

# The Cultural and Nationalising Mission of Kindergarten Teachers in Southern Dobruja, 1914-1940

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## *Abstract*

Public Education was an essential feature of nation-building throughout Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nationalising states designed school policies to transform peasants into nationals and citizens. However, kindergartens were primarily urban institutions. One of their goals was to teach young children modern languages. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Romanian elites started to create and adjust them to nationalise Dobruja and Cadrilater, the two provinces integrated into the Old Kingdom. Both regions were ethnically diverse. In localities primarily inhabited by a minority population, the purpose of kindergartens was to spread the Romanian language and national culture. This article focuses on the national integration of South Dobruja through public kindergartens. It also examines the professional path of teachers serving in these regions until the end of the 1940s. Finally, the paper follows teachers' interaction with the locals and their efforts to mediate between the pedagogical and national aims of Greater Romania and the local interests that sometimes collided with the state school policies.

**Keywords:** Southern Dobruja, kindergartens, 20<sup>th</sup>-century Romania, ethnic minorities.

This paper analyses how school policies regarding kindergarten teaching were designed to contribute to the nation-building process in Romania during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, it closely follows the concept of “normative isomorphism of language, nation and state” put forward by Tomasz Kamusella. Central European countries, such as Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, legitimised the national state by overlapping language, nation and statehood. Kamusella's findings identify a particular type of nationalism. Following Peter F. Sugar's definition of nationalism for Eastern European countries, having an ethnic dimension, Kamusella added the linguistic component.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, he labelled such an

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<sup>1</sup> Peter F. Sugar, *Naționalismul est-european în secolul al XX-lea* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2002), 345-349.

<sup>2</sup> For the connection between the emergence of nationalism and industrialised societies see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 35-58. On the dichotomy between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism, see Constantin Iordachi, “From Disentanglement to Interdependence: State Citizenship in Romania and Hungary, 1945-2012,” in *Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives. Comparisons and Entanglements*, eds. Anders E.B. Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, Balázs Trencsényi (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 711-733.



evolution as ethnolinguistic nationalism since consolidating statehood became synonymous with making the official language mandatory for all citizens.<sup>3</sup> We consider Kamusella's findings relevant to how Romanian political elites have conceptualised and used the public school system of all degrees to nationalise its population. This new concept of the public school is evident in the provinces annexed to the Kingdom of Romania before and after the First World War, as was the case with the Southern Dobruja.

Such evolution became evident during the long liberal governance from 1922 to 1928 (with some interludes), when the Ministry of Public Instruction (hereafter, the Ministry) extended the entire public school network to an unimaginable length a few years back, before the war.<sup>4</sup> It marked the debut of school massification and democratisation in Romania, with visible effects during the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Using elementary school to build a national community out of the Romanian peasantry had been a long-exercised policy. Still, for school representatives of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it always seemed to fall short of expectations.<sup>6</sup> Using kindergartens to spread the Romanian language and national culture among minority communities was a new direction. Much like the cultural transformation of ethnic Romanian peasants into patriots and citizens, their integration into the Romanian national body was a long and challenging process.<sup>7</sup>

This article draws on the documents of the National Archives, the Fund of Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction and the Archives of the Municipality of Bucharest, School Inspectorate Fund to examine pre-school institutions and the professional paths and contributions of the teaching personnel. In doing so, we will analyse the complex interaction between state authorities, the nationalising school policies they designed and the local communities targeted by these.

<sup>3</sup> Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 24-35.

<sup>4</sup> Since 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1936, the official title of the Ministry of Public Instruction became the Ministry of National Education. See Stelian Negoe, *Istoria guvernelor României de la începuturi – 1859 până în zilele noastre – 2012* (Bucharest: Machiavelli, 2013), 136.

<sup>5</sup> Petru Negură and Andrei Cușco, "Public Education in Romania and Moldova, 19-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Modernization, Political Mobilization, and Nation-Building. An Introduction," *Plural. History, Culture, Society* 9, no. 1 (2021): 5-8.

<sup>6</sup> Mirela-Luminița Murgescu, *Între „bunul creștin” și „bravul român”. Rolul școlii primare în construirea identității naționale românești (1831-1878)* (Iași: Editura A '92, 1999), 9-15.

<sup>7</sup> For the French case, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 303-338.

## Preschool Education Before the First World War: the Public Kindergartens

Kindergarten teaching developed in the Old Kingdom throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was represented mainly by urban, private institutions destined for middle-class pupils, often organised by minority communities and churches and employing foreign personnel.<sup>8</sup> They worked without any assistance from the state. Even later, when the Romanian female elite followed their lead, there was a clear tendency to avoid asking the Ministry to get involved financially.<sup>9</sup>

The situation in Dobruja changed during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After being attached to Romania, in 1880, the province got a provisional status, which meant it needed a period before its political integration into the kingdom. Documents show that during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, school policies designed by the governments in Bucharest were challenged and even disregarded by the Bulgarian communities in the two counties, Tulcea and Constanța. In a volume edited to celebrate the former minister Spiru Haret's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, a teacher in Tulcea wrote an article regarding kindergarten teaching in Romania. This article explains an incident in Tulcea in 1897, where Bulgarian schools refused to teach the Romanian language. In contrast, Dobruja was presented as part of Bulgaria in Geography and History classes.<sup>10</sup> Spiru Haret himself mentioned the incident in a speech published under the title *Școala naționalistă*, in 1907, where he complained that "not too long ago" Bulgarian schools in Dobruja used maps that presented the province as part of Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup>

Spiru Haret perceived most seemingly Bulgaria's declaration of independence in the fall of 1908 and the final year of Dobruja's provisional status in 1909 as

<sup>8</sup> On kindergarten teaching in Romania throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Cătălina Mihalache, *Copilarie, familie, școală: politici educaționale și receptări sociale* (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> In 1907, the leader of the Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Romania, Luisa I. Neamțu spoke about creating a new such institution in Bucharest' outskirts. She clearly stated that the comity avoided asking the Ministry for financial assistance. Luisa I. Neamțu, „O veste bună,” *Grădina de copii. Revistă pentru educatoare și familii*, first year, no. 10 (15<sup>th</sup> of January 1907): 307-308.

<sup>10</sup> T. G. Gheorghiu, „Școalele de copii mici (grădinile de copii),” in *Lui Spiru Haret „Ale tale dintru ale tale” La împlinirea celor șezesece ani* (Bucharest: Inst. De Arte Grafice „Carol Göbl”, 1911), 97-103.

<sup>11</sup> Spiru Haret, „Școala naționalistă,” *Revista Generală a Învățământului*, second year, no. 6 (1907): 7.



aggravating factors in a situation that was already worrying.<sup>12</sup> The passing of the first Law on kindergarten teaching by the Ministry, precisely in 1909, was not a coincidence. It was a decision to culturally integrate a province that was by far the most ethnically diverse in the Romanian Kingdom until that moment; a neighbouring state also claimed a part. This experience would serve as a model for all the other new provinces to be united with Romania, as the Liberal Party adopted Spuru Haret's vision of the schools' national mission and extended it after the war. From this perspective, Dobruja was a genuine laboratory for the Romanian state, where the state first implemented this pattern of nationalising foreign minority communities through school.

Throughout the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the so-called Cadrilater region (i.e., Southern Dobruja) had a distinct political evolution. After 1878, when the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria was established, its political rulers claimed the Southern part of Dobruja. However, they received a small territory, much less than they had aspired. Therefore, they heavily colonised the region with ethnic Bulgarians attempting to change its demographic structure since the inhabitants were Muslims who did not follow the withdrawing Ottoman army and administrative staff.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, a distinctive political mobilisation originated in this type of nationalism that would cause tensions between the Romanian administration, teaching personnel and the local population.

When, in 1913, the Southern Dobruja, with its two counties Durostor and Caliacra, was attached to the Kingdom of Romania, there was already a strategy in place that, a year later, the Liberal Party followed. The Law on the organisation of the New Dobruja, adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> of April 1914, was similar to the one regarding Dobruja in 1880. It stated that the local population could not vote for its representatives in the Parliament in Bucharest since they were not Romanian citizens, thus forbidding any political activity in the province (until 1921, when it was changed and republished).<sup>14</sup> Also, by 1914 the Law regarding the organisation of schools for small children passed by the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, Spuru Haret had been in place for almost five years.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Enache Tuşa, *Imaginar politic și identități colective în Dobrogea* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2011), 369.

<sup>13</sup> Tuşa, *Imaginar politic*, 469.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Cain, "Caliacra," in *România Mare votează. Alegerile parlamentare din 1919 „la firul ierbii”*, ed. Bogdan Murgescu, Andrei Florin Sora (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 236-237. The 1914 law was kept in place until 1921, when it was republished after being updated.

<sup>15</sup> "Lege pentru școalele de copii mici (grădini de copii)," *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 58 (12<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> of June 1909): 2410.

The first group of teachers were selected at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the graduates of secondary schools in the most important cities of the Old Kingdom, being allowed to pass a special pedagogy exam to work in kindergartens.<sup>16</sup> Many of these women served in Dobruja and, since 1914, also in Cadrilater.

However, one must distinguish them from other teachers working with small children. Kindergartens were not new institutions in Romania. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political elite saw the potential of these institutions to extend the Romanian language among minority communities since, in urban areas, one of the most important goals of private kindergartens was teaching children modern languages.

The women who were part of the first generation of kindergarten teachers employed by the Ministry are to be differentiated from other teachers working with small children by their commitment to serve in public schools created and financed by the state to spread the Romanian language and the national culture. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of such institutions were created in rural areas, especially those inhabited by minority groups, making teachers accept relocating there, where they were obliged to serve for at least six years. Furthermore, the Primary Education Law distinguished urban and rural teachers at that time. The second had to pass a special exam after completing the minimum teaching stage in rural areas required by the Law. These female educators fell strictly under this provision.

Looking at their home towns, one can notice that many teachers were born in Bucharest, Brăila, Galați, Focșani, Craiova, Pitești or Ploiești and were usually graduates of secondary schools for girls. When Southern Dobruja was annexed to Romania, they had to recruit new teachers. At that time, the teaching personnel they relied on was insufficient to fill the positions even in the Romanian Dobruja. Therefore, in 1913 and 1914, a large part of the girls recently graduating from secondary schools in Tulcea and the surrounding Danube region were recruited, being allowed to pass the pedagogical exam for kindergarten teachers. They were selected precisely to find it easier to work in the new counties that might have been perceived as remote by teachers born elsewhere. Also, they came from ethnically mixed regions. Furthermore, the Ministry issued certificates available only in the New Dobruja to ensure the kindergarten teachers would remain there.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Istoria învățământului din România vol. II (1821-1918)*, ed. Anghel Manolache, Gheorghe Pârnuță (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., 1993), 353-354.

<sup>17</sup> Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (from here onwards ANIC), Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice (from here onwards MCIP Fund), file 167/1930, pages 166-180.



Among those who went to the new province was Maria T. Schibartș.<sup>18</sup> She started working in Ghelengic village, Caliacra County, in January 1914: “I was among the first kindergarten teachers who responded to the call of spreading the Romanian language in Cadrilater. Shortly I could pride myself on having attracted 200 children of all ages since even those old enough for primary school had to start with me, the Romanian language being completely unknown.”<sup>19</sup> According to her professional memoir written in 1941, her class was part of the committee that welcomed King Carol I and his wife Elisabeta, during their visit to the region, in April 1914.

Constanța Teodorescu had a similar experience. She was a kindergarten teacher who started working in Turtucaia in January 1914. In her professional memoir, she wrote right before her retirement, Teodorescu referred to the years she served in Durostor County: “I have worked to nationalise the population of that region, through many festivities and national songs through which I tried to achieve a national education. Through meetings with all the teachers and choirs, I tried to convey the love for our people in the hearts of those who did not look kindly on us.”<sup>20</sup> Such comments referred to the efforts made to culturally integrate a population that must have been hostile or disinterested.

Both women talked about the shortcomings they had to overcome because they came to a new region having no reliable school infrastructure during the years that predated Romania’s war entry. Also, they had no educational supplies. These were essential for making such institutions appealing to small children. The only support was the regional reviser’s limited funds for rewarding diligent kindergarten teachers. However, such rewards were merely moral support rather than proper financial assistance as they consisted of small amounts of money.

The cultural integration of the New Dobruja was a two-way process. Kindergarten teachers in Southern Dobruja tried to expand the Romanian language and national culture into the new region. At the same time, the state made an effort to make the new province familiar to children and the public in the Old Kingdom. One could trace back such endeavours as early as 1916, when the National Society of Orthodox Women, which had created and funded

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<sup>18</sup> Serviciul Municipiului București al Arhivelor Naționale (from here onwards SMBAN), Fond Inspectoratul Școlar al Municipiului București (from here onwards ISMB Fund), file 23/1941, Kindergartens.

<sup>19</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 31/1947, retirement file of Maria T. Schibartș, unnumbered.

<sup>20</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 103/1938, retirement file of Constanța Teodorescu, unnumbered.

a network of kindergartens in Bucharest, celebrated the end of the school year with a national festivity, including *Hora Cadrilaterului*.<sup>21</sup>

### The Difficult Years After the War

After the Romanian administration had evacuated the province during the First World War, the end of the conflict brought most of these teachers back to Cadrilater since the Ministry of Public Instruction expected them to do so. However, those who did not respect the terms of the agreement and chose to work elsewhere were running the risk of becoming substitute teachers, especially those with pedagogical diplomas that would allow them to work as provisional teachers only in the two counties of Southern Dobruja.<sup>22,23</sup> This constraining mechanism that the Ministry had in place was designed to discourage such attitudes. However, not complying with its requirements meant that the kindergarten teacher would lose the chance of staying on track with the proper teaching *cursus honorum*, which started with being appointed a provisional teacher and working her way up to getting tenure. It also brought the possibility of a full teacher's salary.

Even more so, Maria T. Schibart, the same teacher who took pride in being part of the delegation that welcomed King Carol I and Elisabeta in Cadrilater, even mentioned a seven-year contract that some of her colleagues had agreed to before the war.<sup>24</sup> Her comment explains why so many teachers returned to their positions. Despite their hardships, they resumed their lives where they had left them in the summer of 1916.

<sup>21</sup> Anemari Monica Negru, "Un model de educație privată: școlile Societății Ortodoxe Naționale a Femeilor Române," in *Copilării trecute prin război. Povești de viață, politici sociale și reprezentări culturale în România anilor 1913-1923*, eds. Cătălina Mihalache, Nicoleta Roman (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2020), 215.

<sup>22</sup> Being appointed a provisional teacher was the first step in a teacher's career since, after several years, they had the opportunity to pass the exam to get tenure. After that, they benefited from all the rights any experienced teacher had. Substitute teachers were placed at the bottom of the public school hierarchy.

<sup>23</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, 167/1930 file, pages 166-180. The case of kindergarten teacher Maria Banciu Vernescu is indicative of this constraining mechanism that the Ministry of Public Instruction had in place to make teachers work in the Cadrilater. Even though she got her pedagogical diploma in September 1914 to teach in Cadrilater, she did not have the chance to do so because of the war. After the conflict, she conveniently asked to work as a kindergarten teacher in Southern Bessarabia, in Chilia Nouă since it was closer to her home town, Tulcea. In 1930, the regional reviser's office pointed out that according to the pedagogical certificate she possessed, she could get tenure only in Cadrilater. Outside of the province, she could only work as a substitute teacher.

<sup>24</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 248/1922, page 61.



Therefore, some of the inspection reports inside the teachers' retirement files date back from May 1919, as is the case with Eliza Şendrea's file.<sup>25</sup> Southern Dobruja was under Allied control then, and the interactions between the Romanian administration and the Italian troops appointed in the two counties were quite tense. However, things got better once French troops replaced these over the summer of 1919.<sup>26</sup>

That may be why, when he visited the school and the kindergarten in Babuc village, Durostor County, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1919, he did not include any observations regarding the Romanian language, even though reviser Petrescu wrote extensive notes on the way classes were organised. Nevertheless, school authorities praised the teachers for their work, and both the school and kindergarten were considered worthy of serving as a model to others.

Three years later, however, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1922, when inspector V. Negulescu visited the kindergarten accompanied by reviser Petrescu, the language mainly was all he wrote about: "I have examined the children on speaking exercises. Even though they started kindergarten only three months ago, the children have already learned the language quite well. Seeing that they speak Romanian in conversations among themselves is even more gratifying. We hope that by the end of the year, the children will know the language well enough to understand all explanations and that language would have become not a purpose but a way to gain all consciousness."<sup>27</sup> He said that learning the Romanian language was not the final objective of these classes but merely the way for the national discourse to reach these foreign children and make them part of the political body. Language led the way in turning different ethnicities into Romanian citizens. It was the strategy employed by various Central and Eastern European countries when dealing with compact minority communities to modernise society and consolidate statehood.<sup>28</sup>

A brief comment must be made regarding the school inspection reports. One can notice that, much like the sanitary reports, the school inspection reports constituted a genre of administrative documents written to meet the criteria the Ministry envisioned, therefore being repetitive and stereotypical.

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<sup>25</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 60/1943, retirement file of Eliza Macri (formerly Şendrea), unnumbered.

<sup>26</sup> Cain, "Caliacra", 239-240.

<sup>27</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 60/1943, retirement file of Eliza Macri (formerly Şendrea), unnumbered; copy of the Report on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1922.

<sup>28</sup> Andreea Dăncilă Ineoan, Marius Eppel, Ovidiu-Emil Iudean, *Voices of the Churches, Voices of the Nationalities. Competing Loyalties in the Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament (1867-1918)* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 182-186.



However, for kindergartens, they seem heterogeneously written; the wooden language is not always present, even though we notice similar points of interest. After the war, male sub-revisers, revisers and inspectors who had to evaluate such institutions did not have experience working inside them since they were teaching slightly older elementary school students. Consequently, many reports on kindergartens are brief. Others suggest an emotional reaction of the male author, who was impressed by the children's young age and their interactions with the teacher. It is never the exact text written repeatedly, as was the case with the reports regarding elementary schools with a typical structure. We believe that underneath the national and cultural agenda, the reports on kindergarten teaching contain relevant information on the actual activity in the class. They are necessary instruments that help us evaluate the progress of pre-school education.

### **A New Decade, New Practices:**

#### **1920s and the Changes for Elementary School Teachers**

After the First World War, Southern Dobruja remained on the Ministry of Public Instruction's cultural agenda. As a result, at an unprecedented level, teaching personnel working in elementary schools came from the Old Kingdom. It settled in the Bulgarian and Turkish villages hoping to benefit from the financial support the Law included.

In 1924 the new Law on Primary Education encouraged experienced teachers to work in the new provinces, with the promise of receiving critical financial benefits and land. Article 159 listed the counties with minority communities for which the Ministry would accept work commitments. The Ministry included Durostor and Caliacra, among other regions in Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. Also, it promised teachers a bonus of two or three times their regular payment to help them move to the villages they chose. Therefore, for the two counties in Cadrilater, in 1925, there was a massive influx of experienced, mostly male teachers who decided to relocate, hoping for better pay and a better life.

Even though there seem to have been fewer women than men, we are inclined to explain this gender disbalance by a disposition issued by the Ministry regarding assigning positions to Normal Schools graduates. In the fall of 1925, the inspector of the 8<sup>th</sup> School Region Bucharest (Regiunea VIII-a Școlară București) reported that, as the Ministry itself instructed him, female graduates had the right to choose positions in the counties of the Old Kingdom, such as Ilfov, Vlașca and Prahova, while male graduates had to



search exclusively in Durostor County.<sup>29</sup> The same logic could also be applied to experienced teachers, as the Ministry preferred male rather than female teachers for the positions available in elementary schools in Durostor County.

Teachers' requests were declined when they started writing to the Ministry asking for the settling bonus. The Ministry's response was either that during the year 1924, for Southern Dobruja, such an amount was not granted, or simply that for the two counties, the amount was not available at all, leaving the teachers and the reviser who agreed to such bonuses baffled.<sup>30</sup> This correspondence shows that the Cadrilater had an ambiguous status among the new provinces attached to the Kingdom of Romania. Even though article 159 regarding work commitments due to consistent minority communities concerned the two counties, it was not considered as sensitive as other regions because the Romanian administration and teaching personnel had already worked there starting in 1914. Consequently, the Ministry seemed more inclined to change the rules and reinterpret parts of the Primary Education Law articles to its benefit, especially since 1924 and 1925 had been very difficult financially. In 1924, for instance, many teachers in Bessarabia got their salaries with significant delays.

There were deputies in the Parliament in Bucharest who reacted against the insufficient pay of elementary school teachers, writing petitions regarding such a concerning topic. It had become common knowledge that teachers were severely underpaid. Some voices accused Minister Constantin Angelescu of being more interested in school buildings than caring for the human resources on whom education relied.<sup>31</sup>

Another source for teaching personnel for elementary schools in the province was the fresh Normal School graduates. Starting in 1924, the Ministry made them choose positions in the new provinces, where they were expected to serve for at least three years. In the case of Cadrilater, most of these young men were coming from the Southern counties of Romania, such as Romanați, Teleorman, Ialomița, Buzău, Prahova, Tutova or Constanța. Nevertheless, they were the ones who, during the second half of the 1920s, accessed work commitments and settled in the region, marrying their teaching colleagues and thus gaining financial stability and reaching professional success.

<sup>29</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 216/1925, page 174 front and back.

<sup>30</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 74/1925, page 200.

<sup>31</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 263/1925, p. 36-37 front and back. C.I. Ștefănescu was among the most radical deputies, taking a stand against budgetary cuts that forced many teachers, especially young graduates working in the new provinces, to live in misery.

However, working in the Southern Dobruja was not easy or safe. In 1922 the reviser P. Petrescu complained about the numerous difficulties he encountered in crossing Durostor County to evaluate teachers in schools and kindergartens. He reported the dangers of daily attacks by bands of outlaws and the challenges in getting a carriage because of Bulgarian and Turkish peasants' mistrust or their legitimate fear of being robbed of their horses since robbers were attacking in broad daylight.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Bulgarian bandits (*comitagii*) were attacking the road and households in the most exposed areas, such as the border. This happened to teacher I. Belu's family living in the Turkish village Salihler, in Durostor County. Bandits attacked his house in November 1925. Besides the clothes and possessions, the attackers stole, Belu's wife, a kindergarten teacher in the same village, was so terrified that they had to leave the province. In the document in which the reviser reported the incident, he also mentioned that the Turkish population was reluctant to send their children to public school, even though the Ministry was paying someone to teach Turkish and Coran studies. By his tone, it seems he saw a connection between the lack of attachment the villagers displayed towards the school and the teacher's house being attacked by bandits. Therefore, he recommended moving the position of the teacher who taught Turkish and Coran studies to Masutlar, a neighbouring village, as a punishment for the locals' reluctance.<sup>33</sup>

Things got even more complicated when ethnic Romanians from the Balkans settled in the two counties.<sup>34</sup> From the second half of the 1920s, their arrival generated tensions and incidents with the Bulgarian population, also regarded as uninspired by some Romanian officials occupying different positions in the administrative establishment.<sup>35</sup> Complaining about the presence of the Macedonians in the administration due to Taşcu Pucerea, the administrative leader of Durostor County, a handful of Romanian professionals coming from the Old Kingdom argued that continuing to colonise them in

<sup>32</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 56/1922, page 33.

<sup>33</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 100/1925, page 305 front and back.

<sup>34</sup> See „*Transhumanță*” *interbelică în Balcani. Studii și articole despre aromâni în publicațiile școlii gustiene*, anthology by Zoltán Rostás, Martin Ladislau Salamon (Bucharest: Eikon, 2017). The volume includes detailed reports on the Balkan Romanians settled in Cadrilater. Additional information on the settlers see also Ion Gabriel Andrei, “Coloniștii români timoceni din Cadrilater,” *Magazin Istoric*, year XL, no. 11 (476) (November 2006): 51-54.

<sup>35</sup> Tuşa, *Imaginar politic*, 458. Starting in 1925, the government led by Ion I.C. Brătianu allowed the colonisation on a large scale of ethnic Romanians coming from the Balkans. By 1933, 35.000 people were settled in the Southern Dobruja. See also Constantin Tudor, *Administrația românească din Cadrilater 1913-1940* (PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 1999), 104-114.



the region was counter-productive because they did not contribute to the expansion of the Romanian language since they could speak Bulgarian. Also, because of their trade skills, they would have been better suited in Moldova. We can see the tensions and the political battle for the distribution of public positions between the two sides.<sup>36</sup>

Maybe that was why the Ministry preferred male teachers to teach in elementary schools created throughout the two counties of the province, Durostor and Caliacra. They were better suited to adapt to such tensions and cope with this hostile environment.

### Kindergarten Teaching in Cadrilater

Despite this turmoil, the public kindergarten network in the region continued to develop in the years following the war's end. A report on the evolution of primary education in the two neighbouring Counties Vlaşca and Durostor, at that time part of the 8<sup>th</sup> School Region Bucharest, was sent to the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1928.<sup>37</sup> It is a valuable analysis since it includes data on the number of kindergartens in Durostor County for the school year of 1926-1927 and observations and recommendations the reviser felt the need to have. Regarding the number of kindergartens in Durostor, the report shows 67 schools in rural areas and ten in urban centres. However, five of the 67 rural kindergartens and three of ten urban ones had two positions, bringing the number of teachers working there to 84. The information regarding Vlaşca

<sup>36</sup> *Colonizarea în Cadrilater Memoriu adresat guvernului și tuturor factorilor răspunzători* (Siliștra: Tip. Ion P. Davidescu, 1925).

<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, the Statistical Yearbooks of Romania from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not collect data on public kindergartens, as those were included exclusively under the private education category. However, there is information available regarding the number of elementary public schools in rural and urban regions for both Vlaşca and Durostor County. So, during the school year of 1920-1921, in Durostor County there were 90 schools in rural regions and ten in urban ones, while in Vlaşca there were 167 schools in rural regions and seven in urban ones. See *Anuarul statistic al României 1923 Annuaire statistique de la Roumanie* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curții Regale F. Göbl Fii, 1924), 236-237. According to the report in 1928, regarding the school year of 1926-1927, at that time in Durostor County, there were 177 elementary rural schools and 14 urban ones, while in Vlaşca there were 225 rural schools and ten urban ones (ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 7/1928, page 58). We can therefore notice the consistent enlargement of the rural school network, in both counties, in Durostor from only 90 schools in 1920-1921 to 177 schools in 1926-1927, while in Vlaşca from 167 in 1920-1921 to 225 in 1926-1927. The reviser's claims make us assume that a similar process was going on in Durostor County also regarding the number of kindergartens, but unfortunately, the annual yearbooks did not include those, too, to see exactly by how much their number has increased.

County provides a compelling comparative framework. At that time, there were only nine rural kindergartens and three urban ones with 13 teachers since one institution out of the three ones in towns had two positions. Although the number of children aged 5 to 7 was significantly higher in the case of Durostor, a total of 19,786 compared to the 12,520 in Vlaşca, the staggering difference in the number of kindergartens resulted from the presence of foreign communities who did not know the Romanian language. This is how the reviser explained the discrepancy between the two counties: "(...) in the first County (Durostor) recently annexed to our country, the majority population does not speak Romanian, and the state had to create as many kindergartens as possible, even though there weren't enough prepared teachers. In Vlaşca, where this situation did not exist, the needs of primary schools were the first ones to attend."<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the reviser made some interesting observations and proposals regarding the public' reaction towards such institutions. As expected, urban kindergartens were more attractive, and attendance was satisfactory. However, for rural regions, things were different for financial reasons and because mothers were away from home all day to work in the field and did not have the time to pick up the children from school at noon. Therefore, the reviser recommended the creation of day-care centres in villages, arguing that they suited better the work conditions and time frame of agricultural activities. "Women would bring their children to the day-care centre early in the morning to free their hands, and in the evening, when work stops, they would gratefully pick their children up, knowing that they had been monitored and were well taken care of."<sup>39</sup> His comments synthesise the tensions inherent to kindergartens during interwar decades, the school authorities' desire to have classes throughout the day, and the lack of funds and infrastructure to provide lunch and bedrooms for the children to rest during noon. Unless the second criterion was met, teachers could not ask the children to come in the morning, go home for lunch, and then return for classes again. Also, such a schedule meant that there had to be someone available to pick up the child at noon, especially in towns and cities, with numerous dangers. During the 1920s and the 1930s, this problem was still not solved. The obvious solution, especially for teachers working in the new provinces, where they did not want to antagonise the parents by asking too much from the children, was working with half a day schedules.

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<sup>38</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 7/1928, page 58.

<sup>39</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 7/1928, pages 57-78 front and back.



## The Old Generation

As we have already noticed, during the 1920s, many kindergarten teachers belonged to the first generation, that of women who had secondary degrees and got their pedagogical diploma during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and who had worked in Southern Dobruja before the war came back. This was the case with Florica Răzvănescu. Having taught in Cadrilater since 1915, she was appointed teacher at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kindergarten in Silistra, Durostor County and remained there until the late 1930s. In her case, we could document her professional path based on the inspection reports included in the file she sent to the Ministry when she asked to be appointed for the special inspection that would allow her to become a senior teacher in October 1930. Such files constitute the perfect source to learn about teachers' professional trajectory precisely because teachers had to send all the inspection reports during their last five years of activity. Also, they were expected to have only grades of *Good* and *Very good* and not to have any punishments. Attached to the file was a memoir in which they presented their work and results thus far. According to this document, Răzvănescu was appointed in Cadrilater in 1915 and, during the 1920s, benefited from the work commitment the 1924 Primary Education Law allowed. As it was an evaluation moment, she highlighted the good results she had when mainly working with Turkish children in teaching them the Romanian language while also educating them in the spirit of properness, order and discipline, much to their parents' content. Her perception of her professional value was supported by the five inspection reports that followed the memoir, written between December 1925 and March 1931. Different revisers and inspectors issued all these documents, and they all painted the picture of a perfect pedagogue and a true educator.

The structure of the reports shows the different elements school representatives were paying attention to when evaluating the classes. First, there was the language aspect since Turkish children needed to learn Romanian to be able to attend primary school in the following years. "I was pleased to see that all [students], even though of Muslim origin (*sic*), respond in short sentences, and they speak so that it is almost difficult to tell them apart from the Romanian children. They have a rich vocabulary, and I could get along well with them," wrote inspector Sandu Carp in the report dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1930.<sup>40</sup>

Expanding students' vocabulary was essential for all pupils, regardless of ethnic origin. It involved learning basic Romanian terminology and national songs and folk dances since they contributed to creating a Romanian national identity. Poems and different jingles were perceived as essential to integrate

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<sup>40</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 107/1931, page 377.

these children into the Romanian national body culturally, and language led the way for this process.

Second, the manual activities were included in the curriculum and highly appreciated by the children as they were attractive and engaged them more than any other exercise, especially since kindergarten was devoted to older children, between 5 and 7 years, with better motor skills. These work activities were invested with moral values. The teacher was expected to encourage her children to obey the rules, keep their bodies clean and collaborate.

The third aspect was the relationship between teacher and children since school representatives always insisted on the teacher providing a mother figure to them. This recommendation was the cornerstone of the entire teaching process; a calm and loving teacher guaranteed that small students would come to classes on their own, out of interest and would get involved in any activity she would prepare for them. Therefore, it was evident to all revisers that the closer the relationship between the two, the better the results the kindergarten teacher had.

The tendency to present kindergarten teachers as having a similar role as mothers at school must be linked to the general direction of the pedagogical literature of that time. Papers published during the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century encouraged parents to connect emotionally with their children while educating them. Affection was presented as playing a key role in family dynamics, as adults were instructed to prepare themselves for parenthood.<sup>41</sup> However, the public school would complement their educational mission. Therefore, the kindergarten teacher had to guide the transition from family life to public school, much like a mother was expected to educate, care for, and love her students. Such a recommendation is not surprising given children's young age and the pioneering work carried out in schools with orphans by the notorious pedagogues J. H. Pestalozzi and Friedrich Fröbel.<sup>42,43</sup> A similar view on the

<sup>41</sup> Ernest Legouvé, *Părinți și copii în al XIX-lea secol. Copilăria și adolescența* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socec, 1898), 21-22.

<sup>42</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827) was a Swiss educational reformer. His works have been translated and critically commented on and adapted by the Transylvanian teacher Vasile Grigore Borgovanu, and have circulated in the Romanian space from the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. J. H. Pestalozzi, *Cum își învață Gertruda copiii*, translated by E. Bălțeanu, reprinted from „*Lumina pentru toți*” journal, revised and extended, with a preface and a biographical note on Pestalozzi by V. Gr. Borgovanu (Bucharest: Tipografia Mod. Gr. Luis, 1898).

<sup>43</sup> Friedrich Fröbel (1782 – 1852) German educator, the founder of kindergartens. The Pedagogical Association of teachers working in schools for small children in Romania highly publicised his contributions and legacy in its journal. Victoria Georgescu-Tistu, “Fröbel, întemeietorul grădinilor de copii,” *Copilul. Revista Asociației Pedagogice a învățătoarelor de la școlile de copii mici din România*, year seven, no. 9-10 (May-June 1940): 1-3.



mission and moral profile of the kindergarten teacher was also present in the papers<sup>44</sup> that provided daily guidelines prepared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Romanian professionals such as Iulia Lt. Lascaraki and Emilia Cordoneanu.<sup>45</sup> Both women defined their work by their commitment to the school and their love for their children.

In the case of Florica Răzvănescu's files, comments such as "she works with the same love for her children" or "she has not only the skills and the experience, but she devotes her entire love for the career she has chosen to the school" reflect the emotional side of kindergarten teaching.<sup>46</sup>

As documents show, working in counties with minority communities was challenging and sometimes offered kindergarten teachers additional opportunities. Such professionals often organised sewing and tailoring workshops for students in primary and complementary classes. This position was made possible by how some kindergarten teachers were trained. According to the 1909 law Spiru Haret had elaborated to organise pre-school institutions, teachers were called masters because they had the training to conduct all sorts of manual activities.<sup>47</sup> This term was replaced by "conducătoare de grădini de copii" in the following two laws passed by the same Haret, in 1910<sup>48</sup>, since it was better known at that time and would be used exclusively from that moment onward.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Iulia C. Gheorghiu, *Metoda rațională pentru educația copiilor mici de la 2-6 ani. Lecțiuni dezvoltate zilnic în grădina de copii conducător practic* (Piatra Neamț: Tiparul Institutului „Gheorghiu”, s.a.), 48.

<sup>45</sup> Emilia Cordoneanu, *Școala Fröbeliană Mică pedagogie pentru educația copiilor Călăuza profesoarelor și a familiilor pentru Grădina de copii* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Eminescu”, 1904), 9. „Precum o mamă bună îmbrățișează și unește cu o deopotrivă (sic) iubire pe toți copiii, tot așa și conducătoarea grădinii de copii trebuie să adune și să unească pe toți copiii, cu aceeași iubire, cu același devotament”.

<sup>46</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 107/1931, pages 370-379.

<sup>47</sup> The terminology varied as the Law on Kindergarten teaching in 1909 ("Lege pentru școalele de copii mici (grădini de copii)," *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 58, (12<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> of June 1909) used the title *masters for schools for small children* („maestre de școli de copii mici”), while the two laws in 1910 regarding the organisation of kindergartens and the curriculum passed by the same Spiru Haret used the term „conducătoare de grădini de copii”. However, even though the last version was eventually preferred, in practice, for instance on the documents used for assigning positions for kindergarten personnel in 1909, I found the title „maestră conducătoare cu titlu provizoriu”. See SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 107/1938, retirement file of Elena Dragomirescu, unnumbered, file 61/1943 of Zoe Boerescu, unnumbered, file 58/1941 of Matilda Livianu, unnumbered.

<sup>48</sup> "Programa de învățământ pentru școalele de copii mici (grădinile de copii)," *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 260, (20<sup>th</sup> of February/5<sup>th</sup> of March 1910). "Regulamentul pentru administrarea interioară a școalelor de copii mici (grădini de copii)," *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 173, (5<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> of November 1910).

<sup>49</sup> During the 1930s, the title of such personnel would become a *teacher for small children's schools*. For instance, in 1933 it was established the *Pedagogical Association of teachers working*



Even though, according to the Law, female personnel working in kindergartens was supposed to graduate from normal and secondary schools, in practice, there were cases of teachers who had professional training. Out of the 46 retirement files we have seen in the Archives of the Municipality of Bucharest, School Inspectorate Fund, ten belonged to kindergarten teachers who had graduated from professional schools.<sup>50</sup> The women with professional training tended to be recruited from the Danube region, being born in towns like Galați, Brăila and Tulcea, or other places from those counties. The Ministry tended to bend the rules to get teaching personnel who originated in the area, as this was considered a plus in the process of nationalising the two counties in Dobrogea and then the Cadrilater. Proof of such practice is the two cases of sisters who became kindergarten teachers that we came across while reading the documents. Sisters Nedioglu, from Zebil, Tulcea County and sisters Peteu in Stăncuța, Brăila County, have been orientated by their families to become kindergarten teachers.<sup>51</sup> The recommendation from the family shows that people living in the region were aware of the opportunities that arose from this school policy and that they benefited from it.

Elena Hieroiu was one of those teachers who graduated from the “Penetis Zumal” Professional School in Galați. She got her teaching diploma in 1908 and started working the same year. In 1925 she transferred with her husband, priest V. Hieroiu to Caliacra County to work as a kindergarten teacher at the Osmanfacâ-Sredus Ceamurli school for small children.<sup>52</sup> Three years later, they were living in Suiuciu (sometimes spelt Suiutciuc) village, part of Ezibei larger settlement, same county. While her husband was teaching elementary school children, she led the girls’ sewing workshop since the institution had a mixed school population. School authorities praised the teacher for her ability to work as a master for such manual labour, considered useful by her students for developing the abilities most valuable for girls and women as the primary household carers. Unsurprisingly, the reviser observed how Elena Hieroiu

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*in schools for small children in Romania* („Asociația pedagogică a învățătoarelor de la școlile de copii mici din România”), which started editing a journal called at the beginning *Copilul Revista mamelor și educatoarelor. Îngrijirea, educația și protecția copiilor de 3-7 ani*, first year, no. 2, (20th of May 1933).

<sup>50</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, files 110/1938, 29/1944, 58/1946, 193/1947 and others.

<sup>51</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, 100/1938 retirement file of Maria Roznovanu and file 101/1938 of Eugenia Dumitrescu; 131/1947 retirement file of Gherghina Pașolescu and file 275/1947 of her sister Elena Hieroiu, unnumbered.

<sup>52</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 275/1947, retirement file of Elena Hieroiu, unnumbered. She had already worked in Caliacra County from 1915 until 1919, without the years of war and occupation. ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 49/1925, page 243.



attracted older women to participate in the activities, especially since the girls also worked with a sewing machine and manual craftsmanship.<sup>53</sup> Her case illustrates not only the involvement of kindergarten teachers in other parts of elementary training but also that marriage between colleagues was quite common and contributed to the teaching staff's financial stability and professional development. Therefore, in 1940, after the two counties were reattached to Bulgaria, couples represented the majority of teaching personnel leaving the province.

Along with such manual labour, kindergarten teachers were known to get involved in teaching the Romanian language to older students when the opportunity arose. For instance, after the war, Eliza Şendrea, the kindergarten teacher who worked in Babuc village, Durostor County, was appointed at the Muslim elementary private school in Silistra to teach Romanian to Turkish students in second grade. By 1924, when she started collaborating with the private school, she had already been transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Kindergarten in Silistra. As the inspector noted, the children were learning the state language for the first time. Therefore, school authorities found it suited to ask a kindergarten teacher to work with them.<sup>54</sup> Their option precisely reflected the teachers' key role in developing their students' vocabulary, whether they were Romanians or foreigners. Eliza Şendrea's case was by no means an exception. Well-prepared kindergarten teachers were often assigned such tasks at their request or the reviser's proposal. These cases reflect kindergarten personnel's importance, especially in the new provinces, during the 1920s. Even though a minority, these women were present wherever complex teaching contexts arose, as they had to mediate between the state's pedagogical objectives and students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

### **The New Generation of Kindergarten Teachers**

A new generation of kindergarten teachers was trained after the war in special institutions. Born during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these young students graduated from the normal schools for kindergarten teachers created in Bucharest, Iaşi, Braşov, Chişinău and Deva during the 1920s.

In this new context, a typical practice initiated by the Liberal Party was setting aside several scholarships to be granted to diligent students from the new provinces. They were exempted from paying taxes and were even allowed

<sup>53</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 20/1928, page 206.

<sup>54</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 60/1943, retirement file of Eliza Macri (formerly Şendrea), unnumbered; copy of the Report on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1924.

to pass exams in the fall without losing their scholarships since such a policy was to prepare them to become agents of the national school. After the years spent in the boarding school, they would have learnt the language and the national rhetoric to act as the so-called “missionaries” of the Romanian culture, even though some were not ethnic Romanians. This was the case with Atanasa Atanasoff, born in 1908 in Turtucaia, Durostor County, who graduated from the “Domnița Anca” Normal School for Kindergarten Teachers in Bucharest in 1925.<sup>55</sup> After passing the final exam to get her teaching diploma, she was appointed teacher at the kindergarten in the village Denizler, in Durostor County.<sup>56</sup> At that time, she was a fresh graduate, only 17 years old. However, she went back home, which was convenient for her but most importantly for school authorities who saw their pedagogical objectives met.

Almost eight years later, according to the Primary Education Yearbook, in 1933, Atanasa, who had married and changed her name to Cehlarof was still working in the same village, being paid the minimum wage, 2250 lei.<sup>57</sup> Even though she was not an ethnic Romanian, she was part of the teaching personnel and the national body, serving both purposes. Her situation illustrates the complex relationship between ethnicity, national school policies and regional evolutions. During the 1920s, the state tended to recruit such students from the new provinces subjected to nationalisation, integrating them into the public education system, which would define their professional trajectory. They were expected to become allies of the central power against the particularities of their native province. Together with their colleagues from the Old Kingdom, they were encouraged to embrace the centralist perspective on statehood and education promoted by the Ministry.

However, Atanasa Cehlarof represented a minority since most kindergarten teachers working in Cadrilater were ethnic Romanians and came from the Old Kingdom.

The Law on Elementary education and normal schools in 1924 stated that young students had to serve in the new provinces during their first three years after graduation. Consequently, many young graduates in Bucharest, where there were three such schools (“Domnița Anca” Normal School for Kindergarten teachers, the Normal School for Kindergarten teachers attached to the “Principesa Elisabeta” Orphanage and “Pia Brătianu” School

<sup>55</sup> *Anuarul Școalei Normale de Conducătoare de grădini de copii „Domnița Anca” din București*, alcătuit de Stella Burnea Directoarea Școalei 1919-1930 (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Bucovina I.E. Torouțiu, 1930), 26.

<sup>56</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 216/1925, page 210.

<sup>57</sup> *Anuarul Învățământului Primar* (Bucharest: s.e., 1933), 264.



for Kindergarten teachers and Puericulture), tended to choose positions in Dobruja and Cadrilater. Likewise, their colleagues in Braşov asked for positions in counties placed in the South-East corner of Transylvania (Ciuc, Odorhei). Such a measure was deemed necessary since the number of kindergartens in the two counties was impressive, and the positions had to be filled. For example, in 1932-1933, according to the Primary Education Yearbook in Romania, in Caliacra, there were 11 urban kindergartens in Bazargic (housed by the 11 primary schools in town), four in Balcic (at the four primary schools in town) and one in Cavarna (at School nr. 1). Kindergartens were more numerous in rural areas, where 53 positions were available in 27 institutions.<sup>58</sup>

In Durostor County, urban kindergartens were attached to the five elementary schools in Silistra, and four more in Turtucaia, while in rural regions, there were 68 institutions. However, if we take a closer look at the age of the teachers in this last county, the year when they started teaching, and their salary, it becomes that most of these positions were assigned to fresh graduates. They had yet to complete the minimum stage of three years until they could pass the exam to get tenure. Therefore, these women in their twenties and thirties were placed inside the provisional teacher category. Things were different with the personnel in towns, where the average age of the teachers was over 40, so they were more experienced and had better salaries. This situation can be explained by the Ministry's request that the young graduates serve in rural areas during these three years, precisely because these positions were significantly more numerous.

Based on the detailed report and the data analysis the Yearbook provided, one can assume that such a situation fostered permanent mobility of the teaching personnel. As documents in the Ministry archive show, the graduates' presence in the province was a choice they had to make. This meant that once they had passed the exam to get tenure, most of them would have asked to be transferred elsewhere.

Such a reaction did not necessarily mean the failure of their mission since settling in the region depended on many more factors than their careers; personal aspirations, the presence of a support network or the possibility of marriage were equally important. However, school authorities were aware of such a tendency. Therefore, they made graduates stay there during those three years before the exam to get tenure when they had to work hard to get the highest grades during the inspections. According to the authorities' logic, this control mechanism motivated them to do their best. They also started classes

<sup>58</sup> *Anuarul Învăţământului Primar* (Bucharest: s.e., 1933), 264-265.

with a series of children who would have graduated by the time they had ended their provisional teaching stage, being prepared for primary school.

Still, not all the graduates choosing positions in such places worked there. Some young women would make different arrangements to stay in the neighbouring counties of Bucharest. In their case, the Ministry followed the same rule applied to the teaching personnel who were issued special diplomas for Cadrilater but never got to work there.<sup>59</sup> Since it was no longer possible to issue diplomas exclusively for a specific region, given the national relevance of the normal schools, those who avoided the so-called “heteroglot” or the multi-lingual counties and worked elsewhere could do so only as substitute teachers. This derailed them from the usual professional evolution and made them equal to other unqualified personnel when they were graduates of normal schools for kindergarten teachers and had been specially trained for such institutions. Therefore, giving all that up to avoid such regions was not a sound decision. This continuity in the Ministry’s procedures proves that they were effective and that these constraints had effects, especially since the graduates had a different social background after the war. Most students came from rural areas, and impoverished urban categories, but most importantly were war orphans. At that time, normal schools served as educational institutions and social assistance. Consequently, when entering such schools, they were asked to sign a commitment to work in the public school network for ten years after graduation. Not complying with the request allowed the Ministry to take legal action against them and ask for the full reimbursement of all the expenses made with their education. Therefore, they had to obey the rules and follow the instructions.

Mobility was common among teaching personnel inside the regions of the Old Kingdom too. However, with Dobrogea being annexed to Romania and then the Cadrilater, it became clear that the Ministry needed more personnel willing to relocate to such regions. Unfortunately, we do not have access to data showing this back-and-forth movement of kindergarten teachers and normal school graduates during the interwar decades. We can only evaluate such a tendency based on the retirement files of the teachers who belonged to older generations. They all show women born during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who worked in Dobrogea and the Cadrilater and who tended to retire from Bucharest at the end of the 1930s and throughout the 1940s, even though only a minority originated from the city.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> See reference 21.

<sup>60</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 23/1941.



## Work Commitments

The Primary Education law in 1924 (renewed in 1934) allowed experienced teachers to settle in the new provinces for four or ten years, rewarding them with substantial financial benefits.<sup>61</sup> According to article 159, a teacher committed to working in a minority community benefited from a 50% raise in the base salary. At that time, a teacher's salary had two distinct components: the base that was always the same and a variable part that increased every five years by 25%. In the case of a teacher who had an accepted commitment, the basis of the salary would get a 50% raise each month while the stages for periodical rise would shorten from 5 to 3 years.

In 1937, an amendment to this Law referred to the type of villages for which the Ministry would allow teachers working in both elementary and pre-school institutions to get such commitments.<sup>62</sup> Each file would also have to include a document issued by the mare of the village stating the percentage of foreigners living there; a minimum of 70% minority inhabitants became the limit for which the Ministry accepted such documents.<sup>63</sup> This change was made during the Liberal government while Doctor Constantin Angelescu still coordinated the Ministry. The same minister initiated such practices during the 1920s. This change is proof that authorities wanted to limit excesses that might have happened. In the eyes of the central school authorities, rewarding teachers with significant financial benefits was only paying off if they were working inside villages with consistent minority groups.

In this situation, we find Suzana Făcăianu, a kindergarten teacher who started her career in Ceair, Caliacra County, in 1930. When she moved there, she was only 21, a fresh graduate. However, in 1933, according to the Primary Education Yearbook, she was listed as a provisory teacher, paid with 2250 lei, not having passed the exam yet to get tenure.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, she still served the mandatory stage the Ministry required from all normal school graduates.

<sup>61</sup> *Legea învățământului primar al statului (Școalele de copii mici, școalele primare, școalele și cursurile de adulți, școalele și clasele speciale pentru copii debili și anormali educabili) și Învățământul normal primar, Promulgată prin înaltul decret regal nr. 1956 din 4 iulie 1934 și publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 152 din 5 iulie 1934* (Bucharest: s.e., 1934) 46. According to this law, work commitments were only granted for ten years, not also for four (article 158).

<sup>62</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 548/1939, pages 251-252 front and back.

<sup>63</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 28/1932, pages 26-36. Undoubtedly, Caliacra fell under this category. In October 1931 throughout the entire County a total of 304 primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers were listed to receive the additional pay or the cultural financial benefits for teaching in that region.

<sup>64</sup> *Anuarul Învățământului Primar*, 138.

In 1937, after getting tenure, Suzana Făcăianu was still teaching in Cear, the same county, and asked the Ministry to approve her commitment to work for ten more years in the region. Asked about her work and attitude as a teacher and the percentage of minority individuals in the village, the local reviser praised her for her activity, confirming the 72% limit requested by the Law. The Ministry agreed with the commitment only in 1939, even though the documents were issued two years prior. Only then the reviser's office in Caliacra County budgeted the amount needed for each month as the 50% added to the base salary of Suzana Făcăianu.<sup>65</sup>

Postponing such a decision was not a new strategy for the Ministry of Public Instruction. For example, in 1930, after the economic crisis started affecting Romania, the Ministry in Bucharest refused all commitments sent through the local school authorities by all teaching staff working in minority communities, beginning in 1928. The pretext was that the local revisers did not submit such requests to the Ministry's approval, even though some revisers would argue that the Ministry did not let them know about the change. However, the actual reason was the change of government. In the autumn of 1928, the Liberal Party was replaced by the Peasant Party, which had a different vision about paying extra for these mobility stages and wanted to stop such practices.

In the end, teachers were the ones losing since they would work obeying the provisions of the Law, but without any additional pay. The same thing happened with the new Education Law in 1934. Even though school authorities kept such commitments in place, they were not motivated to regulate the process of acquiring them. Even though Suzana Făcăianu sent her file in 1937, the authorities evaluated it two years later and decided. In her case, as with other colleagues, she only benefited from this financial increase for just one year, even though she worked there for ten years because, in 1940, Southern Dobruja was reintegrated into Bulgaria.

In the case of Făcăianu, not only the possibility of additional pay motivated her to remain in the province. Another reason for her settling in Caliacra County would be the relatives working there. According to the list with bonuses for teaching in minority communities in Caliacra in 1939, there were two other couples with the same surname working in the primary school in Ciobancuius (Horia and Ana Făcăianu) and Caralez (Dumitru and Aurelia Făcăianu).<sup>66</sup> This case shows the importance of the network of relatives a teacher could rely on in such places. The Ministry encouraged couples to settle together and prioritised

<sup>65</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 548/1939, pages 161, 251-252 front and back.

<sup>66</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 548/1939, page 144.



teachers when they wanted to transfer to reunite with their spouses. School representatives envisioned the ideal situation of couples settling together since building a house and raising a family contributed to the integration of the Romanian teachers inside the foreign communities. In doing so, they would become part of the rural elite, serving as local leaders and, most notably, as nationalising agents.

Looking at the list in the archives of the Ministry and at the Primary Education Yearbook in 1933 for counties like Durostor and Caliacra, one can notice two different aspects: the young age of the teachers and kindergarten teachers and couples working together. Marriage provided great emotional support, while two salaries allowed professional stability and better living standards.

### **A New Perspective on Kindergarten Teaching: Female Evaluators**

Still, this school policy failed to show the results that some control teams expected. In December 1936, school inspector Zoe Boerescu visited Silistra's four kindergartens, expressing her utmost dissatisfaction with how teachers were working. The division of the work day in half due to the lack of space was considered the cause for which the Bulgarian children barely spoke Romanian. On top of that, what triggered her discontent was that the school for small children number 2 in town had three teachers; the third position was created for a primary school teacher who could not find another job in Silistra. Even worse, at that time, the teacher was on leave, being replaced by a person who was not part of the teaching staff and who, according to the inspector, did not speak the Romanian language correctly. "The majority of the children are Bulgarian; they talk among themselves in Bulgarian. Even more so, it is unacceptable for a person who cannot speak the language of the state to replace a teacher. For instance, she said "bulgi de zăpadă" instead of "bulgări de zăpadă" and "copii, stați cu mâinile în piept."<sup>67</sup> Consequently, she recommended cutting the third position and transferring the children to the classes of two other teachers who were properly trained and spoke the language.

Her final observations refer to the need for the teachers to work full days with the children. However, considering the lack of infrastructure, since the schools did not have enough space for the children to have lunch or rest, it was unreasonable for the inspector to insist on a full-day working schedule. Besides, the accommodation was out of the teacher's control, depending entirely on the funds the school committees possessed. At the same time,

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<sup>67</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 9/1936, page 223.



the only positive Boerescu's comments referred to an experienced teacher's class, that of Florica Răzvănescu. The fact that the results of such pre-school institutions were modest was perceived as particularly disturbing, especially in a town where the presence of the Romanian administration and the overall multi-ethnic urban community should have contributed to a better knowledge of the Romanian language.

Most importantly, inspector Boerescu noticed the lack of pedagogical materials.<sup>68</sup> This lack was a serious cause for the poor results of kindergartens since manual activities represented a major attraction point for the children who attended classes: cutting, sewing, working with clay, and building with small twigs and rocks were beloved activities for children. The lack of pedagogical material was a huge setback for a kindergarten teacher since it was its most appreciated ally in bonding with her students and motivating them to learn.

Comparing Zoe Boerescu's evaluation with the one made by inspector Petrescu immediately after the war, it appears that the significant differences in perspective displayed by the two were caused by their different expectations. While in 1919, each little progress was worth celebrating, in 1936, the financial investments the Ministry had made in promoting such school policies were expected to produce remarkable results.

Also, the gender and professional orientation of Zoe Boerescu, who was a kindergarten teacher, played a role in shaping her negative perspective. As someone who has worked with small children her entire career, Boerescu's professional standards proved more difficult to meet than male reviser's expectations. Therefore, her comments were more elaborated while her recommendations had a broader perspective, aiming to be better appreciated since female inspectors had been recently reappointed after 1934. As documents dating from before the war show, kindergartens had been initially placed under women's control. Names like Adela Dimitriu, Zoe Vasiliu, Smara Gheorghiu, Semiramis Dimitriu, Maria Beiu Paladi or Caterina Pangrati are common among the control teams the Ministry relied on between 1912 and 1920. After the war, they started disappearing, and male revisers took their place. When they were employed again, during the second part of the 1930s, they were fully integrated into the structure of the control teams with professionals such as Alexandrina Demetrescu and Constanța Atanasiu, appointed full inspectors for kindergarten teaching in Romania. In the case of the inspection reports written by Zoe Boerescu and colleagues during the same period, for other provinces, one can detect their need to prove that they were better suited for

<sup>68</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 9/1936, pages 224-225.



evaluating such institutions. Setting higher standards for kindergarten teachers to meet and writing more detailed and integrative reports was a way to display their judging abilities and use their experience to improve such institutions significantly.

### The Locals' Response to Central School Policies

One of the most challenging aspects when writing about school is the difficulty in evaluating the perspective of the local population who should have benefited from such policies. Regardless of the ethnic origin and the different degrees of marginality as regards the distance separating a province from the political centre, peasants did not readily accept kindergartens. Among the documents written by kindergarten teachers who were at the forefront of this school policy before and immediately after the First World War, a significant part showed their struggles to implement them. Perceived as urban affairs, as even historian Nicolae Iorga was defining them during the debates at the Deputies Chamber regarding the Primary School Law in 1924, kindergartens were difficult for peasants to grasp.<sup>69</sup> As the teacher working in Militari village, now a neighbourhood in Bucharest, put it: the parents did not fully understand the need for primary school, let alone education, before age 7. Also, they were easy to offend when she would bring to their attention the need to keep the children clean.<sup>70</sup>

Still, when considering the ethnic factor, we expect the results to be significantly worse, as in Cadrilater. This province was the field of ethnic tensions, which often escalated into violence. There is no doubt that, especially for primary education, there were numerous times when the minority population would refuse the educational offer of the Ministry of Public Instruction. Consequently, in such communities, one can notice the positions reserved for Turkish teachers and Coran studies to make the Romanian public school more appealing to this population. Also, different petitions written by Bulgarians asked for the Ministry to approve for their children to study in private schools among peers of similar ethnic origins. In 1931, the correspondence between the reviser in Caliacra County, P. Papazissu and his superior, inspector Ahile Constantinescu reflected the tensions the Romanian national school faced. The Bulgarian “intellectuals and irredentists” in Bazargic

<sup>69</sup> “Dezbaterile Adunării Naționale Constituante a Deputaților Ședința de vineri 27 iunie 1924,” *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 118, (27<sup>th</sup> of August 1924): 3493.

<sup>70</sup> SMBAN, ISMB Fund, file 23/1941, unnumbered; Cleopatra Tălăngescu's professional memoir.

were challenging the Romanian public school, asking for the right to establish their schools. In doing so, they ended up addressing the League of Nations. Authorities analysed the situation in Bucharest. One month later, in April 1931, inspector Constantinescu recommended sessions of cultural conferences in the county for the locals to see that the Romanian national school and culture were “superior”. He added, “We should let the locals know that the Romanian school only intends to prepare good citizens, loyal to the country they live in, without endangering their ethnic origin.”<sup>71</sup> The comment seems remarkably similar to Spiru Haret’s arguments at the beginning of the century in his article “Nationalist School,” showing a perfect continuity of political thought.<sup>72</sup> In 1907, Haret referred to the “strangers” living in the Old Kingdom, writing: “Instead of leaving school to become a means for action against our statehood and an obstacle against the closeness and getting together of our citizens of any language, on the contrary, let’s turn it into a way of preparing and allowing the fusion of all in the same love for the country, irrespective of origin”.

Coming back to 1931, we notice similar tendencies and the efforts made by minority representatives in other regions, such as the South of Bessarabia, Ismail County, to ask for separate schools. We believe that these reactions are connected to the fact that on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1931, Nicolae Iorga’s cabinet started its governance. Since Iorga had supported the right of different minorities to primary education in their mother tongue, the foreign intelligentsia found a good moment to voice its objectives and actively pursue them.

Even before that moment, the control team in Cadrilater seems to have had a more cautious attitude towards the shortcomings they found in the schools they evaluated. In December 1930, for instance, the sub-reviser in Durostor County, seeing that the rural population had not yet been able to buy books simply because they did not afford them, recommended teachers to be “understanding, tactful and correct in raising the money for the manuals.”<sup>73</sup> These instructions show that school representatives were expected not to antagonise the rural population by adding new tensions to an already severely deteriorated financial situation.

<sup>71</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 11/1931, pages 150-151.

<sup>72</sup> Spiru Haret, “Școala naționalistă,” 3-10. In the article, Haret argues that “the idea was not for them [strangers in the Old Kingdom] to forget their own language, they could have kept it; but it was our duty not to tolerate that a handful of people to live for hundreds of years among ourselves and to stubbornly refuse this modest token of appreciation and friendship for the hospitality that we have shown them on our land, to agree to understand our language”.

<sup>73</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 14/1931, page 217.



Not even one of these problems is visible when looking at kindergarten teaching. On the contrary, most of the inspection reports from the 1920s and 1930s show that the number of students was sufficient, the children's presence not being an issue. Insufficient work-space or pedagogical material always caused problems. Even so, the reports' overall impression was positive. Therefore it isn't easy to accurately evaluate the community's perception of the role of kindergartens.

To shift perspectives and analyse school policies through the lens of someone who lived there but was not a member of the teaching personnel, we must include their memories. In the case of Cadrilater, we only had access to the memory book written by the daughter of a couple of teachers from Buzău. Camelia Cristescu (born in 1927) was the daughter of priest Constantin Cristescu and Elena, both teachers trained in the Old Kingdom, who in 1924 moved to Bazaurtul de Mijloc village, Caliacra County (now Teanovo, Bulgaria). They established themselves as part of the rural community elite. More significantly, they were perceived like this by the Bulgarians themselves. Without actually detailing their contribution to the development of the village, we will only notice the locals' reaction towards the family after 1940. The teachers could never return to Bazaurt, their home for almost 20 years, but their daughter could do that on two different occasions. In 1963, on a motorcycle with her husband, and again in 2001, by herself, the villagers welcomed her each time. Among them, she could find old friends, neighbours and school colleagues. What mainly triggered Camelia Cristescu's desire to write her memoirs was another volume, a monography of the village whose author was Bulgarian. In that book, the comments referring to her parents' work in Bazaurtul de Mijloc are positive and constitute genuine praise for all their dedication and ability to identify with a community and contribute to its evolution.<sup>74</sup> Suppose we could suspect that the warm welcome Camelia Cristescu received during her two meetings with the villagers could partly be attributed to nostalgia. In that case, we cannot make the same assumption in the case of the author Atanas Peev.<sup>75</sup> He had to research and go beyond memory and representations to write the book, analysing the facts. It is, therefore, safe

<sup>74</sup> Camelia Cristescu Săvescu, *Amintiri din Cadrilater Un cântec închinat timpului nemuritor* (București: s.e., 2006), 3-108.

<sup>75</sup> The author was Atanas Peev and the book's title was *Lumină de la Izvor* (the Romanian translation) written in Bulgarian. See pages 13-20, 91-108. Camelia Cristescu opened her book with excerpts from Peev's book, referring to her parents' work. We find the comments even more relevant if we consider that a consistent Macedonian community closely related to the Cristescu family in the village. Even after her father died in 1947, Camelia Cristescu stayed in touch with them as, after 1940, they moved to Constanța County.

to conclude that the teachers were praised for the work the Primary Education Law dictated, reflecting the national school policies implemented before the Second World War. Keeping in mind that the author was the daughter of two teachers from the Old Kingdom, we cannot present such an example relevant to the variety of cultural contexts in the entire Southern Dobruja. Still, it is important to highlight such experiences because they bring forward a personal recollection that was not written to meet the school representatives' criteria. As biased as it may be, it provides a narrative regarding the everyday life of the rural community outside the national propaganda optic. This individual perspective is what is missing from the archive documents.

At this point in our research, we cannot conclude before discussing the interaction between the teaching personnel as agents of the national school policies and the Bulgarian and Turkish minority communities in Cadrilater. For elementary schools, documents clearly show that in Durostor County, even though the Bulgarian and Turkish children were four times more numerous than the Romanian ones, the Ministry did not recruit Bulgarian teachers at all, only Romanian.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, it did assign positions for Muslim specialists to teach Coran studies. The reason for such a measure was not the ethnic origin but religious affiliation. In both cases, we see this investment exclusively in public schools as an attempt to minimise competing educational offers since such schools did not exist in every village, even though Bulgarians and the Turkish community had private institutions. Therefore, all children had to attend classes in Romanian public schools.

As for kindergartens, we noticed that the Ministry employed Romanian-trained professionals exclusively. Although they might have had a different ethnic origin, they had graduated from schools in the Old Kingdom and spoke the Romanian language. The documents did not indicate tensions between local community' institutions and public ones. However, there were other regions where the educational offer available in private kindergartens was far more attractive than that of public institutions. For example, in Banat, German kindergartens or those financed by the Catholic Church were also of interest to Hungarian and Romanian parents.<sup>77</sup> Having a better infrastructure and

<sup>76</sup> ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 7/1928, page 58.

<sup>77</sup> In October 1936, an inspector appointed to check the list of children attending classes visited the confessional kindergarten organised by the Catholic Church for German children in Lipova, Timiș County, to find pupils of other ethnicities. After finding one Hungarian boy and a Romanian one, he reported to the Ministry that he had made the principal aware that they needed to attend classes at the public kindergarten, as the law on private education stated. Undoubtedly, his visit and inquiry were caused by a denouncement. ANIC, MCIP Fund, file 20/1936, page 87.



being culturally more appealing, such institutions were closely monitored by inspectors to remove children who were not ethnic Germans from under their cultural influence. We can therefore conclude that, even with competition between the public kindergartens and private ones in Cadrilater, school authorities had the upper hand as they were the ones who designed the laws and then made the private institutions follow their provisions.<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusion

Kindergarten teaching was directly linked to nation-building, an essential feature of the political and institutional evolution of the modern Romanian state. Such school policies aimed at consolidating the national community through a centralising process that relied heavily on the Romanian language and national culture.

All-female teaching personnel served in these institutions since they were associated with mother figures educating small children while also helping them transition from the domestic environment to the public elementary school. However, documents show that the Ministry of Public Instruction struggled to manage such a reality. Before the Second World War, the state created public kindergartens in minority regions especially. Apart from those in towns and cities that were hardly available for young teachers, school authorities met the dilemma of keeping teachers in those regions to achieve the objectives included on the national and cultural agenda. Cultural and social differences between teachers and rural communities alone were difficult to overcome by any urban professional, regardless of their gender. However, in the case of kindergarten teachers, such relations were even more complex, considering the language barrier and ethnic differences.

Such school policies have targeted the new provinces as the Cadrilater from the very moment they were integrated into the Kingdom of Romania. To make kindergarten teachers work there, the Ministry used the elementary school legislation that obliged them to settle in “heteroglot” rural regions during their provisional teaching years. Also, school authorities used the financial factor to motivate teachers. The latter might have constituted a significant reason to settle in the new regions. However, the inconsistencies and the differences in opinion between the Liberal Party and the Peasant Party regarding the utility

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<sup>78</sup> The Law on Private Education voted in 1925 stated that private schools, confessional or community, had the right to teach only the children who belonged to the ethnic or confessional community they served. All the others had to attend classes at the nearest public school available. ANIC, Senate Fund, file 14,576, vol. I: The Law on Private Education 1924-1925, page 60.

of work commitments, along with the global depression, made teachers realise that the Ministry might re-interpret, postpone, suspend or bluntly ignore the Law provisions, according to its interests and financial shortages. Therefore, teachers shared a high mistrust and uncertainty about the additional payment.

Also, the decision to settle in different regions had to do more with personal reasons rather than professional ones. Of course, payment and the possibility of a career were necessary, but equally important were the teacher's family, the husband's working place, or even cultural and social aspirations. School authorities were aware of such a reality, so they tended to favour couples from the Old Kingdom willing to relocate to the new provinces. As the documents show, elementary school teachers usually formed these couples.

Of the two means that the Ministry of Public Instruction used to make graduates of normal schools for kindergarten teachers to serve in these regions, the constraint proved to be long-lasting. It did not involve any commitment from school authorities and was neither motivating nor culturally appealing.

## Rezumat

În secolul al XIX-lea, educația publică a fost un element esențial al construcției naționale în întreaga Europă. Statele naționalizatoare au conceput politici școlare pentru a transforma țărani în cetățeni. Cu toate acestea, grădinițele erau în primul rând instituții urbane. Unul dintre obiectivele lor era de a-i învăța pe copiii mici limbi moderne. La începutul secolului al XX-lea, elitele românești au început să le creeze și să le adapteze pentru a naționaliza Dobrogea și Cadrilaterul, cele două provincii integrate în Vechiul Regat. Ambele regiuni erau diverse din punct de vedere etnic. În localitățile locuite în principal de o populație minoritară, scopul grădinițelor era de a răspândi limba română și cultura națională. Acest articol se concentrează asupra integrării naționale a Dobrogei de Sud prin intermediul grădinițelor publice. De asemenea, articolul examinează parcursul profesional al cadrelor didactice care au slujit în aceste regiuni până la sfârșitul anilor 1940. În cele din urmă, articolul urmărește interacțiunea cadrelor didactice cu localnicii și eforturile lor de a media între obiectivele pedagogice și naționale ale României Mari și interesele locale care uneori intrau în coliziune cu politicile școlare ale statului.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Dobrogea de Sud, grădinițe, România, minorități etnice.

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# The Puppet and the Puppeteer: Deconstructing the Historiography on King Carol II and Miron Cristea, the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch

Ion POPA

## *Abstract*

Miron Cristea was one of the most important and influential political actors in interwar Romania. He became the first patriarch of the Orthodox Church (1925), a member of the Regency (1927-1930), and was prime minister of Romania from February 1938 until his passing on 6 March 1939. Most historiography on that era overlooks Cristea's power and influence, being focused primarily on the Iron Guard and on several political players, such as King Carol II, Armand Călinescu, Corneliu Codreanu, or Iuliu Maniu. This article traces the origins of this minimisation, unearthing evidence of a process started in the 1970s. It deconstructs the various layers of history writing about Carol II's regime, examining communist and post-communist motivations behind the focus on some players (such as the king, his mistress – Elena Lupescu, or the royal camarilla) and the deliberate forgetting of others, including Miron Cristea. Historiography on Carol II and the royal dictatorship has seen some changes since communist times, some of them analysed here, but the writing on Miron Cristea has remained, for several reasons, largely unchallenged.

**Keywords:** communist/post-communist historiography, Orthodox Church, interwar politics, royal regime.

## **Introduction**<sup>1</sup>

Holocaust historiography has focused, for a long period, on political and military actors. In the case of Romania that was necessary, at least in the 1990s, to clarify the state's involvement in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Many studies looked at the role of Ion Antonescu and his political-military apparatus in the implementation of various policies of marginalization, exclusion, persecution, and destruction. In parallel, an important corpus of secondary literature, some of it dating back to the communist era, has examined the role of the Iron Guard in interwar politics and the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970).



As a result, we have today much more clarity on the role played by these personalities and/or organizations in the destruction of the Jewish community. However, historiography needs to widen research and to expand its focus to other actors who were equally, if not even more important, in the facilitation and implementation of policies that led to the Holocaust.

In the last two decades more research has come to light showing the heavy role played by Churches in interwar politics across Europe. Emma Fattorini, Gerhard Besier, Giuliana Chamedes, Peter Kent, Robert Ventresca, Paul Hanebrink, Todd Weir, or Michael Phayer have examined Catholic and Protestant actions aiming to reverse secularism and advocating return to a type of totalitarian society where Churches regained lost positions of power and strength.<sup>3</sup> They argued that in countries such as Hungary, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Austria, or Poland, Christian denominations used anti-modernism, anti-communism, and antisemitism as tools of political mobilization. In some cases, Churches became directly involved in creating antisemitic legislation.<sup>4</sup> Seen in light of this new research on interwar European extremism, Romania was no exception. Moreover, in comparison to other countries where lower ranked clergy held political office (the leader of the Centre Party in Germany, for example, was, from 1928 to 1933, Catholic prelate Ludwig Kaas, a friend of Eugenio Pacelli, Papal Nuncio/Vatican Secretary of State/future Pope Pius XII),<sup>5</sup> in Romania the head of the main Christian denomination acted as prime minister from February 1939 to his passing in March 1939.

Miron Cristea was an essential player in Transylvania's decision to unite with Romania after the First World War, became the first Orthodox

<sup>3</sup> Emma Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini, and the Vatican. Pope Pius XI and the Speech that Was Never Made* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Gerdard Besier with the collaboration of Francesca Piombo, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany*, trans. W.R. Ward (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Giuliana Chamedes, "The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-communism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 2016), pp. 261-290; Peter Kent, *The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII. The Roman Catholic Church and the Division of Europe, 1943-1950* (Montreal, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Robert Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Michael Phayer, "'Helping the Jews is not an easy thing to do.' Vatican Holocaust Policy: Continuity or Change?" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol 21, No 3 (Winter 2007), 426-427.

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Hertzl, *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993), 85-140. Hertzl shows the decisive role played by both Catholic and Protestant Churches in the creation and wording of anti-Jewish laws of 1938-1939 and 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Besier, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany*, 70.



primate of Greater Romania (1919-1925), the first patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1925-1939), and a member of the Regency (1927-1930). In February 1938, when King Carol II instituted a personal regime, Miron Cristea became prime minister of Romania. Current historiography, both the general one analyzing Carol II and the events leading to the Holocaust, and the more specialized one looking particularly at Miron Cristea, is largely uninterested or dismiss his political role. Researchers such as Mirel Bănică,<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Haynes,<sup>7</sup> Leon Volovici,<sup>8</sup> Bela Vago,<sup>9</sup> Roland Clark,<sup>10</sup> Lucian Leuştean,<sup>11</sup> Armin Heinen,<sup>12</sup> William Oldson,<sup>13</sup> and Zigu Ornea<sup>14</sup> have highlighted the important role played by the Romanian Orthodox Church in the antisemitism of interwar Greater Romania. However, most often the focus was on how the Church legitimated (or not) the activity and ideology of the Iron Guard and other extreme right-wing organisations. Historians, such as Carol Iancu,<sup>15</sup> Radu Ioanid,<sup>16</sup> Nicola Nagy-Talavera,<sup>17</sup> Paul Shapiro,<sup>18</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română: stat și societate în anii '30* (Iași, Romania: Polirom, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Haynes, "The Romanian Legionary Movement, Popular Orthodoxy and the Cult of Death," in Mioara Anton, Florin Anghel, Cosmin Popa (eds.) *Hegemoniile trecutului. Evoluții românești și europene. Profesorului Ioan Chiper la 70 de ani* (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2006), 32-55.

<sup>8</sup> Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și „problema evreiască”: eseu despre formele antisemitismului intelectual în România anilor '30* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Bela Vago, *In the Shadow of Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936–1939* (Farnborough, UK: Saxon House, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion and Political Power in Romania* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Armin Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail - o contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 314-319.

<sup>13</sup> William Oldson, "Alibi for Prejudice: Eastern Orthodoxy, the Holocaust, and Romanian Nationalism," *East European Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 3 (Fall 2002), 301-311.

<sup>14</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România, 1866-1919. De la excludere la emancipare* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), 295-303.

<sup>16</sup> Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), 328-329.

<sup>18</sup> Paul A. Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937 - February 1938," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* (Pittsburgh), vol. 8, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 45-88.

Jean Ancel,<sup>19</sup> Constantin Iordachi,<sup>20</sup> and Ilarion Țiu,<sup>21</sup> who analysed the Goga-Cuza government and Carol II's authoritarian regime, have mentioned, often passingly, the role of Miron Cristea. However, they did not explore the power and influence of the Orthodox patriarch in the life of the Romanian interwar political system. Most recently Oliver Jens Schmitt argued in one of his books that, as prime minister, "Cristea was the man of straws the king and the minister of the interior had looked for."<sup>22</sup> This article argues that such views stem from a pattern of historiography which minimized Cristea's contribution to interwar politics.

Since the beginning of my MA and later PhD studies, I have been puzzled by the lack of interest in the actions of Patriarch Miron Cristea. One of my first articles on this topic, published in *Yad Vashem Studies* in 2012, argued that, during his premiership, Cristea was far from being a man of straws/puppet; on the contrary, he initiated and defended in public speeches various policies against Jews, such as expulsion from the country, their marginalization in culture, economy and finance, incipient programs of Romanianization, and their stripping of Romanian citizenship.<sup>23</sup> Some of those findings were explored further in *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (2017), a book which resulted from my doctoral research.<sup>24</sup> In a 2019 article, published in the *Stefan Odobleja New Europe College Yearbook*, I explored the increase of the patriarch's political-religious influence during 1930s via relations with the Anglican Church. Those relations were used by both Miron Cristea and the Romanian state. For the Romanian state, they were an avenue to improve relations with the United Kingdom in a context of German advances towards Eastern Europe. For Cristea, they were a platform to showcase his political ability. It is not by chance that he became more vocal in Romanian politics after the 1935 Anglican Romanian

<sup>19</sup> Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască, 1933-1944* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), vol. 1, part 1, 30-33.

<sup>20</sup> Constantin Iordachi, "Aristocracy, Fascism, and the Social Origins of Mass Politics in Romania," in Karina Urbach, ed., *European Aristocracies and the Radical Right 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 201-232.

<sup>21</sup> Ilarion Țiu, *Miscarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu. Vol 1 Dictatura Regală (februarie 1938-septembrie 1940)* (Bucharest: Vremea, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea „Căpitanului”* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017), 288.

<sup>23</sup> Ion Popa, "Miron Cristea, The Romanian Orthodox Patriarch: His Political and Religious Influence in Deciding the Fate of the Romanian Jews (February 1938-March 1939)," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2012), 11-34.

<sup>24</sup> Ion Popa, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington IN.: Indiana University Press), 23-24 and 31-33.



Orthodox Conference in Bucharest and the June 1936 visit to London, where he was received by King Edward VIII, the Archbishop of Canterbury and by other British ecclesiastical, political, and intellectual elites.<sup>25</sup>

As Roland Clark shows, Patriarch Cristea used political links already during 1920s to further his ecclesiastical goals. He closed ties with the Liberal Party, which led to his nomination as Regent in 1927.<sup>26</sup> I argue that his role as Regent (1927-1930) was a turning point, as he realized that being at the centre of political power could secure more easily the implementation of his political-religious agenda. However, his involvement in politics grew to another level only after 1934, when he became close to Stelian Popescu, media mogul, owner of one of the most circulated Romanian daily newspapers *Universul*.<sup>27</sup> Together they created the Antirevisionist League, with Popescu as president and the patriarch as honorary president. The League became soon the catalyst for a political program that openly advocated the demise of democracy and a new type of authoritarian society, centered around the king and reliant on the Orthodox Church. By 1937, the organization numbered thousands of members across Romania.<sup>28</sup> Although Cristea's relations with many members of the Holy Synod were not always harmonious, as their political and religious plans often differed, including on how best to deal with the Iron Guard, almost all Orthodox metropolitans and many bishops were members of the Antirevisionist League. Moreover, as Liviu Lazăr shows, the League's committee comprised of Miron Cristea, Nicolae Bălan, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nectarie, the Metropolitan of Bukovina, Pimen, the Metropolitan of Moldova, Gurie, the Metropolitan of Bessarabia, Professors Ion Lupaș, Silviu Dragomir, G. Marinescu, and Gheorghe Țițeica, as well as the president of ASTRA, Iuliu Moldovan.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ion Popa, "The British Connection. Jews and Judaism in the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox Interfaith Relations," *New Europe College Ștefan Odobleja Yearbook 2018-2019*, pp. 225-250.

<sup>26</sup> See Roland Clark, *Sectarianism and Renewal in 1920s Romania: The Limits of Orthodoxy and Nation-Building* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 51-74.

<sup>27</sup> About the friendship with Popescu see, for example, "Cuvântarea I.P.S. Patriarh Miron Cristea la sfințirea bisericii din comuna 'Stelian Popescu' Prahova, 6 Iunie 1937," *Apostolul* 14, no. 12 (15 June 1937), in The Romanian National Archives (ANIC), Miron Cristea 1662/10, 54-55.

<sup>28</sup> For details on the Antirevisionist League see ANIC, Liga Antirevizionistă Română 1020/2186, pp. 11-20. Unlike many political parties, which were narrow in their definition, beliefs, and practice, the Antirevisionist League was wide-ranging. Amongst its members were influent and diverse politicians (such as Iuliu Maniu, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, or Octavian Goga), clerics (most Orthodox and a significant number of Greek Catholic metropolitans), intellectuals, and media personalities.

<sup>29</sup> See also Liviu Lazăr, *Mișcarea antirevizionistă din Transilvania în perioada interbelică* (București: Călăuza, 2003), 251-290.

After the publication of the 2019 article in *Stefan Odobleja New Europe College Yearbook*, I wanted to understand how and why Cristea's political influence was minimized for so long. The current piece is a result of that research. It does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of historiography on Miron Cristea, but rather to show a process of marginalization that started during 1970s and continued largely unaffected after the fall of communism. Historical writing on Cristea has been, for a long time, almost exclusively linked to writing about King Carol II. Hence, to understand why the political impact of the Orthodox patriarch has been overlooked, we must understand the ways in which historians wrote about the former king. Therefore, the first two sections of this article examine how the historiography on Carol II and his regime was built in communist and post-communist Romania. Section three looks at how these writings, including those dedicated exclusively to the life and activity of the Orthodox patriarch, reflected his contribution to the events leading to February 1938 and the year he was prime minister of Romania.

The selection of books included here was driven by their use and influence in contemporary Romanian historical writing. All of them, except for the book by Oliver Jens Schmitt, are works exclusively dedicated to either Carol II or Miron Cristea. They come up as main works when searching for these names in Romanian libraries' catalogues. The selection is not comprehensive. It does not include interwar literature on Miron Cristea, such as those by Vasile Netea,<sup>30</sup> Ion Rusu Abrudean,<sup>31</sup> or Romulus Căndea,<sup>32</sup> most of them focussed on and glorifying his ecclesiastical activity. Such works are not providing insight into the process of deliberate forgetting of his political influence, which started during communism and continued after 1989. The same goes for articles published after 1989 and looking exclusively at Miron Cristea's ecclesiastical activity.<sup>33</sup> The inclusion of Schmitt's book, which gives the title of this piece, was driven by the argument that even well-written and respected recent historiography takes over sometimes, especially when it comes to Cristea, old myths which downplayed his political role.

<sup>30</sup> Vasile Netea, *Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa Patriarhul României Dr. Miron Cristea. La împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani (1868-1938)* (Târgu Mureș: [n.a.], 1938).

<sup>31</sup> Ion Rusu Abrudeanu, *Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa Patriarhul României Dr. Miron Cristea. Omul și faptele* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1929).

<sup>32</sup> Romulus Căndea, "Patriarhul Miron Cristea," *Candela*, XXXVI, no. 3-7 (1925), p. 73-95.

<sup>33</sup> See for example, Gheorghe Vasilescu, "Patriarhul Miron Cristea - Un luptător pentru unitatea neamului,"  *Glasul Bisericii, revista oficiala a Sfintei Mitropolii a Munteniei și Dobrogei*, LIV, no. 5-8 (1998), pp. 127-130; See also a collection of articles published in Adrian Ardeț, Ioan Bolovan, eds., *Biserica și Națiune la Români din Banat și Transilvania. Episcopul Elie Miron Cristea și Marea Unire* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2018).



## The First Layer of Historiography: Carol II as the Main Responsible for the Events Leading to February 1938

Historiography on King Carol II, and, through extension on Patriarch Cristea, has several layers of narratives promoted over time for various political reasons. The first academic writing focusing on the former king was an article published in 1967 by Alexandru Savu.<sup>34</sup> He quotes two other works, by Aurel Vijeli (1949)<sup>35</sup> and V. Anescu (1962),<sup>36</sup> which are not dealing directly with Carol, but rather with some of his economic policies. Savu's article is full of communist themes and imagery. The king is presented as the embodiment of the old bourgeoisie: corrupt, the head of a political system that had no regard for the masses, a dictator who dismantled with viciousness the Romanian political system, the head of a camarilla that was leading Romania in a conspiratorial way, behind the curtains. The first sentence is emblematic for the tone of the entire piece: "After Carol II's ascension to the throne of Romania on 8 June 1930, the reactionary aspect of the bourgeois-landlord state deepened. Carol promoted an internal and external policy that served the interests of the big landlords and bourgeoisie of the country, seeking at the same time to consolidate and increase the positions of the monarchy." Carol is described as someone who was smart "in plundering the public funds and enriching himself," as without scruple, as the one who "played cards with the country's riches and exploited with savagery the workers and the peasants from the factories and domains of the Crown." The author claims that the Crown "continued to be the largest landowner in the country [...] and remained the main factor in maintaining the semi-feudal relations of production." He argues that the king used his prerogatives to better the luxurious life of the royal family.

The focus is on the economic dimensions of Carol II's alleged nefarious activities, in order to emphasize even more the Marxist ideology of class struggle, where a capitalist secretive group, the camarilla, used the royal palace to advance its goals. The dictatorship, as the regime installed on 10 February 1938 is described, was the result of the king's and this group's machinations. In this first stage of the narrative, which will change significantly after 1989, the allegation was that Carol and the capitalist interests, "which were

<sup>34</sup> Alexandru Gheorghe Savu, "Carol al II-lea și partidele burghezo-moșierești (1930-1937)," in *Studii. Revista de Istorie*, tomul 20, no. 2 (1967), 325-340.

<sup>35</sup> Aurel Vijeli, "Cercetări asupra capitalului financiar în țara noastră," București, 1949, 40-70 (approx.). No other identification details offered.

<sup>36</sup> V. Anescu, "Rolul monarhiei în jefuirea și exploatarea poporului român, în aservirea economică a țării față de puterile imperialiste" in *Arhivele Institutului de istorie a partidului de pe lângă C.C. al P.M.R.*, 1962, nr. 6. (pages not clear).

dominated by the Anglo-French and American imperialists,” led the king, from the beginning of his reign, to seek “the installation of an overt (*fățișă*) dictatorship.”<sup>37</sup> Savu, and others after him, claims that Carol always wanted to impose dictatorship and that February 1938 was only a culmination of previous failed attempts. Although using many interesting primary sources and memoirs/diaries of interwar politicians, Alexandru Savu’s analysis is simplistic, completely eluding other factors (internal or external) that might have led to the king’s personal regime.

The 1967 article, and the narrative built around it, lacks several themes that would be added later. For example, Elena Lupescu, Carol’s mistress for whom he renounced the throne in 1925 and who was of Jewish origin, is mentioned only twice, and in those occasions, she is presented as one of the members of the royal camarilla. The reasons for this avoidance of her alleged influence in the life of the country, aspect that appears in interwar documents, is not entirely clear. However, it shows that, in this first phase, the communist narrative was deliberately focused on Carol as the main culprit, with almost complete lack of interest in Elena Lupescu. In fact, in comparison to post-1989 historiography, Savu is paying no attention to Carol’s private life. Although presenting him, as later historians would do, as allegedly morally degenerate, a man driven by vices, Savu is not interested in dwelling on these scandalous aspects. Last, but not least, he is not mentioning at all Miron Cristea, the Romanian Orthodox patriarch. Alexandru Savu developed his ideas even more in his 1970 book about the royal dictatorship (see the next sections).<sup>38</sup>

In an article published in 1978, Ioan Scurtu borrowed many ideas from Savu.<sup>39</sup> As the latter, Scurtu builds his argument around the idea that Carol II had, even before his return to Romania in 1930, the intention to impose a personal dictatorship, and that after several failed attempts (he especially examines events in 1930, 1932, and 1934), the king finally succeeded in 1938.<sup>40</sup> He also emphasizes the role of the camarilla in these plans; he does it to such an extent that the king already becomes a rather secondary player. In one quotation, for example, he claims that the camarilla “was seeking to lead from the shadows the whole economic and socio-political life of Romania, to finish once and for all (*lichideze*) the constitutional-parliamentary regime

<sup>37</sup> Savu, “Carol al II-lea și partidele burghezo-moșierești,” 325, 326, 328.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandru Gh. Savu, *Dictatura regală (1938-1940)* (București: Editura Politică, 1970).

<sup>39</sup> Ioan Scurtu, “Acțiuni de opoziție ale unor partide și grupări politice burgheze față de tendințele dictatoriale ale regelui Carol al II-lea (Iunie 1930-Februarie 1938),” in *Revista de Istorie*, tom. 31, no. 3 (1978), 387-414.

<sup>40</sup> See for example the way in which Savu supports these ideas in Savu, *Dictatura regală*, 25.



and to install Carol II's dictatorship.<sup>41</sup> Apart from this, there are some other significant differences with Savu's article. For example, Scurtu starts to build the second stage of the narrative, where the role of Elena Lupescu is much more highlighted. Scurtu is bolder in accusing the king's mistress; even from the first mention, the author suggests that the camarilla took shape and started to function only when Elena Lupescu returned to Romania on 12 August 1930. While in Savu's article she was mentioned somewhere in the middle of a group of names, here she is at the top of the list, center stage.<sup>42</sup>

These tendencies to split responsibility, or even to entirely exonerate Carol II for decisions taken during his regime, will become even more obvious in post-communist historiographical writing. However, for this section it is worth mentioning the way in which Paul Quinlan deals with the topic in *The Playboy King: Carol II of Romania*. Quinlan's 1995 book is focused more than others, as the title itself suggests, on the scandalous aspects of the king's private life. He is discussing at large the role of the royal camarilla, or that of Elena Lupescu, who is presented in a blatantly misogynistic way. Nonetheless, Carol himself is described as such a morally corrupt individual, that ultimately, he alone should be blamed for his actions. In one of the first sentences of the book, the author gives vent to a simplistic viewpoint when he writes:

“It seems that he (i.e. Carol) is the only king in history to have renounced his throne twice for the women he loved! For years, his scandalous relationship with Elena Lupescu was the delight of the millions of tabloid readers across the Western world, fueling more and more the frustration and anger of millions of Romanians living in poverty and servitude, until Carol and his entourage were forced to flee in order to escape alive.”<sup>43</sup>

Quinlan takes over here communist historiography that saw the king and the peasants or the workers as living in an irreconcilable class fight, where the latter drove the former victoriously away through the emergence of communism. His view, especially of Elena Lupescu and the camarilla, is more complex and I will return to this aspect later.

Oliver Jens Schmitt in his 2016 book about Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of the Iron Guard, also focusses his attention on Carol II as the one at fault for the events leading to February 1938. Although his description of the Captain and of the Legion is often excellent, bringing forward many interesting and

<sup>41</sup> Scurtu, “Acțiuni de opoziție,” 391.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>43</sup> Paul D. Quinlan, *Regele Playboy. Carol al II-lea al României* (București: Humanitas, 2008), 5.



unknown details, there are parts where he takes over communist historiography without critique and without bringing forward new sources. For example, he claims that the king used the Iron Guard in his favor and that in February 1937 he proposed Codreanu to form the cabinet under several conditions that the head of the Legion did not accept.<sup>44</sup> The idea of such a meeting appears in Savu and Scurtu too, but they are building the entire argument on only one source: the unpublished (at the time) memoir of Zaharia Boilă, who was during the interwar period a member of the National Peasants Party, later a dissident. It is surprising that Schmitt takes over this argument without questioning the fact that 1) it was based on only one source and 2) the source/memoir was written during the communist period under unclear circumstances. Schmitt is not backing explicitly the idea that Carol wanted from the beginning of his reign to establish a dictatorship, but he strongly supports the argument that he “sought to instrumentalize the Legion in order to install a dictatorship.” His focus on the Legion leads him to miss some other important players, such as Miron Cristea, Stelian Popescu, or the Antirevisionist League. Cristea is mentioned only three times, rather conjecturally (more details later). There is no insight into his political role before or after February 1938. Stelian Popescu, the media mogul, owner of widely circulated daily newspaper *Universul*, head of the Antirevisionist League and one of the most influential personalities of the interwar period is mentioned only once, as a “journalist.”<sup>45</sup> The Antirevisionist League is not mentioned at all in the book.

### **A Shift in Emphasis:**

#### **The Focus on the Royal Camarilla and Elena Lupescu**

Already in the first articles and books published in the 1960s and 1970s, the narrative about the responsibility for events leading to February 1938 expanded to include the group around Carol II. Although the word camarilla was used during the interwar period, the communist historiography transformed it into an almost mythical group, bent on destroying Romania. While this mythology was utilized before 1989 to present Carol and the camarilla as the embodiment of everything that was bad with capitalism, post-communist historiography generally failed to deconstruct this narrative. There are two things that need to be mentioned here. First, in their analysis, most historians considered in this article forget to explain that any modern royal house operates, largely,

<sup>44</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea “Căpitanului”* (București: Humanitas, 2016; first edition, in German was published in 2016), 265.

<sup>45</sup> Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 262, 284.



using the same methods. Kings, queens, princes are brokers of power attracting economic, political, social players seeking to advance their interests. Second, most of the time the sources, which in most cases are diaries and memoirs of those involved in the events, are not critically assessed. As in various moments these people felt left out of the king's inner circle, it was natural that, most often out of envy, they wrote badly about this group and created an entire aura of conspiracy around it.

Savu, in his 1970 book, and Scurtu in the 1978 article (and in a university course published in 1980), already emphasized the role of the camarilla in the events leading to February 1938.<sup>46</sup> As noted above, this went hand in hand with increasing focus on Elena Lupescu. However, before 1989 her portrayal was rather balanced. For example, in 1970, Savu describes Lupescu as “the one that would influence so much in the next period his (i.e. the king's) life and actions [...] beautiful, ambitious, perverse, and a smart intriguer [...] she became the Messalina and Rasputin of Carol II, accompanying him as a shadow until the end of his life.”<sup>47</sup> Her Jewishness is completely concealed, although the fact that the name of her father was Wolf is mentioned.

In 2004 Ioan Scurtu published a book on Carol II, which largely maintains the ideas promoted during communism. For example, he uses again the argument of the king's continuous plan to establish a dictatorship, seeing February 1938 as the culmination of previous failed attempts. In a quest to adapt to new post-communist ideas, he is not anymore keen on naming that regime a dictatorship, although in essence the way he describes it is unchanged. This is most clearly visible when he declares: “in the night of 10/11 February a coup d'état took place, which in essence meant the change from a constitutional-parliamentary regime, based on political parties, to a regime of monarchic authority, in which the governing (*conducerea*) of the country was taken over by the King.”<sup>48</sup> Scurtu continues his communist approach blaming not only Carol, but the camarilla, and presenting political parties as victims. An entire chapter is dedicated to “The increasing role of the royal camarilla in political life,” with a first subtitle: “The occult forces and the changing of governments.”<sup>49</sup> The way in which he portrays Elena Lupescu, although not as scandalous as Quinlan, or Marcou (see below), is giving vent to the idea that

<sup>46</sup> Ioan Scurtu, Iulian Cârțână, *Curs de istoria contemporană a României. Dictatura Regală (1938-1940)* (București: Universitatea din București, 1980).

<sup>47</sup> Savu, *Dictatura regală*, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor în timpul celor patru regi (1866-1947)*, vol. 3, *Carol al II-lea* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 230-231.

<sup>49</sup> Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, 145.

Carol was dependent on or led by Lupescu. For example, referring to events before Carol's return to Romania in 1930, but casting this characterization on the entire period of his reign, he says that Elena was the head of the group working in favor of the king, controlling all of Carol II's correspondence, and being involved in all his political meetings.<sup>50</sup>

While communist historiography presented Carol II as corrupt, rapacious, evil, having no regard for the masses, destroying Romanian economy and political parties, it generally kept away from the scandalous aspects of his private life; these aspects came into focus after 1989. Paul Quinlan's *The Playboy King*, translated in Romanian in 2008, but published in English in 1995, was heavily focused on these details. He sometimes loses balance presenting the king in the worst light possible, often without quoting the sources in support of his statements. For example, in one instance the author claims that "one historian described him as 'the most corrupt royal of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe,'"<sup>51</sup> but there is no indication as to what historian said that. And this is only one example of poor referencing, with other cases of missing or incomplete sources throughout the book.<sup>52</sup> However, the most problematic aspect of Paul Quinlan's approach is his description of Elena Lupescu. When describing her physique, Quinlan says: "she had a curvy body, with pleasant forms, and when she was walking, she was swinging her hips provocatively, with an exaggerated movement." He describes her as a prostitute, although does not bring any evidence to support such claim, and then adds: "However, she was not a normal prostitute."<sup>53</sup> Quinlan takes interwar gossip about Elena Lupescu, which was fueled by misogyny and antisemitism, and presents it as the valid historical truth.

While Paul Quinlan is rather interested in the scandalous aspects of Carol II's private life, Lilly Marcou, a historian of Romanian origin who worked in France, wants to offer a more substantial analysis of his reign. In a quest to balance the communist narrative, she presents the king in a more positive light, and the title of her work is suggestive of this endeavor: *Carol II of Romania. The Betrayed King*.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, in order to shift the balance of responsibility

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Quinlan, *Regele Playboy*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> See for example page 102, where Quinlan quotes a letter of Queen Mary of Romania to King George V of Great Britain about Carol's affair with Elena Lupescu. The footnote offers the date of the letter, 5 January 1926, then it says "Hoover" (probably a collection), but nothing else about folder, page, etc.

<sup>53</sup> Quinlan, *Regele Playboy*, 100.

<sup>54</sup> Lilly Marcou, *Carol al II-lea al României. Regele trădat* (București: Corint Books, 2015). The first edition, in French (*Le Roi Trahi. Carol II de Roumanie*) was published in 2002 by Edition Pygmalion, Paris.



away from Carol II, she ends up demonizing Elena Lupescu. As Quinlan before, in describing Lupescu, Marcou either lets her fantasy run wild, or she reproduces interwar gossip without any critique: “She had red titian hair, green eyes full of life and skin as white as milk, which concealed her big mouth with meaty lips, horse teeth and elongated nose; her undulated walk and lofty posture were seducing men, and her curvy, not to say vulgar, womanliness was provocative.” Examining their relationship, the author finds hidden explanations behind Carol’s numerous (although there is no quantitative explanation of such claim) mentions of Lupescu in his diary. She concludes that such entries were a sign that their relationship was pathological, or that the king was mysteriously dependent on her. Carol is described as “the man in the hollow of a hysterical woman [...] the man foolishly in love with a more than common person, evidently haunted by caprices.” Although trying sometimes to balance the portrayal of Lupescu, towards the end of the book Marcou blames Carol’s political shortcomings entirely on his mistress: “This presence in the king’s life (i.e. Elena Lupescu) – invisible at the beginning, but becoming more and more burdensome – and the fact that their relationship was exacerbating the passions, led to Carol loosing many of the good intentions he had at the beginning of his reign.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite these rather problematic aspects, Lilly Marcou is one of the first historians to change the narrative and highlight positive aspects about Carol II. Another major achievement is the fact that, more than before, political parties are not presented as victims anymore. The author rightfully argues that they were to a large extent responsible for the events leading to February 1938, through their quarrels and continuous inability to find common ground, and that most politicians expected, advocated, and saluted the installation of the royal regime. She also questions the definition of the regime as a dictatorship. Others who wrote on Miron Cristea did that before, in a quest to excuse the patriarch’s participation as prime minister,<sup>56</sup> but she is one of the first more prominent historians to do so. She argues that Carol’s reign after February 1938 “had nothing to do with the dictatorships flourishing in Europe at the time. Some wanted to see it as a copy of totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy; the comparison was not exact.” She considers that Carol was rather a “democratic autocrat,” promoting personal style populism,

<sup>55</sup> Marcou, *Carol al II-lea al României*, 168, 219, 263.

<sup>56</sup> Ilie Șandru, Valentin Borda, *Un nume pentru istorie - Patriarhul Miron Cristea* (Târgu-Mureș: Petru Maior, 1998), 180. The authors argue that Carol’s post 10 February regime was not a dictatorship, “as it was defined by the historians of the communist regime, but ‘a monarchic authoritarian regime’ as it was described by the well-known politician Armand Călinescu.”

attached to Western values, “impermeable to extremist nationalism, ambient xenophobia and intolerance.”<sup>57</sup>

### **The Role of Miron Cristea: from Deliberate Forgetting to Careless Historical Writing**

In the article published in 1967, Alexandru Savu completely ignores Miron Cristea. However, in his 1970 book, looking at events from 1938 to 1940, he brings up the patriarch several times. While some of these mentions are only tangential, in a few cases he refers to him in a more meaningful way. Moreover, he explains some of the reasons that might have led Carol II to choose Cristea as premier. The first reason mentioned has been at the basis of “Miron Cristea, the puppet” historiography until today. Savu argues that “the nomination of the patriarch in this high political office was not accidental; it expressed, first, the king’s determination to lead unhindered and personally the activity of the cabinet.”<sup>58</sup> He, and others after him, failed to analyze whether Cristea was as decorative as they claimed. Later in the book, the author quotes the famous diatribe of the patriarch against democracy, uttered on 27 February 1938 during a speech celebrating the new constitution, where he compared parliamentary democracy based on political parties with a hydra with 29 heads.<sup>59</sup> This episode alone, showing Cristea’s outspoken support for political authoritarianism, should have been an indication that the patriarch was not a puppet after all. Savu touches upon other reasons that might have led Carol II to nominate Cristea, amongst them his links to extremist movements, through his nomination the king wanting to quash the dissenting voices of Iron Guard sympathizers, or the king’s desire to co-opt the Church and the clergy to his personal regime. The author also emphasizes that the patriarch’s nomination avoided quarrels between personalities of different political parties, if one of them had been chosen instead.

In Ioan Scurtu’s 1978 article, Miron Cristea is not mentioned at all. In his 1980 history course for the University of Bucharest his name appears only once, tangentially, as the person called to be prime minister in February 1938.<sup>60</sup> There is no explanation as to why Carol II chose him, or on his activity as premier. The fact that in late 1970s Miron Cristea was completely forgotten is not accidental. 1978, when Scurtu published his first article on Carol II, was

<sup>57</sup> Marcou, *Carol al II-lea al României*, 312.

<sup>58</sup> Savu, *Dictatura regală*, 151-152.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>60</sup> Scurtu, Cârțână, *Curs de istoria contemporană a României*, 10.



also the year when Aurel Karetski and Maria Covaci published the work on the Iași pogrom, minimizing the number of victims and denying any Romanian involvement in the Holocaust.<sup>61</sup> In an era when the Church was heavily used to legitimize this new type of national communism, investigation into Miron Cristea's role was deliberately avoided. Moreover, towards the end of the 1980s, the first book directly focused on the former patriarch's life and activity, written by a Church personality with the backing of the regime, minimized his role as prime minister, focusing instead on his ecclesiastical activity.<sup>62</sup> The national communism of the late Ceausescu era revised considerably interwar history, culminating in rehabilitation of controversial, anti-Semitic personalities, Antonie Plămădeală's book being a clear example of that process.

As with the historiography regarding Carol II, post-1989 historical writing about the former Orthodox patriarch followed for a long time the pattern conceived during communism. General writing about Carol's regime portrayed Cristea as an insignificant figure; more particular writing examining the patriarch's life, focused on his ecclesiastical activity and minimized his role as prime minister. When discussing the Regency (1927-1930), Paul Quinlan notes briefly that Miron Cristea "was adding prestige to the Regency," but was ultimately inefficient and interested only in making money.<sup>63</sup> In his analysis of what he calls "the royal dictatorship," there is no mention of the leader of the Orthodox Church, not even as a puppet. Instead, following the communist pattern, he examines in detail the personality and activity of Armand Călinescu, the minister of the interior, as if from February 1938 he was the head of the government, not the patriarch.<sup>64</sup> The same pattern, with focus on Călinescu and complete ignorance of Cristea appears in Oliver Jens Schmitt. He mentions the patriarch in only three instances. The first one is just noting that he was one of the members of the Regency. The second is about the nomination as prime minister, Schmitt considering, as noted above, that "Cristea was the man of straws the king and the minister of the interior had looked for." There is no serious analysis of his political activity before or after his nomination, not even his relationship with the Legion. The last mention is again very brief, the author arguing that, when the death penalty law was adopted in May 1938,

<sup>61</sup> Aurel Karețki and Maria Covaci, *Zile însingerate la Iași: 28–30 iunie 1941 [Bloody Days in Iași: 28-30 June 1941]* (București: Editura Politică, 1978).

<sup>62</sup> Antonie Plămădeală, *Contribuții istorice privind perioada 1918-1939. Elie Miron Cristea: documente, însemnări și corespondențe* (Sibiu: Tipografia Eparhială, 1987).

<sup>63</sup> Quinlan, *Regele Playboy*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 257-263.

the patriarch/prime minister chose masterfully to be away from the country.<sup>65</sup> As Quinlan, Lilly Marcou completely fails to mention that Miron Cristea was prime minister from 11 February 1938 to 6 March 1939. Instead, she focuses on Armand Călinescu, as the true leader of the cabinet. This is visible in other writings that were not included in this analysis. Ilarion Țiu, for example, in his book on the fate of the Iron Guard after the murder of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in November 1938, mentions the patriarch only twice, once as the person called to head the government in February 1938, and again to announce his death and the nomination of Călinescu as prime minister. There is no examination of Cristea's role, activity, or relation with the Legion.<sup>66</sup>

The myth of "Călinescu the strong man/Cristea the puppet," probably originated in Ioan Scurtu's writings. In his 2004 book, Scurtu declared that "The main collaborator of Carol II was Armand Călinescu, a true 'wire puller' (*eminență cenușie*) of the regime and the most active and energetic member of the cabinet. Patriarch Miron Cristea, old and sick, was rather decorative. After Miron Cristea's death, Armand Călinescu was nominated to lead the cabinet on 6 March 1939."<sup>67</sup> Scurtu fails to mention that until January 1939 the patriarch's health did not impede in his active participation in most matters of governance. As I showed in my article for *Yad Vashem Studies*, Cristea gave at the end of 1938-beginning of 1939, as head of the cabinet, several virulently antisemitic speeches, including some proposing incipient Romanianization policies.<sup>68</sup> Although in the rest of the book Scurtu is looking at Miron Cristea more than any historian mentioned in this article, including a quotation of the famous speech where he compared party politics with a hydra with 29 heads, the general emphasis is on the conclusion noted above.<sup>69</sup> He downplays the patriarch's role and is completely uninterested in his political and ecclesiastical activity. By saying that Cristea was only decorative, Scurtu and other historians who took over this narrative, mask the lack of proper research into the actions of the leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church before and after he was nominated as prime minister.

The situation is even more interesting in books entirely dedicated to Miron Cristea. Published in 1998 under the blessing of the Harghita and Covasna Orthodox Archbishopric *Un nume pentru istorie - Patriarhul Miron Cristea* (A Name for Posterity – Patriarch Miron Cristea), by Ilie Șandru and Valentin

<sup>65</sup> Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 98, 288, 302.

<sup>66</sup> Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu*, vol. 1, 29 and 141.

<sup>67</sup> Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, 262.

<sup>68</sup> Popa, "Miron Cristea, The Romanian Orthodox Patriarch," 11-34.

<sup>69</sup> Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, 239.



Borda, is, as the title suggests, a biased account of his life. The book is often propagandistic and deals mostly with events prior to 1927. It presents Carol II as rather a victim of Elena Lupescu and of the camarilla. The authors express often anti-Semitic views, although they try, sometimes childishly, to avoid direct mention of Jews. For example, they avoid clarifying that Lupescu was Jewish, but in almost all cases they spell her name “Elena Lupescu (Wolf),” or “Elena Wolf (Lupescu)” making sure that her father’s former Jewish name is noted. As Scurtu and others, they fail to examine Miron Cristea’s activity from June 1930 to February 1938. While the authors downplay the patriarch’s activity as prime minister, claiming that he had a rather neutral role, sometimes they are bolder in defending some of his policies. For example, Cristea’s program against foreigners (most people during the interwar equated foreigners with Jews) is defended in the book on the ground that the fight between political parties created “disorder in all the spheres of society, an anti-Romanian game of the aliens, and an inflation of strange foreigners (*venetici străini*), who, in the name of European liberalism, immediately after the first war, hurried to enter Romania and to assume the role of ticks (*căpușe*), rubbing elbows with the older non-Romanians, first and foremost the Greeks and the Jews.”<sup>70</sup> The authors also provide a brief analysis of the reasons why Carol might have chosen Cristea as premier, noting the close personal relations between the patriarch and the royal house, his friendship with political personalities of that era, and the fact that he was the leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church. However, they do not elaborate on these elements.

Despite its limitations, the book of Ilie Șandru and Valentin Borda is still relevant in at least one specific aspect: it, more than other works, presents the close personal relations between Cristea and Carol II and the moral ascendancy the patriarch had over the king. Carol saw Cristea as an authoritative, fatherly, figure, whose opinion mattered not only politically, but personally. For example, in January 1926, a few weeks after he renounced the throne for Elena Lupescu, Carol wrote to Miron Cristea who replied, in an exchange of letters which was rather intimate. In one instance, Carol told Averescu that he cared very much for the patriarch, and the patriarch noted this with gladness in his diary (*ține la mine*). The authors quote Patriarch Cristea who believed that “Carol is not bad. If he will normalize the relations with his wife and choose sensible, wise, and experienced advisers and not jaded, bohemian, starry-eyed suitors, etc. etc., he can become a good king...” The crux of their argument, which is meant also to exonerate the leader of the Church, is that Carol’s regime was not a dictatorship,

<sup>70</sup> Șandru, Borda, *Un nume pentru istorie*, 173.



“but a regime of monarchic authority,” and that “the Patriarch, on the other hand, surely was sickened of interminable quarrels and disputes for power of political parties, which brought Romanian economy to collapse.”<sup>71</sup> Hence, Carol’s move to end parliamentary democracy is seen as necessary and justified.

Cristian Vasile Petcu, in his 2009 book *Guvernarea Miron Cristea* (The Miron Cristea Government), follows to a large extent the patterns set out previously, often repeating ideas of other historians and basing his arguments exclusively on secondary sources or on memoirs and/or diaries.<sup>72</sup> The forward of the book is written by Ioan Scurtu. The author dedicates ample space to political developments before February 1938 (100 pages), and to events in Miron Cristea’s life unrelated to his role as prime minister (approx. 125 pages). Although the book was a result of a PhD, the writing often lacks academic rigor. In one instance, the author considers that “Patriarch Elie Miron Cristea is in that select group of enlightened Church men who are not given by God to many peoples.” In another place he argues that Cristea was “a personality of high and strong theological and general culture, who knew always, with dignity, to fulfil his high and hard tasks bestowed on him, driven by strong will to put into practice what he knew was truly useful for the Holy Orthodox Church, for his people and his country. Patriarch Miron Cristea must be a ‘model and an example’ (*pildă*) worthy to be known and followed.”<sup>73</sup>

The most astonishing aspect of the book is the fact that the Miron Cristea cabinets are very superficially examined. The author downplays even more the patriarch’s role as premier and avoids any serious analysis of some of the controversial policies passed or implemented during his tenure. For example, Cristian Petcu claims that the revision of citizenship law, aimed at Jews and passed on 22 January 1938, was annulled once the Goga-Cuza government was replaced in February 1938, aspect which is historically inaccurate. As many historians have already explained, during the Cristea premiership approximately 225,000 Jews lost their Romanian citizenship.<sup>74</sup> The book lacks any detail on what the patriarch did, politically, in the years preceding his nomination, and is even scarcer than Savu, Șandru/Borda, and others in examining the reasons why Carol II chose him. The decision to hide some of

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 165, 178-181.

<sup>72</sup> Cristian Vasile Petcu, *Guvernarea Miron Cristea* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2009). There is no evidence that the author consulted any archival material, including the 50 volumes of documents in the Cristea collection, found at the Romanian National Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Petcu, *Guvernarea Miron Cristea*, 102, 103.

<sup>74</sup> Carol Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie (1919-1938): de l’émancipation à la marginalisation* (Paris and Leuven, 1996), 312.



the most controversial aspects of Cristea's life and activity is evident; although quoting the 27 February speech against democracy, the author fails to examine it in any way. Following Scurtu's model, Cristian Petcu focuses more on Armand Călinescu and claims that "As a man of balance in the state (*om de echilibru în stat*), the Patriarch would have been in discordance if he refused to be part in a government of national unity in which all political forces, even the Church, were called to participate." Quoting the book of Antonie Plămădeală, he concludes by saying: "Let us notice, at the same time, that he (i.e. the patriarch) was called only in moments of political crisis, as a neutral, as a technician of reconciliation, to pacify the nation disturbed (*tulburată*) by the politicians, by the vices of princes and the embroilments of kings ..."<sup>75</sup>

In his 2009 book *Patriarhul Miron Cristea. O viață, un destin* (Patriarch Miron Cristea. A Life, A Destiny), Constantin Stan downplays the political role of Miron Cristea too. The book is much better written academically, using many primary sources from both religious and public archives. In comparison to other historians, Stan also pays attention to the period 1930-1937. He is describing, often without critique, some of the patriarch's activities during this period, including efforts to build Orthodox churches in regions of Transylvania inhabited by the Szekelys, who were in majority Catholic or Protestant. He also mentions briefly Cristea's ecumenical activity, including relations with the Anglican Church, but there is no analysis as to how they increased his political role. The patriarch's political links are also missed when the author mentions, without examination, the 1934 inauguration of the church in the Stelian Popescu locality (which got the name after the name of the owner of *Universul*). The activity of the Antirevisionist League is also alluded to a few times, but without critical analysis. When discussing the period of his premiership, Stan provides details of Cristea's participation in government, including his role in antisemitic legislation. However, the overall conclusion is similar to those mentioned previously: "The new prime minister had rather a decorative role; the real chief of the cabinet was Armand Călinescu, who was the minister of the interior." Later, as he was bringing more evidence of the patriarch's cabinet activity, the author felt the need to downplay his political role yet again: "Miron Cristea subscribed to this political program, and fully and solemnly engaged in making it a reality as prime minister. Still, his role was not decisional, but rather decorative."<sup>76</sup> The patriarch's antisemitism is mentioned a few times, but

<sup>75</sup> Petcu, *Guvernarea Miron Cristea*, 265-266, 268.

<sup>76</sup> Constantin Stan, *Patriarhul Miron Cristea. O viață, un destin* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2009), 370 and 375.

in other occasions there is a deliberate decision to avoid it. For example, the author refers to Cristea's 1939 New Year speech; while analysing some of the economic or social policies proposed, the patriarch's many hateful references to Jews are overlooked.

Last, but not least, the 2011 book of Lucian Dindiriță, *Miron Cristea. Patriarh, Regent și Prim Ministru* (Miron Cristea. Patriarch, Regent, and Prime Minister), is more neutral, avoiding a clear conclusion as to the significance of Cristea's political role. The Foreword to the book is written by Gheorghe Buzatu, a controversial nationalist historian. Dindiriță's analysis of the premiership is short; out of 403 pages, the critical last year in the patriarch's life is examined in the last chapter, which is only 30 pages long. The period 1930-1937 is alluded to only a few times in other chapters, often focusing on aspects similar to those described by Constantin Stan; however, the latter's analysis of that period is more detailed. When discussing the reasons why Cristea was chosen as prime minister, the author says: "Considering the patriarch's popularity and his experience gained as a Regent, at which we should add some affinities between Cristea's and Carol II's vision regarding incapacity of political parties to manage the country's affairs, the high hierarch was called to lead the country's destiny."<sup>77</sup> Although alluding here to the patriarch's anti-democratic ideology, this is not further examined. The author discusses in detail the various configurations of the cabinets led by Cristea in 1938-1939, the real-time opinions on the patriarch's nomination, or his role in the new authoritarian 27 February 1938 constitution. He briefly mentions that Cristea subscribed to the cabinet's program, which was overtly nationalistic, or that he wrote to the Orthodox Church membership to support his political role, but these are again not carefully analysed. On the 27 February speech, where the patriarch compared parliamentary democracy with a hydra with 29 heads, the author explains: "Interpreted by some contemporaries as proof of the prime minister's servility, in fact, if we consider the patriarch's view of Romanian political life, that discourse was nothing else than a political credo that the new regime will establish an atmosphere of stability and harmony, bringing about material and spiritual gains."<sup>78</sup> In the chapter, Jews are mentioned only once; the patriarch's antisemitism and his role in anti-Jewish policies is almost completely avoided. As Stan, Dindiriță

<sup>77</sup> Lucian Dindiriță, *Miron Cristea. Patriarh, Regent și Prim Ministru* (Iași; Typo Moldova, 2011), 314-315.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.



mentions the 1939 New Year speech, but entirely fails to pay attention to the heavy antisemitic tone and the antisemitic policies promoted in that address. The author is not spelling out a clear conclusion about the alleged decorative political role of the patriarch; from this point of view, his analysis is more balanced than others. However, his examination of Cristea's premiership is brief and entirely avoids many controversial aspects.

### Conclusion

If it could be grossly summarized, the communist historiography about Carol II and his regime was built on a narrative comprising of several layers: 1) it demonized the king and argued that he always wanted a personal dictatorship; 2) it displayed growing emphasis on a mythical camarilla, seen, alongside Carol, as the anti-thesis of communist values; 3) it presented political parties as victims of the king and his camarilla; 4) it defined the regime installed on 11 February 1938 as a dictatorship; 5) it had very little interest in Elena Lupescu, or in the scandalous aspects of the king's private life; 6) it mentioned Miron Cristea, but as a decorative figure, or as a puppet.

Post-communist writing on Carol II was trapped in this paradigm where the emphasis has been on the political players set out in the 1970s, as if historical writing was caught in a cauldron, with little tentative to escape. Even when the need for balance was felt, it was rather inside the same paradigm, shifting the blame from one actor to another, but unable to find new players, to focus on other institutions. And the clearest example of this inability is the way in which the political role of Miron Cristea was largely forgotten. This is also visible in the case of other influential interwar personalities, such as Stelian Popescu, or organizations, such as the Antirevisionist League. The League and Stelian Popescu are only mentioned occasionally, and even then, most authors miss their social and political role.

The king, the camarilla, Elena Lupescu, all had their contribution to the events leading to the February 1938 change of regime. However, far from being a puppet, Miron Cristea and the group surrounding him were some of the masterminds of the movement that led to Carol II's dismantling of Romanian democratic system. The patriarch's nomination as prime minister was not accidental. During his premiership the leader of the Orthodox Church was the most outspoken promoter of anti-Semitic, anti-immigration, Romanianization and other exclusionary policies, in many of his speeches, articles and interviews defending the government's stand against Jews and other minorities. The patriarch took often center stage at public events where he explained and legitimated

his cabinet's policies.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the Antirevisionist League, with Miron Cristea as honorary president, included in its ranks many politicians that would be part of various Romanian governments from December 1937 to August 1944, amongst them Octavian Goga, A.C. Cuza, Ioan Lupaș, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Alexandru Lapedatu, and Pimen (the Orthodox metropolitan of Moldova, who would be the minister of education in the first Cristea cabinet).<sup>80</sup> All these aspects raise the question, which should be hopefully better explored by future historiography, of how influential this group was in preparing the ground for Carol II and Ion Antonescu regimes, and in the creation and implementation of anti-Semitic policies that would lead to the Holocaust in Romania.

### Rezumat:

Miron Cristea a fost unul dintre cei mai importanți și influenți actori politici ai perioadei interbelice. A devenit primul patriarh al Bisericii Ortodoxe (1925), membru al Regenței (1927-1930) și prim-ministru al României din Februarie 1938 până la decesul survenit pe 6 martie 1939. Cea mai mare parte a istoriografiei dedicată acestei epoci trece cu vederea puterea și influența sa politică, concentrându-se mai mult pe Garda de Fier și pe câteva figuri politice precum Regele Carol II, Armand Călinescu, Corneliu Codreanu sau Iuliu Maniu. Acest articol urmărește sursele acestei minimizări, evidențiind un proces care a început în anii 1970. Articolul deconstruiește diferite straturi ale scrisului istoric și examinează motivațiile comuniste și post-comuniste din spatele concentrării pe anumite figuri istorice (precum regele, amanta sa – Elena Lupescu, sau camarila regală) și uitarea deliberată a altora, inclusiv Miron Cristea. După perioada comunistă, istoriografia despre Carol II și dictatura regală a suferit mici modificări, unele dintre ele analizate aici, însă cea despre Miron Cristea a rămas, din diferite motive, în mare parte neschimbată.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** istoriografie comunistă/post-comunistă, Biserica Ortodoxă, politica interbelică, regimul regal.

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<sup>79</sup> Popa, "Miron Cristea, The Romanian Orthodox Patriarch," pp. 11-34; Ion Popa, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 23-24 and 31-33.

<sup>80</sup> Lazăr, *Mișcarea Antirevizionistă din Transilvania*, 253 and 256.

# Tradition, Nationalism and Holocaust Memory: Reassessing Antisemitism in Post-Communist Romania

Valeria CHELARU

## *Abstract*

This article is a re-evaluation of the Holocaust memory in the contemporary Romanian society. It shows that from its inception, Romania's nation-building process went hand in hand with antisemitism. Furthermore, it points out that after 1989 the country's sense of frustration at its communist past managed to obscure the memory of the Holocaust. Despite Romania's government recognition of the country's involvement in the Holocaust (2004), a wholehearted acknowledgement of the issue remains improbable at the general level of Romania's society. A new law to counteract Holocaust denial was adopted in Romania in 2015. However, the country has proved ever since that it has barely come to terms with its historical legacy.\*

**Keywords:** Romanian Holocaust, post-communism, Transnistria, nationalism, antisemitism.

*“When I wrote “Babii Yar”<sup>1</sup> they attacked me for supposedly anti-patriotism, [for the fact] that I did not like the Russian people and concentrated on people of Jewish nationality. You know, despite the nationalities that divide us, we all are, after all, human beings! All religions are based on human brotherhood.”*

Yevgeny Yevtushenko<sup>2</sup>

The end of 2021 marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Odessa (22-25 October 1941) and Bogdanovka (21 December 1941) massacres in Transnistria, among many others. A territory occupied and ruled by Romania (1941-1944) during the Second World War, Transnistria was the scene of horrific and inhumane crimes perpetrated during Ion Antonescu's regime in the region. As an ally of Nazi Germany in the war, Romania's antisemitism<sup>3</sup> can be easily explained.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.culture.ru/poems/26226/babii-yar>

<sup>2</sup> Yevgeny Yevtushenko, “V sem'e u menia ne vodilos' oskorbleniia drugikh natsii,” <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-37483445>, accessed February 26, 2022 (author's translation).

<sup>3</sup> By “antisemitism” we understand the “hatred of Jews as a people or of ‘the Jew’ as a concept.”

However, Romanian antisemitism has more complex roots and old history. This irrefutable fact still constitutes a thorny issue within Romania's society and a heated debate even among its educated elites. The reality is both reflected in the public discourse and in the various forms of Romanian Holocaust denial.

The fall of Romania's communist regime took place more than three decades ago. Ever since, the country seems to have embarked on a process of modernization and Europeanization. However, in a hasty attempt to become more "European," Romania's society has drawn a veil over its traumatic past and this legacy makes the country lag behind. Regardless of the two extreme forms of government which the country experienced in the twentieth century, – the extreme-right (fascist<sup>4</sup>) and the communist regimes – the memory of communism prevails as Romania's greatest wound of the last century. Moreover, the memory of Romania's other dark chapter, the extreme-right wing

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According to yadvashem.org, "the term 'antisemitism' was first coined in the late 1870s, subsequently it is used with reference to all types of Jew-hatred – both historical and contemporary. The word himself comes from the idea that Hebrew belongs to the Semitic language family, and thus Jews must be 'Semites.' Many other languages also belong to the Semitic language family, such as Arabic and Amharic, and therefore other cultures could be called 'Semites.' However, there is no such thing as 'Semitism' and no other groups have ever been included in the hatred and prejudice denoted by antisemitism. The word itself is a good example of how, during the late nineteenth century, Jew-haters pretended that their hatred had its basis in scholarly and scientific ideas."

<sup>4</sup> When asserting that Romania had a far-right (fascist) regime, despite the existing debate among various scholars, I rely on R.J. Crampton's analysis of the issue. As Crampton noticed, the difficulty of defining fascism derives from the fact that it lacks a clear-cut ideology, unlike Marxism-Leninism. Accordingly, fascism is much more a phenomenon of action, rather than one of ideas. See: Crampton, *Europa Răsăriteană în secolul al XX-lea...și după* (București: Curtea Veche, 2002), 184; David Renton's theory on fascism concurs with that of Crampton: "fascism should not be understood primarily as an ideology, but as a specific form of a reactionary mass movement," see: Roger Griffin apud David Renton, "The Primacy of Culture," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, no. 1 (2002): 21-43, 6. The term "fascism" derives from Constantin Iordachi and Traian Sandu's approaches in regard to Romania's "legionarism." While Iordachi, who employs Max Weber's theory on charismatic authority, points out that "the Legion exhibited the archetypal genesis, message, structure and political trajectory of a charismatic movement" (Constantin Iordachi, "Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in Inter-war Romania," *Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies*, no. 15 (2004), 159). Traian Sandu extends these characteristics to a "global phenomenon." Accordingly, Sandu stresses that the legionary movement used to spark euphoria and enthusiasm among Romania's youth in regard to "the accepted leader;" in the wake of the First World War's distress, this type of leader "seemed to have possessed the new truth on nation, which he had promised to profoundly reshape in the name of this national revelation," Traian Sandu, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier. Un fascism românesc* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2019).



regime (1938-1944)<sup>5</sup> is not only reluctantly tackled, – including the history of Romania’s Holocaust – but also obscured by the anti-communist discourse. This is due to the fact that post-communist Romania’s society has employed memory in the most suitable way to reconfigure its present. However, to extrapolate the Russian novelist Lyudmila Ulitskaya’s remark on the gospel, history “is not an icon to kiss, but to study.”<sup>6</sup>

This article is focused neither on Romania’s competing communism-Holocaust narrative, nor on the exhaustive history of country’s two totalitarian chapters.<sup>7</sup> References to Romania’s totalitarian past will be used only to demonstrate how the legacy of history resurfaces in post-communist Romania; such references prove that a country’s relationship with its past is a harbinger of society’s maturation or the opposite. It provides a striking confirmation of Tzvetan Todorov’s proposition that the representation of the past is not only individual identity’s constitutive element; it is a core element of collective identity.<sup>8</sup> To extend the argument even further, I will use one of Ulitskaya’s most heuristic reflections: “Our future depends on the extent to which the lessons of the past are learned, its mistakes are understood, the ways to achieve

<sup>5</sup> In December 1937 Romania held its last general elections before King Carol II dismissed the parliament and then installed dictatorship in February 1938. As Keith Hitchins noted, the elections in 1937 represented a strong competition between democracy and authoritarianism, Keith Hitchins, *România 1866-1947*, trans. George G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu (București: Humanitas, 2017), 454. The results of the elections produced a terrible blow to Romania’s fragile democracy: it was for the first time in the history of Romania’s parliamentarism when a government lost the elections. Moreover, the extreme-rightists registered significant gains. While the Iron Guard (via its party “Totul pentru Țară”) got 15.58 percent of the votes and 66 seats in the parliament, Goga’s nationalistic and antisemite newly-founded party, obtained 9, 2 percent of the votes and 39 seats. It would not be an exaggeration to state that Romania’s political extremism, officially started with Goga-Cuza government (29 December 1937-10 February 1938), formed on King Carol’s request. While in office, Goga opened the path for Carol’s dictatorship and legalized anti-Semitism. By revising the laws on citizenship, Goga denaturalized a third of Romania’s Jewish minority. On 10 February 1938, King Carol dissolved Goga’s government and replaced it with a “consultative” one led by the patriarch Miron Cristea. Ion Antonescu was included as minister of National Defense.

<sup>6</sup> Ludmila Ulițkaia, *Daniel Stein, traducător*, trans. Gabriela Russo (București: Humanitas, 2011), 214.

<sup>7</sup> To avoid an irrelevant to this article debate in regard to “totalitarian” versus “authoritarian” regime, I need to point out that the term “totalitarian” employed in this context is a rather generic notion. The best approach in the case is Tzvetan Todorov’s perspective on totalitarianism as synonym for “monism.” Briefly, “a totalitarian state is the exact opposite of a democratic state,” Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory, Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (London: Atlantic Books LTD, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Abuzurile memoriei*, trans. Doina Lică (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1999), 52.



the common goal – the peaceful and meaningful existence of mankind are comprehended.”<sup>9</sup>

In this article I dwell on Romania’s antisemitism in light of country’s departure from communism while trying to embrace more European values. The article’s main undertaking is to point out that Romania has not yet come to terms with its past experiences since society has not undergone the process of acknowledging its history. In an attempt to demonstrate that approaches to antisemitism, – as to other official discourses with social high impact – are molded by the state’s official narratives, the history of Romania’s antisemitism will be scrutinized in light of the Romanian state’s policies towards its Jewish subjects. The nation’s “ideal” – to become a single Romanian people by gathering all historical provinces – developed along with systematic Jews’ discrimination; this issue will be analyzed in the article’s first part. The legalization of antisemitism after the First World War, when Romania united its historical provinces, will be further analyzed in the article’s second section. In the last two parts, I dwell on the Holocaust memory against the backdrop of Romania’s post-communist society and I show how anticommunism and antisemitism have jointly evolved in present-day Romania.

### **Nationalism and Antisemitism in Romania’s Pre-WWI Society**

Isaiah Berlin pointed out that nationalism is an inflamed condition of the national consciousness. However, it may take sometimes a tolerant and peaceful form.<sup>10</sup> In backward societies, exploited or dominated by more powerful nations, it is highly likely for nationalism to appear more “resentful.” Faced with an inferiority complex, these nations tend to invoke the glorious – real or imaginary – past or to hope for one if such past does not exist.<sup>11</sup> The Romanians’ national idea contained the force of a national myth which derived from country’s alert to its neighboring great powers – Turkey, Austria and Russia. That is why the national unity and sovereignty became Romania’s *claim* and *ideal*, as Leon Volovici noted.<sup>12</sup> In moments of their partial achievements – such as the union of Moldova and Wallachia in 1859, or Romania’s independence from the Porte in 1877 – country’s sovereignty and national unity were threatened

<sup>9</sup> Liudmila Ulitskaya, *Chelovek v istorii* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo AST), 2018, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Lemnul strâmb al omenirii, capitole din istoria ideilor*, trans. Andrei Costea (București: Humanitas, 2021), 308.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 309.

<sup>12</sup> Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și «problema evreiască» în România anilor’30*, (București: Humanitas, 1995), 23.



by external intervention. The Romanian people's xenophobia and distrust of external and domestic foreigners stemmed from this reality.<sup>13</sup> It was Romania's unfledged nation that explained the country's dramatic struggle with its ethnic minorities, had remarked Emil Cioran. He had assumed that local xenophobia was a consequence of historical inequality between ethnic Romanians and the minorities groups. Had Romania been a pre-eminent nation, it would have integrated its ethnic groups naturally.<sup>14</sup>

Needless to say, in the nineteenth-century nationalism was a dominant movement. Its occurrence on the present-day Romanian territories marked a new phase in the evolution of Romanian juridical antisemitism. While modern antisemitism,<sup>15</sup> along with nationalism, was a widespread phenomenon in other countries of central and eastern Europe, Romanian antisemitism evolved hand in hand with legal discrimination that precluded the Jews from participating in public life.<sup>16</sup> Although antisemitism is commonly seen as a reaction to Jewish emancipation, Raul Cârstocea points out that in Romania, antisemitism developed as a consequence of the failed emancipation in conjunction with the official discrimination of the Romanian Jews.<sup>17</sup>

The Treaty of Adrianople (1829), which concluded the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-9, allowed Russia to occupy the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia. A large number of Ashkenazi Jews fleeing Galicia and the Russian Empire settled in the two Romanian provinces when foreign trade in the region flourished due to a relative degree of independence from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>18</sup> In 1859 the Jews in both principalities accounted for 135,000 people compared to approximately 22,000 prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> However,

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 23-24.

<sup>14</sup> Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească*, (București: Cartea Românească, 2015), 108-109.

<sup>15</sup> References to "modern antisemitism" in this article are borrowed from Raul Cârstocea, who dissociates between religiously-inspired anti-Judaism of the Middle Ages and the modern antisemitism typical of the second part of the nineteenth century. As opposed to old antisemitism, its modern version manifested itself as a distinct secular, political and ideological phenomenon.

<sup>16</sup> Raul Cârstocea, "Path to the Holocaust. Fascism and Antisemitism in Interwar Romania," *S:I.M.O.N – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation*, no.1 (2014): 43-53, 44-5.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, "Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical legacies, Contemporary Challenges," *ECMI Working Paper 81*, 2014, 5.

<sup>18</sup> One of the Treaty's most important clauses was the abolition of the Turkish monopoly on the Romanian principalities' trade. The liberalization of the trade in the region connected the two Romanian countries, via the Danube and the Black Sea, with the rest of the European countries.

<sup>19</sup> Raul Cârstocea, "Uneasy Twins? The Entangled Histories of Jewish Emancipation and Anti-Semitism in Romania and Hungary, 1866-1913," *Slovo*, no. 2 (2009): 64-85, 66.

discriminatory regulations against the Jews were introduced in the Organic Statutes (also the Organic Regulations), legislation imposed by the Russian governor, General Pavel Kisselyov. The most important aspect of the document was that it underlined the foreign definition of the Jews. Seen as vagabonds, economic profiteers and exploiters, the Jews were susceptible to distrust and expulsion. This “official” prototype of the “Jewish nation” as hindrance to Romanian national progress would become an integral part of Romania society’s discourse. As scholars have shown, the anti-Jewish measures of Russian origin would be of paramount importance in the following antisemitic discourse and legal developments.<sup>20</sup> Timothy Snyder demonstrated in a similar context a century later that minorities are the most vulnerable subjects of the state. They are the ones who need the most state protection and law supremacy, as they are the first to suffer in case of anarchy and war.<sup>21</sup> The disenfranchisement and the marginalization of the Jews in Romania tarred them in the eyes of their fellow Romanian citizens.

Requests for the Jews’ emancipation existed though in the Romanian principalities. Such was the case in 1848 during the revolutions in Moldova and Wallachia.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, attempts to gradual emancipation were suggested in December 1863 and January 1865 by prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the ruler of Moldova and Wallachia. However, the number of antisemitic laws and regulations increased until antisemitism reached a state character.<sup>23</sup> With the establishment of the Romanian dynastic house in 1866, new discriminatory laws against the Jews were systematized. Since King Carol refused to emancipate the Jews, the latter became vulnerable economically and politically. The protection of the “national labor force” was made to the detriment of the Jewish ethnic group. Moreover, Romania’s first Constitution adopted in 1866, specified that the Jews continued to be legally identified as “foreigners.” According to Article 7, Romanian citizens could become only the ethnic groups which practiced Christian Orthodoxy. An anti-Jewish campaign was put in practice in the spring of 1867 when Jews from the countryside, but not only, were subject to banishment and even to arbitrary expulsion from the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage Publishing, 2011), 127.

<sup>22</sup> The Revolutions of 1848 were inspired by the French Revolution which took place in February 1848. The process was liberal and democratic in nature and aimed at removing the old monarchical structures and creating new nation-states. In the Romanian principalities, these revolutions promoted the Romanian nation and the revival of the national consciousness.

<sup>23</sup> Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România* (București: Hasefer, 2006), 22.



country. Such an operation was launched by Ion Brătianu, Romania's Minister of Internal Affairs and a former revolutionary of 1848.<sup>24</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to state that Romania's concessions to its Jewish population were made due to international pressure when certain political gains were at stake for Romania. In 1878, for instance, at the Congress of Berlin, the recognition of Romania's independence from the Ottoman Porte brought to the fore the status of the Jews. Despite Romania's consent to grant rights to its Jewry, the minor changes to its legislation allowed emancipation based on a cumbersome process which evaluated the requests individually. In 1878 and 1879 Mihail Kogălniceanu (as Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Ion Brătianu (the Minister of Internal Affairs) were depicting the Jews, both in the country and abroad, as Romania's enemies. The new law concerning article 7 of the Constitution gave way to a complicated process of naturalization that hindered the emancipation of the Jews until the end of the First World War. Only 888 Jews who participated in the War of Independence (1877) were granted Romanian citizenship en bloc. Between 1879 and 1911, the Romanian Parliament agreed to naturalize only 189 Jews based on the process of individual requests.<sup>25</sup>

The international pressure and the debate over the Jews' emancipation against the backdrop of Romania's antisemitic society only inflamed the growing nationalistic tendencies in the country. Having obtained independence from the Porte, Romania focused on its new ideal, the union of all Romanian speakers in a national state. In addition to having been seen as alien residents, Jews were perceived as reluctant to integrate and even as friends of Romania's foreign enemies. Entrenched stereotypes portrayed the Jews either as capitalist exploiters to the detriment of ethnic Romanians or as backward poor – Polish and Russian “barbarians.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ion Brătianu, along with other young politicians and intellectuals, took part in the 1848 Wallachian Revolution which aimed to overturn the administration imposed by the Russian Empire's authorities. The revolutionaries in both Moldova and Wallachia requested “the emancipation of the Jews and political rights for any compatriots of other faith.” See: Joseph Kaufmann, “Evrei luptători în Revoluțiunea românilor din anul 1848 sau o pagină din istoria evreilor români,” in *Evreii din România în texte istoriografice. Antologie* (București: Editura Hasefer, 2004), 316; Radu Ioanid pointed out that when Ion Brătianu had become prime-minister, he had introduced a systematic anti-Jewish campaign, see: Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, p.23.

<sup>25</sup> Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, 24.

<sup>26</sup> As scholars have argued, the great majority of non-Romanian ethnic groups, particularly the Jews, were enterprising and open to competition and risky investments. They were deservedly appreciated as representatives of the Romanian middle class, see: Lucian Năstasă-Kovács, “Premisele discursului antisemit interbelic în mediul universitar românesc.” In *Discurs și violență antisemită în România modernă*, *Revista de istorie a evreilor din România*, Nr. 4-5, edited

Due to Romania's discriminatory legislation, at the end of the nineteenth century the picture of Jews' life inside Romanian society was as follows. The Romanian Jews were forbidden permanent residence in rural areas and could be evicted as vagrants from villages and towns at any time. In rural areas, they were forbidden to own houses, land, vineyards, inns and pubs. In towns, their right to own houses and properties was disputed. The Jews were not allowed to become teachers, pharmacists, state doctors, or railway workers; although they had to perform military service, they could not advance as officers in the army. The sanitary Law of April 1886 and its subsequent amendments stipulated that in order to obtain any position in sanitary services, Romanian citizenship was compulsory. "Foreign" pharmacist assistants were hired provided they could be supervised by a Romanian assistant. While medical care was free of charge for poor Romanians, based on Articles 83 and 84 of the Sanitary Law, the "foreigners" could be cared for only for a fee and were allowed to occupy no more than 10 per cent of the hospital beds.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, poverty, lack of rights, and numerous episodes of antisemitic violence had led to tens of thousands of Jews emigrating. In 1912, Jews made up to 3.3 per cent of the total population. This translated into a number of 240,000 people, most of which were deprived of citizenship.<sup>28</sup> However, the lack of citizenship did not exempt the Jews from the obligation to fight in the First World War.<sup>29</sup> Among the Jewish fighters in the war, 882

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by Adrian Cioflâncă, 206-218 (București: Hasefer, 2020), 209; at the same time, it was typical of the Romanian society to point out the Jews' all pervasive presence to the detriment of ethnic Romanians, see: Lya Benjamin, "Sunt sau nu folositori ovreii Principatelor Române? Analiză istorică a unei broșuri antisemite." In *Discurs și violență antisemită în România modernă, Revista de istorie a evreilor din România*, Nr. 4-5, edited by Adrian Cioflâncă, 206-218 (București: Hasefer 2020), 37; It seems that the influx of the Ashkenazi Jews in Romania was reluctantly accepted by the Romanian elites. Octavian Goga, for instance, had publicly declared that compared to the already existing Jews in Moldova and Wallachia, – which were the Sefardi Jews, "of a fine race" (sic!) – the newcomers from Russia and Poland were "barbarian Jews" with "red face" and "oblique eyes," see: Radu Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 23-7.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Benz, "România și Holocaustul." In *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, edited by Wolfgang Benz and Brigitte Mihok (Chișinău: Editura Cartier, 2010), 18.

<sup>29</sup> Lucian Năstasă-Kovács noted that "Jews' self-sacrifice and virtues during the First World War have not been sufficiently highlighted by the historiography of the event, although a century has already passed. They confirmed Jews' indisputable attachment to the homeland that had stubbornly denied them the right to citizenship, but not the one to satisfy the military service and to sacrifice oneself on the "altar of the fatherland." As during the War of Independence (1877-1878) or the Balkan War in 1913, through courage, devotion and the spirit of sacrifice on the front or behind it, the Israelis in Romania dismantled another



were killed, 735 wounded, and 825 decorated.<sup>30</sup> In 1918 Romania was the only country in Europe whose Jewish population did not possess civil rights.<sup>31</sup> All this historical evidence made Hannah Arendt to conclude that “Romania was the most antisemitic country in prewar Europe.”<sup>32</sup>

### **From Greater Romania’s “National Ideal” to the Pinnacle of Antisemitism**

In the context of the First World War, Romania’s “national ideal”<sup>33</sup> was accomplished. However, the newly acquired territories, which Romania saw as its historical lands, (Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania), contained a large number of ethnic groups. The Jews numbered 4 per cent of Romania’s total population, and most of the country’s elites still opposed the Jews’ emancipation. Romania’s prime-minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu, joined the Paris Peace Conference<sup>34</sup> with a ready-made conception about Romania’s position at the conference.<sup>35</sup> Rather than accept the emancipation of Romania’s Jewish minorities, – a precondition imposed by main European leaders at the conference – Brătianu chose to leave the discussions. However, in addition to having made Romania endow its Jewry with civil rights, the League of Nations was to supervise the implementation of the law. Considering the Jews’ image in Romanian society and the country’s national aspirations, such stipulations were perceived as foreign interference in Romania’s domestic affairs and national humiliation.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to the First World War, Romania and the Russian Empire were the only states which had failed to emancipate their Jews.<sup>37</sup> The right to vote, to

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myth, that of their non-involvement in the key-moments of the nation building,” see: Lucian Năstasă-Kovács, “Premisele discursului antisemit interbelic,” 211.

<sup>30</sup> Ioanid, *Holocaustul*, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Benz, “România și Holocaustul,” 18.

<sup>32</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 190.

<sup>33</sup> As Vladimir Solonari pointed out, in the eve of the First World War, the expression the “national ideal” meant the union off all Romanian provinces – seen as ancestral – with the already united Moldavia and Wallachia, Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea Națiunii: Dislocări forțate de populație și epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940-1944*, trans. Catalin Dracsineanu (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 31.

<sup>34</sup> The Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920) was the formal meeting chaired by the victorious Allies, – which had defeated the Central Powers – in order to conclude the World War I.

<sup>35</sup> Hitchins, *România*, 323.

<sup>36</sup> For Ion I. C Brătianu’s discourse at the conference, see Ioan Scurtu and Liviu Boar, *Minoritățile naționale din România 1918-1925. Documente* (București: Arhivele Statului din România, 1995), 146-8.

<sup>37</sup> Diana Dumitru, *Vecini în vremuri de restriște. Stat, antisemitism și Holocaust în Basarabia și Transnistria*, trans. Miruna Andriescu (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 70-1.

which Romania finally agreed – and adopted in 1923 in its new Constitution – did not spare the Jews from further discrimination in the interwar period. In the newly-regained territories in particular, Jews were treated with a higher degree of suspicion. Romania's fear of Bolshevism and the fact that ethnic minorities in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania had been assimilated by the former regimes showed Jews in an inauspicious light. According to the Constitution adopted in 1923, Jews had to prove their "permanent residency" before the First World War I. Since many of them immigrated from the former Russian Empire in the context of the First World War I and the Russian Civil War, 80.000 of Romania's Jewry in 1928 – most of them in Bessarabia – had no citizenship.<sup>38</sup> As opposed to the prewar period, when Romania's aspirations were defined by irredentism, Greater Romania's national discourse promoted rapid national consolidation after the First World War. Like in other countries of central and eastern Europe, integral nationalism became the ideological framework of Romania's interwar politics. This nationalistic consensus which, however, excluded the communist and socialist sympathizers, was also typical of the great majority of the Romanian interwar intelligentsia. Whatever degree nationalism reached among Romania's intellectuals, in crucial moments, the antisemites tipped the scales in their favor.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that the Romanian intellectuals' antisemitism had had a long tradition, the new socio-political realities of Greater Romania gave impetus to radicalization. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the country faced a difficult period. It had to put up with economic instability, poor living conditions and, most importantly, an overwhelming ethnic and religious diversity. The new atmosphere proved to be the breeding ground for extreme right political parties and intellectual movements.<sup>40</sup> After the First World War, Romania's population and territory doubled while its ethnic minorities increased fourfold. In 1899 ethnic Romanians accounted for 92.1 percent of the total population, whereas in the interwar period, their number dropped to 71.9 percent. Notwithstanding that Jews were no longer the largest minority group in the country, having been outnumbered by ethnic Hungarians, 70 percent of them lived in the newly-acquired provinces.<sup>41</sup> This meant that Jews were the bearers

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 71-2.

<sup>39</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare, 1918-1930*, trans. Vlad Russo (București: Humanitas, 1998), 26-7.

<sup>40</sup> Ion Popa, "Miron Cristea, patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române: influența sa politică și religioasă cu privire la soarta evreilor din România (februarie 1938-martie 1939)." In *Discurs și violență antisemită în România modernă, Revista de istorie a evreilor din România*, Nr. 4-5, edited by Adrian Cioflâncă (București: Hasefer, 2020), 229-30.

<sup>41</sup> Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania," 8-9.



of the former imperial legacies and an additional “burden” to Romania’s national project. In Transylvania the Jews were seen as Magyars, since language and not faith distinguished the Austro-Hungarian subjects. Likewise, a part of Jews in Bukovina had been long integrated and spoke German, while the rest of them – Yiddish. The Bessarabian Jews, as inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement, the compulsory area for Jews’ residency inside the Russian Empire, were defined by a high degree of urbanization. Roughly 48 percent of the total Jews in the Pale lived in urban settlements, as opposed to 10 percent of the Gentiles. In 1930, Chişinău was the second largest city in Romania with 117,016 inhabitants, of which 41,405 were Jews. The city had 38 Orthodox churches, compared to 65 synagogues and Jewish houses of prayer. Moreover, the Jews owned the great majority of the commercial, financial and industrial businesses, including three quarters of the factories. Nearly half of the city’s commercial properties had Jewish owners, while across Bessarabia the Jews constituted over 80 percent of the merchants, almost entirely dominating the grain trade.<sup>42</sup> During the same period, Bessarabia’s ethnic Moldovans (the Romanian speakers) had only modest representation in the liberal professions – 17 percent of the doctors, 18.3 percent of the teachers, and only 11 percent of the judges – and lived mainly on the urban outskirts, far from the progressive and cultural life.<sup>43</sup> The fact that ethnic Romanians were less educated and underrepresented as white-collar professionals became conspicuous after Romania incorporated all the new provinces. Urban settlements of the newly acquired territories were brimming with the former dominant ethnic groups, such as the Russians in Bessarabia, the Germans in Bukovina, and the Hungarians in Transylvania; not to mention the ample number of Jews who spoke Yiddish or the language of the previous regime. The Jews were almost equally present in towns and rural areas only in Transylvania and Crişana-Maramureş; in Bessarabia, according to Anton Golopenţia, their number in urban settlements was slightly exceeded by their presence in villages.<sup>44</sup> Greater Romania’s nationalistic discourse, which overtly promoted xenophobia by describing minorities in the new provinces as a threat to state’s unity, exacerbated Romania’s antisemitism. Paradoxically, the Jews were unanimously blamed for their isolation in the Romanian society. They were suspicious of “racial interests,” incompatible with those of the “true” Romanians.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Dumitru, *Vecini*, 50-1.

<sup>43</sup> Alberto Basciani, *Dificila unire, Basarabia și România Mare 1918-1940*, trans. George Doru Ivan and Maria Voicu (Chişinău: Editura Cartier, 2018), 59.

<sup>44</sup> Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 306.

<sup>45</sup> Dumitru, *Vecini*, 70.



There is little surprise that universities became the breeding ground for antisemitism in Greater Romania, since it was fervently promoted by the country's political and intellectual elites. Despite antisemitism's widespread manifestation across almost all central and eastern Europe of the time, the case of Romania is distinct. As Raul Cârstocea has stressed, the intensity of violence and the official antisemitic discourse, in conjunction with the antisemitic consensus among young intellectuals in the 1930s, made Romania's case so unique and on a par with that of interwar Germany.<sup>46</sup>

Romania's most influential antisemitic ideologue at the end of the XIXth century, Alexandru Cuza, was a senior official at University in Iași. Geography and antisemitism were intrinsically linked in Romania, since the dimension of the Jewish community played a crucial role in Romania's modern antisemitism.<sup>47</sup> Moldova had the largest number of prewar Romania's Jews, and scapegoating them for the Romanians' misfortunes was commonplace among the Romanian elites and the antisemite leaders such as Nicolae Iorga, Alexandru Constantin Cuza and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.<sup>48</sup> In the context of Greater Romania's cultural revolution, universities, along with overall educational facilities, flourished to unprecedented records. Since such efforts aimed to a certain degree to bridge the gap between Romanians and the rest of minorities in terms of education,<sup>49</sup> they emphasized the inferiority of the former. Owing to their cultural and historical legacies, the Jews had been always better prepared for the market's demands and values. They were also the best represented ethnic minority in Romanian universities. While making up to 16.4 percent of the total students between 1921 and 1933, Jews constituted around 30-40 percent of the students in faculties such as medicine and pharmacy.<sup>50</sup> Hostility towards the Israelites, remarks Lucian Năstasă-Kovács, was promoted and theorized as a core element of Romania's nationalism and dominated the country's spiritual life.<sup>51</sup> The lack of material privileges faced by poor Romanian students added to anti-Jewish animosities.

<sup>46</sup> Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania," 9.

<sup>47</sup> Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască 1933-1944. Vol. I.* (București: Hasefer, 2001), 15.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, "Pogromul de la Iași din 20 iunie 1941." In *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, edited by Wolfgang Benz and Brigitte Mihok. Translated by Cristina Grossu-Chiriac (Chișinău: Editura Cartier, 2010), 49.

<sup>49</sup> Livezeanu apud Andrew Janos, *Cultură și nationalism*, 29.

<sup>50</sup> Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania," 10.

<sup>51</sup> Lucian Năstasă-Kovács, "Premisele discursului antisemit interbelic în mediul universitar românesc." In *Discurs și violență antisemită în România modernă, Revista de istorie a evreilor din România*, Nr. 4-5, edited by Adrian Cioflâncă (București: Hasefer, 2020), 209.



Scholars pointed out that in 1935 the idea of a *numerus clausus* – limiting the Jews' access to education – was endorsed by nearly all Romanian parties.<sup>52</sup>

Romania's political life in the interwar period was defined by the confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism, as Keith Hitchins underlined.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the country's traditional parties, other political groups and individuals were against European values, such as urbanism, industry, rationalism and democratic political institutions. The followers of Nichifor Crainic or Nae Ionescu, for example, fostered the nationalistic climate that promoted an authoritarian political line.<sup>54</sup> In 1923, Alexandru Cuza founded the National Christian Union, which evolved into a far-right political party (LANC – the National-Christian Defense League) infused with Nichifor Crainic's theological arguments.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to Cuza's conservative and antisemitic party, a more radicalized faction led by Corneliu Codreanu founded in 1927 the Legion of the Archangel Michael. From 1931, it was renamed the Iron Guard and became a fascist party represented in the Romanian Parliament. According to R.J. Crampton, fascism in Romania bordered on the absurd; its leader had founded the movement as a result of Archangel Michael's alleged visit while Codreanu had been imprisoned. Born out of the Romanian Orthodox Christian tradition to serve God, legionary gatherings would be accompanied by religious hymns and prayers; "national revival!" as Codreanu had asserted, was the movement's supreme aim.<sup>56</sup> The importance of the religious factor dissociated east-European from west-European fascism, according to Crampton.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that Romania implemented three major reforms after the unification: universal male suffrage, the agrarian reform, and the emancipation of its Jewry. The electoral reform meant the insertion of all citizens into Romania's political life, whereas the radical agrarian reform was supposed to guarantee the prosperity of country's long-suffering population. As Traian Sandu noted, against the backdrop of the war, the country's human losses reminded the peasant-soldiers of the debts that the ruling elites had owed them; in the context of the newly-changed realities Romania's peasantry self-

<sup>52</sup> Dumitru, apud Irina Livezeanu, *Vecini*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> Hitchins, *Romania*, 414.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 415.

<sup>55</sup> A poet, publicist, theologian, and political figure, Nichifor Crainic was, – according to Leon Volovici – the leading voice and main theoretician of the traditionalist movements (known in Romanian as *autohtonism*, *ortodoxism*, and *gândirism*). See: Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> Crampton, *Europa Răsăriteană*, 189.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 188.

identified with the source of political legitimacy in their country.<sup>58</sup> A group of people who “felt the same” were building a new culture based on the primacy of nationalism,<sup>59</sup> has remarked Valentin Săndulescu.

Likewise, Romania’s conservative movement “Junimea,” strongly criticized the norms of western liberalism being imposed on country’s different realities: an agrarian country without a middle class and transparent political culture. Their xenophobic stance was very close to Romania’s peasantry and endorsed protectionist nationalism; this message deeply impressed the young Alexandru C. Cuza.<sup>60</sup>

According to Andrei Pippidi, the new radicalized rightists promoted a new type of archaic identity, opposed to the secular state and the social stratum representing old nationalism. It was a new social cleavage between the former period, in which Romania’s nationalism had been promoted by the country’s educated middle class, and the Iron Guard’s moment of power. Uprooted from their rural universe and endowed with political leverage, the legionaries translated their economic and cultural frustrations into a national message. The claim that throughout history the Romanians had been sacrificed despite their general excellence was a typical inferiority complex transferred from a class to a whole people.<sup>61</sup>

Another antisemitic movement – highly reputable since it promoted Romania’s national revival – was linked with the Transylvanian poet Octavian Goga. From 1932 Goga led the National-Christian Party.<sup>62</sup> During his short-term premiership (1937-1938) Romania renounced its parliamentary system and became politically close to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In the context of increasing political instability, financial crisis, and the soaring threat of the legionary movement, in 1937 Goga was commissioned by King Carol II to form a new government, although the National Christian Party had obtained only 9.2 percent of the votes.<sup>63</sup> The 44 days period paved the way not only for Carol’s dictatorship but also for the legalized antisemitism. Goga’s antisemitic laws

<sup>58</sup> Sandu, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 35.

<sup>59</sup> Valentin Săndulescu, “‘Taming the Spirit’: Notes on the Shaping of the Legionary ‘New Man.’” In *Vers un profile convergent des fascismes? «Nouveau Consensus» et Religion Politique en Europe Centrale, Cahiers de la Nouvelle Europe*, N°12, 2010, edited by Valentin Săndulescu, 208.

<sup>60</sup> Sandu, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 36-7.

<sup>61</sup> Andrei Pippidi, *Despre statui și morminte* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), 220.

<sup>62</sup> On 10 April 1932, Octavian Goga founded the National Agrarian Party (by separating from Marshal Averescu’s Party of the People). In July 1935, Goga’s Party joined Cuza’s National-Christian Defense League and established the National-Christian Party.

<sup>63</sup> Hitchins, *România*, 455.



rendered *heimatlosen* half of Romania's Jewry.<sup>64</sup> His efforts to gain the support of the Iron Guard's electorate by intensifying the antisemitic measures, only strengthened the Iron Guard. Moreover, his cabinet ruined Romania's economy and the country's relationship with Europe and the League of Nations. In the wake of Romania's territorial losses and General Ion Antonescu's rise to power in 1940, the Jews' tragedy would unfold into what we currently know as the Holocaust.

The role of the political elites, but especially of the Romanian intellectuals in changing Romania's antisemitic character was paramount. As Jean Ancel pointed out, the latter constituted the chain between the boorish antisemites at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the modern learned Romanians that possessed a broad occidental education.<sup>65</sup> It was particularly that type of intellectuals that readapted Romania's traditional Judeophobia to the rising European fascist ideology, yet also to Greater Romania's new realities. Ancel remarked in addition that the antisemitic apologists were not necessarily the Iron Guard's sympathizers. They included prominent writers who became antisemites in their old age (Ion Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești); brilliant young intellectuals who despite having displayed rightist affinities, could not be labelled as antisemites (Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran); literary critics and right-wing ideologues (Nicolae Roșu and Nicolae Davidescu); original thinkers (Nae Ionescu) and notable journalists (Pamfil Șeicaru), among many others.<sup>66</sup>

For the great majority of interwar Romania's elites the "national ideal" meant not only rapid modernization, but also the eradication of Romania's social and economic asymmetries concerning its minorities. The fact that ethnic Romanians were underrepresented in almost all spheres of life could have suggested Romanians' inability to catch up with their more advanced neighbors. Even Romania's most tolerant and humanist politicians, such as Iuliu Maniu, believed that the Romanian nation possessed "special rights" on the Romanian territory. Compared to Romanians, the ethnic minorities were seen as "islands" of different peoples on the "autochthonous national body"; their "fatherlands" were elsewhere and their presence on Romania's national territory was the result of "infiltration."<sup>67</sup>

When it was created, Greater Romania had to give in to international democracy's pressure. However, the general consensus was that the state belonged to ethnic Romanians. Romania's government mission was to voice

<sup>64</sup> Benz, *România and the Holocaust*, 19-20.

<sup>65</sup> Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României*, 130.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, 131.

<sup>67</sup> Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii*, 40.

the nation's interests, and not those of the country's minorities. The great majority of Romania's elites had a shared vision on how the Romanian nation was linked to its "state" (*stat*) and "country" (*țară*). Vladimir Solonari's example is highly illustrative of this reality. In May 1944, George Călinescu, Romania's reputable literary critic, historian and a member of the Romanian Academy met Ioan Hudița, a remarkable member of the National Peasants' Party. Călinescu confessed that regardless of his contempt for Hitler, he admired the latter's national purification methods; likewise, he would have applied similar measures for Romania's foreigners who had become Romanian citizens. Namely, only after having formed roots in the national body – after three generations – could they achieve political rights. Hudița noted in his diary that Călinescu's ideas made a good impression on him.<sup>68</sup>

This representation of the Romanian nation in medical terms, stressed Marius Turda, eroded the nation's cultural and historical definition. Dominated by its new biological vision, the "Romanian race" became anxious about not being swallowed by internal or external "foreigners."<sup>69</sup> The fear of the neighboring countries and of its ethnic minorities sealed Romania's following political actions and its role in the Holocaust.

### **Holocaust Memory in the Post-Communist Romanian Society**

So far, the exact number of Romania's Holocaust victims remains disputed. However, the crux of the issue is that Antonescu's regime "killed the highest number of Jews in Europe after Nazi Germany; Romania was not merely a Nazi ally, it was the most important ally and was involved on a significant scale – compared to other Nazi allies – in the plan to exterminate the Jewish population in Europe."<sup>70</sup> Raul Hilberg argued that with the exception of Germany, no country had operated so massively the Jews' massacre; Romania's case stands out not only for the swift actions against its Jews, but also for the extent of brutality that defined these actions.<sup>71</sup> The cruelty of

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, 306.

<sup>69</sup> Marius Turda, "Rasă, eugenie și naționalism în România anilor '40 ai secolului al XX-lea." In *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, edited by Wolfgang Benz, Brigitte Mihok, trans. Cristina Grossu-Chiriac (Chișinău: Cartier, 2010), 252.

<sup>70</sup> The statement belongs to Alexandru Muraru, the Romanian government's adviser on antisemitism, <https://www.rferl.org/a/romania-anti-semitism-role-holocaust/31259818.html>, accessed 28 February, 2022.

<sup>71</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Exterminarea evreilor din Europa*, Vol. I, trans. Dina Georgescu (București: Hasefer, 1997), 668.



Romanians against the Jews had impressed even Hitler, who recommended it to the Nazi officials.<sup>72</sup> The employment of the above-cited conclusions in this article is not accidental. They aim to point out the inconceivable tragedy of the Romanian Holocaust in contrast to post-communist Romania's meagre efforts to acknowledge it.

Despite historical evidence, the Romanian Holocaust still represents a thorny issue in present-day Romania, and this reality is highly related to country's failure to accommodate its past. The totalitarian experiences – the extreme-right wing regime (1938-1944) and the communist regime (1948-1989) – still overshadow the post-communist Romanian political and memorial landscape. While the Romanian state has tried to tackle the traumatic past through measures aimed at documenting and condemning the “criminal communist dictatorship,” – the Wiesel Report (2004) and the Tismăneanu Commission (2006) – Romanian society has been more reluctant to put in practice such condemnation.

The collapse of communism gave way to a massive reconsideration of the past and a need to glorify (and overestimate) it in order to refill the country's political void. For the country's new restorers, post-communist Romania's “national centrism” was a handy tool to manipulate.<sup>73</sup> Myths, rather than historical facts, were employed in “demonstrating” various qualities typical of the Romanian nation, – kindness and tolerance, in an attempt to intertwine the national history with Christian Orthodoxy, for example. These “national virtues” were usually personified by historical figures and political leaders of Romania's bygone times, such as Ștefan cel Mare, Mihai Viteazul, and Avram Iancu. Regarding Romania's post-1989 “national” approach, Lucian Boia remarked that “each political orientation cultivates their own heroes.”<sup>74</sup> While resurging post-communist nationalism was obscuring the historical evidence, at the same time, it continued the nationalistic discourse that existed prior to 1989. It is important to bear in mind that the image of the past was manipulated under communism so that it could best serve the regime. Dennis Deletant demonstrated how Romanian historiography was “molded” through certain strategies concerning Romania's participation in the Second World

<sup>72</sup> Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii*, 219; Armin Heinen, *România, Holocaustul și logica violenței*, trans. Ioana Rostoș (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru-Ioan Cuza”, 2011), 95.

<sup>73</sup> William Totok, “Cultul lui Antonescu și reabilitarea criminalilor de război.” In *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, 299-319, edited by Wolfgang Benz, Brigitte Mihok, trans. Cristina Grossu-Chiriac (Chișinău: Cartier, 2010), 299.

<sup>74</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (București: Humanitas, 2005), 369.

War. Transnistria's occupation (1941-1944)<sup>75</sup> was justified by comparing the Romanian regime with Nazi Germany's more terrifying rule in other Soviet territories. Likewise, the omission was employed to exaggerate the Communist Party's role in the Act of 23 August 1944<sup>76</sup> and Romania's contribution to the war against Germany. The third strategy relied on scapegoating Germany and singling out Romania as a victim.<sup>77</sup>

Given the Romanian post-communist relationship with its uncomfortable past, old historical stereotypes have been inherited and flourished, and still define the country's antisemitic discourse. Deletant's third remark on communist Romania's strategy to sweeten the pill of its history would best fit into what Michael Shafir terms as "deflective negationism." Shafir argues in one of his seminal works on post-communist antisemitism that deflective denial does not simply reject the Holocaust. Compared to other forms of denial, it either redirects the blame towards the members of other nations, or minimizes the participation of its nation by reducing it to trifling manifestations. Shafir also emphasized that deflective negationism means externalizing the blame and that Romania's antisemitism has always been defined by scapegoating.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Transnistria, known also as Transnistria Governorate (Guvernământul Transnistriei) was a Romanian-administered territory between the Rivers Dniester and Southern Bug. It was conquered by Axis Powers from the Soviet Union during the Second World War and occupied from 19 August 1941 to 29 January 1944. Not being part of the Romanian territory, Transnistria was used as killing field for Jews' extermination. Compared to Nazi Germany's concentration and extermination camps, life in Transnistria was horrendous due to the Romanians' arbitrariness, viciousness and rampant corruption. Some specialists estimate the number of Transnistria's victims between 105,000 and 120,000, see: Viorel Achim, "Deportarea evreilor în Transnistria în contextul politicii demografice a guvernului Antonescu," In *Holocaustul la periferie Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, edited by Wolfgang Benz and Brigitte Mihok, trans. Cristina Grossu-Chiriac (Chișinău: Cartier, 2010), 243. According to other scholars, the figures were much bigger. Raul Hilberg argued that the Romanians killed 150,000 Jews only in Odessa and Golta regions (Hilberg, *Exterminarea evreilor din Europa*, Vol. I, 668); Jean Ancel showed that the number was no smaller than 310,000 (Jean Ancel, *Transnistria*, Volumul III (București: Editura Atlas, 1998, 301); based on Radu Ioanid's accounts, more than 300,000 Jews perished in Transnistria (Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, 285); whereas Marcu Rozen approximates the total number of the victims to 270,000 (Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, 285).

<sup>76</sup> Known also as Romanian coup d'état, the Act of 23 August 1944 was led by King Mihai of Romania, who removed the government of Ion Antonescu. With the support of the Romanian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Liberal Party, and the National Peasants' Party, the King organized the coup and obtained ceasefire with the Soviet Red Army. The Act was seen as Romania's turning point in the war.

<sup>77</sup> Dennis Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler*, trans. Delia Răzdolescu (București: Humanitas, 2008), 278.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație. Negarea Holocaustului în țările postcomuniste din Europa Centrală și de Est* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 49.



According to Lucian Boia, the “foreigner” is endowed in the Romanian mentality with strong features of otherness;<sup>79</sup> under communism the Romanian-foreigner opposition deepened. Communist propaganda and Romanian population’s despondency jointly contributed to a general obsession about everything that was “foreign.” When communism collapsed and Romania broke its isolation, society became more vulnerable and frustrated. Poverty and seclusion widened the gap between “east” and “west” and intensified Romania’s inferiority complex. Not to mention that the outside foreigners were doubled by its “internal” ones. Lucian Boia has rightly noted that Romania did not know to assimilate, or at least, integrate its minorities. A non-Romanian ethnic was perceived as a foreigner before being seen as a member of the Romanian nation and a Romanian citizen.<sup>80</sup> This reality was particularly highlighted in the context of Greater Romania’s cultural nationalization, as earlier shown in this article. Greater Romania’s attitude towards its newly-acquired provinces and Romania’s policies concerning its eastern territories after 1940 are intrinsically linked. There is a widespread consensus among most historians showing Romania’s mismanagement of Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia after 1918,<sup>81</sup> not to mention Bucharest’s distrust and arrogance concerning Bessarabia’s population.<sup>82</sup> In the wake of Romania’s crisis and territorial losses in 1940, the existing Romanian outlooks on its eastern provinces played a great role in Antonescu’s attempt to transform Bukovina and Bessarabia into “model” provinces for the rest of Romania. Mihai Antonescu explained that the two provinces “had to be experiment cells on which to build a new economic and administrative order, to be later exported to the rest of the country.”<sup>83</sup> It is important to bear in mind that Bessarabia’s and Bukovina’s “purification”

<sup>79</sup> Lucian Boia, *România. Țara de frontieră a Europei* (București: Humanitas, 2005), 206.

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem, 206-7.

<sup>81</sup> Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism*; Hitchens, *România*; Basciani, *Dificila Unire*, 158-60, 166-7.

<sup>82</sup> Ion Țurcanu, *Sfatul Țării. Istoria zbciumată a unei importante instituții politice basarabene din anii 1917-1918* (Chișinău: Editura ARC, 2018), 193; Basciani, *Dificila Unire*, 108; Alexandru Marghiloman, “Note politice (extrase) de la Iași la Chișinău pentru izbânda Unirii Basarabiei cu România-mumă.” In *Unirea Basarabiei cu România-Mumă 27 martie 1918*, edited by Stelian Neagoe (București: Editura ISPRI, 2018), 17-8; Michael Shafir pointed out that Bessarabia had been treated by the Romanian authorities as a colony, rather than a historical province. Anti-Romanian feelings were widespread in Bessarabia; among the supposedly Jews humiliating the Romanian Army in 1940 were also ethnic Romanians, Ukrainians – most of them communists. The argument that Antonescu punished the Jews for their anti-Romanian crimes is groundless (Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație*, 77-8).

<sup>83</sup> Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii*, 151.



through Jews' mass assassination and violent deportations at the beginning of the Second World War, was essential to and perfectly fit into the view of the two "models."<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, Romania's approach to its "foreigners" has an extended dimension, which still plays an important role in keeping antisemitism alive. While the regained Bessarabia and Bukovina in 1941 were seen as Romanian territories, the Jews on their soil were not seen as Romanian citizens. Legally speaking, the great majority of the Romanian Jews lost their citizenship in 1940 due to Romania's antisemitic legislation. At the same time, since the Holocaust did not happen in "Romania proper," it might lead to the conclusion that in Romania the Holocaust did not happen at all. Raul Cârstocea has noted that

"not only temporal distance but also spatial considerations came into play: as most of the crimes committed during the Holocaust by the Romanian administration [...] took place in areas that are currently outside the borders of contemporary Romania, most of the population living within Romania proper would not have been directly exposed to them."<sup>85</sup>

Likewise, deflective and selective forms of Romania's Holocaust denial are based on the widespread statement that Romania was the only country in the Nazi Germany's sphere of influence where the Final Solution was not implemented;<sup>86</sup> a similar and common "argument" is Antonescu's refusal to deport the Old Kingdom's Jews. Such limp reasoning challenges first of all the historical evidence. It has been demonstrated that Antonescu's hesitance to apply the Final Solution in Romania was opportunistic; it was the fear of war's evolution that made the Romanian government keep its hands "clean."<sup>87</sup> Additional Romanian-German disputes over economic and ethnic issues in Transnistria had also an important role; not to mention that already in August 1942 Romania's war enthusiasm was on the wane,<sup>88</sup> and the Jewish leaders

<sup>84</sup> Vladimir Solonari, *Imperiul-satelit. Guvernarea românească în Transnistria*, trans. Andrei Pogăciaș (București: Humanitas, 2021), 139.

<sup>85</sup> Raul Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies: Holocaust Memory and Contemporary Anti-Semitism in Romania," *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 2 (2021), 313-335, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420906201>, 318.

<sup>86</sup> *Raport final / Comisia Internațională pentru Studiarea Holocaustului în România*, edited by Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 350.

<sup>87</sup> Benz, *România and the Holocaust*, 23; Vladimir Solonari stressed that while the Romanian officials had seen the Jews' deportations as a theoretical future plan, the Germans had perceived it as an immediate action. The extermination camp in Bełżec, near Lublin, had been specially expanded by the Germans to amass the Romanian Jews (Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii*, 270).

<sup>88</sup> Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, 353-4.



could mobilize more easily Romania's public opinion against the deportation of Jews from the Old Kingdom.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Anti-Communist Discourse and the Revival of Romania's Antisemitism**

After 1989 Romania's open forms of antisemitism were resumed against the backdrop of trenchant anticommunism. Anticommunism became a common phenomenon in eastern and central Europe, along with a widespread hierarchy of memories of the Holocaust and communism.<sup>90</sup> According to Cârstocea, it is particularly this feature that dissociates the antisemitism in eastern Europe from the "new antisemitism" of western Europe, the latter having its roots in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>91</sup> Concerning antisemitism in post-communist countries, despite being driven by different motivations, it represents an attempt to reconfigure the post-communist community. Michael Shafir pointed out that political communities, and post-revolutionary communities in particular, resort to a "usable history" – a positive past – in order to build self-confident national identities.<sup>92</sup> In such light, the rehabilitation of Ion Antonescu as "a great Romanian" was not dismissed as outrageous by Romania's post-communist society. In the first decade after communism collapsed, the cult of Antonescu flourished with the Romanian dictator being presented as an anti-communist patriot. By 2004, there had been erected between 6 and 8 monuments in the marshal's memory; 25 streets and squares, and also the "Heroes' Cemetery" in Iași carried Antonescu's name.<sup>93</sup> The radicalization of anti-communist and antisemitic discourses materialized between 1992 and 1996 when the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare [PMR]) and the Romanian National Unity Party (Partidul Unității Naționale a Românilor [PUNR]) entered the governing coalition along with former representatives of Romania's Communist Party. In 2000 their popularity was so high that the far-right candidate Corneliu Vadim Tudor got the second round of the presidential elections having received 33.17 per cent of the vote.

The denunciation of communism as a criminal regime imposed from outside became a mantra of numerous radicalized organizations. In most cases,

<sup>89</sup> Heinen, *România, Holocaustul și logica violenței*, 98.

<sup>90</sup> For an extended debate on the topic, see: Emmanuel Droit, "The Gulag and the Holocaust in Opposition: Official Memories and Memory Cultures in an Enlarged Europe," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 2, (2007), 101-20.

<sup>91</sup> Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies," 318.

<sup>92</sup> Shafir, "Rotten Apples, Bitter Pears," 150-1.

<sup>93</sup> Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație*, 98.

interwar far-right models, – such as the “Iron Guard” and its leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu – were employed in order to “legitimate” the country’s lost values. “Tribal impulses,”<sup>94</sup> many of which are typical of interwar Romania’s publications, used as “proof documents,” started being promoted with pride by the Romanian political elite.<sup>95</sup> It seems to be a fact that between 1989 and 1999 up to twenty-eight radical right organizations, along with twelve foundations and associations, were set up by the Iron Guard’s supporters.<sup>96</sup>

Faithful to its past traditions, Romania had to comply with international trends concerning the Holocaust in the context of its integration into NATO. Regardless of the Romanian elite’s readiness to discuss the country’s responsibility for the Holocaust, it was evident that such change of heart was a rather utilitarian approach – dictated once again by international impositions – than a true need for Romania to come to terms with its history. Romania’s politicians half-heartedly tackled the issue and applied double standards when addressed the topic at home and abroad. Although Emil Constantinescu was Romania’s first president to accept Romania’s participation in the Holocaust, he stressed his country’s refusal to apply the Final Solution.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, prime-minister Adrian Năstase declared that “the future cannot be built on falsifications and mystifications,” he later added that he opposed the attempts to “blame the Romanian people concerning the Holocaust” and that “there have been graver situations in history and nobody has tried to blame the German, Russian, American or any other people.”<sup>98</sup>

Against the backdrop of the Emergency Ordinance 31/2002, which banned antisemitism and xenophobia, the Holocaust’s denial was also legally prohibited. Despite the fact that public display of portraits of people guilty of “crimes against peace and humanity” were also banned, a new gallery in the government’s building included Ion Antonescu’s picture. When international protests occurred, Romania’s ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, Răzvan Theodorescu, pointed out that the venue hosting the marshal’s portrait was not a public one.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the need to reconsider the Ordinance’s stipulations soon manifested. According to the following amendments, the Holocaust was defined as the “en-masse and systematical

<sup>94</sup> George Voicu, *Zei cei răi, cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), 65.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>96</sup> Cârstocea, “Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies,” 319-20.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, 320.

<sup>98</sup> Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație*, 99-100.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*, 100.



extermination of the European Jewish population, organized by the Nazi authorities during World War II.” Theodorescu further added that “there was no Holocaust in Romania, but Romania participated in the Holocaust, due to Antonescu’s regime, in the areas under temporary Romanian occupation.”<sup>100</sup> Additionally, Antonescu’s charge of crimes against the peace (1946) was reconsidered in 2006 by Bucharest’s Court of Appeal. It was concluded that in World War II’s first phase Romania tried only to regain its lost territories (Bessarabia and North Bukovina); the country’s participation in the war against the Soviet Union was thus legitimate. This attempt to rehabilitate the former Romanian dictator along with twenty other collaborators, was rejected by Romania’s Court of Cassation only in May 2008.<sup>101</sup>

As a post-communist country, Romania’s integration into European structures caused reactions typical of most countries in central and eastern Europe. In their struggle to adopt and internalize various patterns of western Europe, post-communist countries “swallowed” the Europeanized memory of the Holocaust without having their own domestic public confrontation. Consequently, the proliferation of selective memory stressing victimhood rather than responsibility for collaboration or perpetration was facilitated.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, Romania’s steeped tradition of symbolically excluding its Jews from the Romanian “nation” prioritized the Romanian people’s collective memory of communism as the country’s greatest historical tragedy. By embracing the anti-communist discourse and glorifying Romania’s interwar period, the “Judeo-Bolshevist”<sup>103</sup> narrative resurfaced along with the widespread comparative trivialization. The revalorization of the interwar radical right message has brought into the limelight the old pattern of representation, according to which “foreign” and dreadful communism is highly associated with Jews’ role in having disseminated Bolshevism. While “Judeo-Bolshevism”

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<sup>100</sup> Ibidem, 101-2.

<sup>101</sup> Totok, “Cultul lui Antonescu,” 318.

<sup>102</sup> Cârstocea, “Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies,” 321-2.

<sup>103</sup> Adrian Cioflâncă demonstrated how the Romanian authorities had exaggerated when dealing with “the communist issue” and “the Jewish issue” after the First World War. Various forms of abuse and cruel methods of investigation had been carried out in order to counteract the spread of communism in Romania. In many cases, the antisemitic and anticommunist discourse had been exploited for political gains. The “Judeo-Bolshevism” was forged based on the assumption that all the Jews were communists and that the communists were largely influenced by Jews, see Adrian Cioflâncă, “Antisemitismul și Holocaustul din perspectivă comunistă. Un caz de distorsiune ideologică.” (I) In *Discurs și violență antisemită în România modernă*, edited by Adrian Cioflâncă (București: Hasefer, 2020), 330-331.

can be traced at the Congress of Berlin,<sup>104</sup> when foreign intervention on Jews' behalf was seen as a threat to Romania's sovereignty, comparative trivialization stems from Romania's failure to accept its Holocaust. Basically, it "refers to the abusive use of comparisons with the aim of minimizing the Holocaust, of downplaying its atrocities, or conditioning the memory of this tragedy."<sup>105</sup> There are two main arguments at the core of comparative trivialization. In the first case, the Gulag and the Holocaust are seen as equal tragedies whose victims and perpetrators must shake hands and come to terms with their past. In the second case, the Gulag and the Holocaust are seen in a competitive light, with the stress on who was persecuted the most.<sup>106</sup>

The most alarming aspect concerning Romania's way of tackling the Holocaust resides in the elites' inability to envisage broader and practical strategies to confront the country's communist past. The Holocaust's denial and trivialization have become post-communist practices widely spread not only among Romania's political but also intellectual elites. The Romanian Academy, which claims to be the highest science and culture forum in the country, openly denies the Holocaust in Romania. Moreover, it denied the fascist character of the Legionary Movement and militated for keeping offensive terms such as "*jidăni*" (an offensive word for a Jewish person) and "*țigăni*" (an insulting word for a Roma) in the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary (DEX).<sup>107</sup> Romania's brightest minds keep seeing the Jews as collective disseminators of communism, and consequently, the main culprits in communizing the country. For instance, Romania's prolific philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu pointed out in 1997 that having spread communism, the Jews eliminated for good the singularity of the Holocaust.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Andrei Pleșu reacted to the Law 217/2015 (it condemned the legionary movement as a fascist organization; its symbols and propaganda were prohibited in public space). One of Romania's most visible public intellectuals who is neither an antisemite, nor a Holocaust's denier, Pleșu's criticism stressed the Law's failure to equally denounce the communist catastrophe.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> *Final Report*, 45.

<sup>105</sup> *Final Report*, 45.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, 113-4.

<sup>107</sup> Radu Ioanid, "Aproximațiile păgubitoare ale domnului Andrei Pleșu," [https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/aproximatiile-pagubitoare-domnului-andrei-ple-su-1\\_56b47d765ab6550cb879d576/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/aproximatiile-pagubitoare-domnului-andrei-ple-su-1_56b47d765ab6550cb879d576/index.html), accessed 16 March, 2022.

<sup>108</sup> Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație*, 122.

<sup>109</sup> Andrei Pleșu, "Mărturii pentru cercetări viitoare," [https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/marturii-cercetari-viitoare-i-1\\_55c7c901f5eaafab2c65e82e/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/marturii-cercetari-viitoare-i-1_55c7c901f5eaafab2c65e82e/index.html), accessed 16 March, 2022.



Law 217/2015 was largely perceived by Romania's elites as "antidemocratic and insulting to the Romanian culture."<sup>110</sup> Not to mention that in such context, the Law was seen as a strategy to gain the support of Romania's Jewish community. While associating the latter with the Ellie Wiesel Institute, the name of the Institute's head, Alexandru Florian, was mentioned in a boorish way.<sup>111</sup> A shameless statement made by the head of the Romanian Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism of the Romanian Academy, Radu Ciuceanu, concluded that the Legionary Movement cannot be classified as "fascist" since it lacked ideological character. Raul Cârstocea rightly noticed that such assessments are contradicted by all specialists in the interwar fascism,<sup>112</sup> needless to say that the judgements made by Romania's most esteemed historical establishment are highly suggestive of country's unreadiness for change. Similar statements were made by Radu Preda, the head of the Institute for the Investigation of the Communist Crimes in Romania (IICCMER). Preda's remarks on "anti-legionary law" being "pro-communist" by omission, since they did not ban the apology of communism, made five members of the institution's Scientific Council resign – Dennis Deletant, Adrian Cioroianu, Zoe Petre, Cristian Pârvulescu, and William Totok – after their demand for Preda's resignation had no repercussions.<sup>113</sup>

### Instead of Conclusions

The Romanian Jews' fate was a bitter one. In "Odessa Stories," one of Isaak Babel's most famous protagonists asked rhetorically whether it had not been a mistake on God's part to settle the Jews in Russia, where they would suffer like hell.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Jean Ancel captured the hapless reality of the Romanian Jewry living in a country where "all trends associated with Jews' emancipation had been 50-100 years behind central Europe."<sup>115</sup> Ancel noted that hostility towards the Jews had not derived from their deeds; it had been a reaction to Jews' presence in Romania – a country steeped in prejudice and antisemitism.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Alex Ștefănescu, "Poate că sunt eu nebun," [https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/poate-nebun-1\\_55d58512f5eaafab2cbe441e/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/poate-nebun-1_55d58512f5eaafab2cbe441e/index.html); Ion Spânu, "Legea 217/2015 a lui Crin Antonescu, o Lege împotriva culturii române," <https://www.cotidianul.ro/legea-2172015-a-lui-crin-antonescu-o-lege-impotriva-culturii-romane/>, accessed 16 March, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>112</sup> Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies," 325.

<sup>113</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>114</sup> Isaak Babel, *Maloe sobranie sochinenii* (Sankt-Petersburg: Azbuka, 2020), 24.

<sup>115</sup> Wilhelm Filderman, *Memorii & Jurnale, Volumul 1: 1900-1940*, edited by Jean Ancel (București: Hasefer, 2016), 11-12.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem, 12.

There is little wonder that until 1998, the history of the Holocaust (the Romanian and the Holocaust in general) had not been studied in Romania. That means that schoolbooks or compulsory books in universities did not contain any references to the Holocaust. Nothing is more illustrative than Felicia Waldman's remark on this evidence: "the schoolbooks reflect society's vision on the essential values that it wants to pass on to future generations."<sup>117</sup>

Regardless of the change in Romania's approach concerning its traumatic past, the country is still far away from healthy social strategies. It would not be an exaggeration to state that in Romania the memory of the Holocaust is more honored in the breach than in the observance. Radu Ioanid noted that in Romania, juridical practices like NUP<sup>118</sup> are commonly applied in cases when individuals use publicly terms such as "Yid" (*jid*) or deny the Holocaust. In 2014, in fifty-nine cases of incitement to hatred or discrimination, none of the accused people were sent to trial.<sup>119</sup> Despite Romania's legislation banning Legionary symbols, the Tăbăcănești crucifix – the place where Corneliu Codreanu was murdered in November 1938 – has become a place of pilgrimage under the authorities' permissive eyes.<sup>120</sup> According to county Ilfov's prosecutors, the place was "educational."<sup>121</sup> In 2017, Fundația Gavrilă Ogoranu, a so-called "Memorial of the Anti-Communist Resistance," along with other "NGOs" as such, celebrated the seventy-nine commemoration of Codreanu, "who has not yet been forgotten by many Romanians."<sup>122</sup>

As all these examples suggest, Romania's society still treats its past realities with immaturity. The elites' inability to acknowledge the country's need to confront history might stem from an overall unreadiness for following a different path. Although Romania pays lip service to western democratic values, its actions prove the country's unwillingness to reconsider its past. Like other countries in eastern and central Europe, Romania has copied the western approach – instead of acknowledging on its own the importance of Romania's society to face

<sup>117</sup> Felicia Waldman, "Holocaustul în manualele postcomuniste din România." In *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în Transnistria în 1940-1944*, edited by Wolfgang Benz, Brigitte Mihok. Trans. Cristina Grossu-Chiriac (Chișinău: Cartier, 2010), 320.

<sup>118</sup> NUP is an abbreviation for "*neînceperea urmăririi penale*" (failure to initiate criminal proceedings). In Romania's criminal code, it represents a solution that can be given by a prosecutor when investigating a criminal case.

<sup>119</sup> Ioanid, "Aproximațiile păgubitoare ale domnului Andrei Pleșu."

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.rfi.ro/reportaj-rfi-107654-zelea-codreanu-subiect-de-pelerinaj-la-80-de-ani-dupa-moartea-sa>, accessed 18 March, 2022.

<sup>121</sup> Ioanid, "Aproximațiile păgubitoare ale domnului Andrei Pleșu."

<sup>122</sup> <https://ogoranu.ro/2017/11/26/tancabesti-comemorarea-unei-crime-de-stat/> accessed 18 March, 2022.



the Holocaust. Likewise, the Romanian elites are stuck in their communist past tragedies, preventing them from tackling the Holocaust as one of the country's greatest wounds. Giving moral lessons, however, has never been proof of virtue, remarks Tzvetan Todorov. On the contrary, acknowledging the misfortune of others equates with not claiming for yourself the exclusive status of a former victim.<sup>123</sup> Only when the Romanian Holocaust and communist memories will not be amalgamated will Romania's society be able to overcome its traumatic history. Cultivating a responsible and mature society could be an important step for Romanian society in confronting with dignity its harsh history.

### Rezumat

Acest articol reprezintă o reevaluare a memoriei Holocaustului în societatea actuală din România. El arată că în România procesul de construire a națiunii a mers mână în mână cu antisemitismul. Articolul subliniază că frustrarea țării cu privire la trecutul ei comunist a reușit să plaseze memoria Holocaustului într-un con de umbră. În ciuda recunoașterii de către guvernul României (2004) a participării țării la Holocaust, conștientizarea deplină a acestei probleme rămâne improbabilă la nivelul întregii societăți românești. O nouă lege menită să contracareze negarea Holocaustului a fost adoptată în România în 2015. Cu toate acestea, țara a demonstrat că încă nu și-a acceptat moștenirea istorică.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Holocaust românesc, post-comunism, Transnistria, naționalism, antisemitism.

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<sup>123</sup> Todorov, *Abuzurile memoriei*, 42.



# Soviet Politics of Memory in Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna: Representation of the Past and Mythmaking during World War II

Viktor DROZDOV

## *Abstract*

The incorporation of new territories into the Ukrainian SSR during World War II required reconstructing the local community's identity and shaping its historical memory through Stalinist ideology. This article examines the features of Soviet memory politics in Ukrainian territories through the examples of Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna, which were annexed in 1940 due to the military campaign against Romania. The study's objectives were to determine the influence of Soviet ideology on the representation of the past, characterize the ways that the official memory was shaped during World War II, and analyze historical myths that spread throughout the official and historical discourse. The main historical images, which Soviet ideologists formulated in official statements, historical works, and propaganda in periodicals, have been extracted using historical discourse analysis. Comparative historical analysis has identified similarities and differences in interpreting the abovementioned regions' pasts. It is pointed out that the historical arguments and concepts used by the Soviet power to justify the annexations became the foundation for the historical discourse. The article analyzes the introduction of the myth of "long-suffering lands" into historical narratives, which interpreted the Soviet territorial conquests as the liberation of oppressed peoples. It has been established that the representation of Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna's pasts corresponded to the Soviet concept of "Ukrainian people's reunification." However, the distinction between these regions' ethnic composition and historical development influenced the politics of shaping historical memory.

**Keywords:** politics of memory, Soviet ideology, Southern Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, World War II.

## **Introduction**

The annexation politics of the Soviet Union during World War II was accompanied by the inculcation of Stalinist ideology and the construction of a new Soviet identity. The shaping of historical memory as an essential component of identity building involved the creation of "ideologically correct" versions of the official historical past that would legitimize the Soviet regime.<sup>1</sup> Western

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<sup>1</sup> Tiitu Kreegipuu and Epp Lauk, "The 1940 Soviet Coup-d'État in the Estonian Communist Press: Constructing History to Reshape Collective Memory," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4, no. 4 (2007): 43.



Ukraine, Southern Bessarabia, Northern Bukovyna, and Transcarpathia had different historical destinies before their incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR. However, the Soviet power interpreted the process of their annexation as “Ukrainian people’s reunification within a single Ukrainian Soviet state.” In this context, Soviet politics of memory towards Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna is of considerable research interest. Both lands belonged to various countries through several historical periods, but Romania incorporated them both during World War I. The population of these borderland regions was polyethnic, varied in socio-economic level, and had unique cultural traditions. Therefore, Soviet ideologists created historical images that would be aligned with the collective memory of the population and, at the same time, narratives about their common historical ties with Ukraine.

Given the different approaches to explaining the politics of memory, the author defines it as a political activity that creates, spreads, and preserves common images about people’s historical past. It includes not only constructing and consolidating historical meanings in the collective memory but also deconstructing and forgetting them. Among the different levels of memory, scientists have labeled one type as institutional<sup>2</sup> or official memory,<sup>3</sup> which means the interpretation of historical events, the shaping of images of the past, and their representation by state institutions or political elites. Researchers have emphasized that institutional (official) memory can influence other types (collective and individual) but not wholly dominate them.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the politics of memory is mainly the result of dialogue and compromise between political elites representing various public interests in democracies. At the same time, political elites often try to manipulate the historical past to justify their political ideology and gain, legitimize and retain power. It is especially true for undemocratic countries, where power has a monopoly on the mechanisms of historical memory construction.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. R. N. Lebow, W. Kansteiner, and C. Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006): 8.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, “What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in German Politics since 1989,” *Social Science History* 22, no. 4 (1998): 547; Rafi Nets-Zehngut, “The Passing of Time and the Collective Memory of Conflicts: The Case of Israel and the 1948 Palestinian Exodus,” *Peace & Change* 37, no. 2 (2012): 255; Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory: The Policies of Memory and Commemoration,” in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. M. Bernhard and J. Kubik (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 8.

<sup>4</sup> Olick, “What Does It Mean,” 555; Lebow, “The Memory,” 15.

The Soviet regime, characterized by the Communist Party's monopoly on political participation, total control over the media, education, and science, and the use of terror to silence dissenters, had limitless opportunities to shape historical memory. The politics of memory in the USSR was an essential and integral part of Soviet propaganda, which used all the necessary resources to create a "homo sovieticus." Professional historians, journalists, writers, artists, and other intellectuals, together with the party apparatus (particularly the central and regional departments of propaganda and agitation), produced narratives about the historical past that followed Stalinist ideology. In the 1930s, this ideology changed radically, turning from the "world proletarian revolution" to the "construction of socialism in one country" and from proletarian internationalism to National Bolshevism. David Brandenberger has identified the emergence of the concept of *Russocentric Etatism* as one of the essential characteristics of Stalin's National Bolshevism.<sup>5</sup> It called the Russians "first among equals" in the "friendly" family of Soviet peoples. The rehabilitation of the imperial past, selective integration of Russian pre-revolutionary military, political and cultural figures into the Soviet heroic pantheon, and the creation of historical narratives emphasizing the unique role of Russians in the development of the Soviet state and the history of other Soviet peoples became priorities of Stalinist memory politics. Similar changes occurred in the official historical memory of Soviet Ukraine: on the one hand, national heroes were restored; on the other, new Ukrainian narratives appeared that showcased a relationship with Russian historical heritage.

According to Serhy Yekelchuk, the annexation of Western Ukraine lands in 1939 influenced the shaping of historical memory in Soviet Ukraine. At the same time, he has pointed out the contradictions between the Soviet center and Ukrainian historians when interpreting Western Ukraine's incorporation.<sup>6</sup> In this view, the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna in 1940 helped strengthen the concept of "Ukrainian people's reunification" in official Soviet discourse.

This article determines similarities and differences in interpreting Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna's pasts and characterizes the Soviet politics of memory in the territories annexed during World War II. Using the discourse analysis method for different texts (e. g. official statements, historiography,

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<sup>5</sup> David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002): 43-62.

<sup>6</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 24-25.



newspaper articles), the author has identified the influence of Stalinist ideology and mythmaking on the shaping of historical memory in the context of “Ukrainian people’s reunification.”

### **Legitimation of the Annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna in the Official Soviet Discourse**

The incorporation of the Russian Empire’s historical heritage into Stalinist ideology strengthened the claims of Soviet leadership in its former territories. The Russian Empire’s slogan of “gathering Russian lands” in World War I was practically adopted by the USSR before World War II. For this reason, the “Bessarabian question,” which remained unresolved between the USSR and Romania, became actual. According to the Paris Protocol of 1920, Bessarabia was passed to Romania, but the Soviet government did not accept the decision and considered this territory disputed. The Soviet Union’s territorial interest in Bessarabia on the eve of World War II was confirmed in an additional secret protocol in a German-Soviet non-aggression pact known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. However, the expansionist plans of the Stalinist leadership later spread to Northern Bukovyna.

On June 26, 1940, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR Viacheslav Molotov put forward the ultimatum for the return of Bessarabia and the transfer of Northern Bukovyna to the Romanian envoy in Moscow Gheorghe Davidescu.<sup>7</sup> The territorial claim to Bessarabia was based on several contradictory facts. First, the document pointed out that in 1918 Romania forcibly occupied this territory viewed as part of the “Soviet Union (Russia).” It means that Soviet diplomats laid claim to the former Russian empire’s territory, so far as the USSR had been formed *de jure* only in 1922. Second, the document accentuated that Romania had broken down the “age-old unity” of Soviet Ukraine with Bessarabia, which Ukrainians had predominantly inhabited. It is worth pointing out that the share of Ukrainians was 19.6%, and the percentage of Moldovans was 47.6% in the Bessarabian Governorate at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Ukrainians predominated only in Khotyn County, whereas their percentage was 20 to 25% in the southern part of Bessarabia, Ackerman and Izmail Counties.<sup>8</sup> Finally, highlighting the USSR’s military power growth, the Soviet government called for “the necessity of establishing sustainable peace

<sup>7</sup> “Mirnoe razreshenie sovetsko-rumynskogo konflikta po voprosu o Bessarabii i severnoi chasti Bukoviny (soobshenie TASS),” *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, June 29, 1940, 1 [in Russian].

<sup>8</sup> L. S. Berg, *Naselenie Bessarabii. Etnograficheskii sostav i chislennost’ (S 10-verstnoi etnograficheskoi kartoii)* (Petrograd: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, 1923): 42-45 [in Russian].

between countries” and claimed the “return of Bessarabia to restore justice.” In turn, the demand for the transfer of Northern Bukovyna was based on ethnic principles, namely the common historical destiny, language, and ethnic composition of the region’s population with Soviet Ukraine; however, this territory was never part of the Russian Empire. What is more, Soviet diplomacy explained the fairness of the transfer of Bukovyna as an act of compensation – “a minor way of indemnification to the USSR and the Bessarabian citizens by Romania’s 22-year rule in Bessarabia.”<sup>9</sup>

Romania was in diplomatic isolation and at risk of military conflict, so its government agreed to evacuate its troops from the demanded territories. During the military campaign (June 28 — July 3, 1940) the Soviet army occupied the territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna. Statements in the Soviet press about the advance of troops without incident were untrue, as there were armed clashes between Soviet and Romanian troops near Reni, Herța, Cornești, Pârlița, and Bălți, killing and wounding on both sides.<sup>10</sup> The rapid advance of the Soviet troops was interpreted by official propaganda as “a new bloodless victory” for Stalin’s diplomacy. Central and regional newspapers published Soviet-Romanian diplomatic correspondence to prove the legality of the Soviet “peace campaign.” Materials on Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna appeared regularly in the Soviet press. Their goals were to legitimate Soviet annexation and to portray the official image of the newly annexed lands to the Soviet people.

The day after the Soviet invasion, *Pravda*, the major newspaper of the Communist party, published an editorial representing the official arguments for the annexation. It predominantly repeated reasons from the diplomatic note of June 26. However, another argument added to the official explanation of the Romanian territories’ annexation was the “liberation of the working people from capitalist slavery.”<sup>11</sup> The article portrayed the abrasive character of colonial oppression and exploitation, the economic decline of Bessarabia, the illiteracy of the population and its material and cultural impoverishment, and the constant class struggle during Romanian rule.

On the same day, periodicals published a summary of information on Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna. *Pravda* and the government newspaper *Izvestiia* highlighted the “unjust detachment” of Bessarabia from Soviet Russia

<sup>9</sup> “Mirnoe razreshenie,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> O. P. Kryknitskyi, “Viiskova operatsiia Chervonoï armii z aneksii Pivnichnoi Bukovyny i Bessarabii (cherven - lypen 1940 r.),” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 1, (2009): 153-154 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>11</sup> “Da zdravstvuiut Sovetskaia Bessarabiia i Sovetskaia Bukovina!” *Pravda*, June 29, 1940, 1 [in Russian].



and described the consequences of Romanian rule: the destruction of industry, high mortality rates (including those caused by epidemics), high illiteracy rates, and mass emigration. The situation in Northern Bukovyna was explained in only a few sentences, which mentioned the expropriation of peasant lands and the national oppression of Ukrainians. In contrast to the Romanian territories, the propaganda presented a thriving Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, formed by the Soviet authorities in 1924 from certain districts of Odesa and Podolsk provinces adjacent to the Dniester River.<sup>12</sup> *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, the newspaper of the Ukrainian SSR's republican authorities, defined Bessarabia as a region that had been transformed into a colony of "Romanian boyars." They reduced it to a "center of starvation, poverty, epidemics, lack of culture"; suppressed the uprising of Bessarabian peasants and workers in a bloody manner; distributed lands to kulaks, bureaucrats, officers, and gendarmes; and pursued violent and unnatural Romanianization, antisemitic policy, and political terror against the population.<sup>13</sup> To enhance the emotional perception, the author — when referring to impersonal "letters from Bessarabia" — described the inhumane methods of torturing of people by the Romanian Siguranța (secret police). It is worth noting that the Soviet periodicals often referred to Romanian documents, statistics, and newspaper articles, but the authenticity of these sources is questionable. Such records, letters, and memoirs of the region's inhabitants were regularly published as various materials to substantiate the "atrocities of the Romanian boyars" against the working people. The anti-Romanian campaign in the Soviet press eased at the end of July 1940 but did not stop.<sup>14</sup>

According to Vladyslav Hrynevych, the region's local citizens generally welcomed the Soviet army and expressed dissatisfaction with Romanian social and national politics.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the Soviet leadership secretly sent to these territories sabotage and reconnaissance groups, which were supposed to "prepare the population for the meeting of the Red Army."<sup>16</sup> Soviet propaganda

<sup>12</sup> "Bessarabiia i severnaia chast' Bukoviny (Spravka)," *Izvestiia*, June 29, 1940, 3 [in Russian].

<sup>13</sup> V. R., "Bessarabiia (Spravka)," *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, June 29, 1940, 3 [in Russian].

<sup>14</sup> Ewa M. Thompson, "Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939-1941," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (1991): 398.

<sup>15</sup> V. A. Hrynevych, "Chervona armiiia u viinakh i viiskovykh konfliktakh 1939-1940 rr.: viiskovo-politychni, ideolohichni ta sotsialno-psykhologichni aspekty," *Problems of Ukrainian History: Facts, Judgments, Searches*, no. 10 (2003): 363 [in Ukrainian]; Kryknitskyi, "Viiskova," 155-156.

<sup>16</sup> V. Khadzhyradiava, "Operatsiia Chervonoii armii v Bessarabii ta Pivnichnii Bukovyni (28 chervnia — 5 lypnia 1940 r.)," in *Ukraina v Druhii svitovii viini: pohliad z XXI st. Istorychni narysy*, vol. 1, ed. V. A. Smolii et al. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2010): 198 [in Ukrainian].

skillfully used welcoming meetings of the community with Soviet soldiers and locals' testimonies to demonstrate the "liberation" campaign of the Red Army. Military parades took place on July 3–5 in Chernivtsi, Chişinău, Bender, and Ackerman. In his address from July 3, Georgii Zhukov, the Soviet commander of the Southern Front, pointed out towards the Bessarabian population's common historical destiny, language, and ethnic composition with Soviet Ukraine and welcomed the region's return to the "Soviet Motherland."<sup>17</sup> Authorities organized rallies and meetings across the country in honor of the "liberation of the working people in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna." The press published congratulations from workers, peasants, and intellectuals from various parts of the Soviet Union in support of government's politics.

Thus, the image of the USSR as a country — "liberator of the oppressed working people" was constructed in the collective consciousness of Soviet society. Soviet leadership and propaganda of the times used similar narratives during the annexation of Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and the Baltic states. Moreover, suppressing facts of military preparations for a possible war with Romania and political blackmail, the authorities represented the solution to the "Bessarabian question" as a victory for a peaceful and just Soviet policy in contrast to war between Western capitalist countries.<sup>18</sup> The USSR's territorial acquisitions in 1939–1940 also legitimated the victims of the "construction of socialism in one country." In particular, the official Soviet discourse identified the military weakness of the young Soviet state as a critical factor in the Romanian annexation of Bessarabia in 1918. Therefore, the peaceful solution to the "Bessarabian question" was interpreted as a consequence of the USSR's military and economic power growth, a tangible result of the "work, efforts and sacrifices" of the Soviet peoples for the benefit of the Motherland, and an incentive for Soviet patriots to commit "new exploits."<sup>19</sup>

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR considered the question of the annexed territories' administrative status on August 2, 1940. The Soviet Parliament created the Moldavian SSR and included Northern Bukovyna and Khotyn, Ackerman, and Izmail Counties in the Ukrainian SSR. According to deputies, such a territorial division would contribute to the "reunification" of both Moldavian and Ukrainian peoples within the Soviet state, which the liberated territories' population awaited impatiently. Soviet authorities invited a delegation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna representatives to the Supreme Soviet's

<sup>17</sup> Hrynevych, "Chervona," 364.

<sup>18</sup> "Novaia pobeda mirnoi politiki SSSR," *Izvestiia*, June 29, 1940, 1 [in Russian].

<sup>19</sup> "Da zdravstvuiut," 1.



session to present the voice of “reunited” peoples. The speakers gave speeches in their respective national languages (Moldovan from Bessarabia and Ukrainian from Bukovyna) and supported Parliament’s decision.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the Soviet government took the ethnic criterion as the basis for the administrative division of the new territories, breaking historical ties within the regions. In particular, Bessarabia, previously imagined by the Soviet leadership as a single historical region, was split into three parts: 1) Central — the Moldavian SSR, a new national republic whose population was targeted by Soviet politics of Moldovan national identity construction; 2) Northern — Khotyn County, which was included in the Chernivtsi oblast together with Northern Bukovyna; 3) Southern — Ackerman and Izmail Counties formed the Ackerman oblast.

### “Reunited Lands”:

#### Different Ways of Historical Memory Construction

The national factor by which the Stalinist leadership justified the expansionist claims in 1939–1940 influenced the official politics of memory. In addition, the combination of master narratives such as the “great Ukrainian people’s reunification” and “liberation of working people from capitalist oppression” in public discourse helped reinforce a positive image of Soviet power among the population. Therefore, Soviet ideologists had to scientifically prove and popularize the statement about common ethnic origin and the ongoing historical ties between Soviet Ukrainians and the newly annexed lands’ population. However, the realities of ethnic composition did not fully coincide with the Soviet government’s notions and wishes. For instance, 10% of the population of Chernivtsi in the early 1930s was Ukrainians — fourth only to Jews (38%), Romanians (27%), and Germans (14.5%).<sup>21</sup> Unlike the Chernivtsi oblast, where Ukrainians predominated, the Ackerman oblast did not have an absolute majority in any ethnic group.

Soviet intellectuals — historians, ethnographers, and writers — were entrusted with inventing the new history of Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna. During the first period of Soviet rule (1940–1941), scientific journals, party periodicals, and special propaganda publications published

<sup>20</sup> *Sed'maia sessiia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR [1-go sozyva], (1 avgusta — 7 avgusta 1940 g.): stenograficheskii otchet* (Moskva: OGIZ, 1940): 49-53 [in Russian].

<sup>21</sup> Svitlana Frunchak and Lynne Viola, “The Making of Soviet Chernivtsi: National ‘Reunification,’ World War II, and the Fate of Jewish Czernowitz in Postwar Ukraine” (PhD diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 2014): 87.



numerous historical essays on Bessarabia and Bukovyna. These narratives were similar in their ideological bias, lack of references to historical documents, inclusion of factual mistakes, manipulation of historical facts, and sometimes outright falsifications. As part of the Soviet propaganda machine, historiography represented the processes of annexing new territories exclusively within the concept of “Ukrainian people’s reunification” and Stalin’s historical discourse.

The concept of “reunification” presupposed the existence of a common origin and ancient historical ties between the people of the annexed regions and Soviet Ukraine and their breaking due to specific events. Such an ancestral homeland was identified as Kyivan Rus’, and ethnically these lands were considered Slavic, inhabited by Ulychians and Tivertsians. Historian Naum Nartsov even claimed the autochthony of the Slavic tribes, which had settled in Bessarabia and the Danube Principalities since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>22</sup> The myth of Kyivan Rus’ as “a cradle of three fraternal peoples” included the idea that all lands belonged to the early Slavic state and its successor, the Galicia-Volyn State, in the so-called area of “the Old Russian nation” — the common ancestor of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Ievhen Odryna, a lecturer at L’viv University, in articles for the newspaper *Vil’na Ukraina*, called Bukovyna and Bessarabia “our primordial lands,” but first as Ukrainian and second as Rus’-Ukrainian.<sup>23</sup> Historians described the princely times for these territories as a period of economic growth and cultural explosion. The Tatar-Mongol invasion was considered an event that dissected them from the Ukrainian homeland for centuries. However, the Rus’ language and the Orthodox Church maintained unity with the Ukrainian lands.

Nevertheless, differences in the historical past and ethnic composition of the newly annexed territories did not allow Soviet ideologists to shape a unified model of interpretation of the past. Northern Bukovyna, where Ukrainians were ethnically dominant and had historical and cultural ties to Eastern Galicia, was represented as an “age-old Ukrainian land.” Moreover, Soviet historians and ethnographers identified the Bukovynian population as monoethnic. Other ethnic groups, which played a significant role in the region’s ethnocultural development, either were not mentioned (Jews and Germans) or were portrayed as colonialists (Romanians and Poles). The authors of the historical-geographic essay *Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna*, the primary

<sup>22</sup>N. Nartsov, “Istoricheskie sud’by Bessarabii i Moldavii (Kratkii ocherk),” *Istoriik-marksist* 9, no. 85 (1940): 85 [in Russian].

<sup>23</sup>Ie. Odryna, “Istorychna dolia Besarabii,” *Vil’na Ukraina*, June 30, 1940, 3 [in Ukrainian]; Ye. Odryna, “Spokonvichna nasha zemlia,” *Vil’na Ukraina*, July 4, 1940, 3 [in Ukrainian].



source of information about the new territories for school teachers, considered Northern Bukovyna a territory that was inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, who "...in language, everyday life, examples of national dress... were little different from the people of Volyn and Podillya."<sup>24</sup> Leningrad Museum's ethnographers distinguished two groups of Bukovynian Ukrainians — Podolians and Hutsuls. Soviet propagandists would later use the image of the Hutsuls as an "exotic and romanticized branch" of Ukrainians to illustrate Soviet Bukovyna.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the shaping of historical memory in Northern Bukovyna was based on the national model through an analogy with the Western Ukrainian lands captured in 1939. Numerous propagandistic materials and newspaper articles expressed the inseparable historical and cultural ties between Northern Bukovyna and Ukraine, including its western lands. Ukrainian writer Dmytro Kosaryk called Northern Bukovyna and Eastern Galicia "long-suffering sisters."<sup>26</sup> Historians of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR incorporated the historical past of Northern Bukovyna into the all-Ukrainian historical process in *History of Ukraine: A Short Course*, published at the end of 1940. They described the history of Bukovyna rather fragmentarily but analyzed it conjunctly with the history of Galicia.<sup>27</sup> Soviet memory politics paid significant attention to the popularization of the Ukrainian national movement in Bukovyna in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The symbol of the Bukovynian cultural renaissance became Iurii Fedkovych (1834–1888), whose poetic writing was promoted in the same way as Ivan Franko's in Western Ukraine. Soviet authorities made the Ukrainian writer Olha Kobylyanska (1863–1942) a true living legend of Bukovyna. In November 1940, a street and one of the schools in Chernivtsi were renamed in her honor,<sup>28</sup> and the Kobylyanska Literary Memorial Museum was opened in 1944.

Soviet ideologists integrated Khotyn county, a historical part of Bessarabia predominantly inhabited by Ukrainians, into a single ethnocultural region with Northern Bukovyna. They pointed out at the linguistic and cultural similarities between the Ukrainians of Khotyn and the Podolians of Bukovyna.<sup>29</sup> For

<sup>24</sup>G. Medvedenko and I. Starovoitenko, "Besarabiia i Pivnichna Bukovyna (Istoryko-heohrafichni narys)," *Komunistychna osvita* 8 (1940): 36 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>25</sup>Frunchak, "The Making," 126.

<sup>26</sup>Dmytro Kosaryk, "Bukovyna. Narys z istorii bukovynskoho narodu," *Radianska Bukovyna*, August 14, 1940, 3 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>27</sup>S. M. Belousov et al., eds., *Istoriia Ukrainy. Korotkii kurs* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Akademii nauk USSR, 1940): 252-253, 261 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>28</sup>V. M. Botushanskii, ed., *Chernivtsi: Istoriia i suchasnist (Iuvileine vydannia do 600-richchia pershoi pysemnoi zghadky pro misto)* (Chernivtsi: Zelena Bukovyna, 2009): 227 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>29</sup>Frunchak, "The Making," 125-126.

instance, *Radyanska Bukovyna* used a photo of the Khotyn Fortress as the main image in the article *On the History of Bukovyna*, published by Chernivtsi State University historian A. V. Kryachun<sup>30</sup>.

However, there were also attempts to represent the history of Bessarabia as part of Ukraine. In particular, Nartsov considered Ukrainians and Rusyns (descendants of East Slavic tribes) to be the indigenous population of the Prut and Danube interfluvial area, which had inhabited these lands even before establishing control over them by the Moldavian Principality. Moreover, he made the interrelation between these ethnic groups and Ukrainians, who “constituted the majority of the population in Khotyn, Ackerman, Izmail and other Bessarabian counties.”<sup>31</sup> The historian identified Bessarabian Moldovans as “a largely assimilated Ukrainian population resided here from all eternity.”<sup>32</sup> Nartsov’s version of Bessarabian history sought to prove the direct ethnic connection between Bessarabian people and Ukrainians. Nevertheless, it did not gain currency in Soviet historical discourse.

Soviet historiography characterized Bessarabia as a polyethnic province economically linked to Tsarist Russia since its incorporation in 1812 until the Romanian occupation in 1918. Therefore, the party’s ideologists never sufficiently substantiated the “reunification” of Southern Bessarabia with the Ukrainian SSR. Above all else, the reason was the lack of symbolic resources. In contrast to the situation in Northern Bukovyna, national heroes and events, which would have tightly associated the regional historical memory with Ukrainian national memory, were almost non-existent. For instance, *History of Ukraine: A Short Course* devoted only a few sentences to describing the history of Southern Bessarabia prior to June 1940.

Therefore, given the lack of such Ukrainian symbols, the Soviet power began to shape a Russocentric model of historical memory, the central narrative of which was the imperial myth of the Russian army, headed by the General Alexandr Suvorov, storming the Izmail fortress on December 22, 1790. Suvorov was included in Stalin’s Soviet heroic pantheon and was glorified throughout the country. Moreover, this narrative was related to the region’s collective memory (on the eve of World War I, the Izmail community planned to erect a monument to Suvorov). Until the end of 1940, the historical narratives about Bessarabia contained brief references to Suvorov’s assault. Intense interest in this event coincided with its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, influencing the region’s symbolic

<sup>30</sup> A.V. Kryachun, “Z istorii Bukovyny,” *Radianska Bukovyna*, June 8, 1941, 3 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>31</sup> Nartsov, “Istoricheskie,” 87.

<sup>32</sup> Nartsov, “Istoricheskie,” 90.



space. In December 1940, the Ackerman oblast was renamed *Izmail oblast*, and its administrative center was moved to Izmail. The central city's avenue, the village, the collective farm, and one of the Izmail oblast's districts were named after Suvorov. Professional historians, including Nikolai Korobkov<sup>33</sup> and Natalia Polonska-Vasilenko,<sup>34</sup> contributed to the popularization of the imperial myth. In 1941, *Mosfilm* began filming *Storm on Izmail*.<sup>35</sup> On the eve of Bessarabia's reunification anniversary, *Pridunaiskaia Pravda* published a brief historical essay on Izmail. The author described Suvorov's assault as the main event in the city's history and emphasized the "Ukrainian-Russian nature" of Izmail in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup>

In July 1941, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna were returned to Romania due to the Nazi-Soviet war. Their Sovietization was interrupted. In early 1944, before the expulsion from the Ukrainian territories of the Nazis, Mykola Petrovskii, the leading historian of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, published a brief survey that finally formulated the concept of "Ukrainian people's reunification." He described Ukrainian history as a struggle for national reunification and union with the Russian people. The historian considered Northern Bukovyna and all of Bessarabia as Ukrainian lands, which shared a history during Kyivan Rus' times, and pointed out the constantly increasing Ukrainian population on these territories. For instance, the author asserted that during the Austrian capture of Bukovyna, *Ruthenians* (Ukrainians) had constituted two-thirds of its population. He also defined the territory incorporated into the Russian Empire under the Bucharest Treaty of 1812 as the "part of the Ukrainian lands in Bessarabia."<sup>37</sup> The following year, M. Petrovskii issued several historical references to "reunited lands" but did not include Bessarabia. In essence, Bessarabian history became the study object for Soviet Moldavian and Russian historians, not Ukrainian.

Authorities entrusted Ivan Polosin, a professor at Moscow University, with writing the official history of the Izmail oblast. *Pridunaiskaia Pravda* published Polosin's article on the eve of the anniversary of "liberation from

<sup>33</sup> N. M. Korobkov, "Vziate Izmaila (1790 god)," *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 4 (1941): 24-39 [in Russian].

<sup>34</sup> N. D. Polonskaia-Vasilenko, "Shturm Izmaila," *Znamia Sovetov*, December 22, 1940, 3 [in Russian].

<sup>35</sup> "K predstoiashim s'emkam novogo khudozhestvennogo fil'ma 'Shturm Izmaila,'" *Pridunaiskaia pravda*, June 19, 1941, 3 [in Russian].

<sup>36</sup> I. Kravchenko, "Izmail. Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk," *Pridunaiskaia pravda*, June 17, 1941, 2 [in Russian].

<sup>37</sup> N. N. Petrovskii, *Vossoedinenie ukrainskogo naroda v edinom Ukrainskom Sovetskom gosudarstve* (Moskva: OGIZ — Gospolitizdat, 1944): 46-47 [in Russian].

fascist invaders.” In contrast to Petrovskii’s pro-Ukrainian narrative, Polosin described Izmail’s past in the context of Russian history. His writings about the region’s history began in Scythian times. The author emphasized the multinational “Bessarabian people,” the liberation of Bessarabia from the Ottoman yoke by the “Russian people,” and the building of the “Russian Izmail city.”<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Polosin’s article contained statements about “Ukrainian people’s reunification” and defined the Bessarabian territory as the “primordial land” of Ukraine.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, central episodes of his narrative were the storming of the Izmail fortress in 1790 and the liberation of the Izmail region by Soviet troops in 1944, which were directly related. Similarly, this connection was established in Izmail’s symbolic space when a monument to Suvorov was unveiled on the anniversary of the city’s liberation on August 26, 1945.

Soviet ideologues thus decided to use various models of constructing the historical memory for “reunified” lands despite the attempts of Ukrainian historians to integrate them into the context of Ukrainian history. Therefore, there were certain contradictions between the Ukrainian and Russian historical narratives about Southern Bessarabia: the former emphasized the Ukrainian composition of the region’s population, while the latter highlighted the decisive role of the Russian people in its history. It is important to note that both approaches did not correspond with historical reality.

### “Long-suffering Lands”:

#### The Myth of Enslavement, Struggle, and Liberation

The transformation of Stalin’s ideology towards what is defined by scholars as National Bolshevism did not mean a renunciation of the concept of class struggle. Ideologists synthesized national narratives with a class approach, which was the basis for Soviet history’s periodization. The October Revolution was the decisive event in Russian and World history, which was viewed through the prism of revolutions and wars as turning points in the class struggle.<sup>40</sup> However, in addition to the working people’s fight against the exploiters, the struggle for national liberation became an integral component of the Stalinist ideological metanarrative.

<sup>38</sup> I. I. Polosin, “Izmail (Istoriia oblasti i goroda),” *Pridunaiskaia pravda*, August 24, 1945, 3 [in Russian].

<sup>39</sup> Polosin, “Izmail,” August 26, 1945, 4.

<sup>40</sup> V. I. Chekanov, “The Formatting of Space and Time in Totalitarian Historical Discourse (on the Example of Soviet Historiography).” *Analele Universității din Craiova - Seria Istorie* 40, no. 2, (2021): 97.



Interpreting the past of the “reunited” lands, Soviet politics of memory formed the myth of the “long-sufferance” of the population, which was violently separated from the Motherland and suffered from social and national oppression. Myth, as a component of metanarrative, has contributed to a simplified understanding of the social reality shaped by ideology. The existence of an evil conspiracy against the community, the presence of a savior who can release the community from this threat, and the coming of the golden age are the main themes of myths.<sup>41</sup> The myth of the “long-suffering lands” had a similar plotline: being violently captured by the enemy and the heavy fate of the people; the heroic efforts of the fight for freedom and an act of liberation; and the beginning of the prosperity era in the Soviet state. With some differences, the power used this narrative for all the “reunited” lands.

Kosaryk systematically introduced this myth into the Soviet historical discourse on Northern Bukovyna. The author portrayed the region’s past with such words as: “The Bukovynian Carpathians and the Subcarpathian hills were changed into a bloody piece of Europe until recent years, and the local community can safely be called long-suffering. Wars were not stopped here for many years; military campaigns were damaging the fields, were devouring cattle, were burning human settlements, were impoverishing the people.”<sup>42</sup> The historical destiny of this land was interpreted as a series of invasions: Tatar, Wallachian (Romanian), Turkish, Austrian, and Romanian. The devastating wars ended after the region’s incorporation by the Habsburg Empire. However, the consequences of its colonial rule were villeinage, starvation, cholera, and national oppression. The author emphasized the Bukovynian people’s constant struggle, which took various forms. Its members always maintained close ties with Ukraine, including “battle” (participation in the Cossack-peasant uprisings of the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the liberation war led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky), “revolutionary” (Opryshki’s movement and rebellion of Lukjan Kobyltsia), and “cultural” (national revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). At the same time, the author concealed the truth about the spreading of the Ukrainian national idea in Bukovyna during World War I and the Ukrainian National Revolution and condemned the activity of Ukrainian nationalists in Bukovyna as treacherous.

Bessarabian history was covered similarly, except when describing the Russian Empire’s rule. Despite the feudal serfdom system of Russian tsarism,

<sup>41</sup> Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 4.

<sup>42</sup> Kosaryk, “Bukovyna,” August 13, 1940, 3.

historians pointed to Russia's progressive influence on Bessarabia's economic and cultural development,<sup>43</sup> and the incorporation of Bessarabia into Russia was considered "less evil than the Turkish yoke."<sup>44</sup> This interpretation completely matches the "lesser evil" formula introduced into the Stalinist official discourse on the past.<sup>45</sup>

It is worth noting that Soviet propaganda chose heroes who personified the people's struggle in "reunited" lands according to the appropriate shape of historical memory. Oleksa Dovbush and Lukjan Kobylitsia, the Ukrainian peasant movements' leaders, became symbols of Northern Bukovyna. Instead, Grigorii Kotovskii — a native of the Moldavian town Hâncești, a criminal offender, a Soviet commander, and one of the initiators of the Moldavian ASSR — became a symbol of the resistance against the tsarist regime in Bessarabia.<sup>46</sup>

Romanian rule was portrayed as the greatest disaster for Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna. "These miseries in twenty years exceeded everything Bukovyna had suffered during the five centuries," wrote Kosaryk.<sup>47</sup> Historians tried to prove official statements about the unjust and anti-national nature of the Romanian occupation. The Romanian incorporation of these lands was interpreted as a conspiracy by the imperialist Triple Entente against the Soviet state.<sup>48</sup> Academic articles and historical essays repeated propagandistic narratives about economic devastation, forced Romanization, and various "atrocities" committed by the occupiers, the "Romanian boyars." Like the "Polish Szlachta," this image personified an external enemy that possessed class and national nature. The detailed historical research of Romanian boyars' rule in Bessarabia was a monograph by Anatolii Dolnik that was made in wartime.<sup>49</sup> It was based on many statistical materials but, according to Soviet ideological rhetoric, compared the Romanian imperialist rule in Bessarabia with the "thriving" Moldavian ASSR. The author constructed the image of a victim from the Bessarabian population, describing the proletariat and peasantry's hardships from economic exploitation and tax oppression, the inhumane

<sup>43</sup> Nartsov, "Istoricheskii," 91.

<sup>44</sup> Medvedenko, G., and Starovoitenko, "Bessarabiia," 27.

<sup>45</sup> Yekelchik, *Stalin's Empire*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Iurii Dold, "Virnyi syn moldavskoho narodu," *Komsomol'skiy propahandyst*, no. 7 (1940): 52 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>47</sup> Kosaryk, "Bukovyna," August 16, 1940, 3.

<sup>48</sup> B. Shtein, "Iz istorii pervonachal'nogo perioda grazhdanskoi voiny (konets 1917 g. — nachalo 1918 g.)," *Istoriik-marksist* 4-5, no. 80-81 (1940): 35 [in Russian]; A. Manusevich, "Istoriia zakhvata Bessarabii Rumyniei," *Istoriicheskii zhurnal* 8 (1940): 91 [in Russian].

<sup>49</sup> A. Dol'nik, *Bessarabiia pod vlast'iu rumynskikh boiar (1918–1940 gg.)* (Moskva: OGIZ — Gospolitizdat, 1945) [in Russian].



working conditions, the people's impoverishment due to unemployment, the forced emigration, the "beggarly" living conditions, the increase in the disease and mortality rates, as well as the prohibition of native languages, the rise of illiteracy and the cultural decline, mass murders and violence by *Siguranța*.

Soviet ideologues interpreted local anti-Romanian conflicts and protests as arguments in support of the Bolsheviks by the working people. However, their statements did not correspond to the truth. For instance, official propaganda, together with Soviet historians, repeatedly referred to the decision of the Chernivtsi People's Council in November 1918, which allegedly had proclaimed Northern Bukovyna's accession to Soviet Ukraine.<sup>50</sup> Actually, the People's Council recognized the supreme authority of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic.<sup>51</sup> They also attributed the Bolshevik nature to the Khotyn uprising of 1919.<sup>52</sup> Communist propaganda created the image of the Tatarbuniar rebellion of 1924 as a symbol of the anti-Romanian 22-years struggle. However, the rebellion was actually initiated by the Soviet secret services and the Communist International with the communist underground of Bessarabia.<sup>53</sup>

The culmination of the Soviet myth of "long-suffering lands" was the act of liberation by Soviet troops, which was expounded as the realization of the "people's 500-year dream"<sup>54</sup> — returning to the Motherland and uniting with the "fraternal consanguineous Russian people."<sup>55</sup> Propaganda described the year of Soviet rule as the beginning of a "golden age" for "reunited" Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna. The Nazi invasion, another "intense suffering," interrupted it. Fascist Germany was designated as the new archenemy, and its collaborators were Romania and "Ukrainian-German nationalists." The second act of "liberation" by Soviet troops in 1944 obscured the first event through its symbolic meaning. Unlike the "bloodless liberation" of 1940, it already included new heroic narratives of the Soviet Great Patriotic War myth. They were just reflected in commemorative practices and the new places of memory.

<sup>50</sup> Oleksandr Krytsevyi, "Narodne Viche 1918 roku," *Radianska Bukovyna*, April 6, 1945, 3 [in Ukrainian]; Medvedenko, G., and Starovoitenko, "Besarabiia," 31.

<sup>51</sup> Oleksandr Dobrzhanskyi and Volodymyr Staryk, *Zmahannia za ukrainsku derzhavnist na Bukovyni (1914–1921 rr.). Dokumenty i materialy* (Chernivtsi: Chernivetska oblasna drukarnia, 2009): 233-234 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>52</sup> S. Markov, "Rumynskii proizvol v Bessarabii (1918 g.)," *Krasnyi arkhiv* 4, no. 101, (1940): 67 [in Russian]; Nartsov, "Istoricheskie," 95.

<sup>53</sup> Vitalie Ponomariov, "Considerații privind implicarea serviciilor secrete sovietice și a Cominternului în organizarea rebeliunii de la Tatar-Buniar," *Plural. History, Culture, Society* 7, no. 1 (2019): 43-59.

<sup>54</sup> Kosaryk, "Bukovyna," 4.

<sup>55</sup> Petrovskii, *Vossoedinenie*, 85.



## Conclusions

Soviet official narratives legitimized the military campaign against Romania in 1940, by presenting the Soviet Union as the liberator of peoples from class and national oppression. The justice of the annexation was explained by Romania's illegal occupation of Bessarabia in 1918 and by the historical, ethnocultural, and linguistic similarities between Ukrainians of Northern Bukovyna and Soviet Ukraine. Constructing the image of the enemy represented by "Romanian boyars," the propagandists portrayed the economic exploitation of the working people, the inhumane living conditions of local citizens, the politics of national discrimination, and the political terror by the Romanian authorities. Following official narratives, Stalinist ideologues created a new version of Southern Bessarabia and Northern Bukovyna's history based on the class struggle and the concept of "Ukrainian people's reunification within a single Ukrainian Soviet state." It included the following scheme of historical development: the common origin and being part of Kyivan Rus' and its successor, the Galicia-Volyn State; separation from the historical homeland, and a long-suffering fate under the rule of the invaders, the worst of whom were the "Romanian boyars"; the community's constant struggle against invaders; the liberation and "long-awaited reunification." However, the Soviet politics of memory regarding the annexed territories varied significantly, using the national Ukrainian model in Northern Bukovyna and the Russocentric model in Southern Bessarabia. The national model, which was constructed by analogy with Western Ukraine, emphasized the monoethnic composition of the Bukovynian population and excluded other ethnic groups from public discourse. In turn, imperial narratives about the military glory of the Russian people were inculcated in Southern Bessarabia, contradicting the concept of reunification. These models were finally established in the historical discourse after the Soviet regime's return in 1944 and became the basis for constructing the historical memory of the local community.

## Rezumat

Alipirea noilor teritorii la RSS Ucraineană în timpul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial a necesitat reconstrucția identității comunităților locale și modelarea memoriei istorice prin intermediul ideologiei staliniste. Acest articol examinează caracteristicile politicii sovietice a memoriei în teritoriile ucrainene prin intermediul exemplurilor Basarabiei de Sud și Bucovinei de Nord, anexate în 1940 ca urmare a campaniei militare împotriva României. Obiectivele studiului au fost de a determina influența ideologiei sovietice asupra reprezentării trecutului, de a caracteriza mo-



durile în care a fost modelată memoria oficială în timpul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial și de a analiza miturile istorice răspândite prin discursul oficial și istoric. Principalele imagini istorice, pe care ideologii sovietici le-au formulat în declarațiile oficiale în lucrările istoriografice și în propaganda din presa periodică, au fost extrase cu ajutorul analizei discursului istoric. Analiza istorică comparată a identificat similitudini și diferențe în interpretarea trecutului regiunilor menționate mai sus. Se subliniază faptul că argumentele și conceptele istorice folosite de puterea sovietică pentru a justifica anexările au devenit fundamentul discursului istoric. Articolul analizează introducerea mitului „ținuturilor îndelung suferinde” în narațiunile istorice, care au interpretat cuceririle teritoriale sovietice ca fiind eliberarea popoarelor asuprite. S-a stabilit că reprezentarea trecutului Basarabiei de Sud și al Bucovinei de Nord corespundea conceptului sovietic de „reunificare a poporului ucrainean”. Cu toate acestea, distincția dintre compoziția etnică și dezvoltarea istorică a acestor regiuni a influențat politica de modelare a memoriei istorice.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** politica memoriei, ideologie sovietică, Basarabia de Sud, Bucovina de Nord, cel de al Doilea Război Mondial.

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# Epurarea corpului didactic al Facultății de Medicină din Cluj în primul deceniu comunist

Victoria GROZAV

## *Abstract*

The period of purges represented a dark page in the history of Romanian education and did not end on September 1, 1945, according to the provisions of Law no. 584/1945 regarding the purification of public administrations, but was continued in the following years, disguised under other political decisions. The Faculty of Medicine faced three waves of purges followed by periods of calm. After the first law on the purification of public administrations was passed (Law no. 461 published in the Official Gazette on September 19, 1944), many teachers were temporarily purged, others permanently, whereas others “arranged” their pension rights. This article discusses how the repressive state machine carried out the purges of teaching staff from Cluj medical education establishments in the first communist decade, as well as the employment criteria in the fall of 1958. The paper analyses the social origin of the teaching staff. Social origin was an essential criterion of retention or exclusion from the education of students and teaching staff. Archival documents illustrate that in 1950, 42% of Cluj Medical-Pharmaceutical Institute (I.M.F.) teachers were party members. Four years later the rate of the Romanian Labourer Party (Partidul Muncitoresc Român – P.M.R.) teachers members increased to 50%. In 1959, this rate was 50%. This percentage of P.M.R. members in 1959 can be explained by the teaching staff’s lack of interest in the party policy, and the exclusion of some members from the party. Also, the article tries to decipher the local party bodies’ influence on the decisions made by the I.M.F. in the purifications.

**Keywords:** communism, teaching staff, Faculty of Medicine from Cluj, higher medical education.

În toamna anului 1944 România se afla într-o situație delicată deoarece în 1940 pierduse o treime din suprafața teritorială a țării. La 28 iunie 1940, U.R.S.S. anexa Basarabia, Bucovina de Nord și Ținutul Herța. Prin Dictatul de la Viena din 30 august 1940, România era nevoită să cedeze Nordul Transilvaniei în favoarea Ungariei, iar prin Tratatul de la Craiova din 7 septembrie 1940, Cadri-laterul a fost cedat Bulgariei. La 23 august 1944, când România a întors armele și s-a alăturat Națiunilor Unite în lupta împotriva puterilor Axei, o parte din teritoriul statului român era sub ocupația Armatei Roșii. Ocuparea României, dar și a altor state din Europa de Sud-Est de către Armata Roșie la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război mondial, a reprezentat un factor determinant în impunerea



dominației sovietice și a regimului comunist în aceste state. În urma semnării Convenției de Armistițiu din 12 septembrie 1944, în România a fost creat contextul legislativ al purificării politice a administrațiilor publice. Convenția de Armistițiu prevedea la articolul 15, obligația guvernului român de a dizolva toate organizațiile pro-hitleriste de tip fascist, politice, militare sau paramilitare aflate pe teritoriul românesc, dar și orice alte organizații care fac propagandă ostilă Națiunilor Unite, dar în special Uniunii Sovietice. De propagandă ostilă Uniunii Sovietice puteau fi incriminați cei care exprimaseră vreodată sentimente antisovietice, cei care militaseră pentru recuperarea Basarabiei, cei care fuseseră în funcții de conducere în ministere între 1940-1944 sau ocupaseră în acea perioadă funcții de conducere în universități, sau oricare funcționar care nu-și ascunsese opiniile anticomuniste.<sup>1</sup>

Epurarea din România a fost un proces programat care a început imediat după 23 august 1944, proces pervertit de comuniști după instaurarea guvernului Petru Groza.<sup>2</sup> Aceasta s-a desfășurat conform cadrului legislativ în perioada 19 septembrie 1944 – 1 septembrie 1945, apoi fără suport legislativ, regăsindu-se mascată sub unele decizii politice. Epurarea a fost cerută de ocupantul sovietic, însă comuniștii au folosit-o în scopul acaparării puterii prin înlăturarea din viața publică a adversarilor politici, dar și a celor care își manifestau antipatia față de regimul comunist.

Imediat după ruperea alianței cu puterile Axei, a fost emisă Legea nr. 461/1944 privind purificarea administrațiilor publice, care prevedea sancționarea foștilor legionari, fasciști și hitleriști aflați într-un serviciu public, precum și revizuirea unor acte administrative emise în timpul dictaturilor carliste și antonesciene, lege de care comuniștii au profitat din plin. Legea epurăției din toamna anului 1944, emisă după semnarea la Moscova la 12 septembrie 1944 a Acordului de armistițiu dintre guvernul român pe de o parte, și guvernele Uniunii Sovietice, Regatului Unit și Statele Unite ale Americii pe de altă parte, a provocat convulsii în întreaga administrație publică, în primul rând prin autoritatea nou creată denumită Comisia de epurăție, care era responsabilă de culegerea și transmiterea informațiilor, iar în al doilea rând prin modul în care această lege a fost interpretată și aplicată. Procesul de epurare a

<sup>1</sup> Maria Someșan, Mircea Iosifescu, „Modificarea structurii universității în anii consolidării sistemului comunist”, în *Anul 1948 - instituționalizarea comunismului. Comunicări prezentate la Simpozionul de la Sighetul Marmației 19-21 iunie 1998* (București: Fundația Academia Civică, 1998), 453.

<sup>2</sup> Ion Zainea, *Politică și administrație în România (6 martie 1945 - 1 martie 1946): Epurarea* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2004), 13.

fost extins în toate domeniile de activitate: administrația, armata, presa, biserica, sănătatea și învățământul.<sup>3</sup>

### Cadrul legal după care au fost efectuate epurările

Primele epurări au început în toamna anului 1944, iar baza legală a fost Legea nr. 461 privind Purificarea administrațiilor publice, publicată în Monitorul Oficial în 19 septembrie 1944. Legea era menită să asigure „mersul normal al serviciilor publice” precizându-se că trecutele guvernări nu au ținut cont de criteriile obiective și legale, pe parcursul promovărilor, încadrărilor sau numirilor funcționarilor publici.<sup>4</sup> Legea se adresa tuturor angajaților din sistemul public, inclusiv din instituțiile științifice și de cercetare, numiți, încadrați sau angajați sub orice formă între 20 februarie 1938 și 23 august 1944.<sup>5</sup> Toți acești angajați puteau fi licențiați din serviciu.<sup>6</sup> Cei disponibilizați din funcții aveau dreptul la o indemnizație (reprezentând salariul, alocația și alte indemnizații prevăzute de lege), cuprinsă între o lună și trei luni în funcție de vechimea în muncă (art.1). Pentru o vechime în muncă de trei ani, legea prevedea o indemnizație pe trei luni.<sup>7</sup>

Conform articolului 2, erau licențiați fără nici o indemnizație, indiferent de data la care au fost numiți, încadrați sau angajați, funcționarii care:

- a) în executarea serviciului au avut o atitudine abuzivă ori o ținută nedemnă;
- b) s-au pus sub orice formă în slujba unor interese străine de acelea ale națiunii române;
- c) au avut o activitate notorie în vreo organizație politică sau paramilitară: legionară, fascistă sau hitleristă, sau dacă au deservit, din proprie inițiativă sau excesiv, prin orice mijloace, scopurile unor asemenea organizațiuni.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pentru buna desfășurare a lucrărilor de epurare, au fost înființate comisii de epurare în întreaga țară în fiecare instituție, întreprindere, localitate și județ. Procesul de epurare a fost monopolizat încă de la început de consiliile politice alcătuite din reprezentanți ai formațiunilor politice participante la guvernare. Încă de la început, Partidul Comunist s-a împotrivit unei epurări făcută cu garanții de obiective și respectarea adevărului. Nu era legiferată încă epurația, când comuniștii au început epurările prin intermediul comitetelor de fabrică sau de întreprinderi, comitete care erau alcătuite în cele mai multe cazuri din elemente lipsite de valoare profesională sau care aveau comportament urât. Zainea, *Politică și administrație în România*, 13-14; 45.

<sup>4</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, *Monitorul Oficial* partea I, anul CXII, nr. 216, (19 septembrie 1944), 6348.

<sup>5</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6348.

<sup>6</sup> În textul de lege termenul de licențiat are înțeles de concediat.

<sup>7</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6348.

<sup>8</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6348.



Erau exceptați de la aplicarea prevederilor art. 2 lit. c, acei funcționari care prin acte concrete și bine dovedite puteau demonstra că au părăsit organizațiile politice menționate și s-au încadrat în lupta pentru cucerirea libertăților democratice și pentru înlăturarea fascismului din România, încă înaintea datei de 23 august 1944.<sup>9</sup> Această prevedere lăsa calea deschisă înscrierii în Partidul Comunist celor care considerau că li se poate imputa un anumit trecut politic. Articolul trei preciza că toate încadrările făcute după 20 februarie 1938 erau revizibile. Funcționarii care făceau obiectul acestui articol, urmau să fie reîncadrați, fără să li se acorde un grad inferior față de cel avut la 20 februarie 1938.

Ministrul sau șeful administrației aveau obligația să instituie o comisie de epurație compusă din trei membri dintre funcționarii superiori ai ministerului sau instituției respective, comisie care putea face cercetări înăuntrul departamentului sau instituției prin toate mijloacele ce îi stăteau la dispoziție. Comisia urma să facă „propuneri concrete și motivate” ministrului sau șefului administrației, care trebuia să aprecieze și să decidă.<sup>10</sup> Concluziile comisiei, aprobate de ministrul de resort sau de șeful instituției, nu puteau fi contestate sau atacate pe nici o cale.<sup>11</sup>

Referitor la această lege, presa controlată de comuniști a publicat numeroase articole care cereau arestarea trădătorilor și curățarea aparatului de stat, susținând că întreaga țară cere epurație. Profesorul Teofil Vescan în articolul său „Țara cere o epurație radicală în Nordul Ardealului” preciza că a venit vremea ca sabotajul operațiunii de epurare să înceteze, iar legea adoptată să fie aplicată fără întârziere, menționând că partidele democratice de la noi din țară (Partidul Comunist, Partidul Social-Democrat, Uniunea Populară Maghiară, Uniunea Patrioților) și toți cetățenii cinstiți cer aplicarea legii. În opinia profesorului Vescan „fiecare cetățean trebuie să devină un factor al epurației căci fiecare știe ceva despre fasciști”.<sup>12</sup>

Legea avea termen de aplicabilitate de trei luni, de la data publicării în Monitorul Oficial, iar toate dispozițiile contrare din legile generale sau speciale rămâneau abrogate pe perioada cât această lege era în vigoare. De asemenea, Consiliul de Miniștri putea prelungi termenul de aplicare a legii, cu încă trei luni.<sup>13</sup> Trebuie menționat faptul că într-o perioadă de șase luni, legea a fost modificată de mai multe ori. Pe 8 octombrie 1944 a fost publicată Legea nr. 486

<sup>9</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6349.

<sup>10</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6349.

<sup>11</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6349.

<sup>12</sup> Teofil Vescan, „Țara cere o epurație radicală în Nordul Ardealului”, *Adevărul Ardealului*, 6 (12 aprilie 1945), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Decretul-lege nr. 461, 6349.

privitoare la purificarea administrațiilor publice. La 1 februarie 1945, a fost prelungit termenul de aplicare a legii, până la 1 mai 1945. În 30 martie 1945 a fost publicată în Monitorul Oficial o nouă lege: Legea nr. 217 de purificare a administrațiilor publice. Termenul de aplicare a acesteia a fost prelungit prin alte două legi, ultima prelungire fiind efectuată prin Legea nr. 584/1945 care prevedea prelungirea aplicării legii până la 1 septembrie 1945.<sup>14</sup>

Sub pretextul că vechea lege de purificare a administrației publice a avut rezultate nesatisfăcătoare privind curățarea aparatului de stat de „elementele care s-au dovedit nevrednice”, în 30 martie 1945 a fost publicată în Monitorul Oficial o nouă lege, Legea nr. 217 pentru purificarea administrațiilor publice.<sup>15</sup> Ministrul justiției, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, declara că noua lege a fost concepută astfel încât să corespundă scopului urmărit.<sup>16</sup> Decretul era unul îmbunătățit și conținea 12 articole. Conform noii legi, comisiile instituite și delegații speciali puteau să culeagă informații pe orice cale, chiar și fără audierea funcționarului cercetat. Ministerul putea informa pe cel cercetat, pentru a-și face apărarea prin memorii. Totodată a fost pusă presiune pe comisii, prin instituirea pedepsei cu închisoarea de până la un an pentru directorii și șefii de personal din ministere și instituțiile administrative, dacă nu semnalează în scris ministerului cazurile care intră sub prevederile acestei legii. Erau incluse în noul decret și crimele, delicturile, actele de violență fizică sau morală. Noua lege prevedea că cei epurați conform articolelor 2 și 3, vor fi întrebuiți la muncă obligatorie în folosul statului în lagăre speciale, iar cei care se vor dovedi culpabili de schingiurii, maltratări și alte fapte penale, vor fi trimiși în instanță (art.10). Îndepărtarea din serviciu era cuprinsă între o lună și 5 ani, fără drept de indemnizație. Articolul 3 era modificat, făcând referire atât la perioada dinainte de 23 august 1944, cât și la perioada de după 23 august 1944. Conform acestui articol, urmau să fie licențiați cei care au servit într-o formă sau alta interese străine; au activat într-o mișcare legionară, fascistă sau hitleristă; au avut atitudine antidemocratică, dar și care vor săvârși pe viitor asemenea acțiuni, precum și cei care împiedicau prin acțiunile lor buna funcționare a serviciilor publice sau tulburau relațiile dintre România și aliații săi. Prin această nouă lege, a fost abrogată Legea nr. 486/1944, comi-

<sup>14</sup> *Monitorul Oficial*, partea I, anul CXIII, nr. 25, (1 februarie 1945), 667; *Colecțiune de legi și regulamente*, Tom XXIII, 1945, 1395.

<sup>15</sup> „Țara pe drumul democrației. O nouă lege de epurație. Decret-lege pentru purificarea administrațiilor publice”, *Adevărul Ardealului* 5 (5 aprilie 1945), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, „Expunere de motive privind legea pentru purificarea administrației publice”, *România viitoare*, 89, (4 aprilie 1945), 2.



siile de epurație instituite în baza acestei legi au fost dizolvate, însă deciziile întocmite de aceste comisii de epurație rămâneau valabile (art. 12).<sup>17</sup>

Cotidianul *Dreptatea*, organul de presă al Partidului Național-Țărănesc, descria la începutul anului 1946 profunza îngrijorare a profesorului Emil Hațieganu cu privire la prelungirea legii epurației și la dreptul de apărare a celor incriminați, precizând:

”Dacă forurile conducătoare socotesc că mai sunt cazuri în care epurarea trebuie aplicată, de ce nu propun deferirea lor unor instanțe de judecată compuse din magistrați inamovibili și cu garanția dreptului de apărare?”<sup>18</sup>

Presa țărănistă afirma că epurația nu a lovit pe cei care fuseseră sprijinitori ai dictaturii antonesciene: legionari, fasciști sau hitleriști; ea a lovit pe acei care nu au voit să se înscrie în Frontul Național Democrat (F.N.D). Toți vinovații adevărați care au făcut profesie de credință fendistă au scăpat, sau dacă formal au trebuit epurați, după aderarea la F.N.D. și-au regăsit un loc de muncă în viața românească, de la ministru până la funcționarul cu cel mai scăzut grad.<sup>19</sup>

Prima lege de purificare a administrațiilor publice care a constituit cadrul legal după care au fost efectuate epurările a fost Legea nr. 461 publicată în *Monitorul Oficial* în 19 septembrie 1944, iar scopul urmărit era să înlăture din viața publică definitiv sau temporar pe cei care prin exercitarea funcției au avut o atitudine abuzivă, pe cei care s-au pus în slujba intereselor străine, pe legionari și pe fasciști și să revizuiască contractele de muncă a tuturor celor angajați la stat, numiți sau încadrați în intervalul 28 februarie 1938 – 23 august 1944. Legea a fost modificată de mai multe ori fiind înăsprită prin completarea cu noi articole. Cele mai aspre modificări aduse legii de purificare a administrațiilor publice au fost introduse prin Legea nr. 217/1945, lege care a instituit pedeapsa cu închisoarea. De asemenea, concedierea angajaților era cuprinsă între o lună și cinci ani, perioadă în care cei concediați nu beneficiau de nici o indemnizație. Era extinsă perioada de analiză a activității politice a angajaților și după data de

<sup>17</sup> „Decret-Lege pentru purificarea administrației publice”, *România viitoare*, 89, (4 aprilie 1945), 2.

<sup>18</sup> „Politica epurației”, *Dreptatea*, 7, (12 februarie 1946), 3; Emil Hațieganu (1878-1959) a fost fruntaș al Partidului Național-Țărănesc, ministru în guvernele interbelice, conduse de Al. Vaida-Voevod și G.G. Mironescu. În ianuarie 1946 a fost numit ministru secretar de stat în guvernul Petru Groza, funcție pe care a deținut-o până în 29 noiembrie 1946. A fost profesor la Facultatea de Drept din Cluj și rector al Universității „Regele Ferdinand I” în anul universitar 1928-1929. După „afacerea Tămădău” a fost arestat și întemnițat la Sighet. Andreea Andreescu, Lucian Nastasă, Andrea Varga, *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România 1956-1968* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Culturală, 2003), 371.

<sup>19</sup> B. Ionascu, „Epurare brevet F.N.D.”, *Dreptatea*, 102 (9 iunie 1946), 3.



23 august 1944. Această lege de purificare a administrațiilor publice, coroborată în unele domenii de activitate cu alte legi sau decrete, a servit drept cadru legislativ pentru epurările din perioada 1944-1945.

### **Cum a fost aplicată legea privitoare la purificarea administrațiilor publice?**

În toamna anului 1944 au început să apară diverse acuzații la adresa unor cadre didactice din Universitatea „Regele Ferdinand I”. Atunci au apărut în presă atacuri la adresa unor profesori ai universității, fiind nominalizați: Onisifor Ghibu, Iuliu Hațieganu și Titu Vasiliu. La începutul lunii noiembrie 1944, profesorul Hațieganu a fost arestat de poliția din Sibiu.<sup>20</sup> Având probleme de sănătate, suferind de diabet zaharat și polialergie, a fost transferat din arestul poliției într-o rezervă din Clinica Medicală pe care o conducea și pus sub pază militară.<sup>21</sup> Prin această arestare se urmărea compromiterea și înlăturarea de la conducerea universității a rectorului Iuliu Hațieganu. Schimbarea conducerii universității s-a făcut în noiembrie 1944, iar pentru ocuparea funcției de rector a fost chemat Alexandru Borza, profesor la catedra de botanică la Facultatea de Științe a Universității „Regele Ferdinand I”, facultate care în perioada Dictatului de la Viena s-a refugiat la Timișoara. În martie 1945, la cererea F.N.D. din Ardeal, rectorul universității din Cluj, Alexandru Borza, a fost înlocuit cu Emil Petrovici, încălcându-se astfel principiul autonomiei universitare, prin nerespectarea articolului 10 din Legea nr. 386/1943 privind organizarea învățământului superior care prevedea autonomie în privința conducerii universității, administrarea fondurilor proprii, recrutarea personalului, precum și organizarea activității didactice, științifice, educative și sociale. O altă modificare la vârful conducerii a avut loc la Facultatea de Medicină, când decanul Victor Papilian a fost schimbat cu Mihail Kernbach. Noile numiri erau agreeate de Partidul Comunist. În aceste condiții, se poate afirma că imixtiunea Partidului Comunist în problemele universității, s-a produs încă din primăvara acestui an.

<sup>20</sup> În urma Dictatului de la Viena încheiat la 30 august 1940, Universitatea „Regele Ferdinand I” din Cluj a fost nevoită să se refugieze la Sibiu și la Timișoara. Facultățile de drept, medicină, litere și filosofie și biblioteca universității s-au refugiat la Sibiu, funcționând aici până la sfârșitul lunii mai 1945. Facultatea de Științe s-a refugiat la Timișoara. Marcela Sălăgean, Ana-Maria Stan, Emilia Cizmaș, Szilárd Tóth, „Universitatea din Cluj între 1919 și 1944”, în *Istoria Universității „Babeș-Bolyai”*, coord. Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2012), 176-177; Mihai Teodor Nicoară, *Universitatea „Regele Ferdinand I” din Cluj între cele două dictaturi (1940-1947)* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2011), 69.

<sup>21</sup> Marcela Sălăgean, *Administrația sovietică în nordul Transilvaniei* (Cluj-Napoca: Fundația Culturală Română, 2002), 129; Florea Marin, *Iuliu Hațieganu* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Medicală Universitară „Iuliu Hațieganu”, 1999), 146.



La începutul anului 1945, universitatea se afla în plin proces de epurare. Rectorul era, conform legii, președintele comisiei de epurație. Pentru a se crea o cale liberă spre epurare, a fost nevoie de promulgarea unei noi legi a epurației, prin care au fost desființate vechile comisii de epurație. Se pare că rectorul Alexandru Borza a fost un membru incomod al acestei comisii, de vreme ce F.N.D. a solicitat Ministerului Educației Naționale înlocuirea acestuia din funcția de rector.

În ianuarie 1945, Iuliu Hațieganu figura pe lista epurabililor, la fel și Onisifor Ghibu. Această listă a apărut în ziarul sibian *România viitoare*, fiind semnată „Argus”, pseudonim cu care obișnuia să se semneze Constantin Daicoviciu, decan al Facultății de Litere. Daicoviciu făcea parte din conducerea ziarului *România viitoare*, oficios al „Uniunii Patrioților” organizație subordonată Partidului Comunist.<sup>22</sup> În aprilie 1945, în aceeași publicație, în articolul „Să nu uităm”, „Argus” îi acuza pe doctorii Alexandru Vaida-Voievod și Iuliu Hațieganu că „au otrăvit generații de-a rândul cu duhul urii de rasă, cu duhul fascist”, considerându-i pe cei doi medici autorii fascismului românesc. Hațieganu mai era acuzat că a folosit funcția de rector și uniforma de colonel pentru a conduce manifestații publice contra U.R.S.S.-ului.<sup>23</sup>

La mijlocul lunii aprilie 1945, ziarul *România Viitoare* publica decizia Ministerului Educației Naționale, luată pe baza rapoartelor întocmite de rectorul Emil Petrovici, Liviu Rusu, prorectorul universității și profesorul Borza cu privire la epurarea corpului profesoral al universității clujene. Erau epurați definitiv profesorii: Ioan Lupaș, Onisifor Ghibu și Traian Herseni, iar doctorii Iuliu Hațieganu și Titu Vasiliu primeau pedepse mai mici.<sup>24</sup> Un Decret Regal din 23 iulie 1945, prevedea îndepărtarea de la catedră pe o perioadă de trei luni a profesorului Iuliu Hațieganu și de șase luni pentru profesorul Titu Vasiliu.<sup>25</sup> Un alt articol semnat „Argus” apărut în *România viitoare* în luna februarie 1945, aducea acuzații profesorului Gheorghe Popovici că a avut legături cu cei de la vârful conducerii Gărzii de Fier și că manifestase o atitudine favorabilă alianței cu Germania.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Minodora-Maria Cioban, *Epurările în Universitatea Clujeană* (Teză de doctorat: Cluj-Napoca 2010), 130.

<sup>23</sup> Argus, „Să nu uităm”, *România viitoare*, 95 (10 aprilie 1945), 3; Marin, *Iuliu Hațieganu*, 146-147.

<sup>24</sup> „Epurarea Universității din Cluj”, *România viitoare*, 99 (15 aprilie 1945), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Mihai Teodor Nicoară, „Defascizarea Universității „Regele Ferdinand I” din Cluj (1944-1946): Epurările și comprimările corpului didactic”, *Analele Universității din București. Seria științe politice*, 11 (2009), 90.

<sup>26</sup> Argus, „Un admirator al „Căpitanului”: Profesor univ. Gh. Popovici”, *România viitoare*, 57 (25 februarie 1945), 5.

La Facultatea de Medicină Cluj-Sibiu, operațiunea de epurare de la sfârșitul anului 1944 și începutul anului 1945 s-a produs în două moduri: prin neprelungirea contractului de muncă și prin acte emise de comisia de epurație.<sup>27</sup> După modificarea legii și dizolvarea vechii comisii de epurare, rezultatele nu au întârziat să apară. În ședința Consiliului Facultății din 25 mai 1945 a fost analizată cererea de integrare în postul de asistent a doctorului Remus Doctor, cererea având avizul favorabil de la jurisconsultul universității. Mihail Kernbach, decanul Facultății de Medicină, considera că asistentul Remus Doctor trebuie să se adreseze mai întâi comisiei pentru cercetarea actelor abuzive și ilegale săvârșite în anii de dictatură antonesciană, apoi să solicite Consiliului reavizarea în postul didactic.<sup>28</sup>

Și doctorul Constantin Gheorghiu, fost asistent la Clinica chirurgicală, solicita Consiliului Facultății să fie reconfirmat în post de asistent, deoarece în Monitorul Oficial nr. 106 din 14 mai 1945 a apărut decizia Ministerului Educației Naționale prin care era anulată decizia de punerea sa în indisponibilitate. Această decizie a ministerului a fost adoptată după ce ministerul a analizat procesul verbal emis de comisia de epurație. Discuția de punere în funcție a doctorului Gheorghiu a fost amânată de către Consiliul Facultății, pe motivul că profesorul Alexandru Pop nu era prezent la ședință.<sup>29</sup> În procesul verbal din 2 iunie 1945 se preciza că doctorul Gheorghiu nu a fost pus în indisponibilitate, ci nu a mai fost reconfirmat în postul de asistent.<sup>30</sup> La o nouă solicitare a doctorului Constantin Gheorghiu pentru reconfirmare în post sau transfer, prin hotărârea nr. 2298/1945, Consiliul a avizat transferul. Decanul Kernbach preciza că în cazul în care doctorul Alexandru Pop ar propune reconfirmarea acestuia pentru funcția de asistent, această propunere trebuia să aibă loc în urma unui raport bine motivat, așa cum prevedea legea.<sup>31</sup>

Un document din februarie 1946 ilustrează modul în care procesul de în-lăturare a cadrelor didactice din universitate s-a realizat cu sprijinul politic al Partidului Comunist. Într-o notă informativă din 27 februarie 1946 a Comite-

<sup>27</sup> Denumirea de Cluj-Sibiu a fost dată universității clujene în perioada în care a fost refugiată la Sibiu. Până în anul 1948, Facultatea de Medicină a fost parte a Universității „Regele Ferdinand I”. La Reforma învățământului din 1948, aceasta s-a desprins de universitate și a devenit Institut Medico-farmaceutic care cuprindea facultățile de medicină, pediatrie, igienă, stomatologie și farmacie.

<sup>28</sup> Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (DJANC), fond Facultatea de Medicină și Farmacie (FMF), *Procese verbale ale Consiliului Facultății*, dos. 157/1945-1946, f. 48.

<sup>29</sup> DJANC, fond FMF, *Procese verbale*, dos. 157/1945-1946, f. 50.

<sup>30</sup> DJANC, fond FMF, *Procese verbale*, dos. 157/1945-1946, f. 58.

<sup>31</sup> DJANC, fond FMF, *Procese verbale*, dos. 157/1945-1946, f. 67.



tului Regional de Partid Cluj, se solicita Comitetului Central (C.C.) al P.C.R. să dea o mână de ajutor profesorilor democrați din universitate: decanului Constantin Daicoviciu, rectorului Petrovici și profesorului Roșca, în munca pe care o desfășoară, deoarece exista în universitate o campanie dusă contra profesorilor democrați în fruntea căreia se află profesorul Nicolae Mărgineanu, secretarul general al Asociației Româno-Americane. Se solicita sprijinul C.C. ca astfel de „elemente reacționare” ca profesorul Mărgineanu să poată fi înlăturat din universitate, fapt concretizat în 1947 când Mărgineanu a fost înlăturat din învățământ prin metoda comprimării catedrelor.<sup>32</sup> Un an mai târziu profesorul Mărgineanu era arestat.

Pentru epurarea cadrelor didactice de la Facultatea de Medicină, în perioada 1944-1945 au fost utilizate două metode. Una consta în înlăturarea de la catedră prin acte emise de comisia de epurație a universității, iar cealaltă metodă utilizată era neprelungirea contractului de muncă. La începutul primului val de epurări la Facultatea de Medicină au fost epurați temporar prin decret regal profesorii Iuliu Hațieganu și Titu Vasiliu. Documentele anului 1945 evidențiază trei cazuri în care cadre didactice concediate au contestat decizia consiliului facultății de neprelungire a contractului de muncă, însă nici unul dintre aceste cadre n-a obținut reîncadrarea în funcția didactică. În lipsa unor documente care să conteste deciziile conducerii facultății de medicină în privința concedierilor din 1945, nu putem spune dacă cele trei cazuri au fost singurele cazuri de epurare prin neprelungirea contractului de muncă. Încă din toamna anului 1944 „s-a muncit” neîntrerupt la demolarea elitelor universitare. Înlăturarea definitivă de la catedră a unor personalități medicale nu putea avea loc brusc fără acuzații de cele mai multe ori nefondate, apărute în presă și în note informative trimise Partidului Comunist.

### Comprimarea catedrelor

La 15 septembrie 1947, presa comunistă anunța încheierea lucrărilor comisiei de comprimare, iar raportul acestei comisii prevedea comprimarea unui număr însemnat de profesori universitari care au desfășurat „activitate profascistă”, au avut și încă au „manifestări reacționare”.<sup>33</sup> Tot atunci s-a hotărât ce institu-

<sup>32</sup> DJANC, Comitetul Regional P.C.R. Cluj (CRPCRC), fond 1, dos. 9/1946, f. 31; „Suprimarea unor noi catedre universitare”, *Lupta Ardealului*, 347 (10 octombrie 1947), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Comprimarea însemna suprimarea unor discipline sau reducerea numărului de ore la anumite discipline. De activitate profascistă putea fi acuzată orice persoană care a activat în Mișcarea Legionară și nu a părăsit organizația înainte de 23 august 1944 pentru a se înscrie în partidele care constituiau alianța Frontul Național Democrat. De asemenea, puteau fi acuzăți de atitudine profascistă, cei care au ocupat funcții de conducere în perioada de dictatură antonesciană.

te vor fi desființate. Din comisia ministerială instituită pentru raționalizarea învățământului superior făceau parte: profesorul Traian Săvulescu, ministru, profesorul P. Constantinescu-Iași, președintele Uniunii Sindicatelor, și profesori universitari: Constantin Daicoviciu, Miron Niculescu și Tegăneanu, miniștri subsecretari de stat.<sup>34</sup> Constantin Daicoviciu afirma că aceste comprimări „sunt dictate de necesitatea absolută a reducerii cheltuielilor statului.”<sup>35</sup> În primul rând erau supuse comprimării posturile vacante, apoi posturile deținute de cumularzi, considerate a fi posturi „răsărite” în 1940, iar în al treilea rând, posturile cadrelor didactice care au împlinit condițiile normale de pensionare, posturile acestora fiind supuse raționalizării. În legătură cu ultimele, s-a decis ca posturile considerate inutile sau nu de absolută necesitate să fie comprimate definitiv sau temporar.<sup>36</sup> În acest sens, Constantin Daicoviciu, membru în comisia de comprimări, declara că la luarea deciziilor s-a ținut cont de performanța profesională a profesorilor și de situația materială a acestora, menționând că sunt persoane care au venituri profesionale laterale, și aceste decizii nu reprezintă o problemă de existență pentru cadrele respective. Mai dădea asigurări că, datorită purificării „de tot ce este balast, element inutil sau dăunător,” munca științifică din învățământul superior nu va avea de suferit. De asemenea urmau să fie desființate institutele care „s-au dovedit inutile” și au fost înființate „din interese personale.”<sup>37</sup> Facultățile și institutele urmau să organizeze învățământul cu cadrele didactice rămase, conform instrucțiunilor Ministerului Educației Naționale.

În 1947 profesorul Gheorghe Buzoianu de la Clinica O.R.L. a fost înlăturat definitiv de la catedră. Nu i s-a mai permis să lucreze în clinica pe care o conducea. Singura funcție pe care a putut să o ocupe a fost cea de medic într-un cabinet O.R.L. Era acuzat de atitudine dușmănoasă, reacționară și antimunci-torească, întrucât „intoxică studenții cu teorii fasciste.”<sup>38</sup> Într-o notă informativă a Inspectoratului de Jandarmi Cluj erau caracterizați câțiva profesori din universitatea clujeană. De la Facultatea de Medicină erau puși în discuție profesorii: Marius Hângănușiu, Ion Manta, Dumitru Mihail, Dimitrie Negru, Vic-

<sup>34</sup> „S-au terminat lucrările comisiei pentru comprimarea profesorilor universitari”, *Lupta Ardealului*, 326 (15 septembrie 1947), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Constantin Daicoviciu, „Comprimările în învățământul superior”, *Lupta Ardealului*, 339 (1 octombrie 1947), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Daicoviciu, „Comprimările”, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Daicoviciu, „Comprimările”, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Nicoară, „Defascizarea Universității”, 93; Marius Bojiță, Honorius Popescu, Oliviu Pascu, Cristian Bârsu, *Școala clujeană de medicină și farmacie* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Medicală Universitară „Iuliu Hațieganu”, 2004), 112.



tor Papilian și Alexandru Pop. În 1946 profesorul Dimitrie Negru, cel care în 1919 a pus bazele radiologiei la Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj, a fost epurat din învățământul universitar pe motive politice. Era considerat liberal titelist și acuzat că nu participă la mișcări progresiste, este preocupat numai de câștig și solicită sume enorme de bani de la bolnavii care au o situație materială precară.<sup>39</sup> Profesorului Ion Manta i se reproșă că a beneficiat materialicește de pe urma achizițiilor din Germania, pe care universitatea l-a însărcinat să le efectueze pentru Facultatea de Medicină și pentru clinicile universitare. Era criticat și pentru orientările politice din trecut, fiind etichetat simpatizant legionar, cu-zist, care mai apoi a trecut în tabăra maniștilor.<sup>40</sup> Toți cei menționați în această notă informativă au trecut prin epurări temporare sau definitive.

Comprimările și raționalizările din învățământul superior vizau profesori și conferențieri cu drept de pensionare, dar și alte cadre didactice care nu erau la vârsta pensionării. Presa locală semnală comprimarea profesorilor Nicolae Leon, Cristofor Coroamă, Gheorghe Buzoianu și Marius Hângănuș de la Facultatea de Medicină; conferențiarul Nicolae Mărgineanu de la Facultatea de Litere și Filosofie; profesorii Radu Tițeica, Aurel Ionescu și conferențiarul Ștefan Manciulea de la Științe.<sup>41</sup> În 1947 de la Facultatea de Medicină au mai fost comprimați un număr mare de preparatori și asistenți universitari.<sup>42</sup>

Profesorii Constantin Damian de la Facultatea de Drept și Victor Papilian de la Facultatea de Medicină au fost comprimați cu drept de pensionare. Profesorul Papilian avea doar 59 de ani. Tot în 1947 a fost pensionat și Titu Vasiliu, profesor la Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj. Avea 62 de ani, dar devenise și el indezirabil regimului comunist.<sup>43</sup> Profesorul Iuliu Moldovan a fost de asemenea pensionat, fiind păstrat încă un an la catedră din lipsă de cadre didactice

<sup>39</sup> Nicoară, „Defascizarea Universității”, 96.

<sup>40</sup> Nicoară, „Defascizarea Universității”, 96.

<sup>41</sup> „Comprimările și raționalizarea din învățământul universitar”, *Lupta Ardealului*, 354 (18 octombrie 1947), 3.

<sup>42</sup> „Lista completă a comprimaților de la Universitatea din Cluj”, *Lupta Ardealului*, 355 (19 octombrie 1947), 3; De la Facultatea de Medicină, mai erau comprimate următoarele cadre didactice: Florica Mazilu, Ionel Albu, Grigore Poruțiu, Aurel Ludu, Teodor Tudoraș, Ion Ștefan, Constantin Tache, Ioan Macovei, Mircea Aleman, Grigore German, Constantin Beraru, Cornel Mețianu, Iosif Florescu, Gh. Ștefănescu, Mihaela Stoichția, Victor Corvianu, Traian Stoicoiu, Victor Gavrilă, Crișan Mircioiu, Virgil Baican, Stavre Rașcu, A. Coșoreanu, Zeno Nemeș, Augustin Retcu, Valer Cimoca, Liviu Modran, Ligia Marșecu, V. Vaida Voievod, Iordan Pasarov, Horațiu Costache, Arsilia Aleman, Marius Sulică, Victor Rusu, Costică Crăciun, Ion Dănățiu, Dan Geta, V. Crișan, Gh. Boeriu, Gh. Moga, Ileana Husti, Gh. Stoian Mușetescu, Valeriu Sersea, Mircea Dănicel.

<sup>43</sup> Bojiță, et al., *Școala clujeană*, 58.

specializate pentru catedra de igienă. După pensionare, Iuliu Moldovan a fost închis la Sighet pe o perioadă de cinci ani, iar Victor Papilian la închisoarea Văcărești timp de doi ani. Iuliu Moldovan fusese un membru marcant al Partidului Național-Țărănesc și un apropiat al lui Iuliu Maniu. În 1946 Victor Papilian era membru al Partidului Social Democrat Independent (P.S.D.I.) condus de Constantin Titel Petrescu. La alegerile din toamna anului 1946, Victor Papilian figura pe primul loc la Cluj, pe lista P.S.D.I. Din această poziție a contribuit la mobilizarea personalului medical pentru alegerile din toamna aceluși an. Implicarea sa la alegerile parlamentare din toamna anului 1946 nu a fost agreată de comuniști, care l-au catalogat titelist și nedemocrat.

Crișan Mircioiu ocupa funcția de asistent universitar în 1947, când primise de la decanatul Facultății de Medicină o decizie scrisă privind înlăturarea sa de la catedră. I se spusese și verbal că nu mai are ca căuta în clinică. După câteva luni de cercetări a fost rechemat la catedră. Se înscriesese în partid. Despre această „manevră” a comuniștilor, profesorul Mircioiu relatează:

„Mi s-a dat de înțeles că trebuie să mă înscriu în partid, ca să fac ceva să mă mișc de la un anumit nivel. (...) Se întâmpla că cei care erau în partid puteau să facă ceva, iar dacă nu erai nu puteai”<sup>44</sup>.

Epurarea doctorului Crișan Mircioiu a avut la bază două motive: odată că nu era membru P.M.R., iar în al doilea rând, doctorul Mircioiu era ginerele profesorului Onisifor Ghibu, și el epurat definitiv din învățământ.

Sub pretextul reducerii cheltuielilor bugetare, în toamna anului 1947 au avut loc așa-numitele comprimări în instituțiile de învățământ superior din țară, care n-au fost altceva decât o nouă formă de epurare politică. Prin aceste comprimări au fost desființate unele posturi didactice pe o perioadă temporară sau definitivă. În cazurile profesorilor de la Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj, unora le-a fost „aranjat” dreptul la pensie fără ca aceștia să fie la vârsta pensionării, iar altora nu le-a mai fost încheiat contract de muncă. Posturile rămase vacante au fost ocupate prin promovarea unor cadre didactice de la catedrele respective sau de la alte catedre. Constantin Daicoviciu, membru în comisia de comprimări, declara că la luarea deciziilor s-a ținut cont de performanța profesională a profesorilor și de situația materială a acestora, însă documentele contrazic aceste declarații în privința recunoașterii performanțelor profesionale și a activității științifice a profesorilor de la Facultatea de Medicină. În toamna anului 1947, n-au fost apreciați pozitiv de comisia de comprimări profesorii: Victor

<sup>44</sup> Ionuț Tene, *Clujul universitar în memoria colectivă 1944-1948* (Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2008), 248.



Papilian, Iuliu Moldovan, Dimitrie Negru și Titu Vasiliu, profesori care și-au adus contribuția lor la organizarea învățământului medical clujean în 1919, punând bazele catedrelor și institutelor la care au fost investiți concomitent în funcțiile de director și de profesor.

### **Anul 1948 marcat de reforma învățământului și din nou de epurare**

În 1948 învățământul românesc a fost reorganizat după modelul învățământului sovietic. În perioada stalinistă a fost implementat în învățământul românesc modelul de evaluare sovietic cu note de la unu la cinci. Din 1948, la facultățile de medicină și farmacie a fost introdus cursul de marxism-leninism, care în 1957 a fost înlocuit cu cel de materialism dialectic și istoric. La admiterea la medicină în anul universitar 1955-1956 limba rusă era una dintre materiile de la proba orală. Discipline importante precum: nutriția, eredopatologia, psihologia, biopolitica și o parte din cursurile de igienă, au fost suprimate. Unele au fost suprimate temporar, iar altele definitiv fiind înlocuite cu: economia politică, socialismul științific, marxism-leninismul și limba rusă, toate ca materii obligatorii de studiu.

Decretul nr. 175 pentru Reforma învățământului, publicat în Monitorul Oficial din 3 august 1948 reglementa învățământul din România, învățământ care a devenit în totalitate parte a sistemului educațional de stat. În ceea ce privește învățământul superior, acesta a fost divizat în două categorii. O categorie cuprindea universitățile și politehnicile, iar cealaltă categorie cuprindea institutele de învățământ superior.<sup>45</sup> În baza acestui decret, Ministerul Învățământului Public a emis Decizia nr. 263.327 privind Organizarea învățământului superior, decizie prin care facultățile de medicină din țară au fost transformate în institute medico-farmaceutice. În baza acestui act ministerial, în toamna anului 1948 Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj s-a desprins de universitate și s-a transformat în institut de sine stătător, primind denumirea Institutul Medico-farmaceutic din Cluj.<sup>46</sup> Scopul reformei învățământului din 1948 era politizarea integrală a învățământului și formarea unor cadre care să aplice politica partidului în toate domeniile inclusiv în învățământ care reprezenta principala verigă de pregătire a cadrelor necesare pentru construirea socialismului.

O altă etapă de epurare s-a produs la Reforma învățământului din 1948. „O simplă decizie ministerială din 19 iunie 1948 rezilia toate contractele de angajament privind personalul didactic și științific din învățământul superior

<sup>45</sup> Monitorul Oficial, *Decretul nr. 175* (3 august 1948), Anul CXVI, nr. 177, Partea I-a, 6323.

<sup>46</sup> Monitorul Oficial, *Decizia nr. 263.327 privind Organizarea învățământului superior* (26 octombrie 1948), Anul CXVI, nr. 249, Partea I-a, 8323.



și secundar.<sup>47</sup> Decizia nr. 162067 din 23 iunie 1948 prevedea ca Ministerul Învățământului Public să încheie contracte de angajament de la 1 octombrie 1948 pentru nevoile didactice și științifice.<sup>48</sup> Nu se cunosc criteriile după care s-a efectuat selecția la angajarea cadrelor didactice în toamna anului 1948, însă decizia din 19 iunie poate fi considerată ca un preaviz de disponibilizare pentru cadrele didactice care în luna octombrie n-au mai fost încadrate în învățământ. Practic, prin decizia ministerială din vara anului 1948 li s-a acordat autorităților timpul necesar și libertatea de epurare a corpului didactic.

Dintre toate evenimentele petrecute în toamna anului 1948, cel mai regretabil a fost cazul profesorului Emil Țeposu. În 1948, când Facultatea de Medicină a devenit institut în cadrul căruia funcționau cinci facultăți, funcția de decan la Facultatea de Medicină Generală i-a fost încredințată profesorului Emil Țeposu.<sup>49</sup> Se specializase în urologie la București, Viena și Paris. Era unul dintre discipolii profesorului Iacob Iacobovici. În 1927 a fost creată catedra de urologie. Emil Țeposu a fost numit profesor agregat.<sup>50</sup> Un an mai târziu a devenit profesor titular la această catedră.<sup>51</sup> Când a fost invitat să ia cuvântul ca viitor decan, „Emil Țeposu a urcat la tribună clătînându-se, și a ținut o locuțiune penibilă: bâlbâieli, divagații, fraze cvasi-agramate.”<sup>52</sup> Toți îl respectau și îl cunoșteau pe profesor ca fiind un orator sobru, cu discursul bine organizat la subiect. Cei care au asistat la acest eveniment erau consternați. Unii credeau că profesorul e beat. Ar fi băut de fericire că a fost numit decan. Ziua următoare s-a aflat că profesorul Țeposu își pusese capăt zilelor. Luase înaintea ședinței de la I.M.F. o doză mare de barbiturice. A refuzat categoric să colaboreze cu regimul comunist care dorea ca profesorul Țeposu să-l demaște ca „dușman al poporului” pe colegul său, profesorul Alexandru Pop.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Dinu C. Giurescu, *Învățământul în România între anii 1948 și 1989*. Disertație susținută cu ocazia ceremoniei de acordare a titlului de Doctor Honoris Causa al Universității din Craiova, 22 noiembrie 2001; Apud, A.N.I.C Fond .CC. al P.C.R., Cancelarie, dos. 11/1949, f. 22, în Eugenia Nicoleta König, *Drepturile Biroului Politic al Partidului Muncitoresc Român (1948-1949)*. (Lucrare de licență. Facultatea de Istorie, Universitatea București, 2002), 68-69. [https://www.ucv.ro/pdf/international/informatii\\_generale/doctor\\_honoris/68.pdf](https://www.ucv.ro/pdf/international/informatii_generale/doctor_honoris/68.pdf). (accesat: 20.08.2021).

<sup>48</sup> Giurescu, *Învățământul în România*.

<sup>49</sup> Radu Iftimovici, „Arbitrar, nedreptăți și abuzuri în istoria științei românești. Cincinalul pri-goanei: Cluj, 1948-1953”, *Revista* 22, 36 (15-22 septembrie 1991), 14.

<sup>50</sup> Profesorul agregat era profesorul universitar care funcționa pe lângă o catedră condusă de alt profesor.

<sup>51</sup> Bojiță, et al., *Școala clujeană*, 67.

<sup>52</sup> Iftimovici, „Arbitrar, nedreptăți și abuzuri”, 14.

<sup>53</sup> Iftimovici, „Arbitrar, nedreptăți și abuzuri”, 14.



Profesorul Țeposu nu a dorit să preia Clinica Chirurgicală din alte două motive. În primul rând, nu era pregătit profesional pentru chirurgie generală, iar al doilea motiv era de ordin moral, cei doi profesori fiind buni prieteni. În urma acestei tragedii, organele locale de partid nu au renunțat la planul inițial de a-l înlătura din Institut pe profesorul Alexandru Pop, numai că excluderea nu a mai fost una spectaculoasă, ci a fost efectuată printr-un transfer la Facultatea de Medicină din Timișoara. Nu se știe dacă profesorul Aurel Nana, care a ocupat catedra rămasă vacantă, a avut sau nu un rol în toată această „afacere.”

În 1948, Iuliu Hațieganu a fost din nou epurat. De această dată, s-a încercat incriminarea sa, odată cu a profesorului Nicolae Mărgineanu, însă declarațiile profesorului Mărgineanu în fața anchetatorilor au confirmat refuzul categoric al lui Hațieganu de a intra în politică și de a ocupa funcția de ministru al sănătății în „guvernul rezistenței.”<sup>54</sup> Neputând fi acuzat de implicare în politică în procesul profesorului Mărgineanu, la 8 decembrie 1948 lui Iuliu Hațieganu i-a fost înscenat un „proces” în propria catedră, în care i s-au adus o serie de acuzații de către colegul său, conferențiarul Aurel Moga, medic cardiolog, pe care Hațieganu îl pregătise pentru a-i urma în funcție. Ședința a avut loc în amfiteatrul clinicii, în care a fost mobilizat tot personalul clinicii, iar acuzatorul Moga a avut ca susținători pe secretarul de partid al clinicii, pe secretarul de partid al I.M.F. Cluj și pe profesorul Mihail Kernbach. I s-a imputat atunci profesorului Iuliu Hațieganu „că a avut atitudine net reacționară în perioada 1940-1944; că a avut atitudine profascistă în timpul guvernării antonesciene; că a favorizat nepotismul (făcându-se aluzie la ginerele său, doctorul Octavian Fodor); că a transformat Clinica Medicală I în sanatoriu particular; că a întemeiat și cultivat la Cluj școala misticismului; că a avut o atitudine cosmopolită și a desconsiderat știința sovietică și savanții sovietici.”<sup>55</sup>

După această ședință, profesorul Iuliu Hațieganu a fost înlăturat de la catedră, dar și din clinică, fiind reabilitat abia în 1953.<sup>56</sup> Pe locul rămas vacant în urma înlăturării profesorului Hațieganu, a fost promovat profesor nimeni altul decât Aurel Moga. Serviciul oferit de Moga a fost răsplătit de Partidul Comunist în 1949 cu funcția de decan al Facultății de Medicină, în 1950 cu cea de

<sup>54</sup> Cristina Anisescu, *Nicolae Mărgineanu. Un psiholog în temnițele comuniste* (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 152; 262; Cioban, *Epurările*, 132.

<sup>55</sup> Marin, *Iuliu Hațieganu*, 166-167.

<sup>56</sup> La începutul anului universitar 1953, profesorul Iuliu Hațieganu a fost reîncadrat în funcția de profesor la I.M.F. Cluj, și numit șef de clinică la Clinica Medicală III unde a predat cursuri postuniversitare în specializarea interne-gastroenterologie. Totodată i s-a permis să-și aleagă colaboratorii, dar a fost nevoit să accepte și cadre noi care i-au fost recomandate de forurile de conducere ale institutului. Marin, *Iuliu Hațieganu*, 175.

rector al I.M.F. Cluj, iar mai apoi cu cea de ministru al sănătății în ultimele trei guverne ale lui Maurer. Aceste acuzații grave, aduse profesorului Hațieganu au avut loc sub conducerea decanului Mihail Kernbach, și el un exponent marcant al Partidului Comunist.<sup>57</sup> Pierderea sau rătăcirea documentelor arhivistice din fondul P.C.R., aparținând Institutului Medico-farmaceutic din 1948, cât și a unor documente din fondul arhivistic al I.M.F. Cluj din 1948, constituie un impediment în aprofundarea cercetării acestei perioade.

În primul deceniu comunist, detenția unui membru al familiei avea drept consecință excluderea cadrelor didactice și a studenților din învățământul superior. În 1948 când profesorul Iuliu Hațieganu a fost epurat din învățământ, fratele său, Emil Hațieganu era arestat. Un an mai târziu a fost arestat și Eugen Hațieganu. În perioada în care a avut rudele în detenție, i-a fost deschis dosar penal, fiind suspectat că a trimis îmbrăcăminte, alimente și medicamente deținuților din penitenciare. A fost achitat, după ce a dovedit că pachetele trimise în penitenciar erau pentru frații săi aflați în detenție.<sup>58</sup>

Decretul nr. 175 privind Reforma învățământului emis la 3 august 1948 a schimbat radical sistemul de educație din România la toate gradele. Printre obiectivele principale ale legii învățământului s-au aflat formarea tineretului în spirit comunist și controlul strict al școlilor elementare, medii și superioare. Învățământul românesc a fost organizat după modelul sovietic. În învățământul universitar medical au fost introduse materii obligatorii precum marxism-leninism, socialism științific și limba rusă, iar planul de învățământ era unic pentru toate facultățile din țară. În toamna anului 1948, Comitetul Regional de Partid Cluj s-a implicat în problemele Institutului, influențând deciziile acestuia privind ocuparea unor funcții de conducere și destituirea unor cadre didacti-

<sup>57</sup> Mihail Mihailide, „Nașul, nașa și șantajul. Un mare cardiolog–sperjur!”, *Viața medicală* (13 septembrie 2013). <https://www.viata-medicala.ro/istoria-medicinei/nasul-nasa-si-santajul-un-mare-cardiolog-sperjur-7436>. (accesat: 10.07.2020); În 1950 profesorului Kernbach era apreciat de partid din punct de vedere profesional, fiind considerat un element bine pregătit profesional, conștiincios și muncitor, însă ca membru al P.M.R. a activat intens în domeniul universitar, având multe greșeli în activitatea politică. DJANC, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj (CRPMRC), fond 13, *Tabel nominal cuprinzând caracterizarea corpului didactic și didactic ajutător al Institutului Medico-farmaceutic Cluj*, dos. 200/1950, f. 1; Arhiva CNSS Iași conține o notă informativă în care se preciza că activitatea susținută de profesorii Mihail Kernbach și C. Daicoviciu pentru înlăturarea de la catedră a profesorului Hațieganu nu a fost aprobată de C.C. al P.C.R. Datorită acestei decizii, încrederea partidului față de Kernbach s-a diminuat considerabil. În 1951 profesorul Kernbach a fost exclus din partid, iar în 1952 a fost transferat la Institutul Medico-farmaceutic din Iași. Mihailide, „Nașul, nașa și șantajul.”

<sup>58</sup> Cioban, *Epurările*, Facsimil XV.



ce. Excluderea din învățământul medical clujean în 1948, a profesorilor Iuliu Hațieganu și Alexandru Pop s-a produs cu sprijinul organelor locale de partid și cu acordul conducerii Institutului. Transferarea unor cadre didactice la Facultatea de Medicină din Timișoara sau în rețeaua sanitară, au reprezentat o altă metodă de epurare care a fost practică în toamna acestui an.

### Licențierile din anul 1952

La sfârșitul anului 1944, Partidul Comunist dispunea de un număr mic de membri, de aceea atragerea în partid a unui număr cât mai mare de membri, constituia pentru partid o prioritate. Așa se explică faptul că, până spre sfârșitul anului 1947, înscrierea în partid s-a efectuat aproape fără nici o selecție. Atunci au fost cooptate în partid o serie de persoane publice dar și intelectuali, însă nu toți erau pătrunși de convingeri comuniste, unii dintre aceștia erau constrânși de împrejurări. La 21 februarie 1948, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej prezenta raportul C.C. al P.M.R., în care sublinia necesitatea verificării fiecărui membru de partid privind trecutul, activitatea și devotamentul față de partid și clasa muncitoare.

Nu se cunoaște data începerii lucrărilor de verificare a membrilor de partid din I.M.F. Cluj, însă arhivarea acestor documente a fost datată la sfârșitul anului 1950. În urma verificărilor realizate de Regionala de Partid a P.M.R. Cluj, au fost întocmite caracterizări tuturor cadrelor didactice și didactice ajutoare, membre și nemembre. În baza dispozițiilor Hotărârii Consiliului de Miniștri (H.C.M.) nr. 1849/1952, Comitetul pentru Învățământul Superior, prin Ordinul nr. 44277/21. XI 1952, elibera din funcții pe data de 1 noiembrie 1952 un număr de 127 cadre didactice și didactice ajutoare de la I.M.F. Cluj.<sup>59</sup> Documentele de partid din această perioadă reflectă clar nemulțumirea partidului în privința trecutului și prezentului politic al multor cadre. În 1952, erau înlăturate de la catedră cadrele didactice care au participat ca medici pe front, în cel de-al Doilea Război mondial, și au luptat împotriva U.R.S.S., cei care au fost decorați, apoi cei care în urma verificărilor au fost excluși din partid, însă nu au fost înlăturate toate cadrele didactice excluse din partid. Trebuie amintit faptul că în această perioadă România se afla în plin proces de colectivizare a agriculturii. Nu numai studenții cu origine „nesănătoasă” erau amenințați cu exclude-

<sup>59</sup> DJANC, fond FMF, Ordine și dispoziții de încadrare în muncă, dos. 108/1952-1959, ff. 338-340; În toamna anului 1952 au fost licențiați de la I.M.F. Cluj următoarele cadre didactice cu grad de conferențiar: Vasile Hurghișiu de la medicină legală; Viorel Gligore de la Clinica medicală; Andrei Vitalyos de la endocrinologie; Virgil Sasu de la obstetrică și ginecologie; Nicolae Mayer și Marius Sulică de la igienă; Caius Antonescu, Victor Ciocănelea, Robert Scheinder, Camelia Costache și Lascu Ball de la farmacie.

rea din facultate, ci și cadrele didactice cu origine de chiabur, ale căror părinți nu renunțaseră la proprietate, pentru a se înscrie într-o formă de asociație agricolă colectivă. De această dată, concedierile cadrelor didactice au fost încadrate în categoria elementelor oportuniste, materialiste, carieriste, dușmănoase și exploatare.<sup>60</sup> Pentru o imagine de ansamblu a criteriilor după care au fost decise aceste excluderi din învățământ, vom insera două caracterizări, ale cadrelor didactice concediate.

Despre Caius Antonescu, conferențiar la Facultatea de Farmacie, P.M.R. consemna:

„Conferențiar cu origine de mic burghez, slab pregătit. A fost exclus din partid. A fost alături de hitleriști, a fost pe frontul de răsarit unde a fost decorat. Provenit din P.S.D., unde a activat intens pentru aripa dreaptă. Nu este sincer, nici devotat partidului, șovin, materialist închipuit.”<sup>61</sup>

Despre asistentul universitar Constantin Pană, P.M.R. menționa:

„Asistent universitar cu origine socială de țăran mijlocăș, bine pregătit cu largi perspective de dezvoltare. Exclus din partid din 1940. În 1941 a luat parte la pregătirea de cadre legionare, astăzi încă se menține naționalist și șovin. Susține că regimul sovietic este un regim de dictatură și teroare. Are purtare dictatorială, primește bani de la bolnavi, nesigur, păstrează legătura cu foștii legionari și nu are nimic în comun cu clasa muncitoare.”<sup>62</sup>

Acțiunea de verificare a fiecărui membru de partid privind trecutul, activitatea și devotamentul acestuia față de partid (acțiune care s-a desfășurat în rândul membrilor P.M.R. în perioada 1948-1950) a dus la excluderea din partid a multor membrii. Pentru cadrele didactice de la I.M.F. Cluj, verificarea politică a vizat întreg personalul didactic, indiferent dacă erau sau nu membrii de partid. Documentele studiate atestă faptul că nu toate cadrele didactice excluse din P.M.R. și-au pierdut și funcția didactică. De exemplu, profesorii Ioan Prodan și Leon Prodan au fost acuzați de trecut legionar. În urma verificărilor, Leon Prodan a fost exclus din partid, însă nici Ioan, nici Leon Prodan nu a fost înlăturat din postul didactic. Documentele arhivistice studiate ilustrează limpede că principalul criteriu și aproape singurul după care s-au efectuat excluderile din învățământul universitar a fost criteriul politic, atât în perioada 1945-1948, cât și în 1952, excepție făcând câteva cazuri în care a fost restrânsă activitatea unor catedre.

<sup>60</sup> În acest context, cuvântul materialist are semnificația unui interes material sau pecuniar.

<sup>61</sup> DJANC, CRPMRC, fond 13, *Tabel nominal*, dos 200/1950, f. 7.

<sup>62</sup> DJANC, CRPMRC, fond 13, *Tabel nominal*, dos 200/1950, f. 11.



## **Criteriile de înlăturare a cadrelor didactice din învățământul medical clujean în perioada 1957-1958**

După retragerea trupelor sovietice din România, în vara anului 1958, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej a impus un nou val de persecuții, de această dată fiind vizați cu precădere intelectualii. Epurările din această perioadă a fost resimțite deopotrivă de studenții, medicii și cadrele didactice din Institutul Medico-farmaceutic din Cluj. După un deceniu de la instaurarea comunismului, guvernul emitea H.C.M. nr. 1003/1957 cu privire la îmbunătățirea compoziției sociale în învățământul superior. Dacă până în 1948 s-a pus accent pe înlăturarea seniorilor considerați cu mentalitate burgheză și trecut legionar, în 1958 a venit rândul epurării cadrelor tinere, pentru a se realiza echilibrul compoziției sociale și în rândul cadrelor didactice.

La începutul lunii septembrie 1957, Ministerul Învățământului a trimis instrucțiuni pentru anul universitar 1957-1958, în care erau menționate criteriile după care urmau să fie înlăturate cadrele didactice din învățământ. Conform acestor instrucțiuni, trebuiau îndepărtate din învățământ în primul rând cadrele didactice care nu corespundeau criteriilor politice, apoi urmau cele care nu corespundeau din punct de vedere profesional.

Din analiza documentelor din 1950 rezultă că apartenența politică la P.M.R. a cadrelor didactice superioare (conferențieri și profesori) reprezenta un procent de 39% din totalul de 67 cadre didactice superioare. Din cele 383 cadre didactice ajutătoare, 44,5% erau membre P.M.R. sau U.T.M. În urma verificărilor efectuate de partid, 15% din cadrele didactice superioare și 7,5% dintre cadrele didactice ajutătoare au fost găsite necorespunzătoare și, prin urmare, au fost excluse din partid.<sup>63</sup>

La începutul anului universitar 1954-1955, apartenența politică la P.M.R. și U.T.M. a cadrelor didactice superioare (conferențieri și profesori), împreună cu cea a cadrelor didactice ajutătoare (șefi de lucrări, asistenți și preparatori), reprezenta 50% din totalul cadrelor didactice din institut, iar din acest procent, 25% era reprezentat de cadrele didactice superioare. În toamna anului 1954, doar jumătate din cadrele didactice ajutătoare erau înscrise în partid, însă în toamna anului 1957 nu se mai tolera ocuparea unui post vacant de cadru didactic ajutător fără ca viitorul cadru didactic să fie înscris în partid. Au fost cazuri în care, la unele catedre, Institutul s-a văzut nevoit să angajeze cadre didactice de tranziție. Acestea nu erau nici candidate la P.M.R. nici membre P.M.R., dar aveau o bună pregătire profesională. Aceste cadre de tranziție nu erau

<sup>63</sup> DJANC, CRPMRC, fond 13, *Tabel nominal*, dos. 200/1950, f. 1-34.

menținute în funcție decât până la găsierea unor „elemente corespunzătoare” din punct de vedere profesional și politic.

Analizând documentele anului 1954, originea socială a cadrelor didactice din acest an era următoarea: 202 fii de funcționar, 64 fii de țăran sărac, 29 fii de țăran mijlocaș, 47 fii de muncitor, 13 fii de meseriaș, 11 fii de comerciant, 3 fii de medic, 5 fii de preot, 12 fii de mic burghez, 6 fii de profesor universitar, 5 fii de chiabur și 2 fii de ofițer superior.<sup>64</sup> În vara anului 1959, procentul cadrelor didactice din institut care erau membre sau candidate la P.M.R. era tot de 50%, însă au apărut unele modificări statistice privind originea socială a acestora. A fost introdusă în statistică în acest an originea socială de intelectual. Din totalul de 372 funcții didactice, 77 erau ocupate de fii de intelectuali. Și procentul fiilor de muncitor a crescut semnificativ, ajungând să se dubleze comparativ cu anul 1954. În 1959 cea mai bine reprezentată era clasa socială a fiilor de funcționar, care ocupau 127 funcții didactice. Cu origine de chiabur mai rămăseseră în Institut doar două cadre didactice, una cu funcție de profesor, iar cealaltă de asistent universitar. În privința opțiunilor politice ale cadrelor didactice trebuie subliniat faptul că, în 1959, 50% dintre cadre didactice erau înscrise în P.M.R. și U.T.M.<sup>65</sup>

La 3 septembrie 1958, I.M.F. Cluj trimitea Ministerului Învățământului și Culturii un referat „în legătură cu scoaterea din Institut a cadrelor didactice necorespunzătoare”, propuse pentru luna octombrie.<sup>66</sup> În toamna anului 1958, un număr de 27 cadre didactice „necorespunzătoare” au fost licențiate. Referatul cu „rezolvarea” scoaterii din Institut a cadrelor didactice „necorespunzătoare” prezintă motivele care au stat la baza acestor concedieri. Doctorul Ioan Prăgoi, profesor la Clinica Chirurgicală infantilă, era acuzat de abateri grave de la disciplina sanitară, constând în încasarea unor sume de bani de la familiile copiilor bolnavi. Conferențiarul Virgil Ilian de la Chirurgie III, era „scos” de la catedră din lipsă de ore. În completarea motivării disponibilizării sale se menționa că a fost simpatizant al mișcării legionare, iar cu ocazia verificărilor membrilor de partid a fost exclus din partid.<sup>67</sup> În 1950, Virgil Ilian avea funcția de conferențiar. Avea origine burgheză, dar atunci comuniștii îl evaluau favorabil din punct de vedere profesional, recunoscându-i calitățile didactice. A fost exclus din partid, deoarece era fiu de preot. În 1950, tatăl său

<sup>64</sup> Arhivele Universității de Medicină și Farmacie „Iuliu Hațieganu” (AUMFIH), Prorectorat științific, *Schema personalului administrativ, tehnic și gospodăresc*, dos. 70/1962, f. 4-31.

<sup>65</sup> AUMFIH, Serviciul personal, *Numiri și promovări în funcțiuni*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 33.

<sup>66</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 28.

<sup>67</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 46.



deținea 60 de iugăre de pământ. Mai era acuzat că a avut legături strânse cu legionarii, că a fost pe frontul din est, că a fost decorat cu Coroana României și cu Steaua României.<sup>68</sup>

Gheorghe Cojocaru, asistent la catedra de ginecologie, era considerat un simpatizant al mișcării legionare. Vasile Codoreanu, asistent la catedra de botanică, era inclus în categoria foștilor legionari. Robert Frank, asistent la catedra de anatomie umană, provenea din familie de exploatare. Florin Secăreanu, asistent la Chirurgie III, a fost exclus din partid pe motiv că a fost sionist. Asistentul Ștefan Simu, era fiu de preot, era pasiv față de activitatea politică și rezervat față de partidul comunist. Victoria Bahovschi, asistent la catedra de fiziologie, era considerată slab pregătită profesional. Avea o atitudine pasivă față de activitatea social-obștească.<sup>69</sup> Era căsătorită cu un element dușmănos regimului de democrație populară. Soțul ei fusese condamnat mai mulți ani „pentru activitate contra regimului comunist.”<sup>70</sup> Toți cei scoși din învățământ au fost plasați în rețeaua sanitară sau în munci corespunzătoare pregătirii lor.<sup>71</sup>

În toamna anului 1958 au fost înlăturate cadrele didactice necorespunzătoare din punct de vedere politic (care nu erau membre de partid), cele care nu s-au ocupat suficient de educația comunistă a studenților, cele considerate dușmănoase, cele provenite din clasa „exploatare” dar și cele necorespunzătoare din punct de vedere profesional. Apoi urmau profesorii și conferențiarilor cărora Comisia Superioară de Diplome le-a respins confirmarea gradului didactic, cadrele didactice care, în urma susținerii examenului, nu au obținut titlul de candidat în științe și cele care nu aveau studii în specialitatea la catedra la care activaseră anul anterior.<sup>72</sup> Chiar dacă Ministerul Învățământului a enumerat mai multe cauze care puteau sta la baza acestor epurări, documentele arhivistice ilustrează faptul că și de această dată, principalul criteriu de excludere din învățământ a fost criteriul politic.

<sup>68</sup> DJANC, CRPMRC, fond 13, *Tabel nominal*, dos 200/1950, f. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Se considera activitate social-obștească participarea cadrelor didactice la diverse evenimente culturale; deplasări după orele de serviciu în zone unde a fost efectuată colectivizarea agriculturii pentru acordarea unor consultații medicale; susținerea unor conferințe privind prevenția unor boli; participarea la muncă patriotică și o implicare activă în activitatea de partid.

<sup>70</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 46.

<sup>71</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 48.

<sup>72</sup> DJANC, fond FMF, *Instrucțiuni nr. 1.437.a/1957 privind introducerea statelor de funcțiuni în instituturile de învățământ superior și stabilirea sarcinilor didactico-științifice ale cadrelor didactice*, dos. 107/1952-1959, f. 222.



## Cum s-a derulat procesul de înlocuire a cadrelor didactice și care a fost relația politică-știință?

După epurarea cadrelor didactice „necorespunzătoare” care a avut loc în toamna anului 1958, pentru posturile rămase vacante a fost organizat concurs. Unele posturi rămase vacante au fost scoase la concurs, iar altele nu, deoarece cadrele didactice erau aproape de pensionare. Postul de conferențiar de la Clinica stomatologică ocupat de Vasile Vasilescu și cel de șef de lucrări pe care era încadrată Florica Gavrila nu au fost scoase la concurs, întrucât cele două cadre didactice erau aproape de pensionare. În toamna anului 1958 au avut loc două etape de concurs pentru ocuparea posturilor rămase vacante. La prima etapă au fost scoase la concurs 12 posturi didactice. Pentru participarea la concurs pe aceste posturi erau propuse nominal cadre didactice.<sup>73</sup> Institutul a făcut propunerea candidaților pentru fiecare post didactic, propunere ce viza câte un candidat pe post. Se specifica expres în referat că toate propunerile înaintate de I.M.F. Cluj către minister, precum și aprobarea de a se prezenta cei în cauză la concurs, au fost dezbătute în prealabil cu organele locale de partid, care au fost de acord cu propunerile Institutului.<sup>74</sup> Acest document întărește încă o dată dovada implicării organelor locale de partid, în procesul de selecție a dosarelor candidaților în vederea ocupării unui post didactic în învățământul superior medical clujean.

În a doua etapă au fost propuse să fie scoase la concurs alte 14 posturi didactice. Au fost scoase la concurs posturile următoarelor cadre didactice:

Ioan Manta, profesor la Catedra de Biochimie, Romul Opreanu, conferențiar la Catedra de Fizică medicală; Victor Comes, conferențiar la Catedra de Igienă; Petre Pogâncianu de la Catedra de Fizică; Florea Marin, asistent la Clinica Medicală III; Margareta Sima, asistentă la Clinica Psihiatrică; Stănculescu Viorica, asistentă la Clinica de Psihiatrie; Viorica Tudoran Stanca, asistentă la Clinica Oftalmologică; Constantin Stănciugel, asistent la Stomatologie; Rodica Macarovici, șef laborator la Pediatrie II; Alexandru Șerban, șef lucrări la Anatomie Patologică; Ștefan Hărăguș, șef lucrări la Clinica Medicală I; Aurel Kaufman, asistent la Chirurgie II; Eugen Cosma, șef lucrări la Chirurgie II.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Pentru concurs la etapa I-a, au fost propuse următoarele cadre didactice: Vasile Vasilescu, conferențiar la Stomatologie Ortopedică; Florica Gavrila, șef de lucrări la Limba engleză; Ioan Nestor, șef lucrări la Microbiologie; Liviu Popa, asistent la Chimia medicală; Toma Fărcaș, asistent la Anatomie umană, Eugen Gelepu, asistent la Ftiziologie, Ioan Orha, asistent la Medicală I; Virgil Mîrza, asistent la Medicală III; Elvira Hărăguș, asistent la Stomatologie Ortopedică; Viorel Junie, asistent la Chimie analitică; Sergiu Munteanu, preparator la Anatomie umană și Cornelia Todoruțiu, șef de lucrări la Histologie.

<sup>74</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 42.

<sup>75</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, ff. 41-42.



În vara anului 1958, I.M.F. Cluj, prin rectorul său Aurel Moga, s-a adresat Ministerului Învățământului solicitând să anuleze concursurile posturilor didactice care fuseseră ocupate de Ioan Manta, Ștefan Hărăguș și Alexandru Șerban, justificând cererea cu pregătirea profesională foarte bună, o activitate bogată în cadrul catedrei și „o orientare corespunzătoare.”<sup>76</sup>

În cazul profesorului Manta, nu exista posibilitatea de a fi înlocuit la momentul respectiv. Doctorul Hărăguș, șef de lucrări la Medicală I, era considerat element necorespunzător. Era fiu de avocat cu case naționalizate. De asemenea, și socrul său a avut avere, pe care o cedase statului. Cu ocazia lucrărilor de verificare din vara anului 1958, conducerea I.M.F. Cluj a propus inițial ca doctorul Hărăguș să nu fie scos din învățământ. Ulterior s-a decis scoaterea postului la concurs. Institutul preciza că doctorul Ștefan Hărăguș era un cadru cu o pregătire medicală superioară și activitate didactică și științifică bogată. Conducerea Institutului împreună cu forurile locale de partid au rediscutat cazul doctorului Hărăguș și a propus Ministerului Învățământului ca postul pe care îl ocupă acesta să nu mai fie scos la concurs.<sup>77</sup>

Când posturile doctorilor Eugen Cosma și Aurel Kaufman de la Chirurgie II au fost scoase la concurs, ambii erau excluși din partid, însă în urma verificărilor amănunțite efectuate de partid, cei doi medici și-au recăpătat calitatea de membru de partid. Din acest motiv Institutul solicita Ministrului Învățământului să anuleze concursul pentru cele două posturi.<sup>78</sup> În ceea ce privește acoperirea catedrelor cu personal de specialitate, la 16 noiembrie 1958, serviciul de cadre al I.M.F. Cluj comunica Ministerului Învățământului că în urma concursului de ocupare a posturilor vacante un număr de 23 de posturi au rămas neocupate. Aceste posturi erau în marea lor majoritate cele de început de carieră didactică, preparator, asistent și șef de lucrări.<sup>79</sup>

Datorită faptului că unele dintre cadrele didactice erau în pragul pensionării dar și lipsei de cadre de specialitate care să ocupe aceste posturi vacante, conducerea Institutului s-a văzut nevoită să solicite Ministerului Învățământului să retragă unele dintre posturile scoase la concurs. În anul 1958, pentru gradul de asistent și de șef de lucrări, lipsa calității de membru P.M.R. sau U.T.M., dar și excluderea cadrelor didactice din partid în urma verificărilor efectuate în cursul anului, au constituit principalul criteriu de înlăturare din învățământ. Un alt criteriu de excludere a fost cel al originii sociale. Dacă analizăm modul de ocupare a unei funcții didactice de preparator, asistent sau de șef de lucrări,

<sup>76</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 41.

<sup>77</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 52.

<sup>78</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 43.

<sup>79</sup> AUMFIH, *Numiri și promovări*, dos. 41/1959-1961, f. 63.

observăm că pe lângă cunoștințele de specialitate necesare pentru promovarea concursului era necesară apartenența politică a candidatului la P.M.R. Existau și cazuri în care, din lipsă de cadre specializate într-o anumită disciplină, erau selectate în urma examenului și persoane care nu aveau calitatea de membru de partid care urmau să ocupe aceste funcții până la găsirea unui „element corespunzător.”

### Concluzii

La început, procesul epurărilor s-a desfășurat sub o bază legală fiind emisă în acest scop Legea nr. 461 din 19 septembrie 1944 privitoare la purificarea administrațiilor publice, lege prelungită și modificată de mai multe ori prin alte legi. Această lege prevedea un termen de aplicabilitate de 3 luni, însă acest termen a fost extins prin alte legi până în 1 septembrie 1945. Prin această lege se urmărea curățarea aparatului de stat de funcționarii care au activat în vreo organizație politică sau paramilitară: legionară, fascistă sau hitleristă, ori s-au pus în slujba unor interese străine de acelea ale statului român. Epurarea a fost cerută de ocupantul sovietic, era menționată și în Convenția de armistițiu, însă comuniștii au folosit-o în scopul acaparării puterii prin înlăturarea din viața publică a adversarilor politici, dar și a celor care își manifestau antipatia față de regimul comunist. Epurarea nu au vizat doar domeniul administrativ, ci au fost extinse și în domeniul cultelor, presei, învățământului și sănătății.

În primii ani ai procesului de epurare, au fost vizate cadrele didactice care erau membre ale partidelor istorice și cele cu origine „nesănătoasă”. În 1958, principalul criteriu după care s-au luat deciziile de excludere din învățământ a fost cel politic (lipsa statutului de membru de partid), urmat de originea socială și motive profesionale. Documentele arhivistice studiate atestă că majoritatea cadrelor didactice de la Facultatea de Medicină nu aveau „originea sănătoasă” pe care și-o doreau comuniștii. Tocmai de aceea s-a insistat încă din 1947 ca la fiecare catedră să fie promovate și modelate cadre noi. Aceste cadre noi nu peste multă vreme urmau să înlocuiască profesorii „compromiși.” Din documentele arhivistice cercetate de noi până în prezent, primul an care a oferit informații destul de complete (culese de P.M.R.) privind situația politică, pregătirea profesională și originea socială a cadrelor didactice și didactice ajutoare din I.M.F. Cluj a fost anul 1950.

În 1950, aproximativ două treimi din cadrele didactice din I.M.F. Cluj aveau origine burgheză. Din cele 67 cadre didactice superioare (profesori și conferențieri) încadrate în anul universitar 1949-1950 la I.M.F. Cluj, 74,5% aveau origine socială burgheză, 18% aveau originea socială de țaran mijlocăș, 6%



aveau originea socială de muncitor și 1,5% aveau originea socială de meseriaș. În ceea ce privește originea socială a cadrelor didactice ajutătoare (șef de lucrări, asistent și preparator), aceasta era asemănătoare cu cea a cadrelor didactice superioare. Dintr-un număr de 383 cadre didactice ajutătoare, 77,1% aveau originea socială de burghez, 6,5% aveau originea socială de țăran mijlocăș, 4,7% aveau originea de țăran sărac, 9,4% aveau originea de muncitori, 1,3% aveau originea de chiabur și 1% aveau originea de meseriaș. După verificarea membrilor de partid care a avut loc între 1948 și 1950, cadrele didactice superioare membre P.M.R. reprezentau un procent de 39%, iar procentul cadrelor didactice ajutătoare înscrise în partid era de 44,5%. Au fost excluși din partid în urma operațiunii de verificare, 15% din totalul cadrelor didactice superioare și 7,5% din totalul cadrelor didactice ajutătoare.<sup>80</sup> În aceste condiții, regimul comunist se afla în imposibilitatea de a înlătura din facultate toate cadrele cu origine „nesănătoasă,” întrucât nu se formase încă „medicul de tip nou.”

Excluderea cadrelor didactice pe motive politice din învățământul superior medical clujean s-a produs în trei etape. Prima etapă a epurărilor se încadrează între anii 1945-1948. În primăvara anului 1945 erau înlăturare de la catedră mai multe cadre didactice din Universitatea „Regele Ferdinand I”. Din acest prim lot al celor epurați, era și Iuliu Hațieganu, fost rector al universității clujene. În 1947 sub pretextul reducerii cheltuielilor bugetare, au fost desființate unele catedre, iar altele au fost comprimate. Tot în acest an au fost pensionate cadre didactice cu o vastă experiență didactică, chiar dacă unele dintre acestea nu aveau vârsta de pensionare.

Acest prim val al epurărilor a însemnat excluderea din învățământul universitar a unei părți din elita intelectuală a Facultății de Medicină. În perioada 1945-1948, de la Facultatea de Medicină au fost epurate șapte cadre didactice cu gradul de profesor (Victor Papilian, Iuliu Moldovan, Dimitrie Negru, Gheorghe Buzoianu, Titu Vasiliu, Iuliu Hațieganu și Alexandru Pop), cinci în mod definitiv și două temporar. În această perioadă au fost afectate de epurări și unele posturi didactice de conferențiar, asistent universitar și preparator. Trebuie menționat faptul că fiecare val de epurări era urmat de o perioadă de acalmie.

A doua etapă a epurărilor a avut loc în 1952, după ce a fost finalizată operațiunea de verificare a tuturor membrilor de partid, iar a treia etapă poate fi încadrată între anii 1957-1959. Cu ocazia verificărilor din 1950, organele locale de partid erau preocupate în egală măsură să culeagă informații despre întreg personalul didactic din Institut privind originea socială, situația politică și pre-

<sup>80</sup> DJANC, CRPMRC, fond 13, *Tabel nominal*, dos 200/1950, ff. 1-34.

gătirea profesională. Acest interes prefigura un viitor control politic asupra deciziilor de promovare sau de excludere a cadrelor didactice din Institut.

Cu toate avantajele pe care regimul comunist le-a oferit fiilor de muncitori și țărani muncitori, compoziția socială a acestora în învățământul superior nu era una care să-i mulțumească pe comuniști. Pentru a putea fi corectată această situație, în anul 1957 a fost emisă H.C.M. nr. 1003/1957 privind îmbunătățirea compoziției sociale în învățământul superior atât în rândul studenților, cât și în rândul cadrelor didactice. În urma aplicării acestei hotărâri compoziția socială în rândul studenților, a fiilor de muncitori și țărani muncitori, a atins în anul universitar 1958-1959 un procent de 71,4%. Tot ca urmare a aplicării acestei hotărâri, 27 cadre didactice au fost înlăturate din I.M.F. Cluj în 1958. Scopul epurărilor din această perioadă era înlăturarea din învățământul medical a tuturor celor cu „origine nesănătoasă” și a celor care nu erau membri de partid, fapt ce n-a putut fi realizat decât în parte datorită lipsei de specialiști și în câteva cazuri a opoziției conducerii Institutului. Atât în 1952, cât și în 1958, din lipsă de cadre didactice specializate într-un anumit domeniu, Institutul a fost nevoit să păstreze la catedră cadre didactice de tranziție. Acestea nu erau membre de partid, însă erau bine pregătite profesional. Ele urmau să fie înlocuite cât mai curând posibil cu cadre didactice care să corespundă și din punct de vedere politic. Această selecție, condiționată de apartenența la P.M.R., a avantajat membrii de partid, a îngădit accesul nemembrilor la o carieră didactică, chiar dacă erau bine pregătiți din punct de vedere profesional, și a redus concurența pentru posturile didactice.

În primul deceniu comunist, în lipsa unei alternative, au fost păstrate la catedră și cadre didactice din perioada interbelică cu o bogată experiență în învățământ, chiar dacă acestea nu au aderat la P.M.R. În ceea ce privește influența P.M.R. în învățământul medical clujean, documentele consultate atestă imixtiunea organelor locale de partid în deciziile institutului încă din 1948. Influența politică s-a accentuat în timp. La un deceniu după instaurarea regimului comunist, deplasările externe în scopuri științifice, propunerile de promovare într-o funcție didactică sau de conducere aveau nevoie de avizul P.M.R.

## Rezumat

Procesul epurărilor a reprezentat o pagină întunecată în istoria învățământului românesc și nu s-a încheiat la 1 septembrie 1945, conform prevederilor Legii nr. 584/1945 privind purificarea administrațiilor publice, ci a fost continuat în anii următori, deghizat sub alte decizii politice. Facultatea de Medicină s-a confruntat cu trei valuri de epurări care au fost urmate



de perioade de acalmie. După promulgarea primei legi privind purificarea administrațiilor publice (Legea nr. 461, publicată în Monitorul Oficial la 19 septembrie 1944), mulți profesori au fost epurați temporar, alții definitiv, iar altora li s-a „aranjat” dreptul la pensie. Acest articol discută despre modul în care aparatul represiv al statului a efectuat epurările cadrelor didactice din instituțiile de învățământ medical din Cluj în primul deceniu comunist, precum și criteriile de angajare în toamna anului 1958. Lucrarea analizează originea socială a personalului didactic. Originea socială a fost un criteriu esențial de reținere sau excludere din educație a studenților și a personalului didactic. Documentele de arhivă ilustrează că în 1950, 42% dintre profesorii Institutului Medical-Farmaceutic Cluj (I.M.F.) erau membri de partid. Patru ani mai târziu, rata profesorilor membri ai Partidul Muncitoresc Român (P.M.R.) a crescut la 50%. În 1959, această rată era de 50%. Acest procent al membrilor P.M.R. din 1959 se explică prin lipsa de interes a cadrelor didactice pentru politica de partid, dar și datorită excluderii unor membri din partid. De asemenea, articolul încearcă să descifreze influența organelor locale de partid asupra deciziilor luate de I.M.F. în aceste epurări.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** comunism, cadre didactice, Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj, învățământ superior medical.

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# Responses to the Challenges of Perestroika and the Collapse of the Soviet Union in Moldova's Russian-speaking cities

Keith HARRINGTON

## *Abstract*

Much of the academic discussion surrounding experiences of minorities during the collapse of Soviet power in Moldova centres around Transnistria and Gagauzia. However, a significant portion of Moldova's Russian-speaking population lived outside these regions. There is yet to be a study that addresses how Russian speakers from outside Transnistria and Gagauzia responded to the challenges of *perestroika*. This article<sup>1</sup> shows that the Russian-speakers in three towns, Bălți, Ocnița and Basarabasca, held similar opinions to those in Transnistria and Gagauzia. However, I argue that conflict was avoided in Bălți, Ocnița, and Basarabasca due to proactive measures taken by local elites, who worked hard to placate citizens in their respective towns.

**Keywords:** Moldova, mobilisation, minorities, local elites.

## **Introduction**

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a tumultuous period for the Republic of Moldova. In the early 1990s, the fledging republic was confronted by not one, but two separatist movements, the Gagauz in the South, and Transnistria in the East. Unsurprisingly, much of the historiography on Moldova focuses on the issue of the separatist movements that emerged in these regions.<sup>2</sup> In regard to Transnistria, both scholars and politicians have been quick to criticise those who label it as an ethnic conflict. One of the primary reasons given for this criticism is the fact that most of Moldova's ethnic Russians and Ukrainians

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this article was conducted with financial assistance offered by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth University, and the University of Tartu.

<sup>2</sup> Pal Kolstø and Andrei Malgin, "The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (1998): 103-127; Jeff Chinn and Steven D. Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (1998): 87-101; Steven D Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia," *Regional & Federal Studies* 11, no. 3 (2001): 101-122; Marcin Kosienkowski, "The Gagauz Republic: Internal Dynamics of De Facto Statehood," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Alexander Bell, sectio K - Political Science* 24, no 1 (2018): 116-113; Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 108-38; Stuart J. Kaufman, Stephen R. Bowers, "Transnational dimensions of the Transnistrian conflict," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no 1 (1998): 129-146.



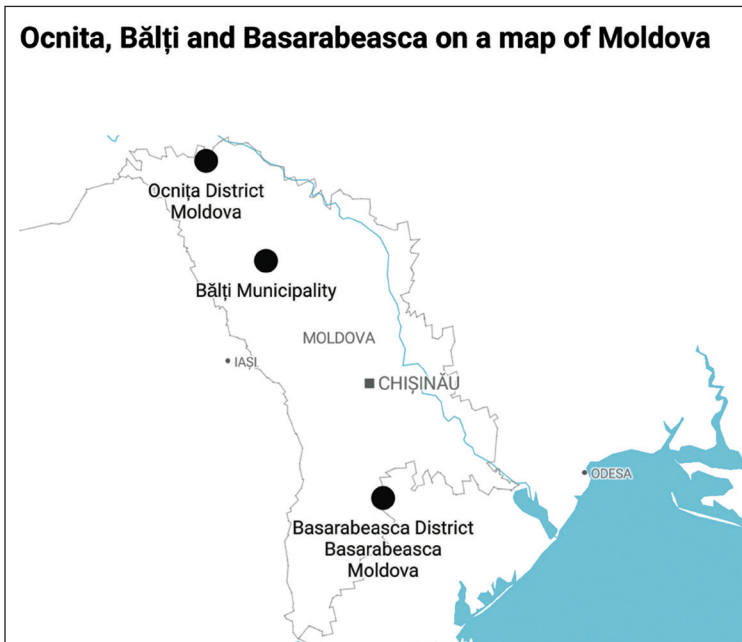
live outside Transnistria.<sup>3</sup> However, scholars working in the field have not yet explored how these minorities reacted to the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent Moldovan independence. Were they wholly supportive of the government in Chişinău? Or did they have their reservations? This paper will address these questions, and fill in the gaps in the historiography, with reference to three multi-ethnic cities and towns in the Bessarabian portion of Moldova: Bălţi, Ocniţa, and Basarabeasca.

In the late Soviet era, Moldova's legislature adopted a series of laws that the inhabitants of Gagauzia and Transnistria cited as discriminatory and used to justify their secession. These included the language laws that made Moldovan the sole official language of the republic (August 1989), the law on state symbols which adopted a new republican tricolour similar to Romania's (April 1990), and the banning of the referendum on the Union treaty (March 1991). This article investigates how the citizens of Bălţi, Ocniţa, and Basarabeasca reacted to these laws. It highlights that just like the inhabitants of Transnistria and the Gagauz in the South, the Russian-speaking inhabitants of these cities also had their reservations about the policies adopted by the Moldovan government. They, too, protested the implementation of the language laws, were hostile toward the Moldovan Popular Front (MPF) and supported the Union Treaty and Moldova's ascension to a renewed Soviet Federation. In essence, the sentiments of Moldova's Russian and Ukrainian minorities residing elsewhere in the republic were remarkably similar to those who resided in Transnistria and Gagauzia. This raises the question, why was conflict avoided in Bălţi, Ocniţa, and Basarabeasca, but not Gagauzia or Transnistria?

This article argues that further mobilisation, and even conflict, was prevented thanks to proactive measures taken by local elites. During the late *perestroika* era, deputies in Bălţi, Ocniţa, and Basarabeasca actively engaged with aggrieved minorities and sought to placate them. They used their control over local resources, such as the press, not to incite divisions, but to encourage unity. For example, the local newspapers in all three regions regularly highlighted the

<sup>3</sup> "Telegramma rukovodstva Respubliki Moldova vnimaniiu: Prezidenta RF Borisa El'tsina, Predsedatelia Verkhovnogo Soveta RF R. Xosbulatova, rukovoditelei stran SNG, predsedatelei parlamentov stran SNG", *Nezavisimoi Moldovy*, 8 aprilia 1992 g. ("The telegram of the leadership of the republic of Moldova to the attention of: the president of RF, Boris Yeltsin, Chairman of the Supreme Council of RF- R.Hosbulatov, leaders of CIS countries, chairmen of parliaments of CIS countries," *Independent Moldova*, April 8, 1992, 2), Charles King, "Eurasia Letter: Moldova with a Russian Face," *Foreign Policy*, no. 97 (Winter 1994), 114; Pal Kolstø, Andrei Edemsky, and Natalya Kalashnikova, "The Dniester Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism," *Europe-Asia Studies* 45, no. 6 (1993), 975.





**Figure 1:** Map showing the location Ocnîța, Bălți, and Basarabeasca in Moldova. Map-authors creation

positive steps taken by the republican authorities towards improving relations with ethnic minorities, such as the opening of minority language schools, newspapers, and other cultural institutions. When tensions were particularly high, local deputies would often meet with protestors, listen to their grievances, and attempt to alleviate their concerns. This was in stark contrast to both Transnistria and Gagauzia. While it is undeniable that the Russian Fourteenth Army played an important role in the Transnistrian War, it is also impossible to overlook the role played by local elites in both Transnistria and Gagauzia in stoking hostility towards Chișinău.<sup>4</sup> Essentially, this article argues that were it not for the proactive steps taken by local elites in Bălți, Ocnîța, and Basarabeasca, these regions may well have been the site of further conflict.

### Methodology

This article focuses on three settlements in Moldova, the city of Bălți, and the towns of Ocnîța, and Basarabeasca. These three regions were chosen for several reasons. Firstly, they are outside of Transnistria and Gagauzia. Secondly, like many cities and towns in Transnistria, and Gagauzia, Bălți,

<sup>4</sup> Keith Harrington, "Exploring the Local Dynamics of the Transnistrian Separatist Movement, 1989-1992" (PhD diss., Maynooth University, 2023), 170-179.



Ocnița, and Basarabeasca all had a non-Moldovan majority during the late Soviet period. In Bălți, Russians and Ukrainians collectively made-up fifty percent of the local population, while ethnic Moldovans accounted for forty percent.<sup>5</sup> In Ocnița, Ukrainians and Russians made up forty nine percent of the local population.<sup>6</sup> Finally, In Basarabeasca, Moldovans made up thirty six percent of the local population, whilst Russians, Ukrainians, as well as Gagauz and Bulgarians, collectively made up the remaining sixty four percent.<sup>7</sup> The ethnic breakdown of each city is important, as we would expect disgruntled non-Moldovans to be more willing to protest or voice their opinions if they are in the majority.

This article is supported by primary source research conducted between 2019 and early 2021, and utilises newspapers and periodicals published in the regions between 1989 and 1991. As Bălți is the largest city covered in this study, and the third largest city in Moldova, it has the most numerous and engaging publications. These included the press organ of city authorities, *Communist*, as well as others such as *Ray*, *The Voice of Bălți*, and *The Position*. Ocnița had two newspapers from this time, *The Dawn*, and *New Path*. As Basarabeasca is a small town in southern Moldova, there was a limited number of available publications, and for covering this region, I rely mostly on the local newspaper *Slava*. I chose these local newspapers as the primary mode of reference because the national Moldovan press rarely covered developments in these regions, as it was more preoccupied with the conflicts in Gagauzia and Transnistria.

Of course, there are some potential issues with using the local press from this time. Most newspapers were controlled by the local party, and hence could be subject to censorship by elites or used to redirect the narrative. Nevertheless, between 1989 and 1991, the Moldovan press was rather open and engaging, particularly on a local level.<sup>8</sup> Each newspaper referenced in this study featured articles written by those with competing views, with the MPF receiving just as much attention as more conservative pro-Soviet figures. Both Moldovans and non-Moldovans alike were typically allowed

<sup>5</sup> “Skol’ko nas?,” *Kommunist*, maia 26, 1990, 1 (“How Many of Us?,” *Communist*, May 26, 1990, 1).

<sup>6</sup> “Ukrainskim detiam - ukrainskie shkoly,” *Novyi Put*, oktiabria 14, 1989, 1-2. (“To the Ukrainian Children- Ukrainian Schools,” *New Path*, October 14, 1989, 1-2).

<sup>7</sup> “Obsuzhdenie zakona o iazykakh,” *Slava*, maia 27, 1989, 2 (“Discussing the law on languages,” *Slava*, May 27, 1989, 2).

<sup>8</sup> During the past number of years, I have read local newspapers from 20 of the MSSR’s districts between 1989-1991 and found them to be mostly engaging with limited bias.

to air their grievances. Even in instances where these newspapers display potential bias, they offer important insights into how local elites perceived the unfolding situation and the message they wished to convey to the local population. When possible, this article also utilises archival documents, including accounts of meetings between local elites and representatives of the republican government.

### **Reactions from Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Bălți, Ocnița, and Basarabeasca to the changes of *Perestroika***

Due to resistance from the predominantly conservative leadership of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM), *perestroika* arrived to the MSSR comparatively late. However, tensions began to rise considerably in the summer of 1989, when certain elements of the MPF began campaign heavily in favour of reform, and members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet came closer to finalising language laws that would make Moldovan the sole official language of the republic.<sup>9</sup> During this period, the inhabitants of all three regions made their opposition to MPF's platform and the proposed laws known. In Bălți, most people supported the language laws, once Russian was made the language of interethnic communication, but rejected the MPF's agenda and accused it of being an 'anti-Soviet organisation'.<sup>10</sup> Anti-MPF rallies began to be organised in July 1989, after the MPF disrupted a parade commemorating the anniversary of Bessarabia's annexation by the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> Many people were also critical of the MPF's decision to disrupt a rally organised by the pro-Soviet group *Interdvizhenie* (Unity) on July 9, 1989. Protestors criticised the MPF for their anti-Soviet stance and labelled them as extremists given their supposed inability to accept other points of view, as demonstrated by their attack on Unity.<sup>12</sup> Opposition to the proposed language laws and the MPF was, however, not unique to Bălți.

<sup>9</sup> The Supreme Soviet was the name given to the main legislative body in each republic during the Soviet period. Additionally, every town, district, and city, had their own Soviet which was tasked with implementing the directives of the centre at the local level.

<sup>10</sup> "Osnovnoi iazyk – moldavskii," *Luch*, i iunia 28, 1989, 1 ("Main Language Should be Moldovan," *Ray*, June 28, 1989, 1).

<sup>11</sup> "V èti dni mnogie predpriiatiia v Bel'tsakh provodiat mitingi," *Kommunist*, i iulia 29, 1989, 2 ("These days many enterprises from Balti are organising meetings," *Communist*, July 29, 1989, 2).

<sup>12</sup> "Net èkstreimizmu," *Kommunist*, i iulia 20, 1989, 1 ("No to Extremism," *Communist*, July 20, 1989, 1).



The proposed laws were met with almost universal condemnation from Basarabeasca's non-Moldovan population. From as early as April 1989, residents of the multi-ethnic southern town wrote dozens of letters to the local newspaper, *Slava*, criticising the proposed language laws. Most commentators supported Moldovan becoming the state language but feared that the exclusion of Russian would result in discrimination against minorities. These commentators often pointed out that Moldovans were in the minority in the town, claiming that such laws would give them undue influence in local affairs. One commentator even claimed that if the laws were adopted, an autonomous republic should be formed in the south of the MSSR, which would have Russian as a second official language.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, there were quite a few people, mostly Moldovans, who wrote to the newspaper in support of the language laws. One writer claimed that Russian had been given preferential treatment in the town for decades, and believed it was only fair that Moldovan become the sole official language of the republic. However, even those who took this position, still argued that Russian should be made the language of interethnic communication.<sup>14</sup> According to some residents, Russian was not the only language that should receive official status, and some argued that Ukrainian should also be made an official language.<sup>15</sup> Unsurprisingly, this position was supported by many inhabitants in Ocnîța.

Local Ukrainian commentators in Ocnîța felt that the proposed laws disadvantaged the Ukrainian population the most, as they would be required to learn three languages: Moldovan, Russian, and Ukrainian. Local scholars argued that the laws would not result in the revival of the Ukrainian language, as the Supreme Soviet claimed. Instead, they argued it would lead to further Russification, as many would be unwilling or unable to learn so many languages. This led to calls by some local intellectuals for Ukrainian to be given official status also.<sup>16</sup> Fears that the laws would lead to further Russification were not unfounded. Ocnîța town, and the surrounding district, were already heavily Russified. There was not a single Ukrainian language school in the entire

<sup>13</sup> "Obsuzhdenie zakonov o iazykakh: zachem iskat' l'goty?," *Slava*, maia 9, 1989, 2 ("Discussing the laws on languages: why search for benefits?," *Slava*, May 9, 1989, 2).

<sup>14</sup> "Obsuzhdaia zakon o iazykakh: ot teni k svetu," *Slava*, aprelia 18, 1989, 2 ("Discussing the law on languages: from the shade to the light," *Slava*, April 18, 1989, 2).

<sup>15</sup> "Obsuzhdaem zakon o iazykakh: davaïte vmeste reshat' trudnosti!," *Slava*, maia 27, 1989, 2 ("Discussing the law on languages: let's solve out the difficulties together!," *Slava*, May 27, 1989, 2).

<sup>16</sup> I. Grek, "Neobkhodim paritet," *Novyi Put'*, iunია 6, 1989, 3-4 (I. Grek, "Parity Needed," *New Path*, June 6, 1989, 3-4.)

district, even though Ukrainians accounted for over eighty percent of the local population in twelve villages.<sup>17</sup> According to Ocnîța's local newspaper, *New Time*, the city's library did not have a single Ukrainian book.<sup>18</sup>

The negative reaction to the language laws amongst Moldova's minorities was well known, with Russian speakers from across the republic claiming they were discriminatory. However, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet remained undeterred. On August 16, 1989, members of the Presidium gathered in Chișinău to review the final drafts of the language laws. These drafts not only made Moldovan the sole official language of the republic, but also made it the language of interethnic communication. This was particularly concerning for Russian speakers, as Russian traditionally served as the language of interethnic communication in the region, particularly in urban centres, since the Tsar's annexation of Bessarabia in the early 1800s.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, many Russophones from outside Transnistria were vocal about their willingness to accept Moldovan as the sole official language once Russian remained the language of interethnic communication. For many, the Presidium's decision to ignore this request was seen as an insult. Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Mircea Snegur, claimed there was no need to make Russian the language of interethnic communication, and argued that Moldovan would naturally fill that role as well.<sup>20</sup> The Presidium approved the final drafts and decided that they would be deliberated upon at the thirteenth session of the Supreme Soviet, scheduled for August 29, 1989.<sup>21</sup>

In general, the fiercest resistance to the language laws came from Transnistria. Industrial elites from Tiraspol, Bender, and Rîbnița, formed a group known as the Union of Joint Labour Collectives (Russian acronym OSTK), which functioned as an umbrella organisation, intended to coordinate industrial action against the language laws.<sup>22</sup> From the regions in our study, the

<sup>17</sup> "Ukrainskim detiam - ukrainskie shkoly», (Interv'iu s kompetentnym chelovekom)", *Novyi Put'*, oktiabria 14, 1989, 1-2. ("To the Ukrainian Children- Ukrainian Schools," *New Path*, October 14, 1989, 1-2).

<sup>18</sup> "Budem chitat' po ukrainski ( Interv'iu s kompetentnym chelovekom)," *Novyi Put'*, oktiabria 7, 1989, 1 i 3 ("We will read Ukrainian (Interview with a competent person) ," *New Path*, October 7, 1989, 1 & 3).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas J. Hegarty, "The Politics of Language in Moldova," in *Language, Ethnicity, and the State, Volume 2.*, ed. Camille C. O'Reilly (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 126.

<sup>20</sup> "Despre modificările aduse legilor," *Moldova Socialistă*, august 22, 1989, 1 ("On the Changes to the Laws," *Socialist Moldova*, August 22, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> "Zakony o iazykakh priniaty," *Leninskoe znamia*, avgusta 17, 1989, 1 ("Laws Approved," *Lenin's Banner*, August 17, 1989, 1).

<sup>22</sup> *Nasha Platforma!* Avgusta 21, 1989 (*Our Platform!* August 21, 1989) (Pamphlet produced by the OSTK at the beginning of the strikes).



stiffest opposition came from Bălți. On August 19, 1989, representatives from 168 Russian speaking labour collectives, including twenty from Bălți, gathered in Chişinău to condemn the laws. To combat the “rising Moldovan chauvinism”, those in attendance created the Union of Workers of Moldova.<sup>23</sup>

The strikes began in Tiraspol on August 21, 1989, when the Kirov and Electromash factories declared an indefinite strike against the language laws. The following day, they were joined by a further thirty-eight enterprises from Tiraspol. As the thirteenth session of the Supreme Soviet drew closer, more enterprises from outside Transnistria began to join the strike. On August 29, 1989, when the thirteenth session began, five enterprises in Bălți declared their participation in the strike. In the days that followed, more factories from Bălți joined. By September 10, 1989, there were a total 189 enterprises from across the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) on strike.<sup>24</sup> In early September 1989, the OSTK boasted about how the locomotive depots in Bender, Bălți, and Basarabeasca had joined the strike, which would halt republican trade with Ukraine and effectively cripple the economy. However, in an interview with *Slava*, the director of the depot at Basarabeasca firmly rejected these allegations and claimed that while some workers opposed the language laws, they continued to work.<sup>25</sup>

While the strikes would last until September 23, 1989, workers in Bălți returned to work on September 13.<sup>26</sup> Of all the Bessarabian cities that participated in the strikes, the OSTK were most impressed with the people of Bălți and praised them for partaking in the struggle against “nationalism”.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Provozglashen Soiuz Rabochikh Moldovy,” *Vechernii Kishinev*, avgusta 22, 1989, 3 (“The Union of Workers of Moldova was proclaimed,” *Evening Chişinău*, August 22, 1989, 3.); Alla Skvortsova, “The Cultural and Social Makeup of Moldova,” in *National Integration and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies the Cases of Estonia and Moldova*, ed. in Pål Kolstø (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 184; John Alan Mason, “Mobilizing the left: The Moldovan internationalist countermovement and the origins of the Moldovan Civil War” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2010), 66-67; John Alan Mason, “Internationalist Mobilization during the Collapse of the Soviet Union: The Moldovan Elections of 1990,” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no2 (March: 2009): 162.

<sup>24</sup> *Informatsionnyi biulleten' №5*, 31 avgusta 1989 (*Information Bulletin No 5*, August 31, 1989); *Rabochego komiteta, gorod Bendery*, sentiabria 15, 1989, (*News of the working committee, Bendery city*, September 15, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> “Interv’iu s Moldavskoï zheleznoï dorogoi,” *Slava*, sentiabria 15, 1989, 2 (“Interview with the Moldovan railroad chairman,” *Glory*, September 15, 1989, 2).

<sup>26</sup> “Rabota vozobnovitsia,” *Kommunist*, sentiabria 5, 1989, 1 (“Work will resume,” *Communist*, September 5, 1989, 1).

<sup>27</sup> “Nuzhna li avtonomiia?” *Rybnitskii vestnik*, sentiabria 27, 1989, 1 (“Is autonomy needed?” *Rîbnița Herald*, September 27, 1989, 1).

From late September onward, various figures inside Transnistria began to advocate for the creation of a Transnistrian Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Perhaps surprisingly, many supported the idea that Bălți be included in the proposed unit. Moreover, deputies from the Rîbnița City Soviet publicly encouraged their counterparts in Bălți to organise a referendum. Such explicit calls were not made for any other region in this study to join the proposed unit. However, some claimed that districts in the south could also join, which presumably would have included Basarabeasca.<sup>28</sup>

The Supreme Soviet's decision to adopt a new state flag in April 1990 did not elicit a negative response from the residents of Bălți or Ocnița. On the contrary, in Transnistria and Gagauzia, local elites condemned the flag as a fascist symbol, claiming Romanian occupying forces had flown it during the Great Patriotic War.<sup>29</sup> This position was supported by most Gagauz, as well as the inhabitants of Transnistria's industrial cities. In contrast, many Russian speakers outside these regions were indifferent towards the flag. In Bălți, most stated that they supported the tricolour as a symbol of the republic's revival and were sceptical of linkage the Transnistrians and Gagauz made between it and fascism. The only place the previous Moldovan flag was still flown was at the city's fourteenth army base.<sup>30</sup> In Ocnița, two village soviets initially refused to fly the flag but were quickly reprimanded by the district authorities.<sup>31</sup> In Basarabeasca, the flag's adoption caused local protest, and some even attempted to remove the tricolour from outside the town Soviet.<sup>32</sup> In comparison to Transnistria, however, opposition was limited, and most non-Moldovans stated they were willing to support their government's decision.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> "Sozdat' TMASSR?" *Leninskoe znamia*, sentiabria 14, 1989, 2 (*Lenin's Banner*, September 14, 1989, 2); *Xronika zabastovki*, sentiabr' 13, 1989 (*Chronical of the Strike*, September 13, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> "Resheniia o trikolore," *znamia pobedy*, maia 12, 1990, 1 ("Decisions on the tricolor," *Victory Banner*, May 12, 1990, 1).

<sup>30</sup> "K voprosu o trikolore," *Luch*, iunia 26, 1990, 2 ("To the Question of the Tricolour," *Ray*, June 26, 1990, 2); "Moldova byla odnoi iz pervykh respublik, pozhelavshikh sformirovat' sobstvennuu armiiu, no do sikh por ne priniat dazhe zakon ob oborone," *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, marta 18, 1992, 2 ("Moldova was among the first republics willing to form its own army but by now even the law on defence has not been adopted," *Independent Moldova*, March 18, 1992, 2).

<sup>31</sup> "Izuchaetsia li gosudarstvennyi iazyk," *Novyi put'*, avgusta 25, 1990, 2 ("Is the State Language Being Studied?" *New Path*, August 25, 1990, 2).

<sup>32</sup> "Referendum 17 marta za i protiv," *Slava*, marta 12, 1991, 1. ("17<sup>th</sup> March Referendum, pros and cons," *Slava*, March 12, 1991, 1).

<sup>33</sup> "Mneniia vokrug problem," *Slava*, iulia 24, 1990, 2 ("Opinions and Problems," *Slava*, July 24, 1990, 2).



Despite their willingness to support the Moldovan government, many still felt a deep attachment to the Soviet Union, and the MSSR's decision to boycott the referendum on the new Union Treaty caused tensions to once again reignite. Moldova's future relationship with the Soviet Union was a contentious issue. In late 1990, Gorbachev proposed transforming the Union into a loose confederation of sovereign states and scheduled a countrywide referendum for March 17, 1991. However, the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR invoked Moldova's Declaration of Sovereignty and decreed that polling stations could not be opened in the republic.<sup>34</sup> This displeased many of the inhabitants of Bălți, Ocnița, and Basarabeasca, with many openly expressing their desire to participate in the referendum.

On January 5, 1991, representatives from the Bălți's branch of the CPM and local enterprises met to discuss the proposed Union Treaty. Most of those in attendance were critical of the Moldovan Supreme Soviet's decision to outlaw the referendum and reiterated their support for Moldova's inclusion in the newly reformed Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics. At the end of the meeting, both groups issued a joint declaration calling upon the Moldovan Supreme Soviet to reconsider its position.<sup>35</sup> The following month, deputies convened for the eighth session of the Bălți City Soviet, to decide whether to defy the Supreme Soviet's ruling and organise a referendum. Unsurprisingly, the majority of deputies voted that a referendum on the Union Treaty would be organised on March 17, 1991.<sup>36</sup>

Most labour collectives in Bălți supported the city soviet's decision to organise a referendum. The city's newspaper, *Voice*, was inundated with letters from various labour collectives, expressing their support for the decision and calling on people to exercise their 'democratic rights and participate in the voting'.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the only labour collective that openly opposed the referendum

<sup>34</sup> "Redaktoru gazety «Slava» organu regional'nogo soveta Basarabiaska, Ivanu Mitrofanovu," *Slava*, marta 3, 1991, 1 ("To Ivan Mitrofanov, the chef editor of Slava newspaper, the organ of Basarabeasca regional council of the people's deputies," *Slava*, March 3, 1991, 1).

<sup>35</sup> "Rezoliutsiia sobraniia partiinogo aktiva i predstavitelei trudovykh kollektivov goroda Belts' ot 05 ianvaria 1991," *Golos*, ianvaria 17, 1991, 2 ("Resolution of the meeting of party activists and representatives of labor collectives of the city of Balti from 05.01.1991," *Voice*, January 17, 1991, 2).

<sup>36</sup> "Pust' skazhet narod «vneocherednaia VIII sessiia Beltskogo gorodskogo soveta narodnykh deputatov," *Golos*, fevral 26, 1991, 1 ("Let the people say, "the extraordinary VIII session of the Balti town Council of People's Deputies," *Voice*, February 26, 1991, 1).

<sup>37</sup> "Prizyv zavodchan. Otkrytoe pis'mo proizvodstvennogo ob"edineniia imeni V.I.Lenina k truzhenikam goroda," *Golos*, marta 2, 1991, 2. ("The call of the factory workers. An open letter of the production association named after V.I. Lenin to the workers of the city," *The*



was the Bălți Pedagogical Institute.<sup>38</sup> This was to be expected, as some of the most ardent supporters of the MPF worked in the various pedagogical institutes scattered across the republic. Bălți was no exception, as most of those that worked in the institute were either sympathetic to the MPF or card-carrying members.<sup>39</sup> The MPF also condemned the city soviet's decision and vowed to organise rallies in the city on the day of the vote. They also issued a call addressed specifically to the city's non-Moldovan population, requesting that they do not participate.<sup>40</sup> Much of the city's Moldovan population complied with the MPF's request and abstained from voting. On the other hand, much of Bălți's Russian and Ukrainian population chose to participate. The city's electoral commission reported that sixty-five percent of the local population participated in the referendum and that ninety-eight percent voted in favour of the Union Treaty.<sup>41</sup>

The Ukrainian inhabitants of Ocnîța were also supportive of the proposed Union Treaty. One of the town's local newspapers, *Dawn*, regularly featured letters sent to the editor from locals who believed that the "Union Treaty is a great document" that "gives new possibilities for the social-economic, and cultural development" of Moldova.<sup>42</sup> Despite the fact that many locals supported the Union Treaty, the district authorities refrained from organising any illegal referendums. However, not everyone was of the same opinion. One week before the referendum was due to take place, workers from several labour collectives in Ocnîța town stated their intention to organise a referendum on the Union Treaty on March 17. In addition to this, several village soviets, all of which had a Ukrainian majority, also stated their intention to organise a referendum.<sup>43</sup> The decision of the village deputies and labour collectives was

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*Voice*, March 2, 1991, 2.); "Budem blagorazumny!", *Golos*, 7 marta 1991, 1 ("Let's be Prudent," *The Voice*, March 7, 1991, 1.)

<sup>38</sup> "Reshenie konferentsii trudovogo kollektiva BGPI imeni A.Russo," *Golos*, marta 16, 1991, 3. ("The Decision of the Conference of the Labor Collective of the A. Russo Balti State Pedagogical Institute," *The Voice*, March 16, 1991, 3.)

<sup>39</sup> Even in Tiraspol, the local Pedagogical Institute were supporters of the Popular Front. More info on this can be found in their newspaper *Lumina* (*Light*).

<sup>40</sup> "Est' vopros," *Golos*, marta 21, 1991, 1 ("There is a question," *The Voice*, March 21, 1991, 1).

<sup>41</sup> "Protokol okružnoi komissii referendumu SSSR o rezul'tatakh gosovaniia po Bêltskomu okružgu," *Golos*, marta 26, 1991, 1 ("Protocol of the Regional Commission of the USSR referendum," *The Voice*, March 21, 1991, 1.).

<sup>42</sup> "Chto my думаем о Союзном соглашении," *Zaria*, dekabria 15, 1990, 2 ("What We Think of the Union Agreement," *Dawn*, December 15, 1990, 2).

<sup>43</sup> "Trudovoi kollektiv vybor sdelał," *Novyi Put'*, marta 12, 1991, 1 ("The Work Collective Made a Choice," *New Path*, March 12, 1991, 1).



criticised by both the district authorities and the Ocnîța branch of the MPF.<sup>44</sup> Despite the criticism, voting went ahead, with many local Ukrainians and Russians participating.<sup>45</sup>

Some members of Basarabeasca's District Soviet were vocal about their support for the Union Treaty and their intention to open polling stations. This position was supported by the workers at the locomotive depot, who published an appeal in *Slava* encouraging all residents to participate in the voting.<sup>46</sup> In response, Basarabeasca's local prosecutor, B. Poiata wrote a letter to the newspaper, reprimanding the editor for publishing such an inflammatory piece. In his letter, Poiata reminded citizens and deputies alike that the organisation of such a referendum would be a direct violation of MSSR's constitution.<sup>47</sup> However, Poiata's intervention did not discourage all Basarabeasca's inhabitants from supporting the referendum.

The local authorities decided to organise discussion groups on the topic of organising a referendum. These discussions revealed that opinions were mostly divided along ethnic lines. Basarabeasca's Moldovan population, especially those that resided in the villages outside of the town, were categorically against the organisation of a referendum. In the town, Russians and Ukrainians were divided on the issue, with most supporting the Union Treaty but reluctant to violate Moldova's constitution by participating in a referendum.<sup>48</sup> Basarabeasca's Gagauz population did, however, support the organisation of a referendum. This was to be expected, as the *Gagauz Halky* also endorsed it.<sup>49</sup> When March 17 came, polls were only opened in the villages where Gagauz predominated.<sup>50</sup>

This portion of the article has examined how Russians and Ukrainians in Bălți, Ocnîța, and Basarabeasca reacted to the changes brought about by

<sup>44</sup> "Sanktsionirovannyi miting," *Novyi Put'*, dekabria 15, 1990, 2 ("Authorised Meeting," *New Path*, December 15, 1990, 2).

<sup>45</sup> "Referendumu- reshitel'noe net," *Novyi Put'*, marta 23, 1991, 3 ("No Referendum," *New Path*, March 23, 1991, 3).

<sup>46</sup> "Obrashchenie kommunistov refrizheratornogo depo," *Slava*, 26 fevralia 1991, 3 ("The refrigerated Depot Communists," *Slava*, February 26, 1991, 3).

<sup>47</sup> "Redaktoru gazety «slava» organu regional'nogo soveta Basarabiaska, Ivanu Mitrofanovu," *Slava*, marta 3, 1991, 1 ("To Ivan Mitrofanov, the chef editor of Slava newspaper, the organ of Basarabeasca regional council of the people's deputies," *Slava*, March 3, 1991, 1)

<sup>48</sup> "Referendum 17 marta za i protiv," *Slava*, marta 8, 1991, 1 ("Referendum on March 17, pros-and-cons," *Slava*, March 8, 1991, 1).

<sup>49</sup> "Referendum 17 marta za i protiv," *Slava*, marta 12, 1991, 1 ("17<sup>th</sup> March Referendum, pros and cons," *Slava*, March 12, 1991, 1).

<sup>50</sup> "Referendum proshel, chto dal'she?" *Slava*, marta 18, 1991, 1 ("The Referendum has passed, what's next?" *Slava*, March 18, 1991, 1).

the onset of *perestroika*. It has shown that reactions in these regions were not dissimilar to those from Transnistria and Gagauzia; most protested the language laws, opposed the MPF's agenda, and supported the Union Treaty. Nevertheless, conflict never manifested in these regions, and no efforts were made to secure local autonomy. This raises the question, why did no autonomist movements emerge? and how was further conflict avoided? It is not unreasonable to believe that these regions could have pushed for autonomy. Bălți was invited to join Transnistria and since 2014 is even referred to by some as the potential "Donetsk" of Moldova.<sup>51</sup> The Ocnîța branch of the MPF were also concerned that local Ukrainians might demand autonomy, while Basarabeasca unwillingly found itself within the borders of the self-proclaimed Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>52</sup> Yet, the inhabitants of these regions respected Moldova's territorial integrity. The next section will address these questions, demonstrating that a combination of pro-active local deputies, and various other local factors, allowed elites to prevent further conflict from emerging.

### How Was Further Conflict Avoided?

The avoidance of conflict in these regions was not a foregone conclusion. In reality, it was because local elites in Bălți, Ocnîța, and Basarabeasca worked hard to placate the sceptical masses and marginalise those who sought to use the social and political unrest to incite inter-ethnic tensions or push for autonomy. In each region, local elites used their control over mobilizational resources to highlight the positive impacts of the *perestroika* reforms. For example, the local media reported the opening of minority language schools and the local soviets organised minority cultural days. The local press also focused on the Gagauz and Transnistrian conflict, highlighting the widespread unrest in the south and the horrors of war in the east.<sup>53</sup>

Local deputies in Bălți worked particularly hard to stave off conflict. Following the commencement of the strikes, prominent local figures, such as the chairman of the city soviet, regularly visited the striking factories and listened to workers' grievances. Unlike in Transnistria and Gagauzia, most workers in Bălți did not expect Russian to become the second official language of the republic, and instead claimed that it should be recognised as the language

<sup>51</sup> Marcin Kosienkowski, and William Schreiber, "Moldova's National Minorities: Why Are They Euroskeptical", *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no. 82 (November 2014): 15.

<sup>52</sup> "Obrashchenie ko vsem liudiam dobroï voli raïona," *Novyi Put'*, avgusta 31, 1990, 1 ("Appeal to all people of Goodwill in the Region," *New Path*, August 31, 1990, 1).

<sup>53</sup> "Bolgarskii tsentr v kishineve," *Slava*, sentiabria 27, 1990, 1 ("Bulgarian Centre in Chișinău," *Slava*, September 27, 1990, 1).



of interethnic communication.<sup>54</sup> After the Moldovan Supreme Soviet relented and made Russian the language of inter-ethnic communication, local elites in Bălți quickly informed the workers, which encouraged them to return to work on September 13, ten days before the strikes officially ended. Deputies also took the time to explain the provisions of the language laws to workers, highlighting that most would be unaffected by the laws and that all correspondence with the state could still be conducted in Russian.<sup>55</sup>

The deputies in Bălți also worked hard to comply with the language laws in the months and years after their passing. Their hard work was recognised in January 1990, at a session of the Central Committee of the CPM. During a meeting between Snegur, and members of the Tiraspol City Soviet, the former criticised the latter for their slow implementation of the language laws and pointed to Bălți as a prime example of their effective application.<sup>56</sup> Bălți was the first city in the republic to organise widespread Moldovan language courses in most of its city's enterprises. These courses, which were widely praised by the republican authorities, were created with the help of the staff from the Alecu Russo Pedagogical Institute in the city. By July 1990, there were 177 adult classes ongoing across the city.<sup>57</sup>

When the Moldovan Supreme Soviet announced the creation of an annual holiday called *Limba Noastră* (Our Language) to commemorate the passing of the language laws, the city authorities immediately declared their intention to participate in the festivities.<sup>58</sup> However, the city authorities in Bălți walked a fine line between supporting the central government and antagonising the local population.<sup>59</sup> Just because they embraced the language laws did not mean they supported all aspects of the national revival. This duality was most evident in the local authorities' relationship with the MPF.

At the MPF's Second Congress in July 1990, the group openly stated that its primary goal was for Moldova's reunification with Romania. Moreover,

<sup>54</sup> "Iazykam - razvivat'sia," *Luch*, iunია 21, 1989, 1 ("Languages-to develop," *Ray*, June 21, 1989, 1).

<sup>55</sup> "Vstrecha s rabochimi," *Kommunist*, sentiabria 5, 1989, 3. ("Meeting with Workers," *Communist*, September 5, 1989, 3.); Kaufman, "Spiralling," 126.

<sup>56</sup> Materialy k protokolu № 93. Zasedaniia biuro Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kompartii Moldavii ot „25” ianvaria 1990 g. Fond 51, Opis' 71, Delo 605 pp. 16-37 (Materials for Protocol No. 93. Meetings of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova dated January 25, 1990, Fund 51, Inventory 71, Case 605 pp. 16-37).

<sup>57</sup> "Na nashei ulitse budet prazdnik," *Kommunist*, iulia 7, 1990, 3 ("There Will be a Holiday in Our Street," *Communist*, July 7, 1990, 3.).

<sup>58</sup> "Mudraia palitra prazdnika," *Kommunist*, sentiabria 4, 1990, 3 ("Wise Palette of the Holiday," *Communist*, September 4, 1990, 3.).

<sup>59</sup> "O registratsii sektsii Narodnogo fronta," *Kommunist*, sentiabria 6, 1990, 1 ("About the registration of the People's Front Section," *Communist*, September 6, 1990, 1).

the Moldovan press reported that the group also made irredentist claims against Ukraine, stating that Moldova should recapture the lands that Stalin had seceded to Kyiv in 1940 before reuniting with Romania. The Congress's declaration caused uproar amongst many ethnic minorities and provided ample propaganda material for the separatists in Gagauzia and Transnistria. In Bălți, several labour collectives wrote to the local soviet in protest. However, instead of using the declarations to create tensions, the local authorities called for calm, encouraging workers to disregard the declarations.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the Bălți city authorities did acknowledge that the MPF could be a destabilising force within the city.

Like elsewhere in Moldova, the local branch of the MPF active in Bălți began to pursue its goals with more vigour in 1990. The local authorities were acutely aware of the tightrope they were walking and were worried the MPF's support for pan-Romanianism might incite inter-ethnic tensions in the city. In June 1990, a request by the local branch of the MPF in Bălți to organise a rally in the city was rejected by the presidium of the city soviet.<sup>61</sup> This decision was unsurprising, as just a few days prior, a rally in the village of Varnița, near the city of Bender, resulted in violent clashes between workers from Tiraspol and supporters of the MPF.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the local branch of the MPF decided to organise a rally in Bălți.<sup>63</sup> This decision was met with an outcry of condemnation from locals, with dozens of labour collectives writing letters of complaint to the city authorities. In response, the city authorities decided to deregister the local branch of the MPF in July, citing their unsanctioned rally and how their actions could incite inter-ethnic violence.<sup>64</sup>

The MPF was not a disruptive force in every district, and in some cases, served as a unifying one. Both the Ocnița branch of the MPF and the district authorities worked in tandem to prevent inter-ethnic conflict in the region. As noted above, local Ukrainians initially responded negatively to the language laws, believing it would require them to learn three languages. However,

<sup>60</sup> "Obrashchenie narodnykh deputatov Bêltskogo gorodskogo soveta k naseleniiu Bêlts," *Kommunist*, iulia 24, 1990, 1. ("The appeal of Balti town council of the people's deputies to the population of Balti," *Communist*, July 24, 1990, 1.)

<sup>61</sup> "Po sledam odnoi vstrechi," *Kommunist*, iunია 16, 1990, 1. ("On the Footsteps of One Meeting," *Communist*, June 16, 1990, 1.)

<sup>62</sup> "Stolknovenie u Varnitsy," *Pobeda*, maia 26, 1990, 1 ("Clash at Varnița," *Victory*, May 26, 1990, 1).

<sup>63</sup> "Po sledam odnoi vstrechi," *Kommunist*, iunია 16, 1990, 1. ("On the Footsteps of One Meeting," *Communist*, June 16, 1990, 1.)

<sup>64</sup> "O registratsii sektsii Narodnogo fronta," *Kommunist*, sentiabria 6, 1990, 1 ("About the registration of the People's Front Section," *Communist*, September 6, 1990, 1.)



local deputies worked hard to redirect this narrative. They capitalised on the provisions of the language laws and opened more Ukrainian ethnic institutions in the region. Already by October 1989, six new Ukrainian cultural clubs had opened in Ocnița and its surrounding villages.<sup>65</sup> The local authorities also used the *Limba Noastra* celebrations to highlight local diversity, and in 1991 began organising Ukrainian cultural days.<sup>66</sup> The local authorities and press also highlighted the positive steps taken by the Moldovan authorities to revive the Ukrainian language and culture. Snegur's decree on the development of Ukrainian culture, published in March 1991, was widely praised. The decree called for the opening of Ukrainian language schools and cultural centres in regions where Ukrainians predominated, as well as for the establishment of a Ukrainian language press.<sup>67</sup> A Ukrainian language newspaper that was subsequently founded, called *Enlightenment*, was also praised by local elites.<sup>68</sup>

The local authorities in Ocnița, the government in Chișinău, and the local branch of the MPF all developed close relations with various bodies in Ukraine and used them to stave off conflict. The MPF in Ocnița developed close ties with the Ukrainian group, Rukh. In late 1990 the Ocnița branch of the MPF published a declaration issued by Rukh, calling on Ukrainians in Moldova to respect the republic's territorial integrity.<sup>69</sup> The local and republican governments also developed closer ties with the authorities in Ukraine, opening several schemes that allowed students and workers to travel to Ukraine to study or receive specialist training.<sup>70</sup>

In Basarabeasca, the local authorities, the MPF, and other groups worked hard to discourage separatism and avoid interethnic conflict. This was

<sup>65</sup> T.Molokishan, "Pesnia-dusha naroda. (Interv'iu s kompetentnym chelovekom)," *Novyi put'*, oktiabria 24, 1989, 2. (T.Molokishan, "The song is the soul of the people. (Interview with a competent person)," *New Path*, October 24, 1989, 2).

<sup>66</sup> "Den' ukrainskoï kul'tury," *Zaria*, iunია 6, 1991, 2 ("The Day of Ukrainian Culture," *Dawn*, June 6, 1991, 2); "Zasedanie koordinatsionnogo komiteta," *Novyi put'*, avgusta 9, 1990, 1. ("Coordination Committee Meeting," *New Path*, August 9, 1990, 1).

<sup>67</sup> "Ukaz Prezidenta SSR Moldova O merakh po obespecheniiu razvitiia ukrainskoï natsional'noi kul'tury v respublike," *Novyi Put'*, marta 12, 1991 g., str. 1. ("Decree of the President of the SSR Moldova on measures to ensure the development of Ukrainian national culture in the republic," *New Path*, March 12, 1991, 1).

<sup>68</sup> "ProsvetIta (Prosveshchenie) pervaiia ukrainskaia gazeta v Moldove," *Novyi Put'*, oktiabria 12, 1991, 1 ("Enlightenment the first Ukrainian newspaper in Moldova," *New Path*, October 12, 1991, 1).

<sup>69</sup> Ion Apostol, "Za tselostnost' respubliky," *Novyi put'*, noiabria 3, 1990, 2 (Ion Apostol, "For the integrity of the republic," *New Path*, November 3, 1990, 2.).

<sup>70</sup> "Poedut uchit'sia na Ukrainu," *Novyi put'*, iulia 13, 1991, 1 ("Will Go to Ukraine," *New Path*, July 13, 1991, 1).

especially difficult in Basarabeasca, as the town and surrounding district were included in the borders of the self-proclaimed Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in November 1989. Basarabeasca's inclusion in the Gagauz separatist project was rejected by the town's Moldovan, Ukrainian, Russian, and Bulgarian population. Collectively, these groups had little interest in joining a Gagauz-led separatist state and realised that the impoverished south was reliant on funding from Chişinău. Nevertheless, Basarabeasca had a considerable Gagauz minority, most of whom supported the separatists in Comrat.<sup>71</sup>

The local authorities found themselves fighting for Moldova's territorial integrity from as early as April 1989, when the Basarabeasca's Executive Committee refused to allow the group "*Budjak*" to organise a rally in the town. *Budjak*, which would become a notorious organisation in the south of Moldova, supported the *Gagauz Halky* and later advocated for forming an autonomous unit in the south of Moldova. The executive committee denied a permit to *Budjak* because the group "spread misinformation" and sought to undermine the republican authorities.<sup>72</sup>

The local authorities in Basarabeasca paid little attention to the Gagauz declaration of autonomy in November 1989. The creation of the Gagauz Republic in August 1990 and the subsequent rise in tensions concerned local elites.<sup>73</sup> Articles began to appear in *Slava* criticising elites in Comrat for not consulting the people of Basarabeasca before including it in their separatist project. Many commentators acknowledged that the local Gagauz population supported the district's inclusion but argued this meant little, as they made up only fourteen percent of the population. In response, Basarabeasca's Executive Committee instructed all enterprises in the town and district to discuss the matter. Eighty percent of participants rejected the region's inclusion in the Gagauz Republic. Interestingly, sixty percent of participants affirmed their support for Moldova's territorial integrity and rejected the creation of any form of autonomous unit in the south of the republic.<sup>74</sup> It was apparent that most of Basarabeasca's local population rejected secession and local deputies worked hard to keep it that way.

<sup>71</sup> I.Mitrofan, "Kogda raskol nepriemlem," *Slava*, noiabria 23, 1990, 2 (I.Mitrofan, "When the split is not acceptable," *Slava*, November 23, 1990, 2).

<sup>72</sup> "V ispolkome oblsoveta narodnykh deputatov," *Slava*, aprelia 14, 1989, 1 ("In the Executive Committee of the Regional Council of the People's Deputies," *Slava*, April 14, 1989, 1).

<sup>73</sup> "Deklaratsiia sobraniia deputatov vsekh urovnei Basarabskogo, Vulkaneshtskogo, Komratskogo, Tarakliiskogo i Chadyr-Lunzhskikh okrugov," *Slava*, sentiabria 27, 1990, 2. ("Declaration of the meeting of all level deputies of Basarabeasca region, Vulcăneşti region, Comrat region, Taraclia region and Ceadir-Lunga region," *Slava*, September 27, 1990, 2).

<sup>74</sup> "I.Mitrofan, "Kogda raskol nepriemlem," *Slava*, noiabria 23, 1990, 2. (I.Mitrofan, "When the split is not acceptable," *Slava*, November 23, 1990, 2).



Local deputies in Basarabeasca carefully avoided any action that might incite interethnic tensions. Like in Ocnița, the *Limba Noastra* celebration was used to emphasise and celebrate the region's ethnic and linguistic diversity.<sup>75</sup> Similar to Ocnița, the local press continuously highlighted the positive steps taken by the republican authorities towards ethnic minorities: they covered the opening of the Bulgarian culture centre in Chișinău, Snegur's decree on the Ukrainian language, and the proposal to open a state university in Comrat.<sup>76</sup> To discourage violence, the local press also meticulously covered the conflict in the south of the republic and was quick to report on clashes. In most instances, journalists portrayed the Gagauz fighters as drunks or hooligans. The press was also especially critical of elites in Comrat, who they claimed turned the "south into a powder keg".<sup>77</sup>

The local authorities in Basarabeasca were also supported by various groups active in the region. Many of the villages in the Basarabeasca district had their own branch of the MPF, the most active of which came from the Sadaclia. These branches campaigned on behalf of the government in Chișinău against the referendum on the Union Treaty and Gagauz separatism.<sup>78</sup> On the latter point, the MPF was supported by local Bulgarians. Although not supportive of pan-Romanianism or boycotting the Union Treaty referendum, the Bulgarians of Basarabeasca were, like many other Bulgarians elsewhere in the south of Moldova, opposed to Gagauz separatism.<sup>79</sup> A delegation of Bulgarians from Basarabeasca was sent to the First Bulgarian Congress in Bolhrad, Ukraine, where they, alongside their counterparts from elsewhere in Moldova, argued in favour of the republic's territorial integrity.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>75</sup> "Prazdnik Limba Noastră," *Slava*, sentiabria 4, 1990, 1. ("Holiday Limba Noastra," *Slava*, September 4, 1990, 1).

<sup>76</sup> "Bolgarskiĭ tsentr v Kishineve," *Slava*, sentiabria 27, 1990, 1. ("Bulgarian Centre in Chișinău," *Slava*, September 27, 1990, 1); "Iazykovaia problema," *Slava*, iun' 23, 1991, 3. ("Language Problem," *Slava*, June 23, 1991, 3); "Byt' universitetu v Komrate." *Slava*, iulia 27, 1991, 1. ("Yes, to the University," *Slava*, July 27, 1991, 1).

<sup>77</sup> "O tom kak sozhgli Vulkaneshtskiĭ raĭotdel poltsii," *Slava*, Noiabr' 19, 1991, 1 ("How the Regional Police Department was Set on Fire," *Slava*, November 19, 1991, 1).

<sup>78</sup> "My ne dolzhny byt' vrazhdebny," *Slava*, iulia 7, 1990, 2. ("We shouldn't be at enmity," *Slava*, July 7, 1990, 2); "Referendumu -kategoricheskoe net," *Slava*, marta 8, 1991, 1 ("To the referendum - categorical No," *Slava*, March 8, 1991, 1).

<sup>79</sup> "V tvarditse formiruiutsia oboronitel'nye otriady," *Slava*, 12 dekabr' 1991, .3 ("In Tvardita the defence regiment is created," *Slava*, December 12, 1991, 3).

<sup>80</sup> "Chto skhod reshil," *Slava*, iunia 8, 1991, 1 ("What was Decided at the Gathering?" *Slava*, June 8, 1991, 1).



## Conclusion

The collapse of the Soviet Union inspired a wave of literature that focused on Moldova's path to independence. In most instances, this literature focused on the Gagauz and Transnistrian conflicts.<sup>81</sup> Scholars often argued that the latter could not be considered as an ethnic conflict, as the majority of Moldova's Russian-speaking population live in other parts of the republic.<sup>82</sup> Despite this widely recycled statement, those working in the field are yet to adequately explore the attitudes of these Russian-speakers towards reforms of *perestroika* and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. This article has sought to fill this gap in the historiography by examining how the inhabitants of Balti, Ocnița, and Basarabasca responded to these issues. This article has demonstrated that the inhabitants of these cities and towns harboured many of the same fears as their counterparts in Transnistria and the Gagauz: most were concerned about the language laws, sceptical of the MPF, and wished to remain within the Soviet Union. It was not a foregone conclusion that minorities in these regions would easily accept Moldovan independence, and many feared that they would push for autonomy. However, conflict was avoided, in large part, due to a proactive local elite that refrained from using inflammatory rhetoric and actively sought to engage and placate the masses, by discrediting separatist forces and explaining the various laws.

Bălți, which has been flagged as the potential "Donetsk of Moldova", had the most complicated relationship with the Moldovan authorities. The majority of the city's population were pro-Soviet, initially opposing the language laws and hostile towards Moldovan independence. However, the city also had a considerable Moldovan population, many of whom supported the reforms undertaken by the new government. This put the city authorities in a difficult position. Determined to avoid interethnic conflict, deputies walked a fine line between supporting Moldova's territorial integrity and undermining the central government's authority. They readily implemented the language laws, for which Snegur praised them. However, they also deregistered the local branch of the MPF for holding an unsanctioned rally. The gravest violation committed by the authorities in Bălți was sponsoring the organisation of a referendum on the Union Treaty. However, Bălți's disobedience stopped there, and the city's

<sup>81</sup> Kolstø and Malgin. "The Transnistrian Republic," 103-127, Chinn and Roper. "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 87-101; Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova," 101-122; Kosienkowski, "The Gagauz Republic," 116-113.

<sup>82</sup> King, "Eurasia Letter," 114; Kolstø, Edemsky, and Kalashnikova, "The Dniester Conflict", 975.



population and authorities readily accepted Moldova's sovereignty following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In Ocnița, many Ukrainians rejected the language laws, believing they would disadvantage them. However, local elites worked hard to redirect the narrative, with the local press regularly focusing on the opening of Ukrainian cultural institutions and other positive initiatives taken by the local and republican authorities. In addition, they cultivated relations with groups inside Ukraine that called for their compatriots to respect Moldova's territorial integrity. Finally, they also opened cross-border initiatives that created new opportunities for Ocnița's Ukrainians.

The authorities in Basarabeasca took a similar approach to their counterparts in Ocnița, using the press to highlight positive aspects of Chișinău's minority policy. They also used the *Limba Noastră* celebration to celebrate the region's diversity. Basarabeasca's Moldovan, Ukrainian, Russian, and Bulgarian populations also had an external factor that brought them together: the Gagauz Republic. Opinions may have been divided on the language laws, the tricolour, and the Union Treaty, but all the non-Gagauz ethnic groups agreed that they did not wish to become part of the Gagauz-led separatist republic. This was supported by Basarabeasca's authorities, who used the local newspaper, *Slava*, to highlight the horrors of the war.

The findings of this article have broader implications that go beyond filling in a historiographical gap. It reiterates the critical role local elites play in avoiding conflict and even secession, particularly in times of uncertainty such as regime change.<sup>83</sup> Their control over the local media allowed deputies to direct the narrative. Moreover, they could also register and deregister groups and sanction rallies of whatever organisation they wished. Much of the same scepticism in Gagauzia and Transnistria was also present in Bălți, Ocnița, and Basarabeasca. However, while elites in Tiraspol and Comrat chose to incite tensions, their counterparts in the city and towns of this study typically decided to support the authorities in Chișinău.

This study also opens numerous other avenues that are worthy of further exploration. A more nuanced comparison between the multi-ethnic cities and towns of Bessarabia, and those in Gagauzia and Transnistria could be made, with researchers questioning why elites in the former sought to placate the masses, while their counterparts in the latter sought to incite tensions. Given the similarities in their demographic makeup and level of industrialisation,

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<sup>83</sup> Dmitry P. Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

a comparison of Bălți and Tiraspol, or Basarabeasca and Comrat, could be made. An analysis of how the local media and elites reacted to the language laws, tricolour, Union Treaty, and other issues would likely yield fruitful results. There is also considerable scope to further explore the attitudes of Moldova's Ukrainian population towards the aforementioned issues. While this article has focused mainly on Ocnița, a significant number of Ukrainians also live in several other districts in Moldova. Moreover, they are also the second largest ethnic group in Moldova. In summation, there are a variety of different aspects of Moldova's path to independence that have been overshadowed by issues of separatism but are equally worthy of further attention and discussion.

### Rezumat

O mare parte din discuțiile academice legate de experiențele minorităților în timpul prăbușirii puterii sovietice în Moldova se concentrează în jurul Transnistriei și Găgăuziei. Cu toate acestea, o parte semnificativă a populației vorbitoare de limbă rusă din Moldova a trăit în afara acestor regiuni. Nu există încă un studiu care să abordeze modul în care vorbitorii de limbă rusă din afara Transnistriei și Găgăuziei au răspuns provocărilor perestroikăi. Acest articol arată că vorbitorii de limbă rusă din trei orașe, Bălți, Ocnița, Basarabeasca, au avut opinii similare celor din Transnistria și Găgăuzia. Cu toate acestea, conflictul a fost evitat în Bălți, Ocnița și Basarabeasca datorită măsurilor proactive luate de elitele locale, care au depus eforturi pentru a calma stările de spirit ale cetățenilor din orașele respective.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Republica Moldova, mobilizare, minorități, elite locale.

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# The Orthodox Church and Education in Belarus as a Reflection of the Specific Pattern of Church-State Relations

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## *Abstract*

This paper<sup>1</sup> discusses the development of cooperation between the Orthodox Church and educational establishments in Belarus. The first Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) was signed in 1994, several years before the adoption of a new Law on the Freedom of Conscience and the signing of the Agreement on Cooperation between the Church and the State. Although many objectives, stated in the first Agreement, were not met on time, there was a continuing and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Ministry and the BOC since then, with a series of Programmes of Cooperation, signed every 2-4 years. The Orthodox Church is the only religious denomination in Belarus which concludes Programmes of Cooperation with the Ministry of Education; however, one cannot claim that the general legislative framework is particularly favourable for this Church. Indeed, there are some restrictions, limiting the presence of the BOC and its representatives in educational establishments. Also, the Church has not managed to get the inclusion of the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture” and related courses in the curriculum. At the same time, these courses can be taught as optional subjects, at the request of parents. In addition, the BOC is able to organise various cooperation with educational establishments (seminars, lectures, regular talks, etc.); however, the scope and intensity of this cooperation largely depend on the will of the schools’ administration to interact with the Orthodox Church.

**Keywords:** Orthodox Church, Belarus, education, school, the teaching of religion.

## **Introduction**

Currently, around 60% of the population of Belarus state they are believers. The Belarusian Orthodox (BOC) and Roman Catholic Churches constitute the vast majority (respectively, 73% and 12% of all believers), with Protestant Churches representing a minority of believers.<sup>2</sup> The number of BOC

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<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, “Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues”, 2018, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://>

communities is more than half of all religious communities in the country (1709 out of 3389). As of 2022, fifteen dioceses form the established administrative structure of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. The Church is governed by the Holy Synod, which is composed of the ruling bishops of all the dioceses in Belarus. The most important decisions of the Belarusian Synod (such as the election of new hierarchs or the establishment of new seminaries or dioceses) should be approved by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, of which the Metropolitan of Minsk is a permanent member. The ecclesiastical ties between Moscow and Minsk have been strong and friendly, due to the unity in faith and tradition, the intensive cooperation and the low level of nationalistic feelings in Belarus.

The current model of Church-State relations in Belarus is close in its essence and scope to the 'cooperationist model', which lies somewhere between the strict separation and the state (official) Church models. The cooperationist model denotes formal separation between Church and state, but normally with agreements, regulating the status of Churches. This model became a popular development in the post-Communist world, equipping Churches with new functions and opportunities, not known in the Communist regimes.<sup>3</sup> An example of this model could be seen in Germany, where, according to Soper and Fetzer, the Basic Law "establishes a formal separation between Church and state, but at the same time the constitution secures cooperation between the two institutions in such areas as education and social welfare provision".<sup>4</sup>

The Constitution of Belarus stipulates that the relations between the state and religious organisations "shall be regulated by law with regard to their influence on formation of spiritual, cultural and state traditions of the Belarusian people."<sup>5</sup> This provision recognizes that Churches can be meaningful and influential in the public domain and that the state will apply different approaches when building relationships with religious organisations. In the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, adopted

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[www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/](http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/).

<sup>3</sup> Mikhail Antonov, "Church-state symphonia: its historical development and its applications by the Russian Orthodox Church," *Journal of Law and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2020): 474-493; Liudmyla Fylypovych and Anatolii Kolodnyi, "The Culture of State-Church and Church-State Relations: The Ukrainian Case," *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 12, no.2 (2021): 9-30.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Soper and Joel S. Fetzer, "Religious Institutions, Church-State History and Muslim Mobilisation in Britain, France and Germany," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no.6 (2007): 933-944.

<sup>5</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, accessed September 15, 2022, <http://law.by/databank-business/constitution-of-the-republic-of-belarus/>.



in 2002, specific mention is given to the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, as well as Lutheranism, Islam, and Judaism. The Orthodox Church is placed at a preferential position in this law, since it recognizes the “determining role of the Orthodox Church in the historic formation and development of the spiritual, cultural and state traditions of the Belarusian people.”<sup>6</sup> This has been similar to developments in some neighbouring countries (i.e. Russia, or Poland) where there is also a sort of preferred religion/religions.<sup>7</sup> The important role of the Orthodox Church has been further reinforced by the Agreement on Cooperation, signed between the State and the Belarusian Orthodox Church in June 2003. In this agreement, the state recognises the Orthodox Church as “one of the most important social institutions” in the country and provides guarantees for the “freedom of [its] internal organization”. The agreement gives priority to the cooperation between the Church and state in the spheres of education, culture, charitable work, family and family values, morality, etc.<sup>8</sup> The Belarusian Orthodox Church is the only religious institution in Belarus which has signed such an agreement, which is reflective of its role, significance and dominance in the religious domain. Obviously, the provisions of the 2002 Law on the Freedom of Conscience and the 2003 Agreement on Cooperation have created favourable conditions for the development of cooperation and common work between state institutions and the Orthodox Church. Indeed, in 2003 and 2004 the Church signed the Programmes of Cooperation with a substantial number of governmental agencies, including ministries and state committees.<sup>9</sup> The assessment of this cooperation varies,<sup>10</sup> but it would be wrong to disregard

<sup>6</sup> Natsionalnoye sobraniye Respubliki Belarus (2002). *Zakon Respubliki Belarus o svobode sovesti i religioznikh organizatsiyakh* [National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The Law of the Republic of Belarus on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations], Minsk.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center, “Many Countries Favor Specific Religions, Officially or Unofficially”, 2017, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/10/03/many-countries-favor-specific-religions-officially-or-unofficially/>.

<sup>8</sup> Soglasheniye (2003) *Соглашение о сотрудничестве между Республикой Беларусь и Белорусской Православной Церковью* [The Agreement on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Orthodox Church], accessed May 25, 2022, <http://www.church.by/resource/Dir0009/Dir0015/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> The Belarusian Orthodox Church signed the programmes of cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences, Committee on the prevention of the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and with the Ministries of Interior; Health; Information; Culture; Defence; Education; Emergencies; Natural Resources; Sport and Tourism; and Labour and Social protection.

<sup>10</sup> Nelly Bekus, “On the political mission of Orthodoxy in Belarus and its consequences for the church and state”, in *Orthodoxy Versus Post-Communism?: Belarus, Serbia, Ukraine and*

the important presence of the Belarusian Orthodox Church in various spheres, including key ones for the state and society.

In this article, I shall discuss one of these spheres, the educational. The main research question I address is to what extent Church has been able to get and use the new opportunities in the educational field. The article is divided according to the following questions: (1) how the BOC has developed the programmes of cooperation with the Ministry of Education, especially in terms of their content; (2) What were the main outcomes of this cooperation, in terms of access by Church representatives to educational establishments, and the ability to introduce at schools courses with the religious/religion-related content.

Overall, the cooperation between the BOC and the Ministry of Education/ educational establishments has been one of the most intensive and has been given some priority by the Church and state structures. At the same time, this issue has been barely given appropriate attention in academic literature, with few exceptions. In 2009, Nikolay Sukhotski, then a specialist at the Ministry of Education, admitted that it is not possible to speak about the “harmonious and efficient joint work of the educational system and the Orthodox Church in the Republic of Belarus”.<sup>11</sup> He recognised that for many education specialists, the issue of interaction between educational establishments and the BOC seemed ‘non-substantial’, or seemed to be ‘explosive’ even “for discussion in a pedagogical collective”.<sup>12</sup> Seven years later, in 2016, priest Dmitriy Vorsa, who analysed the BOC’s cooperation with educational establishments, admitted that in the last 20 years “there has been a transition from the principles of separation of state and school from the Church, to the principle of building constructive

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*the Russkiy Mir*, edited by Michal Wawrzonek, Nelly Bekus and Mirella Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 71–158; Natallia Vasilevich, “Unequal by default: Church and state in Belarus in the period of consolidated authoritarianism”, in *Civil society in Belarus 2000–2015. Collection of texts* (Warsaw: East European Democratic Centre, 2015), 97–128; Sergei Mudrov, “Belarusian Orthodox Church”, in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Lucian Leustean (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 334–356; Sergei Mudrov, “Church-State relations in the post-Communist world: the cases of Belarus and Estonia,” *Journal of Church and State* 59, Issue 4 (2017): 649–671; Sergei Mudrov and Nikolay Zakharov, “The Internal Discussions in the Belarusian Orthodox Church on Identity and Policy Issues: A Contemporary Perspective,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 15, Issue 1-4 (2022): 81–104.

<sup>11</sup> Nikolay Sukhotski, “Социально- педагогические аспекты взаимодействия учреждений образования и православной церкви в Республике Беларусь” [Social and pedagogical aspects of the interaction of educational establishments and Orthodox Church in the Republic of Belarus], *Problemy upravleniya*, no. 4 (2009): 218.

<sup>12</sup> Sukhotski, “Социально- педагогические аспекты”: 219.



relationships”.<sup>13</sup> Although he does not provide an exact assessment of these relationships, he claims that there are ‘certain successes’ in the realization of joint programmes of the BOC and governmental institutions.

This article is based on the analysis of official documents, syllabuses, textbooks, unpublished reports and expert interviews with representatives both of the Church and governmental institutions. It is organised around the following key points: an analysis of changes in the Programmes of Cooperation between the Church and the Ministry, the finalizing of the principal legislative framework of cooperation, and the analysis of some practical aspects of this cooperation, including the teaching of different courses on religion, such as the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture”.

### **The Programmes of Cooperation: Key Developments**

The desire of the Orthodox Church to be involved in the area of education is understandable: the Church regards this area, especially in the sphere of secondary education, as very important for promoting its values and views (and this would be similar for most religious denominations). Indeed, the influence of the school on the minds of schoolchildren is important; therefore, the desire of the Church to see schoolchildren as having at least neutral, or better positive attitudes towards Christian values and ideals is reflective of the Church’s missionary purposes. Besides, it is reflective of the desire to establish more objective attitudes towards religion in Belarusian society, which is still influenced by the remnants of atheist ideology. Finally, the Church might aim at promoting family values and helping schoolchildren, disoriented by various ideologies, to find their place in changeable and at times hostile surroundings.

It is important to note that the first formal agreement between the BOC and MofE was signed as early as 1994: almost nine years before signing of the Agreement on Cooperation between the BOC and State. To some extent, it became possible due to personal negotiations between Metropolitan Philaret<sup>14</sup> and then the Minister of Education Vasilii Strazhev<sup>15</sup>, who was in general

<sup>13</sup> Dmitriy Vorsa, “Ретроспективный анализ нормативной правовой базы Республики Беларусь по вопросам взаимодействия государственных органов с Белорусской Православной Церковью в сфере образования” [Retrospective analysis of the legal basis of the Republic of Belarus on the issues of interaction of governmental institutions with the Belarusian Orthodox Church in the sphere of education], *Vysheishay shkola*, no. 4 (2016): 51

<sup>14</sup> Head of the Belarusian Orthodox Church in 1978-2013.

<sup>15</sup> Vasilii Strazhev was educated as physicist (PhD in Physics), and worked in academia and governmental institutions. He was appointed Minister of Education in August, 1994, soon after A.Lukashenko was elected for the first time President of Belarus (July, 1994). Strazhev run the ministry for more than 7 years, until October, 2001.



quite positive towards the cooperation with the Church. The Agreement on Cooperation, signed in September 1994, became a unique document for Church-State relations of the early 1990s, since it provided some new and unique opportunities for the BOC, not even imaginable several years earlier. In this Agreement, the emphasis was made on the necessity of the “revival of spirituality and morality of Belarusian people, restoration of cultural traditions and confirmation of the historical role of Orthodoxy in Byelorussia”. It was not just a declarative document; in fact, it was the first document in independent Belarus where the principles of the post-Communist model of Church-State relations became visible and were clearly formulated. The following key points of the document are worth mentioning, reflecting its significance as a building block in the construction of the cooperationist model of Church-State relations in Belarus.

First, the document speaks about the necessity to realise in Belarus “the traditional European principle of the differentiated status of religions, confessions”. It defines the necessity to develop the principles of participation of traditional for Belarus confessions in the teaching, research and administrative processes of educational establishments. In addition, the document makes a very important step in relation to the presence of the Orthodox Church in educational establishments and its influence on the syllabus. The Ministry recognises drawbacks in the teaching of a number of disciplines (philosophy, ethics, cultural studies, history, etc.) and admits that the teaching of “secular courses” should be improved; moreover, this improvement needs to be done in consultation with the Orthodox Church and other traditional confessions.<sup>16</sup> This was done in order to overcome the legacies of the Communist era, when philosophical, historical and other disciplines were taught in the atheist and harshly anti-religious character. Thus, the document was aiming at diminishing these negative aspects, at bringing more diversity into the educational sphere, with the noting of interests and position of the main Belarusian confessions, including the Orthodox Church.

The 1994 Agreement between the BOC and MofE turned into a somewhat revolutionary document, since it made provisions for the Orthodox Church to get access (non-existent before) to educational establishments, with the right to influence the content of various courses and disciplines—namely the disciplines, where the religious issues have been present or where the ideational

<sup>16</sup> Soglasheniye (1994) Соглашение о сотрудничестве между Министерством образования и науки Республики Беларусь и Белорусским Экзархатом [Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Exarchate], Minsk.



factors have been interpreted. On top of this, the document contained provisions for the development of adequate mechanisms for the recognition of degrees in theology (awarded by theological schools); it was stated that it would be necessary to develop this by September, 1996.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the revolutionary theoretical provisions performed poorly in practice, mainly remaining mere declarations. This could be explained by the strong opposition at that time to the Church's involvement in education: a logical consequence of the long domination of atheist ideology. In addition, the general legislative framework in the 1990s was not that favourable to the Orthodox Church; the changes occurred only in the early 2000s. There was some difference in comparison with neighbouring states; for instance, in Russia, the principal legislative document – the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Communities— was adopted in 1997.

After the Agreement between the Orthodox Church and State was signed in 2003,<sup>18</sup> opportunities appeared for the formal conclusion of agreements between the BOC and governmental agencies. Therefore, the new Programme of Cooperation between the BOC and MofE was signed in 2004, for two years only. In the declaratory part of the Programme the following points should be noted. First, there was indicated the necessity to use the potential of Orthodox traditions and values<sup>19</sup> in the "formation of personality of a human being" as well as the "correction of behavior and social support of children and teenagers with deviant behavior, who got into socially dangerous situations". Second, the Programme was aimed at helping the "development of humanities, including theological and religious studies education" in Belarus.<sup>20</sup> These two points reflected, in my view, the important goals of the Orthodox Church: to use the positive potential of its values and to create adequate conditions for the development of theological education in Belarus, which had been extinct in the years of the Communist regime. The practical points, elaborated in the 13-page

<sup>17</sup> Soglasheniye (1994).

<sup>18</sup> The signing of such an agreement became possible only after a new Law 'On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations' was adopted in 2002.

<sup>19</sup> These are normally understood as the traditions and values aimed at the support of strong and stable family, respect towards each other, support of chastity, honesty, the ability to do good deeds, and the presence of religious elements, inspired by the Orthodox Christianity, in the everyday life.

<sup>20</sup> Программа (2004) Программа сотрудничества между Министерством образования Республики Беларусь и Белорусской Православной Церковью на 2004-2006 гг. [Programme of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Orthodox Church for the years 2004-2006], Minsk.

long table, included a number of concrete measures/events. For instance, the document envisioned the elaboration of statutes of the Orthodox gymnasium, the liberal arts-religious studies classes and the conception of the development of religious education in secular higher education establishments. Again (as 10 years earlier), the statement was included about the necessity to work for the recognition of diplomas, issued by educational establishments of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. Some other points were also quite ambitious: the opening of classes (at the request of parents), realizing spiritual upbringing based on the Orthodox traditions, the consideration of opening theology departments, and the introduction of an elective course on theology at higher educational establishments.<sup>21</sup>

The next Programme of Cooperation, from 2007 to 2010, was less ambitious and omitted a number of important points, which were included in 2004. For instance, there was no declaration to use “the potential of Orthodox traditions and values”. It was stated instead, in line with other legislative acts, that the Orthodoxy “made a crucial influence on the historical growth and the development of spiritual, cultural and state traditions of Belarusian people”; therefore, it can currently be regarded as “an important basis of spiritual and moral upbringing of growing generations”. Unlike previous Programmes, the 2007 document did not specify separately the development of theological education; it was replaced by the “development of humanities (including theological and religious studies) education”. In the concrete measures, listed in the table, a number of conferences, music festivals and discussion forums was again mentioned, but the point for the recognition of diplomas was omitted. No mention was given to the organisation of celebrations of religious feasts, such as the Nativity and Easter (mentioned in the previous Programme); it was replaced by such events as ‘Christmas meetings’, ‘Easter evenings’, ‘Family day’, etc.<sup>22</sup> Most likely, it reflected the officials’ perspectives from the ministry at that time. The proposal to establish departments of theology also disappeared, although the document contained a proposal to elaborate a syllabus for the elective course “Foundations of Theology”, for the humanities students in higher education establishments. However, one needs to note an important point: it was specified that the Ministry and BOC would aim at

<sup>21</sup> Программа (2004).

<sup>22</sup> Программа (2007) Программа сотрудничества Министерства образования Республики Беларусь и Белорусской Православной Церкви на 2007-2010 гг. [Programme of Cooperation of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Orthodox Church for the years 2007-2010], Minsk.



the “elaboration, expertise and approval” of the syllabuses of elective courses, special courses, and experimental disciplines which describe “the basis of the Christian worldview, morality and culture, traditions and role of Orthodoxy in the formation of culture and statehood of Belarusian people”.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, it is plausible to claim that the 2007 Programme was less favourable towards the Orthodox Church, especially bearing in mind that the key points of the 2004 programme were not fulfilled. To an extent, it reflected changing relations between the Church and state; it is therefore not surprising that the next Programme, signed in April 2011 (for almost four years, until the end of 2014) did not show substantial improvement. On the one hand, in the Preamble of this 2011 Programme the statement from the 2004 Programme was returned, with the use of “the potential of Orthodox traditions and values” in the “formation of personality of a human being”. On the other hand, in the section on practical actions, some aspects again were excluded: for instance, no mention of the common celebrations of religious feasts. Instead, there were the ‘events’, dedicated to “state holidays, memorable dates and traditional international days”. Otherwise, the list of events was quite similar to the previous ones: conferences, round tables, common seminars, and drafting methodical material for various elective courses. Probably the most prominent direction of work was the development of the State standard and syllabus on theology.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the Programme for 2015-2020 had a preamble, almost identical to the previous Programme. By way of concrete steps, a few points were innovative and quite notable, making some specific aspects of this programme. P.4.5 envisioned the organisation of medical brotherhoods in medical educational establishments. The concrete plan in the table was divided into the thematic blocs, which included “the common research and innovation activities”, “the forming of love for motherland”, “the development of folk arts”, “the organisation of work with the family, strengthening the spiritual and moral basis of the family, revival and propagation of family values”, and “organising events for memorable dates”, “volunteer activities”, “Orthodox education”, “the information activities in the educational establishments to prevent dependencies (drug use and other habit forming substances) and negative influence of totalitarian sects and destructive cults”. Notably, it was decided to

<sup>23</sup> Programma (2007).

<sup>24</sup> Programma (2011) Програма супраадуництва Міністэрства аазавааання Рэспублікі Беларусь і Беларускай Праваслаавай Цэрквы на 2011-2014 г. [Programme of Cooperation of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Orthodox Church for the years 2011-2014], Minsk.

organise celebrations of anniversaries related to some Orthodox saints, such as St Serafim of Sarov and St Alexander of Neva.<sup>25</sup>

Overall, assessing the development of the Programmes of Cooperation between the BOC and the MofE in 1994-2020 (starting from the 1994 Agreement), one can claim that the content of these programmes was gradually changing, with the omission of crucial points of the first programmes. Indeed, the sections on the recognition of diplomas of theological schools, the establishment of the departments of theology, and the introduction of optional courses on theology at higher education establishments have vanished from the subsequent Programmes, which was disadvantageous for the Church. The Programmes became more 'events-oriented', listing a number of common seminars, lectures, visits, round-tables, discussions, etc. At the same time, the Programmes were making important provisions for the presence of the Orthodox Church at secondary schools: via the common events, lectures/talks of the priests and teaching of optional courses. Eventually, the content of these Programmes reached a balance, acceptable to both sides, at least in the area of secondary education. In tertiary education, it remained more disadvantageous for the Orthodox Church (in comparison with secondary education), although the Programmes provided opportunities for the BOC to interact with higher education establishments.

### **The Government's Resolution**

The Programmes of Cooperation between the BOC and MofE cannot be regarded as the key legislative documents, since they are not legally binding for participating sides. The most important and detailed (as well as legally binding) provisions on cooperation with religious organisations were formulated in the Resolution of the Council of Ministers, adopted in June 2011. This document leaves a dubious impression. On the one hand, it repeats a number of provisions, which could be found in the earlier adopted legislative acts, such as the necessity to take into account "the historical role and influence" of religious organisations. The Resolution also stipulates that only the Orthodox Church is permitted to sign an Agreement with the Ministry of Education (since the BOC is the only religious organisation in Belarus which signed the agreement with the state).

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<sup>25</sup> Программа (2015) Программа сотрудничества между Министерством образования Республики Беларусь и Белорусской Православной Церковью на 2015-2020 гг. [Programme of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Orthodox Church for the years 2015-2020], Minsk.



On the other hand, this Resolution introduces a number of restrictions, found also in other legislative acts, such as the Code on Education, adopted in December 2010. For instance, educational establishments are allowed to interact with religious organisations only during the extracurricular time. To make things more complicated, the initiative to interact with the religious organisation should be approved by the founders of the educational establishment; besides, schoolchildren can participate in the common activities only having the written consent of their parents (or guardians). Also, this Resolution prohibits missionary activities of religious organisations, the distribution of religious books, video- and audio-material with religious content (excluding earlier stated for tutorial work), the religious services and ceremonies, as well as placing at educational establishments of religious symbols and religious objects.<sup>26</sup>

It is worth noting that there is no single opinion among the clergy of the Orthodox Church in the assessments of legislative acts, related to Church-State cooperation. In total, I interviewed around 25 clergymen, representing all regions of Belarus. The interviewees included the representatives of the intellectual elite of the Orthodox Church, i.e. people working in theological seminaries/academy, doing some research, and holding responsibility for the educational work in their dioceses. The opinions of priests about the interaction with state institutions and the practical significance of the agreements between the BOC and the state, including the Ministry of Education, reflect mainly their experience and the peculiarities of their concrete practical work in this field. Normally the Orthodox clergy are far from unilaterally praising this cooperation, although, as father Pavel Bubnov claimed, the state “did everything it could do”: it established an appropriate legal model which “could be used, in the first instance, by the state institutions, civil servants, so that they could use all these documents and agreements in their work”.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, he mentions the “inertia of the Soviet era”, when the people, who were brought up in that era, may now not be convinced “even by state directives or agreements with the Church”, and, as a result, they do not allow Church representatives to

<sup>26</sup> Postanovleniye (2011) Постановление Совета министров Республики Беларусь от 24 июня 2011 г. № 838 “Об утверждении Положения о порядке, условиях, содержании и формах взаимодействия учреждений образования с религиозными организациями в вопросах воспитания обучающихся”. [Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus from 24 June, 2011, #838 ‘About approval of Regulations on the order, conditions, content and kinds of the interaction of educational establishments with religious organisations on the issues of upbringing of those who study’], Minsk.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Fr Pavel Bubnov, lecturer at Minsk Theological Seminary. August 24, 2019.

appear in, say, educational establishments.<sup>28</sup> Fr Sergiy, sharing his experience of cooperation with local institutions in a small provincial Belarusian town in the Minsk region admits the inability to cooperate, since there are no concrete points in the agreements and the local authorities are “with the Communist inertia in their heads”.<sup>29</sup> Fr Sergiy M. is not very optimistic; he says that he is deeply dissatisfied with the agreements, since “much effort is directed at the creation of some bulky structures, meetings. Then we need to report all this, and much effort and time is consumed by such activities”.<sup>30</sup> He describes some situations where a lack of concrete points may lead to uncertainties:

‘Let us discuss some practical issues. Can we place an icon of St Ephrosinia of Polotsk at school? No. But if we say that she is an educator of the 10<sup>th</sup> century? Then yes. Can we place an icon at kindergarten? No. But I can put it on a chest of drawers of my child, since it is his private space. And these issues have not been solved, since there is an illusion that if we get together with state officials, sign something, then the state and society will become closer to the Church’.<sup>31</sup>

In December 2011 in line with the Resolution of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education issued its recommendations on the organizing of cooperation of educational establishments with the Belarusian Orthodox Church. This document did not contain anything revolutionary in comparison with the earlier adopted Resolution, although it certainly elaborated more concrete points which were regarded as important from the Ministry’s perspective. The document develops the Resolution’s principles in the following way. In order to allow “advanced study of the spiritual, moral and cultural heritage of Orthodoxy”, as well as the study of its role in the formation of Belarusian statehood and patriotic upbringing of children and youth, it should be possible for students (pupils) to attend optional subjects. In the area of family work, it is recommended that the young generation should accept such notions as “chastity, strong family, responsible parenthood and respect to parents” (this is called “gender and family education of the youth on the basis of Christian values”). Also, it is important, in the process of joint activities, to form in children and studying youth “the active life position, based on the moral and ethical basis of Christianity”. It is recommended to provide at schools some information about the Orthodox saints, who, according to the

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Fr Pavel Bubnov.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Fr Sergiy. May 10, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Fr Sergiy M. June 11, 2019. By telephone.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Fr Sergiy M.



authors of the document, contributed to the formation of the Belarusian state, such as St Ephrosinia of Polotsk, St Kirill of Turov, St Sofia of Slutsk and others. The other aspects include some work to prevent deviant behavior, to organise common seminars, to explore local Orthodox sites and similar activities.<sup>32</sup>

In principle, it appears that the authors of the Ministry's recommendations were trying not to promote the most unfavorable (for the Church) parts of the Council of Minister's Resolution. Certainly, the Government's Resolution imposes some restrictions on the presence of religious organisations, including the Orthodox Church, in educational establishments, but it still leaves some space for maneuvering, allowing the participating sides to find ways for mutually beneficial cooperation.<sup>33</sup>

### Teaching of Religion

As earlier noted, the current legislation in Belarus does not allow the teaching of Religion at schools as part of the curriculum. In that respect, it makes a stark difference with Russia, where pupils can choose (as a compulsory module) one of the four main religions: Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism, or 'secular ethics', if no preference for one of these four religions has been made. Belarusian laws allow only 'optional courses' on Religions at schools; at present, there are the following subjects approved by the Ministry of Education:

Foundations of Orthodox Culture (for primary school, 1-4 forms).

Foundations of Orthodox Culture (for secondary school, 5-9 forms).

The Bible as a monument of history and literature (6 form).

Churches, castles and palaces of Belarus (7 form).

Ringling of Bells skills (9 form).

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<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. Методические рекомендации по организации сотрудничества учреждений образования с Белорусской Православной Церковью [Methodical recommendations on the organizing of cooperation of the educational establishments with the Belarusian Orthodox Church]. Minsk, 20.12.2011.

<sup>33</sup> There were some negative comments after the Resolution had been adopted. For instance, Yulia Chirva said that the authorities, after they prohibited the presence of icons and prayers at schools, continue to allow 'demons and witches' in the form of Halloween celebrations. However, Fr Alexander Shimbalev, then the Head of the Department of Education and Catechism of Minsk Diocese, pointed out that 'The guidance published on the website of the Ministry of Education (on the implementation of the Resolution) seems to be convincing enough to counterbalance possible negative consequences of this governmental act. In fact, many things, as previously, depend on the will of the head of educational establishments.' Mudrov, "Church-State relations".



Culture and religion (10-11 forms).

Foundations of Religious Studies (11 form).

Foundations of Orthodox culture. Orthodox sacred objects of Eastern Slavs (1-11 forms).

Some of these courses are of a general character; others are more Orthodox-oriented, since they provide knowledge about Orthodoxy and reflect Orthodox values and principles. These include the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture” and, to an extent, “The Bible as a monument of history and literature”. However, less than half of Belarusian schools have introduced these courses; there is a clear regional difference (with the domination of western regions). This domination can be explained by a higher level of religiosity in western Belarus, which did not experience the persecution of religion for as long as the eastern part of the country.

The practical arrangements for opening optional courses have been standardized throughout Belarus; it normally looks as follows. If there are enough pupils who are willing to study one of the Orthodox-related subjects (as confirmed by written applications of their parents), then the school allows these subjects to appear in the timetable (not as a part of the compulsory curriculum), normally once a week. Each lesson lasts (as all other school lessons) for 45 minutes; however, it is not equal to regular, obligatory classes, since marks are not awarded to pupils, and there is normally no requirement to attend all the classes. In some cases, pupils cease attending these courses; it may lead even to their discontinuing. The initiative to introduce optional courses can also be taken by teachers or the school’s administration; of course, if the administration will be against it, it would be almost impossible to introduce these courses, even if the pupils and their parents are in favour. Partially, this underlines the presence of a subjective approach in this area, reflecting the drawbacks in the current legislation.

As was explained by Elena Oleshko, who was for nine years a teacher of the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture” at school #10<sup>34</sup> of Baranovichi, in her case the initiative was taken by the school administration. Oleshko<sup>35</sup> was asked by the deputy director to teach this subject, not least because she had earlier attended educational classes at the local Orthodox Church. After getting this request, Elena Oleshko had to explain this initiative to parents,

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<sup>34</sup> Normally the ‘Foundations of Orthodox Culture’ will be taught at school #10 once a week, on Saturdays, under the notion of ‘Associations of mutual interests’.

<sup>35</sup> Elena Oleshko was a full-time teacher of Belarusian language and Arts.



who had to make a decision for their children. In the talks with parents, she normally draws attention to the “Programme of Cooperation” between the BOC and MofE (thus explaining the legislative basis), and then offers more detailed explanation of the optional course. As Oleshko emphasised, there has never been a negative perception of this course from the parents; although the proportion of pupils, who attend it, is normally low, no more than 15-20%.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes pupils stop attending these classes; although at times the interest is great and the pupils themselves propose the themes they wish to discuss. The main textbooks include “Foundations of Orthodox Culture”, written by authors from the Russian Federation—Andrei Kuraev and Alla Borodina. However, in many cases, the Belarusian textbooks have been used, prepared under the guidance of Alexander Broiko, chairman of the NGO “Centre of Orthodox Education”. These textbooks have been approved in Belarus by the Ministry of Education and have been distributed more widely to the schools’ libraries. In addition, these textbooks might be regarded as more adaptable to Belarusian circumstances than the ones from the Russian Federation.

As earlier noted, in eastern Belarusian regions this optional course is not present as widely as in the western regions. Priest Alexiy Naumenko, who is in charge of the Department of Religious Education and Catechism of Mogilev Diocese of the Orthodox Church, explains that the attitudes of school authorities have been in general favourable, but this is not very helpful. There are two main problems which prevent organizing more classes: a lack of qualified teachers and a lack of pupils willing to study these subjects. As father Alexiy explains:

‘When we come to meetings with the parents, many are in favour, but later on only few of them (if any) agree to submit the necessary written applications. In principle, this is understandable: most parents wish to provide for their children practical-oriented subjects, which would be necessary for admission to higher education establishments (say, mathematics, physics or languages). In addition, we still feel the influence of the atheist era: eastern Belarus was more subject to this influence than western Belarus. We therefore used some alternative methods of working: for instance, in the 2018-2019 school year we were giving several lectures on morality for higher school pupils; we gave these lectures in almost half of all schools in the city of Mogilev’.<sup>37</sup>

It is worth noting that the positive assessment of cooperation at the regional level is also confirmed in western Belarus. The practicalities and favourable

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Elena Oleshko, teacher of the ‘Foundations of Orthodox Culture’ at school #10, city of Baranovichi, Belarus. By telephone. July 22, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Fr Alexiy Naumenko, Mogilev Diocese. By telephone. July 21, 2020.

arrangements of this cooperation have been reflected in the report of the Department on Religious Education and Catechism of Grodno diocese, where the following statements are of particular significance:

‘One can see an interest in common work with Grodno diocese from the representatives of the administration of educational establishments, teachers, students and their parents. The administration of educational establishments willingly invites Church representatives, especially when it concerns spiritual and moral problems in society. According to the administration of educational establishments, which cooperate with Orthodox parishes and where the optional course ‘The foundations of Christian morality and culture’ is taught, the number of offences among students is decreasing, the number of cases when the rules are violated is diminishing, and the emotional atmosphere in children’s and adults’ groups have been stabilized’.<sup>38</sup>

In Grodno diocese, there are 23 schools (as of 2019) where ‘Foundations of Orthodox Culture’ are taught. The number of students attending this optional course ranges from 3 to 26 (here I take into account separate classes, not combined classes, as present at some schools). In almost all cases, this subject is taught by school teachers, representing different disciplines—history, geography, Russian and English languages. Only in one case—a gymnasium in the town of Schuchin—is this subject taught by a local priest, although, as noted by father Igor, in many cases schools would have preferred to have clergy teaching the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture”, but it is difficult to realize in practice, since priests often lack required pedagogical qualification.<sup>39</sup> In order to understand the scope of cooperation in Grodno diocese, one can mention that in 2019 there were 164 events in the educational area, mainly talks at different educational establishments—with students, their parents and staff.

Overall, it is plausible to claim that currently there are adequate opportunities for the teaching of religion, including Orthodox-related subjects, at schools, but only as optional courses. All attempts to introduce these courses as part of the curriculum have failed, not least due to the influence and resistance of atheist and anti-Church forces. Nonetheless, if there are attempts

<sup>38</sup> Grodno Diocese (2018) Религиозное образование и катехизация [Religious education and catechism], Grodno.

<sup>39</sup> Grodno Diocese (2019) Информация о преподавании факультативного курса «Основы православной культуры» в государственных учреждениях образования, находящихся на территории Гродненской епархии Белорусской Православной Церкви, в 2017/2018 учебном году [Information about teaching of optional course ‘Foundations of Orthodox Culture’ in the state educational establishments, located on the territory of Grodno Diocese of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, in 2017/2018 school year], Grodno; Interview with Fr Igor, Grodno Diocese. By telephone. July 30, 2020.



to introduce optional classes, these are normally welcomed by parents, although only a fraction of them choose “Foundations of Orthodox Culture”. This is explained by higher demand for more practically-oriented courses, such as languages or mathematics. As a rule, the school administration does not make obstacles, although if it takes a negative stance, there are no realistic legal ways to overcome this. Indeed, almost everything in this issue has been put into the hands of the administration of educational establishments.

### Conclusion

The developments of cooperation between the Belarusian Orthodox Church and Ministry of Education were not progressing evenly, with the changing legislative framework, which allowed certain fluctuations from one side to another. The key points could be confined to the following. The first Agreement on Cooperation, signed in 1994 – well before the adoption of a new Law on the Freedom of Conscience (2002) and the Agreement on Cooperation between the BOC and the State (2003) – contained a number of provisions, which looked quite revolutionary for that time and opened great prospects for the development of mutual work between the Church and educational establishments. However, the development of relevant legislation has been controversial. On the one hand, there were legislative acts, which provided better conditions for the activities of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. On the other hand, the legislative acts in the area of education introduced several restrictions, as could be seen in the Code on Education, adopted in December, 2010 (a new edition of this Code was adopted in January 2022, with the same provisions on religion) and the Council of Ministers’ Resolution, adopted in June 2011. However, the interpretations of the principal provisions of these documents were not directed against the Orthodox Church, allowing it to continue its work in education, with the signing of new Programmes of Cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

Unlike neighbouring countries (Russia, Lithuania, Poland), Belarus does not allow the teaching of religion at schools as part of the curriculum. Instead, this can be taught as optional courses, where the most prominent role is given to the “Foundations of Orthodox Culture”. This course was not introduced widely at schools: this is explained by low demand and by a lack of qualified teachers, although the teaching of this course varies from region to region, with more substantial figures in western Belarus. At the same time, even in the conditions of not the most favourable legislative framework, the BOC managed to establish, in many cases, quite successful cooperation with

educational establishments, often in the form of common seminars, lectures, and talks on various subjects of religion, morality, family, values, etc. However, one needs to note that the scope of intensity of this cooperation depends on the will of the administration of educational establishments. If rectors/directors of schools, colleges and Universities are not willing to cooperate, the doors of their institutions will be closed to the Church and its representatives. This, of course, presupposes that there are better opportunities for cooperation in the regions with a higher level of religiosity and better perception of religion in general and the Orthodox Church in particular.

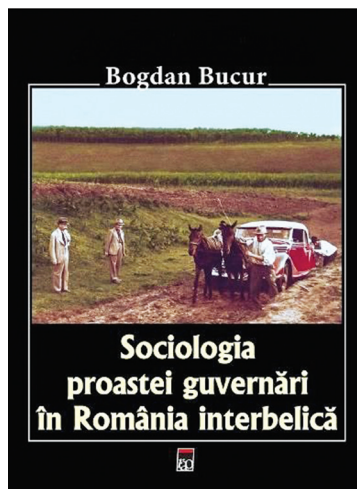
### Rezumat

Această lucrare analizează dezvoltarea cooperării dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și instituțiile de învățământ din Belarus. Primul acord de cooperare între Ministerul Educației și Biserica Ortodoxă din Belarus (BOB) a fost semnat în 1994, cu câțiva ani înainte de adoptarea unei noi legi privind libertatea de conștiință și de semnarea Acordului de cooperare între Biserică și stat. Deși multe dintre obiectivele stabilite în primul acord nu au fost îndeplinite la timp, de atunci a existat o cooperare continuă și reciproc avantajoasă între minister și BOB, printr-o serie de programe de cooperare, semnate la fiecare 2-4 ani. Biserica Ortodoxă este singura confesiune religioasă din Belarus care încheie programe de cooperare cu Ministerul Educației; cu toate acestea, nu se poate afirma că cadrul legislativ general este deosebit de favorabil pentru această Biserică. Într-adevăr, există unele restricții, care limitează prezența BOB și a reprezentanților săi în instituțiile de învățământ. De asemenea, Biserica nu a reușit să obțină includerea în programa școlară a cursului „Fundamentele culturii ortodoxe” și a cursurilor aferente. În același timp, aceste cursuri pot fi predate ca materii opționale, la cererea părinților. În plus, BOB este în măsură să organizeze diverse cooperări cu unitățile de învățământ (seminarii, prelegeri, discuții periodice etc.); cu toate acestea, amploarea și intensitatea acestei cooperări depind în mare măsură de voința administrației școlilor de a interacționa cu Biserica Ortodoxă.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Biserica Ortodoxă, Belarus, educație, școală, predarea religiei.

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**BOGDAN BUCUR,**  
*Sociologia proastei guvernări  
în România interbelică.*  
**București: RAO, 2019, 728 pp.**

Cartea lui Bogdan Bucur este o contribuție valoroasă la studiul și înțelegerea societății și statului românesc din perioada interbelică. Lucrarea îmbrățișează din capul locului și fără ocolișuri o perspectivă critică. Originalitatea acestei contribuții este asigurată de abordarea „from below” asupra guvernării românești, bazându-se pe date sociale și mărturii ale „oamenilor mici” (N. Iorga), colectate și analizate în cercetările Școlii Sociologice condusă de Dimitrie Gusti în anii 1920-1930 și în timpul celui de al Doilea Război Mondial. Cartea lui Bucur este cu atât mai importantă cu cât majoritatea studiilor despre România interbelică au adoptat până acum mai curând o perspectivă „de sus”, sprijinindu-se pe documente și discursuri produse de stat și elite administrative și intelectuale și neglijând surse ce oglindesc o perspectivă socială asupra istoriei, cum sunt cele produse de Școala monografică de la București. Un alt merit al cărții lui Bucur este că oferă o înțelegere a guvernării românești din perioada interbelică dinspre periferiile regionale spre centru, în răspăr cu logica centralizatoare a statului.

După cum o anunță și titlul, cartea analizează dintr-o perspectivă socială punctele slabe ale guvernării românești din interbelic, pe direcția liniilor trase de cercetările școlii gustiene și anume: centralizarea administrativă excesivă, insensibilă la particularitățile locale și regionale, politicile de omogenizare culturală și lingvistică în regiunile cu pondere ridicată a minorităților etnolingvistice, comportamentul abuziv și arbitrar al funcționarilor și jandarmilor români

față de cetățenii de rând, în special în zonele rurale, și corupția generalizată a administrației și clasei politice românești din acea perioadă. La acestea poate fi adăugată instabilitatea politică cronică (mai cu seamă în perioadele 1919-1922, 1926-1928 și 1931-1933). Toate aceste manifestări ale „proastei guvernări” produc efecte în lanț de ineficiență instituțională și anomie socială.

Pentru a defini corupția sistemică a statului în perioada interbelică, autorul folosește concepte provenite din studiile recente de politici publice și de știință politică precum acelea de „stat slab”, „stat capturat” și chiar „stat eșuat” (32). Cartea abundă în exemple de proastă administrare și corupție. Corupția politică se manifestă prin fraude electorale, traseism politic și finanțarea ilegală a partidelor (155-57). Organele judiciare sunt și ele corupte și ineficiente. Astfel, crimele comise de partidele politice (fapte de corupție politică comise de partide dominante și acte de violență săvârșite de partide extremiste) au fost neglijate constant de magistrați (36). Instabilitatea politică prelungită și salarizarea mizeră a funcționarilor publici se numără printre cauzele corupției sistemice și a calificării scăzute a corpului administrativ (174).

În România interbelică, guvernarea nu a fost aplicată doar prin practici procedurale, ci și, în mare măsură, prin abuzuri administrative și măsuri excepționale. Starea de asediu și cenzura presei a fost aplicată în Basarabia aproape pe durata întregii perioade interbelice, iar de la 11 februarie 1938, starea de asediu este instituită în toată țară (138-40). Instituții de ordine ale statului, cum era Brigada a III-a a Siguranței și Serviciul Secret de Informații (din cadrul Ministerului de Război) aveau drept misiune persecutarea oponentilor politici, în special a organizațiilor politice de stânga (146). Lucrarea recunoaște că mai multe state din perioada interbelică au avut clase politice și organe administrative corupte și abuzive în raport cu cetățenii. Totuși, potrivit cărții, violența politică și instituțională moștenită din Vechiul Regat perpetuează o adevărată tradiție de guvernare, continuată și după 1918 în România Mare (47). Violenței sistemice operate la nivel înalt îi revenea o violență instituțională la „firul ierbii”. Violența și abuzurile comise de jandarmerie și funcționarii români în localitățile rurale erau practici „administrative” curente (279-80).

Pentru a înțelege deficiențele guvernării din România interbelică, autorul adoptă conceptul de „război intern” (teoretizat de Harry Eckstein și aplicat de Paul E. Michelson și Hans-Christian Maner<sup>1</sup>). „Războiul intern” este de-

<sup>1</sup> Harry Eckstein (coord.), *Internal War: Problems and Approaches* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); Paul E. Michelson, *Conflict and Crisis: Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871* (New York: Garland Press, 1987); Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România: 1930-1940* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000).



finit prin existența unei stări de violență permanentă prin conflictul dintre contestatarii și deținătorii puterii (129). În România interbelică, „războiul intern” a fost dus atât între diverse facțiuni ale clasei politice, cât și între stat și cetățeni. În treacăt fie spus, acest model teoretic nu oferă, cel puțin în această lucrare, o explicație causală suficientă acestei situații de conflict permanent în statul și societatea românească interbelică. Alte modele teoretice ar fi fost, probabil, de mai mare folos la descălcirea cauzalităților acestei stări prelungite de conflict la nivel societal. Astfel, lucrările lui Eric Lohr și Peter Holquist au ajutat la înțelegerea violenței aplicate pe larg la nivel social și instituțional în Rusia și URSS în timpul și după Primul Război Mondial<sup>2</sup>. După Holquist, măsurile excepționale aplicate în timpul războiului au marcat modelul de guvernare în Uniunea Sovietică pe timp de pace. Eric Lohr, de partea sa, explică manifestările generalizate de violență în timpul Primului Război Mondial și al Războiului civil prin slăbiciunea instituțiilor statului care nu au reușit să impună „monopolul asupra violenței legitime” (după celebra formulă de M. Weber) în tot teritoriul statului.

Lipsa de rezistență din partea elitelor intelectuale și politice față de instaurarea dictaturii regale în februarie 1938 este văzută ca o dovadă a nemulțumirii generalizate față de regimul parlamentar de până atunci, care a funcționat cu multe încălcări și deficiențe. Totodată, tranziția spre un regim autoritar în 1938 a fost una de continuitate, nu de ruptură, cu regimul precedent (33). De fapt, regimul formal democratic a supraviețuit până în 1938 tocmai pentru că avea o structură autoritară. Guvernarea prin decrete, mai puțin prin legi discutate și adoptate în parlament, instituirea abuzivă a stării de asediu și a cenzurii constituiau un model constant de guvernare în România interbelică. În mod paradoxal, singurii contestatari autentici ai regimului carlist nu au fost partidele democratice, ci legionarii (217).

Starea învățământului din România interbelică reflectă fidel inegalitățile sistemice din societatea românească interbelică, fracturată între o minoritate educată și relativ înstărită și o majoritate analfabetă și puternic dezavantajată din punct de vedere social și economic. Majoritatea copleșitoare a populației (rurale) era analfabetă sau slab școlarizată (37). Sistemul școlar și universitar existent discorda cu structura societății și cu posibilitățile ei reale de dezvoltare. Școlile rurale și urbane nu ofereau absolvenților competențe practice, în ciuda eforturilor ministerului condus de D. Gusti de a accentua profilul practic și

<sup>2</sup> Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Peter Holquist, “Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-21,” *Kritika*, 4, no. 3 (2003): 627–52. <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2003.0040>.



aplicat al învățământului școlar. Științele umane dominau pe larg învățământul universitar, în detrimentul disciplinelor exacte și tehnice. Lipsa competențelor practice la absolvenții liceelor și universităților producea o armată de *șomeri intelectuali*.<sup>3</sup> În interpretarea autorului cărții, aderarea unui număr mare de studenți la Garda de Fier a fost stimulată de frustrarea materială și de lipsa perspectivelor profesionale a tinerilor (191-96). Ultranaționalismul xenofob și antisemitismul au fost exploatate pe larg de diverse partide de dreapta pentru a da explicație frustrărilor materiale ale românilor. Naționalismul etnic a fost de fapt singura ideologie dominantă și consensuală în societatea românească între cele două războaie (292). Intelectualilor universitari le revine un rol important în legitimarea și difuzarea acestei ideologii. De altfel, fascinația totalitară printre intelectualii români a fost în creștere anii 1930 (63).

*Sociologia proastei guvernări* nu oferă doar o imagine în totalitate sumbră intelectualității românești din interbelic. Pe fundalul radicalizării politice și a nivelului în general scăzut și inadecvat cu realitatea socială al expertizei tehnice și intelectuale din epocă, Școala Sociologică de la București a fost singurul mediu intelectual conștient că „cercetarea țării este premisa bunei guvernări” (37). Prin cunoașterea monografică a satului, Școala condusă de D. Gusti a contribuit la apropierea dintre elitele intelectuale și politice și lumea reală a satului din diverse regiuni din România. În ciuda simpatiei pe care autorul o poartă acestei mișcări monografice, cartea propune o analiză obiectivă diverselor aspecte ale activității Școlii și liderului ei. Astfel, Dimitrie Gusti este analizat ca o figură intelectuală care manifestă maleabilitate și oportunism în diverse conjuncturi politice (54-9). Întreprinderea intelectuală lansată de Gusti nu a fost ocolită de un soi de misionarism naționalist, iar cercetarea sociologică întreprinsă în satele românești a fost afectată la bază de distorsiune metodologică prin selecția satelor pentru cercetare. Cartea relatează episodul anecdotic în care Gusti i-a cerut lui Ștefan Ciobanu, intelectual basarabean și înalt funcționar în câteva ministere, să aleagă un sat pentru cercetarea monografică, îi sugerează și criteriile de selecție ce țin mai curând de un imaginar naționalist decât de un cadru teoretic sau metodologic: „Dorim un sat vechi răzășesc, cu săteni care să se cheme Căpitane și situat lângă o mănăstire” (119).<sup>4</sup> Nivelul de pregătire teoretică și metodologică a cercetătorilor Henri H. Stahl, Anton Golopenția și Traian Herseni a asigurat, totuși, acuratețea științifică necesară cercetărilor de teren și probitatea analizelor.

<sup>3</sup> A se vedea și Dragoș Sdrobiș, *Limitele meritocrației într-o societate agrară* (Iași: Polirom, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Grigore Botezatu, „Alegerea satului Cornova pentru cercetări sociologice”, în *Cornova 1931*, coord. Marin Diaconu, Zoltán Rostás și Vasile Șoimaru (Chișinău: Quant, 2011), 584-588.



În ciuda eforturilor făcute de Școala sociologică de la București, satul românesc era puțin cunoscut de elitele politice și intelectuale din România interbelică. Imaginea pe care și-o făceau elitele față de satul românesc era în totală discordanță cu realitatea (98). Ignoranța socială a elitelor vremii a mers mână-n mână cu un soi de „bovarism geocultural” (pentru a prelua expresia lui Sorin Antohi, adaptată după conceptul lui J. De Gaultier<sup>5</sup>). Ne raportăm în general la România interbelică din marele orașe, cu confortul lor burghez și intelectualii săi occidentalizați, dar ignorăm cele 80% din populație ce locuiau la sate. Pe urmele echipelor de monografiști în satele românești din interbelic, cartea lui B. Bucur constată înapoierea profundă a satelor românești și a României în general. Cu excepția Albaniei, România la 1938 era statul european cu cea mai scăzută speranță de viață (40 pentru bărbați și 41 pentru femei), cu cea mai înaltă rată de mortalitate infantilă (182,5 copii <1 an/ 1000 de nou-născuți), cu ponderea cea mai ridicată de analfabetism (201).<sup>6</sup>

Deși se anunța viguros și ambițios, proiectul românesc de modernizare s-a poticnit de obstacole majore, fiind săpat la rădăcină de o hibă de fezabilitate și durabilitate. Deficiența cea mai mare a acestui proiect de modernizare este cristalizată de formula „forme fără fond” (T. Maiorescu). Întreaga legislație românească și infrastructură instituțională a fost replicată de fondatorii statului român după modele occidentale, fără să încerce a le adapta la particularitățile sociale și culturale autohtone. Decalajul dintre „formele” legale și instituționale europene și „fondul” vieții sociale și culturale, și anume ruralitatea avansată și înapoierea societății românești după principalii parametri de dezvoltare, era de natură să înstrăineze populația rurală față de legile și instituțiile statului. Simțindu-se excluși din cadrul mecanismelor statului modern, țărani operau tactici de rezistență pasivă prin care sabotau tacit acest proiect ambițios de transformare socială (477).

O teză importantă a cărții este că noile coduri legale create în a doua jumătate a secolului 19 substituiau și subminau formele tradiționale de control social instituite în comunitățile țărănești: „obiceiul pământului”, devălmășie, administrație obișnuielnică, orânduiri moșnenești sau răzeșești. Percepția populației rurale era deci că o administrare arbitrară și coruptă urmărea să înlocuiască o legiuire tradițională, considerată legitimă în comunitățile rurale (268,

<sup>5</sup> Sorin Antohi, “Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology”, *Tr@nsit online*, no. 21 (2002). <https://www.societateamuzicala.ro/sorinantohi/romania-and-the-balkans/>; Jules de Gaultier, *Le Bovarysme* (Paris : Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010)* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 218-219.

316). Noua formă de administrare era, în percepția sătenilor, un instrument folosit de latifundiarilor locali și de marile corporații anonime pentru exploatarea economică a satelor (347).

După cum s-a menționat în trecere mai sus, unul din defectele majore ale guvernării românești interbelice era centralismul excesiv, care înstrăina populația autohtonă din regiuni, în special minoritățile etnolingvistice. Atitudinea Bucureștiului față de provincii era una de „colonialism intern” (38). De-semnarea de facto a primarilor din localități de către guverne instituționaliza dependența autorităților locale față de București și în special de partidele politice de la guvernare, în loc să le facă responsabile în fața populației autohtone (276). Alienați de noua guvernare instituită în 1918, noii cetățeni din provinciile alipite în 1918, Transilvania, Banat, Bucovina, Basarabia, își exprimă cu diverse ocazii regretul pentru vechea administrație austro-ungară sau rusă. Cartea ia în vizor cazul Basarabiei. În 1934, echipa regală studențească este surprinsă să constate o reacție de ostilitate mocnită a populației din satul Năpădeni, Basarabia, față de administrația românească. Niciun locuitor nu se declara român, toți se considerau moldoveni. Sătenii basarabeni manifestau semne de loialitate față de vechea administrație țaristă, afișând în casele lor portretele țarilor. Un raport al Siguranței din ianuarie 1920 constata că „o mare parte din populația basarabeană simpatizează cu bolșevicii și ar fi dispusă să ajute întronarea regimului bolșevist dacă ar avea puțință” (381). Un alt raport al Siguranței din februarie 1932 declara că populația din satele basarabene „nutrește sentimente ostile Statului nostru” (380). Reacția populației din Basarabia față de autoritățile române poate fi înțeleasă în contextul abuzurilor comise de funcționarii români în provincie. Potrivit unui raport al Serviciului Secret de Informații din 1918, 90% dintre funcționarii trimiși în Basarabia au săvârșit grave abuzuri în serviciu. Dar cazul Basarabiei nu este singurul în această privință. Stările de spirit nostalgice față de vechile administrații imperiale ale sătenilor din Bucovina, Banat și Transilvania erau similare cu cele ale locuitorilor din Basarabia (388-92).

Administrația românească din Transnistria din 1941-1944 face obiectul unui studiu de caz în ceea ce privește percepția populației locale față de calitatea guvernării românești și a celei sovietice. Studiul se bazează pe mărturiile colectate și analizate în cadrul operațiunii de Identificare a Românilor de la Est de Bug (IREB), coordonată de Anton Golopenția, o cercetare monografică realizată în special în satul Valea Hoțului din Transnistria. Autorul cărții constată neutralitatea axiologică a cercetătorilor în acest proiect, în ciuda intențiilor politice care îi stăteau la bază (413). Cercetarea a rezultat într-un studiu monografic: *Note despre administrația rurală sovietică și despre problemele ridicate*



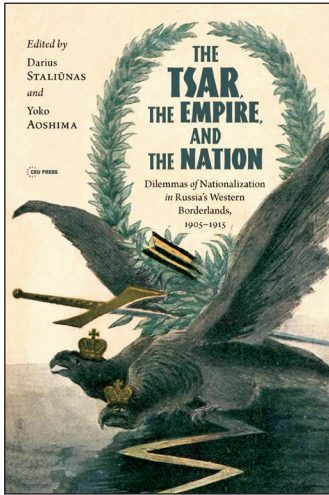
administrației românești de teritoriul dintre Nistru și Bug, întocmite în urma anchetei de la Valea-Hoțului (raionul Ananiev), ianuarie-martie 1942. Acest studiu și cartea lui B. Bucur fac un rechizitoriu dur calității guvernării românești din Transnistria din perspectiva populației autohtone. Pentru cei mai mulți locuitori transnistreni anchetați, administrația românească în Transnistria a însemnat în primul rând introducerea unor practici de administrare abuzive și violente. După mai bine de douăzeci de ani în care autoritățile sovietice au abolit bătaia aplicată în administrație și școli, autoritățile românești o reintroduc cu prisosință în viața de zi cu zi atât în școli, cât și în practica jandarmilor și funcționarilor. Confiscările ilegale de la locuitorii evrei iau forma unor jafuri. După cum constată cu amărăciune coordonatorul cercetării, Anton Golopenția, în situația în care funcționarii români îi abuzau în mod curent pe localnicii moldoveni, pretenția României de a se considera eliberatoare a Transnistriei nu putea fi decât ridicolă<sup>7</sup>. Practicile abuzive și violente ale slujbașilor români nu erau sancționate în niciun fel pe cale administrativă sau judiciară. Cartea se arată totodată critică față de politica culturală și educațională a administrației românești în Transnistria, în contrast cu cea sovietică. Cartea oferă un exemplu grăitor în acest sens. În timpul administrației sovietice, în satul Valea-Hoțului funcționa un cinematograful cu 400 de locuri, dotat cu scenă pentru reprezentații teatrale. Autoritățile române au închis cinematograful și au deschis în acel local biserică. În ciuda lipsei cadrelor didactice, mai mulți învățători rămași în Transnistria, inclusiv moldoveni, au fost concediați. Atât autoritățile românești în timpul celui de al Doilea Război Mondial, cât și statul sovietic în epoca stalinistă au aplicat violența la scară largă. Deosebirea fundamentală dintre violența aplicată de cele două state ține de forma și organizarea guvernării. Violența bolșevică era organizată, reglementată și puțin vizibilă în spațiul public, pe când abuzurile și violența administrației românești erau aplicate în mod cotidian, individual și voluntarist (422-32).

În încheiere, autorul cărții se grăbește să se dezvinovățească de orice acuzație că ar critica regimul politic democratic și că ar face apologie regimurilor autoritare. „O democrație bolnavă este preferabilă, oricând, unei dictaturi sănătoase”, ne spune autorul (484). Critica formulată de carte, sprijinită pe dovezi documentare și mărturii ale oamenilor de rând, vizează calitatea guvernării românești, nu regimul democratic și parlamentar în sine. Marele defect al statului român în perioada interbelică era, din perspectiva cărții, o guvernare deficientă, lipsa sau ineficiența statului de drept și croirea și aplicarea unor poli-

<sup>7</sup> Anton Golopenția, *Românii de la Est de Bug*, volum I, editat, cu Introducere și comentat de Sanda Golopenția (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006): 317.

tici administrative pe baza unei cunoașteri superficiale a vieții sociale din satele românești, în special în regiunile alipite în 1918. Valoarea analitică și empirică a cărții e greu de tăgăduit. *Sociologia proastei guvernări* contestă modelul istoric național, încă dominant în România, potrivit căreia statul-națiune, în speță România Mare, ar oferi o formă de guvernare superioară celei aplicate în imperiile habsburgic și rus. Cartea domnului Bucur sugerează, dimpotrivă, că „vechile administrații imperiale aveau o civilizație politică superioară statelor naționale succesoare” (485). Lucrarea oferă în anexe documente extrem de interesante în calitate de complement argumentelor articulate în carte. Totuși, cartea nu este lipsită de cusururi. Stilul lucrării este de multe ori repetitiv și prolix, iar registrul ei este adeseori polemic în raport cu obiectul studiului. Argumentul cărții ar fi cu siguranță mai convingător dacă ar adopta un ton mai neutru. În plus, credem că tezele formulate în lucrare ar merita o fundamentare teoretică mai solidă. La fel, mai multe referințe comparative ne-ar ajuta să înțelegem mai bine specificul guvernării românești din epocă. În ciuda acestor slăbiciuni, cartea domnului Bogdan Bucur angajează o perspectivă „de jos” inovatoare și foarte necesară în dialogul public și academic despre istoria României în perioada interbelică și în cel de al Doilea Război mondial, în special în ceea ce privește forma și calitatea guvernării.

**Petru NEGURĂ**



**DARIUS STALIUNAS și YOKO AOSHIMA,**  
**coord. *The Tsar, the Empire, and the Nation:***  
***Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia's***  
***Western Borderlands, 1905-1915.***  
**Historical Studies in Eastern Europe**  
**and Eurasia. Volume V. Budapest**  
**& New York: Central European**  
**University Press, 2021. 400 pp.**

Era oare Imperiul Rus, în ultima fază a existenței sale, un stat cu adevărat „naționalizant”, cel puțin la începutul secolului al XX-lea? Și, dacă da, în ce măsură și în ce sens? Care a fost reacția acestei formațiuni statale față de provocările și pericolele reprezentate de proiectele naționale de la periferii, mai ales având în vedere încercările centrului imperial de a consolida un nucleu „național” rus, tot mai greu de definit? Consensul istoriografic în creștere – exemplificat, printre alte lucrări, de volumul recent apărut sub titlul *Nationalizing Empires*, cu o largă aspirație comparativă, editat de către Stefan Berger și Alexei Miller – pare să sugereze că imperiile continentale europene (și, în special, Imperiul Rus) au avut un succes remarcabil în „domesticirea” naționalismului, adaptându-l și folosindu-l pentru propriile lor scopuri legate de întărirea legitimității politice și construcția statului.

Volumul colectiv editat de Darius Staliunas și Yoko Aoshima – rezultat din eforturile unei excelente echipe internaționale, formate din cercetători specializați în istoria periferiilor occidentale ale Rusiei imperiale – revizuieste și amendează parțial această viziune prin schimbarea prisme de analiză, axându-se pe „reacția și răspunsul elitei conducătoare a imperiului față de provocările naționalismului în ultimele decenii ale regimului țarist” (4). Lucrarea atinge acest scop, în primul rând, prin reevaluarea critică a vechii dihotomii dintre „naționalismul birocratic” și „strategia imperială” de guvernare, dihotomie formulată acum mai bine de două decenii de către istoricul polonez Witold Rodkiewicz, dar și prin contribuția esențială a cărții la dezbaterile actuale privind natura relației dintre imperiu și națiune într-o epocă a politicii maselor. Unul din-

tre argumentele centrale ale volumului este că a existat o tensiune constantă și permanentă – care nu a fost niciodată rezolvată cu adevărat – între două viziuni antagonice ale imperiului: una care „percepea imperiul, înainte de toate, drept un stat etnic rus (*russkii*)”, care trebuia să privilegieze „interesele rușilor în detrimentul ne-rușilor”, și o altă concepție, care „îmbrățișa ideea eterogenității imperiale”, urmărind, în principal, să „asigure loialitatea popoarelor ne-ruse” (2). În contribuția sa din acest volum, Staliunas exprimă această opoziție prin introducerea „distincției dintre politica națională *imperială* sau *pragmatică* și strategiile *naționaliste* ale politicii naționale” (39). După cum subliniază editorii în introducere, una dintre concluziile principale ale volumului este că nici una dintre aceste două strategii nu își putea aroga o victorie decisivă, nu în ultimul rând pentru că „regimul nu se putea hotărî, în mod definitiv și irevocabil, să urmeze nici una dintre ele” (13).

În al doilea rând, volumul pune sub semnul întrebării definițiile consacrate și dinamica evoluției „naționalismului oficial”. Autorii resping, sau cel puțin nuanțează semnificativ, interpretarea propusă de istoricul rus Alexei Miller, evidențiind esența și natura *inconsecventă* (și chiar adesea contradictorie) a eforturilor naționalizante depuse de statul rus. Dacă, așa cum afirmă Anton Kotenko în capitolul său, statul condus de dinastia Romanovilor era „un imperiu care se naționaliza în mod inconsecvent (*an inconsistently nationalizing empire*) și care nu urma un program coerent de transformare a imperiului într-un stat [cu un caracter] mai rusec” (31), putem oare conchide că ceea ce istoricii credeau că știu sigur despre statul țarist în ultimele sale decenii de existență ar trebui revăzut în mod fundamental? Cu alte cuvinte, a fost oare această formațiune imperială, care se naționaliza aproape „contrar voinței sale” (*reluctantly*) (13), cu adevărat modernă, în ceea ce privește politicile sale naționale, administrarea diferenței și eforturile de a integra comunitățile sale etnice ne-ruse? Autorii articolelor din acest volum ar răspunde, probabil, la această întrebare, în sens negativ, punând accent pe inconsecvența și „non-simultaneitatea” politicilor naționale din epoca imperială.

Din punct de vedere metodologic, cele douăsprezece texte incluse în acest volum se concentrează pe „un cadru geografic intermediar, axându-se pe periferiile occidentale ale Rusiei” (4). Chiar dacă această „scară medie” a analizei nu este nouă, în sine (putem menționa, în acest sens, lucrările mai vechi ale unor autori precum Rodkiewicz, Miller, Mihail Dolbilov sau Theodore Weeks), paleta subiectelor abordate, ca și analiza detaliată a studiilor de caz individuale, este impresionantă. Volumul reușește să mențină un echilibru analitic delicat, urmărind concomitent câteva linii și direcții tematice întrepătrunse și strâns legate



între ele. Capitolele se încadrează în patru categorii principale, care sunt reflectate și în structura generală a volumului, anume: dinamica politicii naționale a imperiului între prima revoluție rusă din anii 1905-07 și izbucnirea Primului Război Mondial; traiectoriile suprapuse (și uneori opuse) ale conflictelor etno-naționale și ale rivalităților confesionale din aceste ținuturi de frontieră eterogene sub aspect religios; ecuația complicată a politicilor educaționale, aflate în evoluție permanentă și plasate sub presiunea crescândă a cerințelor naționaliste tot mai radicale, a dilemelor de ordin lingvistic și a definițiilor concurente ale loialităților imperiale și ale spațiului imperial; și, în fine, mobilizarea tot mai puternică a organizațiilor ruse naționaliste, radicale și de extremă dreaptă, ceea ce a avut drept rezultat apariția unei diversități deconcertante a viziunilor de excludere colectivă, a unor proiecte utopice, dar și, uneori, a unor combinații politice destul de improbabile.

Printre punctele forte ale cărții aș remarca, în primul rând, felul ingenios și convingător în care autorii abordează dilema tripartită dintre „țar, imperiu și națiune”, dilemă rezumată foarte bine chiar în titlu. De altfel, *multiplicitatea actorilor locali, regionali și centrali* care rivalizau pentru putere, resurse și loialități contestate pe un eșichier politic tot mai competitiv și mai violent este o concluzie crucială a lucrării, care este confirmată de toate studiile de caz și care definește specificul ultimului deceniu antebelic. Autorii demonstrează că existența capacității de acțiune (*agency*) colective sau individuale conta cu adevărat – fie că este vorba despre clerul catolic și ortodox care încerca să îi atragă pe credincioși, de anumite comunități locale care negociau niște oportunități educaționale mai bune, de profesori deveniți activiști politici care încercau să își impună propriile viziuni privind spațiul și teritoriul național ideal nu doar asupra elevilor, ci și asupra autorităților centrale, sau, în fine, de anumiți funcționari guvernamentali „atipici”, cum a fost cazul guvernatorului general al Varșoviei, Georgi Skalon (67-109) sau cel al guvernatorului de Vilna și Kovna, Piotr Veriovkin (50-56). Mai mult, aceste capacități de acțiune defineau, într-o foarte mare măsură, limitele a ceea ce era fezabil din punct de vedere politic. În al doilea rând, *ierarhiile etnice ale percepțiilor inamicului*, aflate în continuă evoluție, și dinamica schimbătoare a acestor categorii au structurat nu doar modurile de imaginare, tot mai contestate, ale spațiului imperial, care erau mereu amenințate de incertitudine și deseori radicalizate sau subminate de așa-numita „izolare dublă” (*twofold isolation*) (106) a birocrăției imperiale de la periferii, ci au avut și anumite consecințe concrete pentru scopurile și prioritățile politicilor de stat în aceste regiuni. Deși inconsecvente, politicile naționalizante ale centrului imperial au avut drept urmare instaurarea unui cerc vicios al es-



caladării și radicalizării reciproce, ceea ce a împiedicat apariția oricărui spațiu potențial de dialog dintre ruși și comunitățile ne-ruse. În al treilea rând, faptul că volumul se concentrează pe *mobilizarea politică a naționalismului popular al rușilor*, fenomen pe care îl consideră o variabilă esențială pentru înțelegerea tulburărilor politice din acea perioadă, este extrem de relevant și lăudabil. Chiar dacă mișcările ruse de „dreapta”, în toată diversitatea lor, nu au obținut niciodată un succes durabil în ținuturile de frontieră, aceste mișcări au servit drept catalizator pentru stimularea naționalismelor ne-ruse și au complicat enorm guvernarea imperiului, în special la periferii. Astfel, departe de a consolida imperiul, curentele radicale ale „dreptei ruse” l-au slăbit, și chiar, adesea, l-au subminat, mai ales în aceste regiuni „sensibile din punct de vedere geopolitic” (4).

Ținând cont de dimensiunile vaste ale problematicii abordate în volum și de calitatea excelentă a articolelor, mă voi rezuma doar la câteva mici observații critice. Mai întâi, ar fi fost, cu siguranță, de dorit (și de așteptat) un interes și o atenție ceva mai mare impactul Primului Război Mondial asupra regiunii. De asemenea, există anumite inconsecvențe sau mici scăpări contextuale, care nu sunt surprinzătoare, având în vedere bogăția și varietatea subiectelor discutate. De exemplu, publicația *Okrainy Rossii* este evaluată de către unul dintre autori (Vytautas Petronis) drept „moderată și, într-o oarecare măsură, naționalistă” (316), în timp ce Karsten Brüggemann folosește un limbaj mult mai tranșant și mai univoc, calificând același ziar drept „șovin” (327).

Acest volum reprezintă o contribuție crucială și indispensabilă la dezbateră curentă asupra procesului de „naționalizare” a Imperiului Rus din perioada sa târzie. Totuși, volumul depășește cu mult acest cadru, mai ales prin problematizarea conexiunilor și interacțiunilor conceptuale și practice dintre categoriile analitice de „națiune” și „imperi”. Din acest motiv, culegerea de articole editată de Staliunas și Aoshima este o lucrare extrem de relevantă și utilă pentru toți cei interesați de studierea naționalismului și a imperiilor moderne în contextul mai larg al Eurasiei.

**Andrei CUȘCO**