelligence Unit," Democracy Index 2021, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/>

Indeed, the Economist's Democracy Index reflects many problems which some other studies about the functioning of Estonian democracy have also pointed out. It appears that, even if trust in political institutions and support for democracy is considerably higher in Estonia than in neighboring Latvia and Lithuania, it is still much lower than in the Nordic countries. This low level of trust is particularly evident among the Russian-speakers and the ethnic Estonians "left behind" (those who have a lower socio-economic status and level of education, live in the rural regions, etc.)¹². The same patterns appear in cases where the scholars have studied political participation: the urbanized middle class is relatively well engaged in civil society and is aware of the institutions' democratic efficacy, but the Russian-speakers and the less well-off Estonians are excluded in many respects¹³.

These scholarly studies demonstrate that the populist radical right seeks to mobilize the more resentful citizens and those who feel "left behind"¹⁴. Material insecurity and the perceived loss of social status also play a role in populist right-wing support¹⁵. Thus, it is expected that EKRE would seek to increase their electoral gains by mobilizing the "left-behind" ethnic Estonians, but not only: there is also a serious potential for them to reach out to the more disillusioned and alienated Russian-speakers.

Furthermore, the studies on populism also show that the populist radical right could threaten liberal democracy through undermining the separation of powers, the rule of law, and minority rights¹⁶. Hence, that is the reason why we are so concerned about the rise of EKRE. While mobilizing more resentful ethnic Estonians and making inroads into the Russian-speaking constituencies simultaneously, the party could mobilize a sizable electoral coalition that would catapult them to being a dominant party and might allow them to initiate many reforms which would undermine liberal democracy in Estonia.

Many authors believe it unlikely that the ethnic minorities would vote for the populist radical right because those parties, particularly in Eastern Europe, usually target ethnic minorities and depict them as "the other," turning them into major scapegoats¹⁷. However, recent research has drawn attention to cases where

¹² Duvold, et. al., *Political Culture*; Kalmus et al., *Researching Estonian*.

¹³ Tõnis Saarts and Mari-Liis Jakobson, "Civic Engagement in Policy Making Processes in Estonia: A Controversial Success Story," in *25 Years of Development in the Post-Soviet Space: Civil Society and Participatory Democracy*, eds. by Sergiu Musteata and Stefan Schäffer, (Vienna: Böhlau, Der Donauraum Series, 2017), 25–38.

¹⁴ Jens Rydgren. "The Sociology of the Radical Right," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 241-62.

¹⁵ Rydgren. "The Sociology of the Radical Right."

¹⁶ Takis S. Pappas, *Populism and Liberal Democracy: A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁷ Lenka Bustikova, *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).



some right-wing populist parties have gradually changed their rhetoric towards minority groups and have actively sought to win their electoral support, mainly by playing on anti-immigration sentiment or emphasizing conservative values. For example, in Germany the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) has been such a party, mobilizing the Russian immigrants living in Germany¹⁸.

Nevertheless, even if EKRE does not succeed in mobilizing the Russian-speakers, the lower political engagement of the Russian minority and the further failures in integrating them will undermine the quality of liberal democracy in Estonia, in any case. It is complicated to build a well-functioning democracy without a cohesive political community.

The Russian minority – An Achilles' heel of Estonian democracy?

In this section, we explore the issue of the integration of the Russophone minority in Estonia while focusing on some key aspects, like language, citizenship, media, education, socio-economic well-being, and political integration.

The violent annexation and occupation of independent Estonia by the Soviet Union in 1940 disrupted the nation-building process in Estonia. After Estonia regained its independence in 1991, this process continued, but under a new demographic situation: in 1945, the share of ethnic Estonians in Estonia was 97.3%, but by 1989 it was down to 61%¹⁹. Moreover, as one of the results of the Soviet era in Estonia, two comparatively large language-based communities emerged that had a different understanding of statehood.: Aa large share of the Russophone community viewed Estonia rather as an organic part of the Soviet Union, but many Estonians perceived the migrants as an extension of the Soviet power structures, and the question of their integration became a major issue²⁰.

According to the first official integration program, the aim of integration was building a multi-cultural society, where people of different nationalities would ideally feel like a part of the Estonian nation and share a common Estonian-language-based cultural space²¹. This means that integration was viewed mostly from the perspective of cultural belonging. Even though the main spheres of integra-

¹⁸ Michael A, Hansen and Jonathan Olsen, "Pulling up the Drawbridge: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Support for the Alternative for Germany among Russian-Germans," *German Politics and Society* 38, no. 2 (2020): 109-136.

¹⁹ Raivo Vetik. "Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation in Post-Communist Estonia," *Journal of Peace Research* (1993) 30, no. 3:271–280.

²⁰ Raivo Vetik (Ed.), *Nation-Building in the Context of Post-Communist Transformation and Globalization. The case of Estonia* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012).

²¹ „Integratsioon Eesti ühiskonnas 2000–2007 (National Program "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007)", accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/82230>

tion were not only related to language and culture, but also to the economic and political spheres, the concrete measures were primarily focused on linguistic integration, meaning that socio-economic and political integration were left in the background.

The problems and challenges of integration have been researched consistently in Estonia since the beginning of the 2000s. The Integration Monitoring surveys show that the Russian-language-based community has improved its Estonian language skills step-by-step. For example, the 2020 report shows that, since 2008, the number of people who evaluated their Estonian language skills as good has risen from 31% to 42%²². Over the years, the number of people who do not speak the Estonian language at all has fallen considerably, now representing 8% of the Russophone community. Placing those numbers in context, according to the last Soviet-era census, in 1989, only 14% of the Russophone community spoke the Estonian language²³.

The growing connections and contacts between the two different language communities could be seen as one of the main preconditions for successful integration. It can be argued that, even thirty years after regaining independence, Estonian society still has a long way to go in achieving coherence rather than segregation. For example, people do communicate in languages other than their own, but it happens primarily at work or at school; leisure time is spent mostly communicating with people belonging to the same language communities²⁴.

In addition, the language-based divisions have also been obvious in the Estonian media sphere since the Soviet era. Only in the last years can one notice two significant changes. The first is related to the weakening role of the Russian media (official Kremlin TV channels), which had been the dominant media outlet for many Russophones in Estonia for several decades. The high point of the Russian media was reached during the Bronze Soldier crisis, in 2007-08, but its impact has steadily been decreasing since then²⁵. The second trend is that the Russophone minority has replaced the Russian media with Estonian Russian-language-based media, especially with web-based news services and public broadcasting companies. Based on the Integration Monitoring survey of 2020, the most salient changes have happened especially in the last years when, for example, the state-sponsored Russian-language-based TV channel ETV+ has become more prominent,

²² Eve Mägi, Ivan Polynin, Katrina Koppel, Kats Kivistik, Kirsti Melesk, Kristi Anniste, Kristjan Kaldur, Külliki Seppel, Mari-Liis Sepper, Meeli Murasov, Märt Masso, Nawal Shaharyar, Nikolai Kunisõn, Raivo Vetik and Triin Pohla, *Eesti Integratsiooni Monitooring 2020 (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2020)*, <https://www.kul.ee/media/3240/download>.

²³ Vetik, "Ethnic Conflict."

²⁴ Eve Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni (Estonian Integration)*.

²⁵ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.



and therefore has provided more information to the Russian minority about what is happening in Estonia²⁶. In the long run, one can expect that this will positively influence the political engagement of the Russian-speakers, because it reduces their social and political isolation.

Another key sphere for integration is the educational system. Estonia inherited a bilingual education system from the Soviet time, with a clear-cut curriculum for all public schools, but the instruction language varies by school²⁷. The main idea since independence has been to transform the two parallel language-based education systems into one integrated Estonian language-based system. Already in 1993, parliament decided that, by the year 2000, the whole education system should be based on the Estonian language. However, the preparations required for implementing the reform were still in progress. Instead, a new policy was adopted for the interval 2007-2011: the upper high school (grades 10-12) were supposed to be taught according to a 40/60 system, meaning that 60 percent of the subjects should be taught in the Estonian language²⁸. The aim was, on the one hand, to better prepare students for integration into society, by improving their language skills and by therefore reducing the socio-economic inequalities in the future. On the other hand, the minorities could still retain their cultural identity.

Unfortunately, the following years have shown that the students' language skills had not improved sufficiently in Russian language schools, and this model still reproduced the segregation of language communities²⁹. In addition, studies show that the current linguistically segregated education system reproduces socio-economic inequality and also hinders the development of active democratic citizenship³⁰.

Since Estonia regained independence, the citizenship policy has been a highly contested issue³¹. The main question was whether the Soviet-era immigrants had the right to get Estonian citizenship automatically, or if they should abide by the naturalization process. Estonia decided to follow the restitution model, according to which only the former citizens of the inter-war Republic of Estonia and their descendants obtained citizenship automatically.³² However, because of being So-

²⁶ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsioon*.

²⁷ Nikolai Kunitsõn and Leif Kalev, "Citizenship Educational Policy: A Case of Russophone Minority in Estonia" *Social Sciences* 10, no. 4 (2021): 131, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10040131>

²⁸ Kunitsõn and Kalev, "Citizenship Educational Policy."

²⁹ Helen Sooväli-Sepping, *Inimarengu aruanne 2019/2020 (The Estonian Human Development Report)* (Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Kogu, 2019).

³⁰ Sooväli-Sepping, *Inimarengu aruanne*.

³¹ Vetik, "Ethnic Conflict."

³² Graham Smith, "Democracy Thesis and the Citizenship Question in Estonia and Latvia," *Nationalities Papers* 24, no. 2 (1996): 57-93

viet-time immigrants, a majority of the Russian-speakers did not get citizenship automatically and had to obtain it through naturalization. Many of them are still non-citizens or have applied for Russian citizenship³³. As a result, many studies show that the non-citizens and the Russian citizens, in particular, have been more alienated from the Estonian political system than other social groups: they do not trust political institutions and are dissatisfied with Estonian democracy³⁴.

In the first years after re-independence, the naturalization process was quite rapid. In 1992, when the Law of Citizenship was adopted, around 1/3 of the population did not yet have Estonian citizenship. By the year 2000, 1/4 of the population still had not received Estonian citizenship, and by the year 2000, there still were around 5% of people with non-citizenship status, while around 7% of the population had Russian citizenship³⁵. Currently, the naturalization pace has slowed down: less than 1000 people per year acquire Estonian citizenship via naturalization, including all the children in Estonia whose parents do not have any citizenship³⁶. Without changes in the legal system, the number of non-citizens will gradually decrease, but their share in the near future will not fall below 4-5%³⁷.

Rapid economic and political changes in the 1990s created growing socio-economic inequalities, which were often discernible along ethnic or linguistic lines. Comparative research shows that around thirty years ago, the material well-being and socio-economic position in society were broadly similar between Estonian and Russophone communities. However, during and after the free-market reforms in the 1990s, ethnic inequality rose substantially and has more or less remained stable until today³⁸. During the 1990s and 2000s, the differences in salaries between Estonians and Russian speakers reached 20%³⁹ and are now around 15%⁴⁰, favoring the titular nation. In addition, the labor market participation is lower, and the unemployment rate is higher among the Russian minority. They also evaluate their labor market position and stability lower compared to the Estonians⁴¹. Economic crises have influenced the Russophone community to a greater extent: fewer people work in managerial positions or as specialists, while

³³ Sammy Smooha and Priit Järve, *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (Budapest: Open Society Foundation, 2005).

³⁴ Vetik (Ed.), *Nation-Building*.

³⁵ Eve Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni (Estonian Integration)*.

³⁶ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.

³⁷ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.

³⁸ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.

³⁹ Kristian-Olari Leping and Ott Toomet, "Emerging Ethnic Wage Gap: Estonia During Political and Economic Transition," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36, no. 4 (2008): 599–619.

⁴⁰ Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.

⁴¹ Kalmus et al., *Researching Estonian*.



many Russians belong to the blue-collar working class⁴². As noted before, socio-economic insecurity, rapid social changes, and the perceptions of one's status loss (the Russian-speakers' social, political, and economic status has been degraded compared to the Soviet period) provide a fertile ground for the rise of radical and anti-liberal parties among this segment of society.

The above-mentioned difficulties and failures in integrating the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia are obvious in the way in which they see democracy and trust institutions. The Baltic Barometer data from 2014, collected by Duvold and his colleagues⁴³, demonstrate that there is less principled support for democracy, but also a considerably higher support for strongman rule, among the Russian-speakers (see Table 3). The Russians are notably less satisfied with how democracy really works in Estonia, and they believe that the government does not treat them fairly. Based on different indicators, Duvold claims that 2/3 of the Russian-speakers are rather disillusioned with politics. Furthermore, they tend to trust the key political institutions less than the ethnic Estonians (including courts, parliament, and the government and president in particular). However, they still have higher confidence in other institutions, such as the police, the trade unions, and the church.

Table 3. Trust in the Estonian political system among the Russian speakers, according to the Baltic Barometer (2014).

The survey question	Estonians	Russian-speakers
Principled support for democracy as preferable to any other kind of government system	53	41
Support for strongman rule	41	20
Satisfied with the way democracy works	53	35
Government treats people equally and fairly	39	21
Citizens having a pessimistic / disillusioned political attitude	45	63
Trust in institutions		
Courts	60	49
Police	65	51
Political parties	11	13
Parliament	20	15
Government	28	13
President	52	17
Trade unions	42	42
Church	43	61

Source: Kjetil Duvold, Sten Berglund, and Joakim Ekman, *Political Culture in the Baltic States* (Cham: Springer, 2020), 44, 108, 119, 170, 174.

⁴² Jelena Helemäe and Ellu Saar, "Estonia: Highly Unequal but Classless?" *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 4, no. 2 (2012): 49-58.

⁴³ Duvold, et al, „Political Culture“.

To conclude, we emphasize the main contradiction in the integration of the Russian-speakers into Estonian society: while the Russophone community's language skills and cultural capital have increased in the last few decades, their socio-economic, material well-being and labor market conditions have not improved at the same pace. In the Estonian Human Development Reports, this situation has been called the "integration trap," which inevitably would increase the political alienation of the Russian-speaking community⁴⁴. The widespread perception that ethnic inequality can be reduced just by learning the Estonian language has not been confirmed either by the current research or by real-life experiences. It is possible to invoke some examples of highly successful people with Russian origins, but this is rather an exception that proves the rule. Briefly, ethnic relations and the failures of the integration policy can be viewed as an Achilles' heel of Estonian democracy.

The rise of populism – the song of the angry Estonian men

Estonia's fast development after re-gaining independence has also been evident in the party system's institutionalization and consolidation⁴⁵. Before the 2015 parliamentary elections, populism had mainly played a marginal role in Estonia, with the exception of a flash-party, Res Publica, in the 2003 elections⁴⁶. However, the situation has considerably changed since then, and Estonia has seen the astonishingly quick rise of the populist radical right⁴⁷.

The Conservative People's Party of Estonia (Estonian: *Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond, EKRE*) was established in March 2012, when a former agrarian party, the People's Union of Estonia, which had failed to pass the 5% threshold to reach parliament, and the Estonian Patriotic Movement, merged⁴⁸. This merger had a significant impact, since the newly founded party inherited a strong and geographically extensive party organization from its predecessor – the People's

⁴⁴ Raivo Vetik, "Kokkuvõte: Eesti arengumudel post-2015" (Summary: Estonian Development model post-2015). In *Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne 2014/2015 (Estonian Human Development Report 2014/2015)*, edited by Raivo Vetik. Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Koda, 2015.

⁴⁵ Daunis Auers, *Comparative Politics and Government of the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the 21st Century* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁴⁶ Mari-Liis Jakobson, Ilze Balcere, Oudekki Loone, Anu Nurk, Tõnis Saarts, and Rasa Zakreviciute. *Populism in the Baltic States: A Research Report* (Tallinn: Tallinn University / Open Estonia Foundation, 2012).

⁴⁷ Stefano Braghiroli and Vassilis Petsinis, "Between Party-Systems and Identity-Politics: The Populist and Radical Right in Estonia and Latvia," *European Politics and Society* 20, no. 4 (2019): 431-49.

⁴⁸ Saarts et al. "When a Right-Wing."



Union⁴⁹. The popularity of EKRE initially remained quite low, at least for a few years. Still, with the change of leadership (after a charismatic former diplomat, Mart Helme, was elected as chairman), the party took advantage of the current political situation in Estonia. It managed to draw support from various interest groups and to enter parliament after the 2015 elections, with 8% of the votes and 7% of seats⁵⁰. During the next four years, the party stayed in opposition. Still, they managed to mobilize considerable public support for the next elections, in 2019, in which they got almost three times more votes than in the previous elections (i.e., 18% of the votes and 19% of seats).⁵¹

After the 2019 elections, a controversial coalition government was formed. The left-leaning Russophone-dominated Center Party made a coalition with the right-wing nationalist Pro Patria and the right-wing populist EKRE. The winner of the elections – the right-wing liberal Reform Party and the left-wing Social Democrats – were left in opposition. EKRE's time in government was marked by several scandals and controversial policy initiatives concerning either immigration policy, minority rights issues, foreign policy, or general democratic governance⁵². This resulted in a slight decline in the score of democracy for Estonia, according to the Freedom House *Nations in Transit* report⁵³. The government collapsed after a corruption scandal in January 2021, but many believe that this was just an excuse for the prime minister (Jüri Ratas, Center Party) to abandon the right-wing populist EKRE as a coalition partner. EKRE is now back in opposition, and they are viewed as one of the main favorites to win the next parliamentary elections, due in 2023, because, according to several recent opinion polls, EKRE has become the most popular party in Estonia, or a strong second option.⁵⁴

Regarding its ideology, EKRE is not significantly different from the other populist right-wing parties in Western or Eastern Europe⁵⁵. Nativism, anti-immigration sentiment, traditional family values, and hard Euroscepticism are its major keywords. Those values are supplemented by anti-liberal views regarding the minorities and minority rights (e.g., anti-LGBTB rhetoric), and by other elements of populism, such as anti-elite discourses and an appeal to “the people”. In addition,

⁴⁹ Saarts et al. “When a Right-Wing.”

⁵⁰ “Elections in Estonia.”

⁵¹ “Elections in Estonia.”

⁵² Mari-Liis Jakobson and Leif Kalev, “Covid-19 Crisis and Labor Migration Policy: A Perspective from Estonia,” *Frontiers in Political Science* 2 (2020): 1-5.

⁵³ “Freedom House.”

⁵⁴ ERR, “Erakondade toetus.”

⁵⁵ Andres Kasekamp, Mari-Liis Madisson, and Louis Wierenga, “Discursive Opportunities for the Estonian Populist Radical Right in a Digital Society,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 66, no. 1 (2019): 47-58; Stefano and Petsinis, “Between Party-Systems.”

EKRE sees Western-style liberal democracy, and the EU in particular, as foreign enemies and praises the Hungarian and Polish governments for their policies and ostensible independence. In socio-economic terms, it is difficult to classify EKRE either as right-wing or left-wing, because, on the one hand, they propagate quite extensive state intervention in the economy, including increasing wages and social benefits, but, on the other hand, the party proposes lowering taxes.⁵⁶

Moreover, the party, in general, does not support the climate policies of the EU and is supportive, conversely, of continuing the oil-shale industry in Estonia, which is a relatively popular policy position among the Russian-speakers living in North-Eastern Estonia⁵⁷. EKRE implements the “Estonia first” approach in foreign policy, meaning that they are against multinational corporations and supra-national unions, like the EU. In the field of defense policy, their main idea is based on the self-reliance of Estonia, but they envisage cooperation with other NATO countries, especially the US and Poland.

In terms of democracy debates, they claim that current democracy is not “real democracy,” and therefore, they support certain measures of implementing direct democracy. This agenda also includes the direct election of judges and introducing referendums on various policy issues (for example, on defining marriage only as a union between members of the opposite sex).⁵⁸

Curiously, at least until 2020/2021, EKRE treated the Russophone minority as “the Other” (along with immigrants and refugees) and regarded them as a potential “fifth column.”⁵⁹ Recently, however, the EKRE’s position has changed, as we will see in the last part of the article.

Various issues have contributed to the exceptional rise of EKRE. The aim of this paper is not to point out only one crucial factor. Instead, we focus on several issues, taking into consideration that they have all played their role. Three main clusters of explanations can be advanced: 1) socio-economic reasons, 2) cultural and value-based approaches, and 3) contextual reasons.

Regarding the socio-economic reasons, we emphasize the growing economic inequalities found in Estonian society⁶⁰. While Estonia has implemented the

⁵⁶ “EKRE uus majandusprogramm paneb majanduse, palgad ja pensionid kasvama” (EKRE New Economic Programme Will Make the Economy, Salaries and Pensions Grow), EKRE website, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.ekre.ee/ekre-uus-majandusprogramm-paneb-majanduse-palgad-ja-pensionid-kasvama/>.

⁵⁷ “EKRE maaelu programm” (EKRE Rural Life Programme), EKRE website, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.ekre.ee/ekre-maaelu-programm/>.

⁵⁸ EKRE konservatiivne programm (The Conservative Manifesto of EKRE), EKRE website, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://ekre.ee/konservatiivne-programm/>.

⁵⁹ Kasekamp, Madisson, and Wierenga, „Discursive Opportunities“.

⁶⁰ Ellu Saar, *Towards a Normal: Actual and Perceived Social Stratification in Post-Socialist Estonia*, *Baltische Studien Zur Erziehungs- Und Sozialwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2011).



neoliberal Washington Consensus since independence, and while this model has proven to be successful at a macro-economic level, there are still great inequalities in Estonia between the cities and the rural areas.⁶¹ In the public discourse, some even talk about the “Second Estonia”: the sections of Estonian society “left behind”, regarded as losers of the post-communist transition, who are poorly coping with the pressures of globalization.⁶² EKRE skillfully mobilized these voters by speaking more openly about regional differences and social inequalities. They claim that they can restore to these people their dignity as members of a larger national community. Analyzing the socio-economic profile of EKRE’s supporters, one can conclude that they are predominantly male (this is why the title of the section refers to “angry men”), reside in rural regions and smaller towns, and have a lower level of education⁶³. Curiously, the same studies show no clear-cut correlation between EKRE’s support and social class and income.

The analysis by Siim Trumm⁶⁴ demonstrates that a conservative value orientation predicts the electoral support for EKRE even better than socio-economic background variables. Indeed, while the younger generation and the economically well-off urban dwellers embrace liberal and individualistic values, conservative and traditional values are still strongly entrenched in many sections of Estonian society⁶⁵. This, in turn, provides a fertile ground for culture wars and identity politics. For many years, the paramount cleavage in Estonian politics was the ethnic cleavage – the so-called “Russian question”, revolving around ethnicity, language issues, history, and geopolitical orientation⁶⁶. However, the political situation has changed since the Russian-friendly Center Party’s leader Edgar Savisaar was replaced by a more Western-oriented and younger chairman (Jüri Ratas), in autumn 2016⁶⁷. This shift means that the “Russian question” is no longer so strongly present in party politics, which has opened a window of opportunity for EKRE to push the cultural conflict to the forefront.

⁶¹ Helemäe and Saar, “Estonia: Highly Unequal”.

⁶² Saar, *Towards a Normal Stratification Order*.

⁶³ ERR, “Erakondade toetus”; Siim Trumm, “The ‘New’ Wave of Populist Right-Wing Parties in Central and Eastern Europe: Explaining Electoral Support for the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia,” *Representation* 54, no. 4 (2018): 331-47.

⁶⁴ Trumm, “The ‘New’ Wave.”

⁶⁵ Mare Ainsaar and Tarmo Strenze (eds.), *Väärtused kui inimvara ja nende mõju ühiskonna arengule* [Values as Human Capital and Their Impact on Social Development] (Tallinn: Arenguseire Keskus, 2019).

⁶⁶ Tõnis Saarts and Ellu Saar. “When the Ethnic Cleavage Overshadows the Class Cleavage in a Post-Communist Country and Why We Should Care?” *European Politics and Society* (published online, 2021): 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2020.1858397>.

⁶⁷ Martin Mölder, “Estonia,” *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* 56, no. 1 (2017): 85–91.

Last but not least, one cannot entirely dismiss the contextual issues and historical contingencies. It seems that two critical events, taking place in 2014-2015, played a decisive role in EKRE's rise to prominence. First, the Estonian parliament ratified the recognition of same-sex unions in Estonia in the autumn of 2014⁶⁸. This was a divisive issue in society, and the bill passed in parliament on October 9, 2014, by a very close margin. At the same time, some implementing provisions required for the law to come fully into force were not adopted, since they required an absolute majority of votes - 51 MPs - and this was not reached. EKRE managed to mobilize the more traditional and conservative voices in society, being the only political party that was actively against the "imposing of the liberal EU agenda" on Estonia. Since society was divided over the issue of same-sex unions, the party gained a lot of popularity due to this action. It is clear that this was a turning point for EKRE. Formerly a fringe party, it became a party that their liberal opponents had to reckon with. The European refugee crisis in 2015 provided new opportunities for EKRE to keep the public focused on value- and globalization-related issues. While the liberal-leaning political elite was united in its attitude towards the refugee crisis, the population was not⁶⁹. EKRE took a hard stance against the refugees by stating that "Our quota of refugees is 0". The discourse claiming that the European Union is forcing refugee quotas on member states found a fruitful ground, amplifying the anti-EU discourse in Estonian society.

Consequently, there is no doubt that EKRE would potentially threaten the liberal democratic order and consensus in Estonia. However, two main reasons make the scenarios similar to Hungary and Poland less likely for Estonia. First, the proportional electoral system in Estonia and the traditionally very fragmented party system make it practically impossible for a single party to gain a majority of seats in parliament⁷⁰. Second, even if EKRE manages to increase its popularity further, it does not mean automatically that other parties would allow them to form a government coalition. There has been a historical precedent in Estonia when the Russian-friendly Center Party was excluded from the government for more than 11 years, despite their electoral success⁷¹. However, let us imagine that EKRE manages to mobilize a substantial electoral coalition of the citizens "left behind" (both Estonians and Russians). In that case, it could allow them to

⁶⁸ Allan Sikk, "Estonia," *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* 54, no. 1 (2015): 94-100.

⁶⁹ Andrey Makarychev and Vladimir Sazonov, "Populisms, Popular Geopolitics and the Politics of Belonging in Estonia," *European Politics and Society* 20, no. 4 (2019): 450-69.

⁷⁰ Tõnis Saarts and Marleen Allemann, "The Long-Term Governmental Parties in Post-Communist Democracies," *Problems of Post-Communism* (published online, 2021): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1906281>.

⁷¹ Saarts and Allemann, "The Long-Term Governmental Parties."



get the biggest representation, by far, in the national parliament (ca. 30-35% of seats, or more), making it difficult for other, more liberal, parties to ignore them while forming a government.

The angry Estonian men meet the alienated Russian minority

As stated earlier, EKRE's rhetoric and policies can be described as anti-Russian, Eurosceptic, pro-family and anti-refugees. However, before the last local elections, in October 2021, EKRE changed its rhetoric toward the Russian population. For example, the former chairman of the party, Mart Helme⁷², said that the Russians were a "civilization", not a nation, and he openly stated in his interview to the public broadcasting company of Estonia that Russian-speaking voters were "a potential, untapped source for Estonia".⁷³ Although this may seem surprising, it is actually quite a logical step, based on several assumptions, which we will now dwell on.

In general, the Russophone minority has more conservative values than the ethnic Estonians⁷⁴ – at least considering the classical conservative-liberal divisive issues in Estonia, like tolerance towards refugees or same-sex couples' cohabitation. Thus, the Russophone community, in general, has more common ground with the perceptions of EKRE, rather than with the liberal elites. In addition, as we have demonstrated, there is still a substantial socio-economic gap between the Estonians and the Russophone community: the latter were the "losers" of the transition in the 1990s and can still be seen as a part of the so-called "Second Estonia." As noted before, socio-economic grievances and the loss of status provide fertile ground for populist right-wing support. Last but not least, the Russophone community is also more Eurosceptic⁷⁵, which aligns them with the ideas of EKRE.

There are several reasons why the Russophone community is more conservative than the Estonians, but one of the most crucial is the Russian-speaking media from Russia, which is also Eurosceptic and conservative. As it was mentioned before, many of the Russophone community members follow the Russian state media for various reasons, including because of their lack of proficiency in the Estonian language. The Center Party has previously exploited that issue, managing to use different discourses towards their Russian-speaking and Estonian supporters for years. EKRE has used the same strategy by saying different things in a different language to separate communities.

⁷² The new chairman of EKRE is Mart Helme's son, Martin Helme, who was elected in July 2021.

⁷³ "EKRE leader on education, Russian votes and possible coalition partners", ERR <https://news.err.ee/864400/ekre-leader-on-education-russian-votes-and-possible-coalition-partners>

⁷⁴ Ainsaar and Strenze, *Väärtused kui*.

⁷⁵ Duvold et. al., *Political Culture*.

In addition, in local elections, all people with permanent residence permits can vote, no matter their citizenship⁷⁶. There are around 100 000 people in Estonia who have Russian citizenship or are non-citizens⁷⁷. Thus, at least potentially, EKRE could be quite successful in mobilizing the more conservative and resentful sections of the Russian electorate.

Nevertheless, EKRE is still a right-wing nationalist party. So, how does becoming more Russian-friendly align with nationalist tendencies? As already mentioned, one of the ways to overcome this dilemma is by exploiting the different media preferences of the population. Also, EKRE managed to mobilize the Russian-speaking minority against immigration: mostly against Muslims and racial minorities, but also, in more practical terms, against Ukrainian workers, whose number was estimated at around 20 000 before the Russian war against Ukraine started⁷⁸. The Ukrainian guest workers often work in low-skill areas. They were willing to work for smaller salaries than local people and lived in harsher conditions. Thus, they were “taking the jobs” from “our Russians,” as EKRE’s perspective on this issue would have it.

As one can see in Figure 2, the support for EKRE started to increase steadily in early spring 2021 and reached its peak right before the elections, during which 21% of the Russian-speakers were ready to support EKRE. Thus, the party leadership had high expectations regarding the Russian voters, and they started campaigning in the Russian language in majority Russian-populated areas. Several high-ranking EKRE politicians ran for office in the Tallinn area, which is home to the majority of the Russian-speaking population.

Although EKRE, in general, proved to be successful in the municipal elections of October 2021, in which they nearly doubled their previous vote share, from 6.7% to 13.2%⁷⁹, their “Russian strategy” ended in failure. They did not reach the 5% threshold in North-Eastern Estonia (Ida-Virumaa County), where the majority of the population is Russian speaking⁸⁰. Thus, their candidates did not get any seats in the municipal councils in Ida-Virumaa’s bigger cities (including Narva)⁸¹. In the subdistrict of Tallinn, they got only 6.3% of the vote, which resulted in

⁷⁶ Auers, *Comparative Politics*.

⁷⁷ Auers, *Comparative Politics*; Mägi et al., *Eesti integratsiooni*.

⁷⁸ “Estonian Statistics, 2021”, RV022U, accessed March, 22, 2022, https://andmed.stat.ee/et/stat/rahvastik__rahvastikunaitajad-ja-koosseis__rahvaarv-ja-rahvastiku-koosseis/RV0222U/table/tableViewLayout2

⁷⁹ ”Elections in Estonia.”

⁸⁰ ”Elections in Estonia.”

⁸¹ ”Elections in Estonia.”

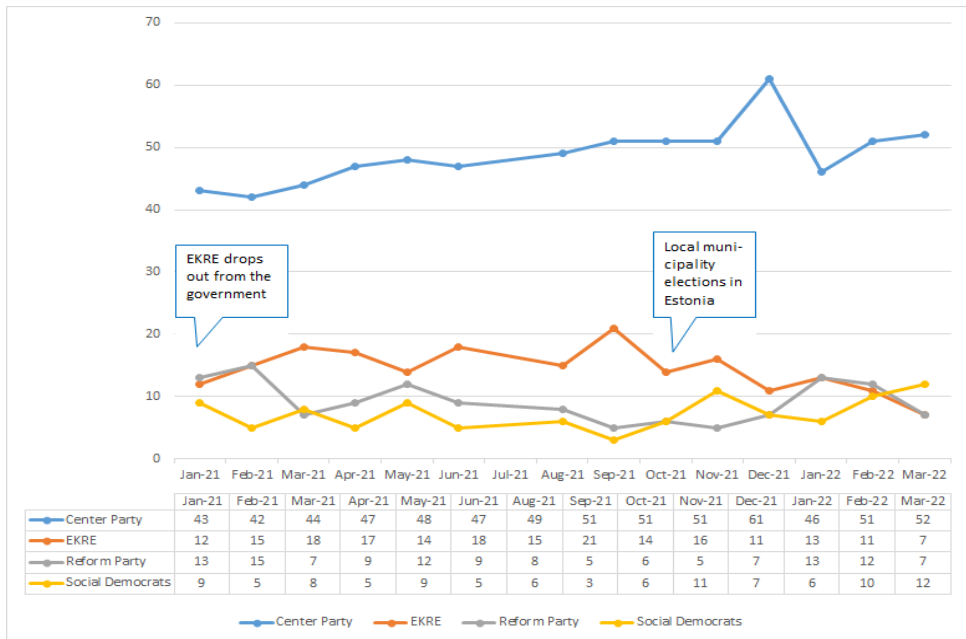


Figure 2. Support for EKRE among the Russian speakers (percent), 2020 – 2022.

Source: "Erakondade toetus 2018. aastast praeguseni (Support for Political Parties since 2018 to the Present)," ERR News Portal, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.err.ee/reitingud>.

Note: The Center Party has traditionally been the party most widely supported by the Russian speakers in Estonia; the Reform Party is a liberal party and the second largest party in Estonia, currently forming a government together with the Center Party; the Social Democrats are included because minorities often support left-wing and pro-welfare-state parties.

only one seat out of 15⁸². In figure 2, one can also see how the EKRE's popularity among the Russian segment plummeted after the local elections.

Most commentators argue that the major reason behind EKRE's failure was that they could not field well-known candidates in the Russian-speaking districts, politicians that the local Russian people could trust⁸³. Here the Center Party fared better, because they have worked for decades in creating their own pool of Russian-speaking candidates, some of which are now very prominent.

Nonetheless, we cannot conclude that the setback described above may force EKRE's leadership to abandon their aspiration to attract Russian voters. There

⁸² "Elections in Estonia."

⁸³ Tõnis Saarts, "Protestiparteid Kohtuvad Valimisrealsusega (The Protest Parties Meet the Reality of the Local Elections)." *Postimees*, October 21, 2021, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/7365488/tonis-saarts-protestiparteid-kohtuvad-valimisrealsusega>.

are no signs that this has happened. On the contrary, based on a personal communication with a prominent member of EKRE⁸⁴, it appears that they are busily preparing for the next parliamentary elections in 2023. The Russian-speakers are not being forgotten as one of the important target groups in the upcoming campaign. Moreover, the party's main webzine, *Uued uudised*, now also has a Russian-language version.⁸⁵

Hence, probably EKRE would make new attempts to gain Russian votes in the near future. As it was shown earlier, it is a worrying tendency because, if EKRE manages to combine the two disgruntled groups in society – the angry Estonian men and the “left-behind” Russophone community – they could amass a sizable electoral coalition which could not be ignored during government formation. Once in power, there is no doubt that the EKRE would work to undermine the liberal democratic regime and its key institutions in Estonia.

Nevertheless, the current war in Ukraine will certainly affect the EKRE's chances to mobilize the Russian voters. On the one hand, it would make it more difficult to get votes from the pro-Putin section of the community, but, on the other hand, their opposition to the Ukrainian refugees would make EKRE even more attractive in the Russian-speakers' eyes. Yet, it is difficult to speculate on the impact of the Ukrainian war upon Estonian domestic politics in more detail, but it is clear that its effect would be profound.

Conclusion

The current analysis demonstrated that even the most advanced and seemingly resilient democracies in the post-communist world, such as Estonia, could potentially be subject to democratic erosion. As it was shown, the current liberal-democratic model in Estonia has two major Achilles' heels: (1) the limited success in integrating the Russian-speaking minority, which sows the seeds of resentment among the minority groups, who might feel like “second-rate citizens”; and (2) the rapid rise of the populist radical right (EKRE), which demonstrates that even many ethnic Estonians are not satisfied with how democracy really functions in Estonia. A real danger to liberal democracy arises if those two resentful groups might form a joint coalition under the auspices of EKRE. Although the first attempt to form such a coalition for the local elections of 2021 failed, there is little room for optimism or for hopes that EKRE's leaders will simply abandon the plan.

⁸⁴ EKRE prominent party member, Personal communication – the party member wished to remain anonymous, March 6, 2022.

⁸⁵ „Uued Uudised (The New News)”, *Rahvuskonservatiivne uudiste ja arvamusportaali* (The National-Conservative Opinion and News Portal), accessed March 22, 2022, <https://uueduudised.ee/>.



The paper sought to make a contribution to several strands of specialized literature. First, while demonstrating the inherent fragility of some – even the most developed – post-communist democracies, we hope to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on democratization and democratic backsliding in Eastern Europe. Second, while studying ethnic minorities in the context of the rise of right-wing populism, we have demonstrated that the possible scenarios are not always predictable and straightforward: the populists could, in some cases, seek an alliance with the ethnic minorities and with the immigrant population in order to expand their voter base and to realize their political ambitions (i.e., to get into government). Such patterns of behavior and the consequences of such strategic choices have generally been poorly understood by scholars.

Nevertheless, the main limitation of the current research is that we are examining an ongoing process, which is still unfolding, and we do not know exactly to what extent EKRE will succeed in mobilizing the Russian minority in the forthcoming years. Thus, we can draw attention to this emerging phenomenon and map the possible risks, but we can only speculate on the possible outcomes.

However, one cannot interpret the rise of EKRE and its attempts to mobilize the Russian-speakers, along with the Estonians, solely in a negative light. This tendency could be treated, rather, as a wake-up call for the Estonian liberal elites. It demonstrates that the Russian speakers' integration, coupled with the issues of social inequality, regional disparities, political alienation, and distrust in liberal democratic institutions are real and pressing problems and challenges. They must be taken seriously and addressed systematically in the near future.

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Rezumat

Estonia este deseori văzută ca un „elev-model” printre statele post-comuniste. Multe dintre renumitele think tank-uri și organizații care măsoară calitatea democrației (de exemplu, Freedom House, Varieties of Democracy, Bertelsmann Foundation) îi acordă, în mod frecvent, Estoniei cele mai înalte calificative din regiune. Totuși, această fațadă aparent imaculată ascunde tensiuni tot mai mari și contradicții emergente. Prezentul articol se axează pe cele două tendințe deosebit de îngrijorătoare care au devenit evidente în ultimii ani, dacă nu chiar mai devreme: (1) succesul limitat al integrării importantei minorități rusofone în societatea estoniană și (2) recrudescența extremei drepte populiste. Eșecul integrării minorităților etnice ar putea duce la creșterea frustrării și înstrăinării politice în rândurile comunității rusofone, făcând mai dificilă sarcina construirii unei comunități democratice sănătoase, unite și consolidate. Cu toate acestea, creșterea influenței dreptei populiste și radicale, anume succesul electoral remarcabil al partidului EKRE (Partidul Conservator Popular Estonian) s-a dovedit a fi chiar o provocare mai importantă, deoarece acest fapt demonstrează că mulți estonieni sunt profund nemulțumiți de modul în care funcționează democrația în țara lor. Articolul discută, în ce măsură ar fi posibil scenariul, în care estonienii și rușii nemulțumiți de situația actuală și-ar putea uni forțele pentru a pune sub semnul întrebării actualul model de democrație liberală din Estonia. Analiza noastră demonstrează că, chiar dacă încercările inițiale de a face acest lucru au eșuat, un asemenea scenariu nu poate fi completamente exclus, în viitor.

Cuvinte-cheie: Estonia, democrație liberală, democratizare, populism de extremă dreaptă, minoritatea rusă.

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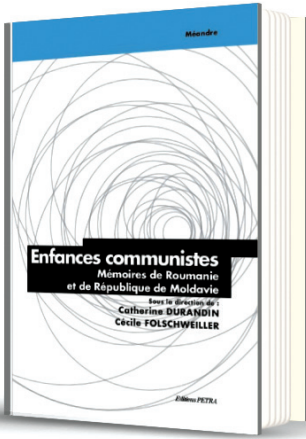
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REVIEWS / RECENZII

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Catherine DURANDIN,
Cécile FOLSCHWEILLER (coord.),
Enfances communistes.
Mémoires de Roumanie
et de République de Moldavie
(Paris: Editions PETRA, 2022).

În regimurile totalitare, învingătorii au întotdeauna mijloacele de a-și impune discursul și viziunea asupra faptelor și asupra trecutului. Pentru astfel de regimuri politice, memoriile oferă incursiuni alternative, experiențe ale politicilor coercitive și adesea intruzive în viața privată. Venind din perioade de represiune mascată ideologic și susținută propagandistic, cu voci contestatate reduse la tăcere în închisori, prin șantaj sau etichetare, a vorbi public despre experiența comunismului (sau a oricărui regim totalitar) este un act de curaj, recuperare și respect față de sine și față de semenii. Fiecare ego-document este o voce particulară, iar suprapunerea mai multora arată specificul unui context și al unei generații. Este ceea ce ne propune volumul de față, dedicat copilăriilor trăite în perioada comunistă în România și în Republica Moldova, lucrare axată pe trei generații (generația de dinainte de 1945, generația 1945-1965 și generația 1965-1980). *Enfances communistes* se alătură demersurilor recente din România¹ și le completează prin includerea comparației cu Republica Moldova și a rememorărilor referitoare la mediul rural. Cartea arată cum bunicii, părinții și copiii deveniți azi adulți își aduc aminte de stalinism, de instalarea regimului comunist în România și în Republica Moldova și cum au resimțit cultural transformările. Există fire comune de trăire în toate aceste memorii, dar există și specificități ce țin de profilul interlocutorului și, desigur, de generație.

Generația de dinainte de 1945 are o viziune mai nuanțată și în același timp mai complexă asupra comunismului. Este de așteptat întrucât ea este singura din cele trei generații care a prins și „cealaltă” lume și, implicit, cealaltă viziune

¹ Ioana Părvulescu (coord.), *Și eu am trăit în comunism* (București: Humanitas, 2015); Matei Cazacu, Ioana Crețoiu, Ladislau Hajos (coord.), *Povestea generației noastre. De la monarhie la democrație. Liceul "Spiru Haret"* (București: Corint, 2016).

asupra a ceea ce putea fi viața: perioada interbelică. Pentru această generație copilăria începe aproape întotdeauna în tonuri întunecate, marcate de: plecarea sau întoarcerea unei rude (de) la închisoare, de suferința familiei, de penurie, de confiscarea bunurilor și împărțirea obligatorie a spațiului locativ cu străini, adesea oameni ai regimului. Șapte memorii ce compun acest prim calup generațional format din patru doamne și trei domni converg în a sublinia patru direcții de viață afectate: spațiul locativ, sărăcia, legea învățământului și receptarea lui Stalin. Copilăria acestor vremuri este marcată de figura lui Stalin – orașe, parcuri numite astfel –, iar la exterior de preschimbările vestimentare (de exemplu, trecerea de la pălăria burgheză la bască) și implementarea unui vocabular specific (*limba de lemn*). Copiii sunt învățați să folosească bârfa pe post de denunț și etichetare și să se autocritice public (89, 151). Sunt învățați să fie comuniști. Modelul oferit de propaganda stalinistă este povestea lui Pavlik Morozov, pionier fruntaș prezentat drept erou de sovietici pentru că și-a denunțat la 13 ani tatăl ce realiza documente false pentru rezistență, pentru „inamicii” regimului; ca răspuns la fapta sa, spune legenda, adolescentul Pavlik a fost ucis de propria familie. Din 1935, sloganul oficial devine „Mulțumim, dragă Stalin, pentru copilăria fericită!”, iar în 1936 *Pionerskaia Pravda* vorbește despre visele copiilor fericiți, unul dintre acestea fiind acela de a-l întâlni pe Stalin.² Sub aceste auspicii de debut, mitul fără substanță se răspândește din centrul rus către statele satelit, printre care România și Republica Moldova, fiind gestionat în ideea de a construi generații sovietice și comuniste „roșii” și diferite de cele de dinainte de revoluția bolșevică.

Dincolo de discurs și zâmbetul în public, copilăria este și nu este fericită în realitate. Aproape toate mărturiile acestei perioade converg asupra ideii de vieți paralele, de contrafacere a „normalității”, a existenței unui cod al tăcerii și de lume protectivă a copilului creată ca un zid de familie. În școlile publice, clasele au un caracter cosmopolit, incluzând copii de toate etniile. Învățarea limbii ruse este comună întregului spațiu sovietic, dar pentru a distanța și fractura identitatea română se recurge la diverse mijloace. Limba română devine în Moldova limba moldovenească și se continuă un proces de rusificare existent anterior în imperiul țarist. Din 1949 tezele lui Andrei Jdanov sunt implementate în România prin diverse instituții româno-sovietice, din 1953 fiind introdusă o nouă ortografie „slavizată” a limbii române. Mobilitatea între Moldova și România este restricționată, iar în privința menținerii limbii un autor își aduce aminte de cât de multe demersuri birocratice a fost nevoie pentru a exista o clasă (nu o școală) cu predare în limba română, devenită moldovenească, la Ocnița (236). Uniunea Sovietică începe

² Despre fenomenul Morozov, vezi Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: the Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (Londra: Granta, 2005); Lewis Siegelbaum, Andrei Sololov (coord.), *Stalinism as a Way of Life. A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2000), 357.



transformarea românilor într-o minoritate etnică de facto. Totodată, pe lângă propaganda sovietică centrată pe lider ca figură paternalistă, se demarează procesul de deformare a istoriei naționale comune. Tot ce ținea de originea românilor, de regalitate și România Mare, de represiunea bolșevică sau de diversele ocupații rusești din ambele teritorii este distorsionat până la negare în lucrările publicate. Școlile sau liceele denumite după personalități culturale și politice devin un număr, un exemplu fiind al liceului Gheorghe Lazăr din București redenumit în epoca stalinistă școala medie nr. 22. Uniformizarea în crearea omului sovietic vede în conștiința națională și în limbă un impediment, Uniunea Sovietică fiind, după 1945, o continuatoare a politicilor imperiale.

Interesant este că în Transilvania, fostă provincie imperială austriacă, o fostă elevă de origine săsească își aduce aminte cum limba română se învăța ca limbă străină, cum exista o superioritate a sașilor față de români («ils n'avaient pas besoin du roumain. Ils ont vécu très pacifiquement aux côtés des Roumains, mais à côté, pas avec», 75), probabil o rămășiță legată de statutul privilegiat avut de ei înainte de 1918. Exemplul rușilor și al sașilor converg aici în atitudinea față de ceilalți. Aceeși elevă realizează că idealul comunist nu exista. Credea cu ardoare în el, spera să fie pionier, însă nu a fost primită printre pionieri pentru că tatăl ei deținea un atelier, avea un ucenic și era considerat „capitalist”; în plus, ea avea și o mătușă în Occident (Germania). Jinga-Roth intră astfel în contact cu un element discriminatoriu al regimului din România: respingerea tuturor celor ce nu aveau un dosar „sănătos”. În Republica Moldova, a avea un dosar problematic îi include și pe cei ce au avut experiența Gulagului. Aceasta este o temă recurentă: discriminarea în colectivitate, în accesarea unei formări intelectuale și profesionale superioare și limitarea mobilității naționale și internaționale. Divizarea, crearea unei lupte de clasă (deși oficial se lupta împotriva ei) prin controlul discriminatoriu al populației; pe lângă încurajarea denunțului, a bârfei și a urii. Pentru această primă generație, „trezirea” la realitatea comunistă apare în jurul vârstei de 13-16 ani, în adolescență, când sunt respinși în diverse situații pentru că au o identitate familială neconformă regimului (34-35; 64-5; 81; 129). Atunci, o parte din reprezentanții ei descoperă că regimul nu este egalitarist, nu este deschis și nu îi vrea decât dacă se dezic de o parte din identitatea lor. Prin o maturizare forțată, reprezentanții generației de dinainte de 1945 își dau seama de fracturile și tensiunile sociale produse și întreținute de noul regim. Oamenii trebuiau să trăiască de parcă „totul era normal”, construind o realitate acasă și una la serviciu, învățând pe copii să tacă sau, știind că nu se poate, să-i excludă din conversațiile „oamenilor mari”. Părinții și copiii învață să se „joace” cu regimul. Toți reprezentanții acestei generații își

aduc aminte de celebrarea morții lui Stalin, de instaurarea unei *normalități a contradicțiilor* (57) și de o *schizofrenie debutantă* (86) a regimului comunist.

Pentru generația 1945-1965, de după război (așa-ziii *baby-boomeri*), lumea de dinainte de instaurarea regimului comunist este prezentă prin amintirile și discuțiile adulților, iar copiii devin mai angrenați în noua societate. Moartea lui Stalin (1953) nu este moartea stalinismului, metodele folosite de autorități în vremea sa continuă și ulterior (179), însă se observă o resemnare, o coabitare între regim și cetățenii săi. În interiorul familiei pot exista păreri contradictorii despre regim (197), dar în public nimeni nu se întreba dacă puterea sovietică era bună sau era rea (202). Anumite teme devin tabu precum colectivizarea, ce a dus la divizarea clasei țărănești (197-8), religia sau știința. La școală se învață că rușii au inventat tot ce era important (218) și că nu există Dumnezeu. Gluma că Iurii Gagarin a fost în spațiu și nu l-a găsit pe Dumnezeu încapsulează ideea (199). În Republica Moldova continuă descurajarea legăturilor cu România: nu se ascultă posturi radio românești, cărțile în limba română sunt rare, iar la întrebările incomode pentru discursul propagandistic oficial, părinții răspund copiilor: *nu ai nevoie să știi* (204). Neștiința protejează copiii până ajung în același punct cu cei din generația anterioară: li se refuză să aibă meseria dorită din pricina dosarului familial sau, fapt nou, află ce înseamnă un protest (209) și de aici le apar întrebările revelatoare. Occidentul este o prezență firavă acum prin artiștii acceptați de regim (de exemplu, Mireille Mathieu și Yves Montand) și este integrat în spațiul public la modul comparativ, pentru a-i arăta decadența. Este nevoie de un astfel de dialog în condițiile în care știri despre realitatea sovietică transpar în Vestul Europei, încă fascinat de progresul raportat de ruși. Borna cronologică a acestei generații este 1965, moartea lui Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej în România dând aceeași impresie unui copil de zece ani de atunci precum cea a morții lui Stalin: a plâns (213). Tot în 1965, la Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român a fost ales Nicolae Ceaușescu drept Conducător.

Comitetul Central al Tineretului Comunist prezenta în 1983, retrospectiv, ce însemna o generație crescută sub semnul lui Nicolae Ceaușescu: să ducă o muncă „eroică împreună cu întregul nostru popor”, într-o „organizare revoluționară” având „convingerea fermă în triumful idealurilor socialiste și comuniste în viață.” Dacă generația epocii sale are conștiința că și-a îndeplinit „sarcinile încredințate de partid și popor”, atunci are „certificatul de identitate revoluționară” adică „dovada cea mai convingătoare a recunoștinței pentru minunatele condiții de realizare și afirmare ce îi sunt oferite”³ Ceaușescu intră astfel în viziunea paternalistă asupra lumii creată anterior. Comunismul nu este însă fericit, decât dacă fericirea este

³ Comitetul Central al Uniunii Tineretului Comunist, Cuvânt înainte, în Traian Gânju, Ion Ardeleanu, Stelian Motiu et al. (coord.), *Generația epocii lui Nicolae Ceaușescu* (București, 1983), VII.



definită prin raționalizare alimentară, oprirea curentului electric sau complicitate în implementarea răului. După cum arată și alte memorii, statul nu se mai baza acum numai pe denunț, ci intra direct în viața individului.⁴ Securistul este un personaj pe care până și copiii îl cunosc. Într-unul din memoriile din volum este povestit cum a fost creat un joc alternativ la eroii din epocă din România (Cireșarii, Pionerii, din filmele de propagandă) – Haiducii din cartierul Calea Giocului al Timișoarei –, cuprinzând aproape toți copiii din cartier. O miză era eschivarea din fața securistului și a părinților prin joaca de-a v-ați-ascunselea, în timp ce o alta era crearea propriului magazin alimentar cu bunătăți adunate de pe unde se putea. Când jocul lor a devenit cunoscut, au creat altul: Haiducii-Ninja, aducând în plus spiritul justițiar și suprapunerea cu spiritul competitiv al echipelor de fotbal. Câștigarea echipei de fotbal Steaua București față de o echipă „cosmopolită” a campionatului european de fotbal (1986) servește politicii național-comuniste a lui Ceaușescu dar și sentimentului de mândrie al copiilor: „Republica Socialistă România i-a bătut pe toți. Uniunea Sovietică a rămas în urmă.” Mândria, competitivitatea și conștiința națională îi fac să respingă persecuția regimului, autorul sugerând prezența unora dintre ei în revoluția din 1989 ce a dus la căderea lui Ceaușescu.

Volumul vorbește și de relațiile dintre, pe de o parte, periferii, centrul moscovit și Occidentul sau percepția asupra lui. Astfel, deși aproape toți ascultă Radio Europa Liberă ori BBC, locuitorii din Moldova cred că presa și televiziunea din România este mai altfel, mai occidentalizată. În tot acest timp, românii erau interesați de ce se difuza la bulgari și la iugoslavi, percependu-i pe aceștia ca dimpotrivă, mai occidentali decât ei. Astfel, se observă gradul de coerciție și imixtiune al URSS, mai lax cu cât se îndepărtează de centrul de putere. Naționalitatea și naționalismul sunt cărți politice jucate de regim, ce se întrevăd și în memoriile de față. Inițial urmărindu-se o slavizare, se conștientizează că nu are succes în a câștiga aderenți. Ulterior se recurge la o mai mare inserție a naționalismului în ideologie și la un joc de control în interiorul URSS: națiuni contra altor națiuni prin manipularea conflictelor etnice. În ce-i privește pe copii și tineri, viziunea triumfalistă demarată de Jdanov alături de Stalin, preluată ulterior și asociată unui ceremonial oficial și unei ierarhii similare celei fasciste/naziste a avut un dublu efect. Au creat în copii și tineri ambiția și competitivitatea, perfecționismul, aducând folosul economic urmărit la fiecare cincinal. La nivel colectiv, a funcționat. La nivel de individ, s-a întors ca un bumerang, copiii neprimind ceea ce meritau în urma muncii și dăruirii lor. A creat frustrare, angoasă și revoltă.

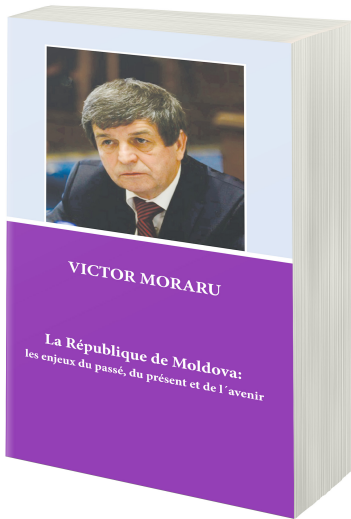
⁴ Sanda Stolojan și Vlad Stolojan, *Să nu plecăm toți odată. Amintiri din România anilor 50* (București: Humanitas, 2009), 88-89.

Toate incursiunile punctează nivelurile memoriei în interacțiunea cu trecutul, dar și strategiile de a găsi fericirea personală și o oarecare împlinire profesională dincolo de cerințele regimului comunist. În plus, există o dezvrăjire a tinerilor prin contactul cu „cealaltă” cultură, cea occidentală, și prin observarea rezistenței membrilor familiei sau a prietenilor în fața discursului regimului; pentru Republica Moldova, cei ce discutau critic, doar în familie, erau numiți de regim *disidenți de bucătărie* (239). Umorul era o formă de rezistență, solidaritate și supraviețuire psihologică, personajul Bulă simbolizând frustrările românilor (416). Raportarea la conștiința națională este și ea importantă: după plecarea armatelor (română, rusă) din teritoriu, armele rămase în urmă, în mâinile țăranilor, nu sunt predate, ci îngropate. La fel, moștenirea culturală, identitatea națională și cea religioasă ajung într-un hambar ca o formă de refugiu, de apărare în fața propagandei, a deformării cunoștințelor, a științei și a batjocoririi credinței și cultelor (198, 219). Ele se păstrează, nu se șterg și nu se uită în ciuda atacului la care sunt supuse de propagandă. Ca o concluzie, copilăria comunistă, mereu într-o „bulă” protectoare, spațiu creat de familie ca urmare a relației acesteia cu lumea exterioară și în special cu statul. Copilăria comunistă înseamnă și un seducător joc ideologic (cu și împotriva regimului), descoperire și muncă. Volumul *Enfances communistes* devine astfel un instrument de lucru generos pentru toți cei ce vor să studieze copilăria acelor vremuri prin prisma relațiilor dintre învățător/profesor și elev, dintre ruralitate și urbanitate, a rolului prieteniei și al familiei; piste de lucru sunt multiple.

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Thinking and Building the European Future of the Republic of Moldova

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Victor MORARU.
***La République de Moldova:
les enjeux du passé, du présent
et de l'avenir.***

- Chisinau: Tipografia Sirius, 2022 -
2nd revised edition. - 200 p.
– ISBN 978-9975-4203-9-6.

The imagological study “The Republic of Moldova: Challenges of the Past, Present and Future” (Chisinau: 2022, 200 p.) by Victor Moraru, a university professor, and substitute member of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, operates within a rather broad conceptual field, including essays on the geopolitical, historical, societal and media dimensions of the Republic of Moldova (fields in which the author is an expert). His work focuses, from an evolutionary perspective, on a country located on the border of Eastern Europe, coming out from the former Soviet space. The title seems to be in harmony with Ernest Renan’s idea of nation-building based on common glories in the past and a common will in the present. Several of the book’s topics were discussed during the annual meetings of the international colloquium titled *Penser l’Europe*, on the new project of European construction, held in Bucharest under the chairmanship of the late Eugen Simion, President of the Romanian Academy.

The fact that the Republic of Moldova is less known abroad prompted the author to publish the volume in French, thus configuring a specific way of presenting to the world a multi-dimensional overview of his country. The author starts by observing that “the case of Moldova is unique for the simple reason that this province has never existed as an independent political entity” (Moraru, p. 86). Being part of historical Romania, this area, marked by its geographical position at the confluence of major empires, has often been a victim of these circumstances. For a long time, the Republic of Moldova was on the border separating the free world from the totalitarian one.

Just as the French European Paul Valéry had counted in the interwar period on “a certain power of transformation” (“Lettre sur la société de transformation”), so the hope of change has altered the course of the Republic of Moldova, becoming a decisive vector in its trajectory.

The volume opens with a reference to a programmatic idea (we would say, in the style of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a Dream” speech, recently echoed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky): “In the beginning there was an aspiration. A rather vague and general aspiration for westernization, which developed into an argument of the incipit: ‘Being stimulated by the fundamental changes that took place in society in the late 1980s-early 1990s, this aspiration led to the discovery that democratic principles and the defense of human rights, representing values inherent in Western society, could also constitute reliable benchmarks for the countries of Eastern Europe” (Moraru, p. 7). This opening towards the West was perceived as “a relevant metamorphosis” and even as a panacea. The transformations concerned different spheres of life and involved the introduction of various innovations, such as an open political culture, multiparty politics, reorientation in the mental sphere, etc.

Through his approach, Victor Moraru identifies ways to optimize the European integration policy in Moldova (such as cooperation with NATO, which would contribute to the security and stability of the region), as well as the many obstacles that appeared on this path, such as the ineffectiveness of successive governments, a certain degree of duplicity in the state policy of the Republic of Moldova, the confrontation between “old and new” (*homo sovieticus* versus *homo europeus*), the Russian factor, the so-called Transnistrian issue, the lack of a continuous tradition of statehood, etc. Referring to various analyses of the concept of nation based on its purported geographical, territorial, administrative, financial, legal, linguistic, and spiritual unity, the author finds, like most historians and political scientists dealing with the Moldovan case, that the Republic of Moldova “does not meet all its characteristics”.¹ Between the concepts of resistance and project-oriented identity formation, as Yves Tardif defines them, identity construction is situated at the confluence of self-consciousness (*idem*) and recognition of the other (*ipse*), of continuity and rupture. The dialectical tension between the two tendencies (traditionalist and European, defensive and cosmopolitan), and the oscillations between the stages of isolation and integration are characteristic features of border countries.

¹ Angela Demian, *La nation impossible? Construction nationale en République de Moldova, et au-delà* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).



These factors of the national reality “tend to redefine their priorities, to reaffirm their European vocation”, which makes it possible to observe that “the Republic of Moldova remains firmly committed to the path of democratization and social reform” (Moraru, p. 70). Thus, achieving these tasks required the development of a well-defined strategy and a complex and ambitious program involving various political, economic, and social transformations related to the process of European integration, as well as the search for its own development path.

The difficult circumstances of the European option involve the process of replacing old values with the values inherent in contemporary society. The system of European values (liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, legality, human rights, etc.), which ensures the stability of democratic regimes, has become a landmark and an existential model for Moldovan society, a model which it must uphold, according to the author’s correct observation. This model could be inculcated by the consolidation of European consciousness while remaining open to the *praxis* of values. Starting from these constituent values of the European project, the author points out that European identity derives from three common principles: Christianity, humanism, and law, even though there are two Europes, each with its own history and different experiences. In order to accede to the European project, it is very important “to exploit the heritage of common history, to identify secure European landmarks, to achieve a desirable convergence, based on solid values” (Moraru, p. 102).

At the present stage, the European vector, with its values, ideals, and horizons is decisive for the country. In this vein, the author concludes that “Moldova’s European vocation is perennial and constant” (Moraru, p. 81). Integration has become, according to the author, the slogan of the day. These challenges have made Moldova change its old policy priorities and become a candidate country for accession to the European Union, with a firm commitment to the irreversibility of the country’s European course.

European identity is also addressed in another section, as the author considers it as a paradigm and a cultural experience based on freedom of thought and expression. The articles on developments in the media field are particularly interesting because of their correlation with the political field, “namely an increasing politicization of media content and the amplification of the proportions of political communication flows, even of the number of actors involved” (Moraru, p. 120). By accepting and embracing the role of agents of change, the media reflected the harsh confrontation of different positions and the controversial interpretations of the main issues relating to the political horizons of the country. Victor Moraru pursues a critical stance, talking about certain vulnerabilities of

Moldovan journalism, such as servility to the political elites, sensationalism and personalization of politics, a simplistic attitude, schematization in mirroring reality, conceptual scarcity of messages, instead of revealing the essence of phenomena, typical of today's society. Thus, the phenomenon of hyper-personalization of the politician was stimulated by the media, reducing all the complexity of political life to the one-dimensional figures of politicians. The author notes that this hyper-presence of the "new Olympians" and their "canonization", originating from the media, "became overwhelming" in Moldova after 1989 and defined the features that characterized the political and media process in recent years (Moraru, pp. 148-149). By way of comparison, one could quote the British journalist Bernard Ingham, who argues that the Western governments and media live in a permanent and natural state of tension, and even cannibalism. We are increasingly aware of the role of personality in politics, by virtue of the fact that political leaders become symbols of competence/incompetence, good/bad conduct, promise of the future/return to the past, etc., thus contributing to the enhancement of the meaning of political spectacle in a murky political world².

Advocating the use of "operational, relevant and varied information" (Moraru, p. 129), the author's reflections also refer to the quality of evaluation, commentary, and interpretation of facts, events, and attitudes. He argues that nowadays the media is no longer limited to the dissemination of the message, but, on the contrary, the focus shifts towards creation, towards the construction of reality, and "towards the insistent promotion of a specific vision of this reality" (Moraru, p. 132). Elaborating on the relevant analyses of foreign scholars, Victor Moraru proposes a list of indigenous media topics, focusing on aspects of interest to manipulative technologies, such as persuasion and propaganda, symbolization and mythologization, the virtualization of characters and events, blurring their explicit and clear presentation. Following the principles of media logic (sensationalist information, personalization of politics, commercial interests), the author succeeds in elucidating, quite convincingly, the phenomenon of "the entwining of politics and the media" and "the mediatization of politics as a mode of existence" (Moraru, pp. 138-139).

Starting from his focus on monitoring the Moldovan media, the author emphasizes that history has become "a primary component of politics". Based on references to Nicolae Iorga's opinion on the necessity of history for society, to Italian political scientist Gaetano Mosca's view of the teachings of history, and in the spirit of French historian Fernand Braudel's interpretation of total history,

² Corina Barbaros, *Political Communication. Constructing Political Spectacle, Public Opinion and Public Agenda* (Iași: Adenium, 2014).



which encompasses the history of events and the history of everyday life, Victor Moraru highlights the media's "natural vocation 'to construct and interpret the immediate history, but also the history of past occurrences'". The explosion of historical issues, accompanied by the interpretation of topics previously viewed as taboo and the shaping of history from a new perspective, is at the forefront of the national press, which is increasingly involved in historical education. The decisive argument for historical continuity is the opinion that if "the teaching of history had as its objective, in the past, the formation and consolidation of a sense of national identity among citizens < ...> today, we should perhaps talk more about European identity and European citizenship" (Moraru, p. 185).

One of the articles in the book is devoted to the issue of migration, an emblematic subject for Moldova, considered the European champion in this respect. The subject is presented through the prism of its reflection in the media. Victor Moraru, who has coordinated several projects in the field of migration and currently supervises the multi-volume collection "Migration: Problems and Opportunities", launched in 2010, has formulated the title of the article in a balanced way, emphasizing not only the problematic aspects, but also the constructive elements. He asserts that the issue of migration "must be explained, regulated, and optimized" (Moraru, p. 139) by means of social mediation and integration. Elaborating on a series of factors that influence and define the current state of this new Odyssey of Moldovan citizens, the author argues for a better use of the media in the dissemination of the subject in the Western press. Highlighting the thought that "migration is almost always a drama (familywise, economic, social, political), it is necessary to conceptualize relevant solutions to optimize this process, to increase opportunities". It is necessary, the author insists, to reduce the invocation of outdated clichés and stereotypes (e.g., illegal immigrants, criminal behavior, etc.) in favor of the principles of coexistence and integration (given the need for foreign workers), based on acceptance of otherness, the viability of dialogue, and intercultural communication. A special role is reserved for the Western press. The author astutely notes that "the latter only deals to a limited extent with the problems of migrants, almost never with their culture, their context of life or their aspirations". Hence the author's conclusion: "The watchword that should accompany "migrant histories" is, first and foremost, "human dignity", regardless of the circumstances in which these histories take place" (Moraru, p. 166).

The author believes that, among the factors that could help migrants to start a new life in a new context, is the practice of religion, which "can become a key to the dynamics and strategies of migrant integration" (Moraru, p. 171). This is especially valid in the case of Moldovan citizens. By fulfilling their social function, churches

could claim the role of “bridges between different cultures”. The commendable activity of dozens of Orthodox parishes in Italy, which preserve the continuity of traditions and customs, as well as the Romanian language, within the community of Moldovan citizens, is a case in point.

Thus, Victor Moraru’s volume succeeds in proposing thoughtful and well-argued answers to the country’s uncertainties and current challenges. The author’s approach is future-oriented, being generated by the powerful and profound changes of values within Moldovan society. The new image of the country, articulated by Victor Moraru, emphasizes Moldova’s increasing regional significance and its democratic aspirations.

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Transnational Migration in the Moldovan-German Context, or: My *Totul va fi bine* (Road)trip

Report on my field research in the framework of the PLURAL Research Fellowship, March-May 2023

About 40 hours on the road for a good 2,000 kilometres. What may sound like an adventure at first glance is normality for many Moldovan migrants who work as construction workers, care givers and seasonal workers in agriculture, but also for those who come as students or visiting grandparents. Every day, dozens of coaches and minibuses leave Moldova for southern and western Europe. It was a given that I wanted to make my experiences with the route to Germany - and back again - as I am doing research on and with those who have to make this route part of their life.

To this day, the bus network has not been completely replaced by air travel, but it has become more professional over the years. Among my contacts, this plan of a Marcus-inspired *following* the masses in their busses nevertheless triggered a mixture of amusement and concern, which I threw overboard in order to gain the impressions that conversation and exploration of the locally fixed field alone can hardly offer me from an absolutely safe distance.

Anyone who wants to study transnational migration necessarily must consciously integrate the transnational, for example in the form of this infrastructure of mobility, into their (research) everyday life and find their way through the confusion and the feeling of being overwhelmed that this sometimes holds in store. This was my vague plan for further and, above all, mobile exploration of the Moldovan-German context when I set off for Chişinău in the spring of 2023 to take a closer look at the reference site of my field, Moldova. The fact that I was able to do this is largely thanks to the PLURAL Research Fellowship, which I took up in March 2023 for three months of field research– vă mulțumesc mult pentru încredere și susținere!

In my cultural studies dissertation project, I deal with transnational migrants and the styles and strategies of maintaining contact that they exercise in the Moldovan-German context. I focus on individuals and families, but also try to include institutions such as associations of Moldovans abroad and infrastructures of mobility as well as consumption, such as bus companies and shops or restaurants.

In essence, I am concerned with the question of how Moldovans with migration experience construct their relationship to their context of origin, especially from abroad. To this end, I approach the practical strategies of their contact with Moldova and ask how this influences their relationship to the country and its people. I also try to draw conclusions from this about the complicated relationship to the term *diaspora*, which has emerged here as a key concept, albeit a conflictual one. Other key terms and concepts in my study include cultural baggage, both tangible and intangible, social networks that emerge transnationally and communitarianisation that is negotiated across distances.

While my research perspective at the very beginning of the project was still - and as it turned out: wrongly - focused on pure labour migration, de facto guest work, which is clearly present but does not cover everything, I was able to significantly diversify my perspective through interviews already conducted in Germany in 2022: Migration is not a singular nor an easy interpretable phenomenon for Moldova and in general, but one that renegotiates positions, status, borders and values and is thus socially overarching. It is widely present - hardly a taxi driver who does not have his own or a family history of it, hardly a lamppost that does not have a "*Lucru în Europa*" advertisement.

The negotiation processes that accompany active migrants in particular, but also those who remain here, do not take place in a vacuum. They are culture- and region-specific and fed on historically grown patterns of the present. This should be reflected in my research, so I set myself the goal of ideally uniting both ends of migration in my approach. In practical terms, this means that I spoke with families who live multi-locally¹ in different ways, such as having relatives in both countries and linking them through mobility practices of varying intensity, be it through constant commuting or summer holidays *acasă*. Thus, my path to *Moldoveni în Germania* and their often widely ramified networks has so far led me to Berlin, Kassel, and Giessen, to Chişinău and its outskirts, to the Raions of Cantemir and Ungheni, as well as to a Transnistrian village, and has also taken place online with extended family members in Italy and the Netherlands, as well as under pandemic conditions.

In this way, I was able to continue numerous contacts made in Germany and also gain new ones, which show that both countries can only be thought of together through the transnational practices of the actors in this context.² Nevertheless,

¹ See: Rolshoven, Johanna / Winkler, Justin. „Multilokalität und Mobilität.“ *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung* 2009 1/2: 99-106.

² See: Glick Schiller, Linda / Basch, Linda / Blanc-Szanton, Cristina. Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1992.



“ideally” already implies that those relatives in Moldova or Germany who were then to be the extension of my initial conversation were not always in agreement: In addition to simply other priorities, mistrust of questions from the outside or the idea that one had nothing important to tell, often played a role. Here, ongoing, and resilient contact work based on trust and mutual respect with already familiar interaction partners turned out to be vital for my research.

Field research and especially the conduct of conversations *pe parcurs* is an endurance run. In my case, it takes place - oriented towards the realities of my interlocutors' lives - in at least two national as well as in various social contexts and unites different codes. Tracing this can only be done in the sense of *multi-sited ethnography*³, which aims to bring together these different layers and spheres through the actors themselves. In my study, I rely on an ethnographic approach and aim to drill empirically deep in order to get close to the underlying patterns on the basis of individual life plans and their narration. I myself am an instrument of research, which may open up paths through contacts and a convenient knowledge of Romanian. Still, some also remained closed to me through gender, age, and life circumstances. This experience reveals not only a lot about my field, but also about my role in it - not only once was I asked how I, as a German, could voluntarily do research here and whether I would not rather write about the economic prosperity of some returnees. Although such *business* approaches, which emerged from migration, are thematically not entirely remote, I tried to communicate my interest in more everyday cultural, interfamilial practices, which was sometimes far from successful in every context, yet often far from the general expectation of what I would be most interested in.

While I experienced a wonderful, intensive Easter weekend of participant observation in the circle of a family with diverse migration experience, in the course of which other relatives were repeatedly brought “to the table” via video chat, there were also sobering experiences: I am still practising Moldovan time culture and spontaneity and sometimes doubt my rather lax understanding of bureaucratic relations, which to me in Moldova are far more characterised by authority than I am used to. I found it strange that the office for diaspora relations, for example, was only willing to talk to me after some advocacy by colleagues and enquiries, but that I was then neither expected nor given more in-depth answers, but rather a reference to the website and material to read on my own. I felt as if I had missed the chance to strike the right notes here in order to tickle deeper answers out of my interview partners. On the other hand, the topic is so central in this country and the German diaspora is definitely present in various

³ See: Marcus, George E. “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 1995, 24: 95-117.

organisational structures. So why didn't the highest authority of this *imagined community* take the opportunity to present itself accordingly to academics? It will probably remain a mystery to me – especially regarding the warm and welcoming Diaspora group at the General Assembly for a European Moldova several weeks later. However, the fact that the concept of *the diaspora* and its design is a sticking point of my research project became apparent not only in the conversations with foreign Moldovans, but also with local decision-makers. At least this is an issue I am still chewing on.

Overall, however, the enriching and sometimes humbling experiences outweigh the negative ones. So, it may seem clichéd at first glance to talk about the overflowing hospitality or the infectious optimism of purpose alternating with fatalism - next to *Asta este, Totul va fi bine*. was probably the phrase I heard the most - but these are the things that first come to mind when I think of my stay in Moldova. Besides various kinds of *Bucuria* - the iconic chocolates in coloured paper - things like the home-gathered herbal tea that a grandmother I interviewed gifted me and the travel-sized saint's picture that a family gave me for Easter will surely provide me for some time with the memories that my conversation partners otherwise take as essential, tangible or intangible content from their remittance packages fuelling the bond.⁴

Sometimes it seemed to me that I could have extended the time I spent here - travel to Transnistria once more, visit other places in the countryside, and last but not least, wait for the Moldovan early summer as such a tempting season and see when, at the latest during the holidays, the diaspora is more regularly present. To follow Ulf Hannerz here is less an excuse or consolation than a plea for a pragmatic approach to the field: “[E]thnography is an art of the possible, and it may be better to have some of it than none at all. And so, we do it now and then, fitting it into our lives when we have a chance.”⁵ This might have become my mantra.

In this respect, and following this pragmatic approach, I am returning to Germany after three months of field research in various places and with very different people in the city and in the countryside, rich in impressions of the *Moldoveni în Germania* and their families as well as the returnees in the country of origin. The fact that the total phenomenon of migration is one of the most formative factors of the Republic of Moldova is by no means a new insight, but how this formative power can take on different forms, and thereby may tear down old borders, but also build

⁴ This topic is expanded on here: Stöxen, Jana. “Parcels, Pills, and Pufuleți. Remittances as Transnational Strategy of Migration between the Republic of Moldova & Germany”, *Südosteuropäische Mitteilungen* (to be published in summer 2023).

⁵ Hannerz, Ulf. “Being there... and there... and there!: Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography.” *Ethnography*. 2003; 4 (2): 201-216, 213.



up new ones, is something that can be paradigmatically shown especially in this biographical, everyday cultural perspective. Europeanisation tendencies of those who benefit from free access to the market meet here with the attempt to preserve local heritage, which is not at all excluded entirely. Retraditionalization, especially in rural areas due to the exodus of the mainly male working population, clashes with innovation and emancipation on the part of those who use their experience from abroad as a resource. Nevertheless, everyone seems to agree that Moldova still has a long way to go, even though there are discussions about the destination and the route, which are conducted in many languages and voices and can only be understood intersectionally. For example, the question arises as to how the crux of the diaspora, under which many can be categorised in purely practical terms but to which incomparably fewer profess to belong, can be one that can determine the fate of the country that is developing ever further towards Europe and yet is still divided in two. While this can hardly be answered in simple terms, I hope that the selection of what has been and will have been surveyed in this project will at least provide further insights into how keeping in touch is something that goes hand in hand with caring and worrying, and while it is more related to the local area, it radiates from the practices to the formation of values and is thus able to initiate larger discourses. It is no coincidence that a large part of those active in politics and culture in the country, to whom the diaspora looks so expectantly, is fed by the diaspora itself, shares its experiences and holds just as much potential for conflict as for the future.

With this cautiously positive outlook, I am happy to say goodbye for the time being to a country whose resilience has so far remained a charming puzzle to me, despite all the travels and conversations in the most positive sense: *La revedere, Moldova, ai grijă de tine - și pe curând!* Only: next time, despite all the fascination, I will not travel by bus from Germany again.

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